

Contesting War Memories: Parties and Voters in Contemporary Southeast Europe

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“Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past.”

George Orwell, 1984

The study of collective memories has developed into a rich field crossing the boundaries between sociology, political science, and history over the past several decades. It has remained, however, largely detached from the study of party politics (Malka et al. 2019). This is unfortunate. Keeping collective memories on the sidelines of electoral politics research, and treating them as purely epiphenomenal, risks not capturing the essence of political competition in many polities where debates over recent and more distant pasts often dominate public discourse (Olick 2016). Collective memories are in many ways societies’ connective tissues (Hite 2012). They strike at the core of people’s identities (Alexander 2004; Gillis 1994). This is particularly the case when it comes to national identities and collective memories of violent and traumatic events such as revolutions or wars. “War made the state, and the state made war,” Charles Tilly famously remarked (1975: 42). Following Edward Said’s (2010) argumentation, one could transform this observation into “memory of war created the nation, and the nation created the memory of war.”

This is not to say that national collective memories are uniform or homogenous – quite the contrary. All collective traumatic events are followed by contestations, challenges, and struggles over their remembrance and commemoration (Edkins 2003). This memory contestation takes many shapes and forms, and comes from a variety of directions – from center and periphery, from within and without, from above and below (Olick and Robbins 1998). Nevertheless, it is ultimately political and is fought over in the electoral arena. Its public prominence may move with the ebb and flow of social and political priorities, but its staying power is often long lasting and can span generations, as has been the case with the “politics of history” and the “historical consciousness problem” in post-World War II Germany and Japan (Wolfrum 1999; Hashimoto 2015), or with the debates over the historical legacies of the Civil War that continuously seem to wash over American politics. What is important to note is that these contestations over memories of traumatic conflicts – although to some extent limited by the historical events themselves (Kubik and Bernhard 2014) – are shaped by contemporary considerations about what is yet to come. As we

suggested by this article's epigraph, collective memories of the past are fought over in the present, in order to shape the society's future.

In this article, we examine whether political parties in the post-conflict polities of Southeast Europe differentiate themselves based on value stances toward the memories of the ended conflicts, and whether voters make their electoral choices based on these different value stances of the parties. We wish to expose the extent to which electoral competition in societies marred by recent violent conflict is founded upon considerations of how that conflict should be remembered. To this end, we analyze data collected in an expert survey on the policy positions and ideological orientations of all relevant political parties, as well as an extensive survey of more than ten thousand voters, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. These countries are good objects of study for two reasons. First, they have functioning, if flawed, democratic political marketplaces of ideas, policies, and parties, and their elections over the past two decades have been largely free and fair. And second, questions of collective war memories have maintained their public prominence to this day despite temporal distance from the regional wars of the 1990s.

Those regional wars of the 1990s were representative of the larger number of conflicts that erupted as the systemic constraints of the Cold War collapsed. All six countries under study were part of the Yugoslav federation, whose protracted break up resulted in a string of violent conflicts in: Slovenia (1991), Croatia (1991-1995), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1995), Kosovo (1998-1999), and North Macedonia (2001). These conflicts took the lives of more than 130,000 people and led to the forcible – and in many cases permanent – displacement of more than four million people. The causes of the Yugoslav wars were complex, but in essence, they were nationalist wars fought for control of territory. Their logic was perhaps best summed up by the economist Vladimir Gligorov (2011): “Why should I be a minority in your state when you can be a minority in mine?” In addition to devastating human loss and extensive damage to physical infrastructure, the conflicts also poisoned inter-ethnic and inter-state relations in the region with slow recovery partly due to the flawed process of transitional justice. Despite many efforts at reconciliation, memories of the 1990s conflicts continue to be a nearly constant presence and burden in regional politics to this day, with political entrepreneurs using the recent past to gain electoral advantage.

Our analysis convincingly shows that political parties in contemporary Southeast Europe indeed take different positions related to war memory and these positions are one of the principal determining factors of their overall ideological orientation, independent of factors that led to the regional wars in the 1990s, such as nationalism or attitudes toward the rights of ethnic minorities. What is more important, our results show that views on war memory are also of critical importance in voters' decision-making on which party to support. Voters to a significant extent base their electoral choices on the level of their agreement with the political parties' stance toward how recent wars should be remembered, even when we control for a number of other policy positions, as well as voter and party characteristics, including voters' own war experiences. We argue this is clear evidence that political competition in post-conflict Southeast Europe – even more than two decades after the wars that plagued this region – is defined by voters and parties' divisions on war memory. Considering everything we know about postwar societies in a variety of geographic and temporal contexts, we believe the results of our analysis can help us better understand the impact of war on postwar political competition far beyond the borders of contemporary Southeast Europe. The Yugoslav wars of the 1990s may have belonged to a particular class of post-Cold War conflicts, but the trauma suffered by the local populations, as well as the politicization of recent war memory, are virtually universal to all societies that experienced similar events. Simply put, collective memories of violent conflicts are politically contested, and party politics research would benefit from taking them seriously.

Collective war memories and political contestation

The study of collective memories has been a “nonparadigmatic, transdisciplinary, centerless enterprise” without agreement among scholars even on some of the field's basic terminology such as “collective memory” (Olick and Robbins 1998: 106). If we trace the field to what is generally considered its foundation in the scholarship of Maurice Halbwachs, we can find the roots of the concept of collective memory in the Durkheimian idea of “collective representations” – symbols or meanings that constitute the character of a social group (Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy 2011). Though obviously closely related, collective memories should be understood as distinctive from individual memories, history, and historiography (Olick 2016). Instead, they should be thought of as shared corpora of remembrances and understandings of historical information by

social groups that strike at the core of the groups' meaning and identity. What is critical to understand here is that memory scholarship, in spite of its Durkheimian roots that are often critiqued for essentializing and reifying social groups, has always considered collective memories as politically and socially contested and constructed (Gillis 1994; Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy 2011).

This contestation is obviously constrained to a certain extent by historical events and the repertoire of interpretations that could be deemed as culturally credible or potentially valid (Kubik and Bernhard 2014). Nevertheless, the selectiveness of collective memory according to present-time conditions of remembering the past has been recognized by memory scholars from the very beginnings of the field. As much as they are connected to the historical record, collective memories are not permanent, but are instead representations of that historical record, which are subjectively (and often consciously) constructed to fit the needs of the present (Hashimoto 2015). This is particularly the case when it comes to collective memories of traumatic social experiences of violent conflict. Collapses of colonial empires and dictatorships, ends of civil wars and international conflicts, revolutions – all of these events place collective memories at the heart of public discourse and political debate (Zubrzycki and Woźny 2020). They do so not only because political identities are often defined by violent conflict, but also because different forms of remembering (and forgetting) can serve as the means of social recovery from trauma (Edkins 2003).

In spite of their undeniable importance and the proliferation of interest in their causes, consequences, and dynamics of contestation/construction across a variety of fields over the past four decades, collective memories have been absent from party politics research, save for a recent contribution looking at discursive expressions of different memory modes associated with the Israeli Mapai party (Malka et al. 2019). Researchers have provided us with tremendously insightful case studies of collective war memory social contestation in a string of important geographic and historical contexts, such as Japan (Hashimoto 2015), Poland (Hackmann 2018), or Germany (Wolfrum 1999; Olick 2016). They have also improved our understanding of concepts of increasing social relevance such as transitional justice (Rigney 2012). The study of the politics of

memory, however, has been marked by scarcity of systematic theorizing based on larger numbers of cases and comparative approaches.

One notable exception to this trend has been the proposition of a theory of the politics of memory by Kubik and Bernhard (2014). Together with the contributors to their edited volume, they trace the politics of memory and commemoration of communism in post-communist Eastern Europe and find the nature of the “memory regimes” (fractured, pillarized, or unified) in the countries of the region to be dependent on the interactions among the different “mnemonic actors” (warriors, pluralists, abnegators, and prospectives). We find great value in their approach, but the question we are primarily concerned with is different. Our goal is to distill the potential political contestation over collective memory of a violent conflict to its foundational essence. We believe that essence to be centered on the question of victimhood and the acceptance by different groups of the suffering of others.

Indeed, memory scholarship has long recognized that the denial of the reality of suffering of others is at the core not only of rejection of responsibility, but also of perpetuation of conflict (Alexander 2004). Very often, individuals and communities perceive memories of victimhood as zero-sum games. As Aleida Assmann (2007: 16) has argued, “one remembers something in order to be better able to forget something else. When applied to the realm of national memory, this means that one recalls one’s own suffering in order to avoid being reminded of one’s own guilt.” Or, to turn things around, one rejects recalling others’ suffering in order to be reminded of one’s own. Making that leap of acceptance of others’ suffering, however, is key to finding and building lasting peace. As Jennifer Dixon (2018) has shown in her study of narratives of guilt in Turkey and Japan, acknowledging harmful acts is the first step on the road toward finding closure of dark chapters in nations’ histories. In fact, as Jennifer Lind (2008) has demonstrated in her analysis of the politics of states’ apologies, the mere avoidance of denial of past violence is a critical facilitator of reconciliation – even without the additional steps of apology, compensation, or commemoration of the other side’s victims. Acknowledging harmful acts committed against others, therefore, is not just a symbolic show of solidarity. It also has real impact on the diffusion of conflict, prospects for reconciliation, and all the political, social, and economic consequences that a lasting peace could bring. We do not deny that war memories are complex social concepts that encompass a

number of dimensions. At this early stage of scholarship on collective war memories and party politics, however, we believe a focus on what we see as the essential question of acknowledgement of guilt and victimhood is important in order to gain the strongest possible empirical footing, with refinements and greater theoretical richness to come with further research.

Ultimately, broad social acknowledgment of harmful acts committed against others is usually determined by a string of political decisions made by those who have control over the government. As all political decisions, it is subject to contestation that political parties can choose to engage in. A long strand of scholarship on party politics has recognized the role of parties in fostering issue salience and even cleavage formation (Lijphart 1999; Sartori 1969). In this line of argumentation, parties are seen as political entrepreneurs who articulate a certain agenda in public space in search of support (Inglehart 2015; Lijphart 1999; Sartori 1976). The salience of politicized issues is thus a function of the competition among parties, who highlight certain social divisions to secure an electoral advantage (Hloušek and Kopeček 2016). Considering everything we know about political competition in postwar societies – particularly those in Southeast Europe of the past two decades – this argumentation is in our view very plausible when it comes to contestation over collective war memories. Indeed, (some) parties in postwar societies actively keep the memory of war alive by partaking in commemorations of war-related events and engaging in public discourse and activities loaded with meaning related to the war past, so much so that it has become an integral part of the political culture even decades after the wars end (Ashplant, Dawson, and Roper 2015; Chirot, Shin, and Sneider 2014; Lazic 2013). The politics in Southeast Europe is replete with such examples that continue to mar the local political landscape to this day: from parties in Croatia sparring over the role of war veterans in society or the commemorative practices in the town of Vukovar that was the sight of the biggest battle during the war, to politicians in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro continuously debating the wars' causes or the genocidal nature of the massacres at Srebrenica.

To be clear, the events of the wars in the 1990s in Southeast Europe, with the destruction of property, the often permanent expulsion of people from their homes, the decades-long struggles to find out what happened to lost loved-ones and to bring perpetrators to justice, have the potential to shape political decisions of voters regardless of what political parties do. We, therefore, do not

argue that the memory of war would have been politically impotent if it were not for the actions of political elites, nor do we argue that parties simply respond to the aspirations of the voting public. Rather, we believe political parties amplify war-related sentiments that are at their core very much real. In this way, a number of scholars have argued that “keeping the war alive” has been the strategic choice of many postwar political parties in Southeast Europe with the goal of obtaining an electoral advantage (Gödl 2007; Bieber 2019), just like ethnicity and national identity have been politicized and constructed by political players across a variety of polities (Linz and Stepan 1996). We do not disagree.

The causes of the Yugoslav conflicts were obviously rooted in pre-existing cleavages centered around nationalism and rights of different ethnic groups in the states created on the ruins of the dissolved federation. Moreover, these conflicts and the very dissolution of the Yugoslav federation were precipitated by politicians who (ab)used the memories of past inter-ethnic strife. Nevertheless, we argue that the impact of collective war memories on the contemporary politics of the region cannot be reduced to these pre-existing lines of division. Instead, the wars and their memory have added something unique to the nature of political competition. We firmly believe that the wars of the 1990s fundamentally altered local social structures and created populations with real and objective differences rooted in their vastly different experiences of the war. We also, however, firmly believe that political parties in the region have actively worked to politicize the recent war past in an effort to mobilize supporters. The essence of that politicization has been the question of collective memory of the conflict’s perpetrators and victims, i.e. to which extent the suffering of the members of the out-group is deserving of acknowledgment and commemoration. Our first task is to demonstrate that parties in contemporary Southeast Europe indeed have different standpoints when it comes to collective memory of war victimhood, as there can be no political contestation without parties taking different positions.

Our proposition, however, goes further than this and suggests that war memories strike at the core of the central left-right political divide in the party politics of postwar societies. The left-right continuum occupies a central place in politics, both for elites and the public; this has been the case for decades (Downs 1957). The labels “left” and “right” serve as instruments with which people are able to orient themselves in a complex political world. In other words, the left-right spectrum

is a taxonomic system that allows people to understand, store, and order political information. The content of the left-right continuum, therefore, can reveal what issues are most important in a given society in a given era (Inglehart and Klingemann 1976: 244-245). Classic accounts argue that the left-right divide was related to the conflicts between workers and the owners of the means of production (Kriesi 2010). However, left-right semantics are dynamic and can change meaning following societal transformations and pivotal events. One example is the emergence of materialist/post-materialist politics in Western societies following WWII (Inglehart 1984). We argue here that war and its memory can have a similar transformative impact on what a society considers left and right. Obviously, contestation on war-related issues in postwar societies can be completely unrelated to other ideological differences, as was the case in Ireland, where the two main competing parties, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, represented the two sides of the Irish Civil War, but differed little in terms of other issues (Gallagher 1985). We believe this scenario, however, to be an exception.

There are four major theories on how societal changes impact the left-right continuum (Knutsen 1995; Kitschelt and Helleman 1990). The first argues that old meanings of left and right will be discarded in favor of new ones. The second that the labels left and right become outmoded by an entirely new political language. The third predicts that new and old meanings will be merged into one ideological dimension. The fourth and final argues that new meanings to left and right will be added to the old ones, without replacing them or making them fade away. This last perspective has received most empirical support, and has guided our own expectations. Considering the nature of wars and collective war memories in former Yugoslavia, we propose that positions on collective war memories help define ideologically what it means to be a leftwing or rightwing party in the region today. The distinction between the nationalist right and the more liberal center in Serbia, for example, could not be clearer than when it comes to their attitudes toward Serbia's role in the wars of the 1990s. Similarly, the distinction between the nationalist right and the social-democratic left in Croatia could not be clearer than when it comes to their attitudes toward war veterans (Dolenec 2017).

While conceptually clear, our ability to discern the independent impact of one issue dimension on the left-right scale as a whole is hampered by the fact that parties engage in “ideology-making”, in

which they group issues together because of a superordinate value or because they deem issues to belong together (Converse 1964). A whole body of literature has demonstrated high levels of positional constraint among elites (Jennings 1992; Burt and Neiman 1987; Lesschaeve 2017). In Southeast Europe, this is likely to be the case for war memories and nationalism, ethnic minority rights, and the gal/tan dimension in general. Nevertheless, the degree to which war memories have an independent effect on parties' left-right positions would suggest that the war and the views on it have shaped the nature of political competition in the region. Our empirical propositions reflect this view. We therefore first suggest that:

H1: Parties take different positions on war memory. These positions are closely related to their general worldview and ideological orientation.

Whether or not parties take different positions on an issue is ultimately, however, irrelevant if the voters find that issue not salient enough in their decision making on which party to support. Harking back to the information processing models of Zaller (1992), and Iyengar and Kinder (1987), individuals retain a large number of possible frames or considerations relevant to political choices and decisions in their memory. When asked to evaluate an object, voters sample from these considerations. For instance, voters can evaluate parties on the basis of economic performance, or the fight against corruption. However, not every consideration is equally accessible, and it is these differences in accessibility that determine the manner in which voters judge political parties (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2006). Considerations that are highly accessible are more likely to shape voters' assessments (Belanger and Meguid 2008; Green and Hobolt 2008). Voters are, therefore, expected to prioritize opinion congruence, i.e. the sharing of policy views with parties, on dimensions that are more accessible to them. In turn, accessibility is determined by the importance or salience of a policy dimension (Soroka 2006). This has been demonstrated numerous times in non-war contexts (Lefkofridi, Wagner, and Willmann 2014; Walgrave and Lefevere 2013), but arguably extends to Southeast Europe as well.

The central claim of this study is that the memories of the ended conflicts are potent and relevant in the political competition of the region, through the inherent importance the war past still enjoys decades after the conflicts' end, and the deliberate efforts by parties to amplify this importance.

Attitudes toward and views of the (recent) war past, thus, strike at the core of people's value systems, giving rise to a new ideological conflict or cleavage which is rooted in cultural divisions that have transcended objective structural and experiential causes (see Torcal and Mainwaring 2003; Kriesi 2010). As such, voters' preferences for political parties likely depend on the extent to which their personal views of the memory of war victimhood correspond to the parties' views of the memory of war victimhood if those views are important to voters. If this is indeed the case, which we believe it is, then it would follow that voters' support for political parties is dependent on the congruence between theirs and parties' views of the memory of war victimhood – regardless of their personal experiences of war violence. More specifically, voters with less conciliatory views of war victimhood should support political parties with similarly hardline positions, and voters with more conciliatory views of war victimhood should support parties with similarly broadminded positions. This is why we hypothesize that:

H2: Voters' level of support for political parties is dependent on the level of their agreement with parties' positions on war memory.

Data and method

To test our propositions, we rely on an expert survey on the ideological character, policy positions, and behavior of political parties and a voter survey with more than ten thousand respondents, both of which we conducted concurrently between October and December 2018 in the six post-conflict countries of Southeast Europe. For the former, we contacted political scientists in relevant fields from all major universities in Southeast Europe, as well as scholars working on the region from abroad, and invited them to participate in an online survey. In total, 73 experts participated. The expert survey follows the standard set by the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) requiring a minimum of four experts before a country can be included in the dataset (Polk et al. 2017), with our average number of respondents per country being 11. The party list (presented in the appendix) includes all major parties in each country, as well as a number of smaller parties that are nevertheless considered relevant to the country's party politics. While expert surveys are certainly not without their problems (Budge 2000), they have been found to produce similarly valid estimates of party positions on issue dimensions, when compared to the manual coding of party statements and elite surveys, regardless of parties' general left-right positions (Hooghe et al. 2010;

Marks et al. 2007; Ruedin and Morales 2019; Steenbergen and Marks 2007). In other words, expert placements of parties are made in their own right, and are not simple deductions based on other political reputations.

In addition to party positions on war memory and the parties' general left-right orientation, our expert survey captures information on five other subject areas: gal/tan positions, nationalism, economic policy, military policy, and ethnic minorities. Wherever possible, we employed the same formulations as the ones used by CHES and a comparison between the items that overlap with the CHES indicates a high degree of consistency.¹ With an average standard deviation of 1.9 per party and question, the precision of our measures is comparable to other expert surveys. We further complemented expert survey data with information about the parties' parliamentary and government representation, as well as their age. When it comes to parties' positions toward war memory, we decided to capture it with the question: "How do you estimate the position of each party toward acknowledging harmful acts committed against other groups during [the conflict relevant for the county in question]?" As argued above, we believe this question strikes at the core of the way war memory is understood and politicized, not only in the post-conflict societies of Southeast Europe. Expert survey data allows us to determine to which extent parties' left-right positioning is related to their war memory stance, as opposed to their stances in other policy areas, and to provide an answer to our first hypothesis. Table 1 gives an overview of the descriptives for the left-right orientation, war memory, and the five issue/policy areas for the parties in our sample.

[Table 1 about here]

The total size of the sample in our voter survey that was conducted on a dedicated online platform and mobile app, on the other hand, was 10736, with 2718 respondents coming from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2324 from Croatia, 1311 from Kosovo, 722 from Montenegro, 1460 from North Macedonia, and 2201 from Serbia.² To ensure representativeness of our sample in terms of gender,

¹ We checked the correspondence of our and CHES party scores on the general left-right positioning, economic policy, gal/tan, nationalism, and stance toward ethnic minorities for 39 matching parties. For all items, we found correlations above 0.8 except for economic positions (0.67).

² Respondents were recruited by quota-sampling voters in each country using Facebook's Marketing API. This method has proven to be not only cost-effective, but also reliable in leading to similar results as national probability samples (Zhang et al. 2018). It allowed us to target specific demographic groups based on a large number of strata we identified

age, education, and region, we apply survey weights in all our analyses (Ansolabehere and Rivers 2013) based on the raking method (Kalton and Flores-Cervantes 2003). The voter survey captured respondents' views on memory of their country's most recent armed conflict with a Likert scale question identical in substance to the one asked in the expert survey. In addition to the respondents' socio-demographic characteristics (gender, age, education, income, ethnicity, and religiosity) and attitudes toward a number of social issues and policy areas, the survey also captured respondents' political preferences and commitments through a string of propensity to vote questions. For each party relevant to the respondents' polity, respondents were asked on a 0-10 scale how likely it was that they would vote for that party in the future. In our research design aimed at answering our second hypothesis, we follow the approach proposed by Van der Eijk and Franklin (1996), and make these propensity to vote (ptv) scores into the dependent variable. With ptv scores we create a stacked data matrix in which the unit of analysis is the respondent*party combination. In other words, there are multiple observations per respondent, one for each party included in the survey. In contrast to discrete choice models, which only measure actual party choice, this approach allows for a far more detailed view of how individual and party characteristics make a party more or less electorally attractive. In addition, it allows researchers to test hypotheses of party choice determinants across a large number of parties and countries instead of estimating a model for each individual party.

When examining the role of standpoints on issues or values in party choice, the standard approach is to use a measure of distance or congruence between the positions of respondents and those of political parties (Lefkofridi, Wagner, and Willmann 2014; De Vries et al. 2011). Congruence is measured as the absolute difference between the mean respondent score (rescaled to match the expert survey format) subtracted from 10 in order to obtain scores ranging from 0 (no agreement) to 10 (complete agreement). The principal congruence value of our interest is related, obviously, to the question on the acknowledgement of harmful acts committed against other groups, as it helps us address our second hypothesis, i.e. whether voters' level of support for political parties is dependent on the level of their agreement with parties' positions on war memory.

in each country according to gender, age, level of education, and region (we identified on average 180 social strata per country). According to www.internetworldstats.com, Facebook covers about half of the adult population in the region, making our method more than viable.

As a means to test the robustness of the relation between views on war memory and party preference, we account for the role played by other policy dimensions. Our voter survey includes multiple questions related to social issues and policy areas that we believe present the strongest possible test for the relationship between war memory and voter choice: nationalism, ethnic minority rights, military policy, libertarian-authoritarian values, and economic policy. For the first three dimensions, measures of congruence were calculated similarly to that for war memory. For economic policy and libertarian-authoritarian values, however, Cronbach's alphas proved to be too low. They were nevertheless included in the analyses via another method, of which more below. Nationalism, ethnic minority rights, and to some extent military policy should be highlighted because they arguably capture the essence of the conflicts of the 1990s and are thus the strongest test of the independent effect of war memory on party preference. The precise formulation of all the statements in both the expert and voter survey can be found in the Appendix, and Table 2 gives an overview of the descriptives of the ptv scores and the congruence variables.³

[Table 2 about here]

To control for the role played by economic and libertarian-authoritarian attitudes, as well as respondents' social characteristics, linear regressions are estimated for each party separately before the data is stacked (Walczak, Van der Brug, and De Vries 2012). For instance, in the case of social class, the ptv scores of one party are regressed on a set of social class indicators. This process is visualized in Figure 1 (also see Van der Eijk et al. 2006). Based on these regressions, predicted ptv scores, or \hat{Y} s, are calculated and used as independent variables. The logic behind this method is that if social class indicators are good predictors of voters' party preferences, regressions will produce predicted values that come close to the actual scores. These control variables, therefore, are based on the predicted values of models that contain one or more explanatory factors.

³ The measurement of war memory congruence differs from the other congruence measures in the way voter position is determined. To test for an instrumental difference between congruence variables, we developed an alternative measure of war memory congruence, calculated on the basis of multiple statements in a similar fashion as nationalism, minority policy, and military policy congruence (see Table A4 in the Appendix). The results of our analyses, however, were ultimately substantively the same.

[Figure 1 about here]

Here we should particularly highlight that our analysis controls for respondents' personal war experiences, captured as a composite variable operationalized as the \hat{Y} s obtained in a regression where propensities to support parties are predicted by six indicators of voters' personal war experiences: 1) being a war veteran, 2) having been in physical danger during the war, 3) having been forced to emigrate because of the war, 4) having close family or friends be killed during the war; 5) suffering from a war-induced physical disability, and 6) suffering from war-related trauma. While the first five variables are dummies, war trauma is the sum score of respondents' answers to six yes-no questions measuring symptoms of war-related trauma (see Appendix Table A2 for the exact wording of the questions). Cronbach's alpha exceeding 0.80 shows that the scale consistently measures war trauma. Our analysis also accounts for voters' ethnicity, religiosity (based on membership of a religious or church association), education (based on dummies indicating the highest obtained degree), social class (based on income deciles and employment status), gender, age, political interest, and being a non-voter (based on whether the respondent would vote if elections were to take place today). The analysis does not control for the rural/urban divide. However, given that it does control for a host of ideological and structural factors (most notably the regional distribution within each country) that in totality closely mirror the differences between urban and rural populations in Southeast Europe, we are convinced that the inclusion of a covariate for this divide would not substantially affect the results. On the party-level, we account for party age and government membership. The stacking procedure obviously inflates the number of observations ($n = 115337$), and renders the data by definition nested in voters ($n = 10736$) and political parties ($n = 69$), which raises concerns over the independence of errors (Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal 2008). As a result, we use multilevel linear regression with random intercepts for the respondent and party level as crossed upper levels. In addition, to account for country-level differences in ptv scores, all our models include country dummies. As such, the full model used to estimate the preference of respondent i for party k presented in the next section can be written as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
Y_{ik} = & \beta_0 + \beta_{War\ memory\ congruence_{ik}} + \beta_{Nationalism\ congruence_{ik}} + \beta_{Military\ policy\ congruence_{ik}} \\
& + \beta_{Minority\ rights\ congruence_{ik}} + \beta_{Libertarian-authoritarian\ values_{ik}} \\
& + \beta_{Economic\ policy\ preferences_{ik}} + \beta_{Personal\ war\ experiences_{ik}} + \beta_{Ethnicity_{ik}} \\
& + \beta_{Religiosity_{ik}} + \beta_{Education\ level_{ik}} + \beta_{Social\ class_{ik}} + \beta_{Gender_{ik}} + \beta_{Age_{ik}} \\
& + \beta_{Political\ interest_{ik}} + \beta_{Non-voter_{ik}} + \beta_{Government\ coalition_k} + \beta_{Year\ of\ founding_k} \\
& + \beta_{HR\ dummy} + \beta_{XK\ dummy} + \beta_{MK\ dummy} + \beta_{ME\ dummy} + \beta_{RS\ dummy} + \zeta_i + \zeta_k \\
& + \varepsilon_{ik}
\end{aligned}$$

Results

As stated above, the first task in establishing whether parties' stance toward war memory could be structuring the content of political competition is demonstrating that there actually exists a sufficient difference among political parties when it comes to their views of war memory. Figure 2 shows the violin plots of party positions on this issue in all six countries of the region (the scores for parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina being split into those for the Federation and the Republika Srpska), with party positions weighted based on their seats in parliament. In other words, the plots show the likelihood of encountering the party positions in the legislature. Only in Republika Srpska does the party landscape exhibit little to no diversity. Parties in the Serb entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina seem to be united in their unwillingness to acknowledge war crimes – in our view, unsurprising considering how Republika Srpska was created. In all other countries of the region – and in particular in Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia – there are parties representing a wide range of positions when it comes to war memory, with the depicted level of support varying depending on their contemporary electoral fortunes.

[Figure 2 about here]

Our first hypothesis, obviously, went beyond merely stating that parties in the post-conflict countries of Southeast Europe had differing positions toward war memory. It proposed that war memory was related to the parties' overall worldview and that it struck at the core of their positioning on the ideological left-right continuum. Figure 3 shows the bivariate relation between parties' left-right position (x-axis) and their views on war memory (y-axis). War memory is indeed strongly related to parties' overall left-right position. Parties opposed to acknowledging war crimes

are consistently found on the right side of the spectrum. This pattern is confirmed even when we split up the graphs by country in the Appendix Figure A1, with the only exception possibly being the parties in North Macedonia.

[Figure 3 about here]

The relation between parties' left-right orientation and stance toward war memory is more formally tested in Table 3. Here parties' general left-right position is the dependent variable and parties' standpoints on six areas – war memory, nationalism, minority rights, economic policy, libertarian-authoritarian values, and military policy – are the explanatory variables. We test the correspondence of parties' stance on war memory with their left-right placement in three models: pared down Model 1 with only *War memory* as the explanatory variable; Model 2 which adds the parties' stance on *Economic policy* and *Libertarian-authoritarian values*; and finally Model 3 which adds *Nationalism*, *Minority rights*, and *Military policy*. We opt for this technique because, as discussed above, we recognize that in the Southeast European context *Nationalism*, *Minority rights*, and *Military policy* could be conceptually and in practical terms very closely related to *War memory*. The wars of the 1990s were ultimately nationalist wars which were fought militarily over both territory and minority/majority status of different ethnic groups. Parties' positions toward nationalism, minority rights, and the military were arguably decisively molded by what took place during that decade. Being so related to our issue of interest – and yet conceptually distinctive from it – we believe our three models present a useful way of establishing exactly what the nature of the relationship between war memory and left-right orientation really is.

[Table 3 about here]

Model 1 shows that *War memory* has a strongly statistically significant (at the 0.001 level) and negative relationship with left-right orientation. Substantively, Model 1 suggests that a one standard deviation (equal to 2.15) move toward greater acknowledgement of war crimes committed by members of the in-group leads to a decrease of the party's left-right score (i.e. a move to the left) equal to 1.2. Considering that the standard deviation of the *Left-right position* variable is equal to 1.59, this is a substantively large effect. What is equally important to note is

that even this simple model does well, with more than 53% of the variation explained. The effect of *War memory* survives the inclusion of *Economic policy* and *Libertarian-authoritarian values* in Model 2, though it obviously becomes smaller. The effects of the two newly added variables are also highly statistically significant and in the expected direction. With only these three explanatory variables, this model does exceptionally well as it succeeds in explaining 84% of the variation. The inclusion of *Nationalism*, *Minority rights*, and *Military policy* in Model 3 does little to improve the model's explanatory power. Even here, however, the variable *War memory* remains statistically significant. The diminishing effect of *War memory* due to the inclusion of other party positions should come as no surprise, and is evidence of the ideology-making tendencies of political parties (Converse 1964). The origins of the conflicts in the 1990s can be traced to the pursuit of national self-determination and the rights of ethnic groups. It is therefore only natural for parties' positions on these two issue to be connected to their *War memory* views. However, the fact that war memory views retain an independent effect on parties' left-right positions heavily suggests that the wars and their memory have added something unique to the nature of political competition. Cognizant of all the limitations of this methodological approach, we feel confident in concluding that the evidence supports our first hypothesis.

Our second hypothesis, on the other hand, suggested that voters' congruence with parties' stance on war memory was a significant factor in their decision whether to vote for a party or not. The results of our analysis are presented in Table 4. Model 1 includes only country dummies, and *War memory congruence*. Model 2 and 3 add the congruence measures for other issues and socio-demographic control variables. The models thus become increasingly stringent tests of the effect of war memory congruence on party preferences. In the models, the effects of almost all variables, including *War memory congruence*, are highly significant. This is unsurprising given the large sample size. This is why statistical significance is not a useful metric for assessing support that Hypothesis 2 receives in the data. While a non-significant finding would have been evidence for a lack of support, statistical significance must be supplanted by a substantive effect size before we can conclude that the assertion is confirmed. Therefore, we plot the relation between *War memory congruence* and party preference in Figure 4. Keeping all other variables at their mean values, no congruence on war past views is estimated to result in a *ptv score* of 0.8, while perfect agreement in a score of 4.3. This demonstrates, in our view beyond doubt, that *War memory congruence* has

a sizable effect especially when considering that we are controlling for a number of alternative explanations. Our analysis therefore shows that respondents in the postwar societies of Southeast Europe still assess parties with the question of war memory in mind, more than two decades after the conflicts had ended. This is true even when controlling for the voters' views on other, arguably closely related, issues and even when controlling for voters' personal war experiences. This indicates that the legacy of war is not merely an expression of another political fault line that predates the war, but that it even may be a cleavage-like fault line in its own right. We see this as clear evidence in support of our second hypothesis.

Regarding our control variables, voter/party congruence on nationalism also exerts a particularly large effect on party preferences, increasing propensity to vote scores by 0.99 for a one standard deviation increase in congruence. The effects of one standard deviation increases in *Military policy congruence* (1.79) and *Minority rights congruence* (1.69) are, on the other hand, substantially smaller (0.3 and 0.42 respectively). Here we should also comment on the set of our socio-demographic control variables that are not measuring congruence on various issues. Their coefficients cannot be interpreted substantively. They represent predicted ptv scores based on indicators of the listed concepts. As such, they are scaled according to the dependent variable, i.e. a 10-point scale (Van der Brug 2010: 593). The values of the coefficients thus indicate how well the \hat{Y} ptv scores can predict the actual ptv scores. Most interestingly, the coefficient 0.51 for *Personal war experiences* means that for every increase in \hat{Y} based on respondents' six measures of personal war experiences, the actual ptv scores go up by 0.51. This is a sizeable effect that is surpassed only by the effects for *Libertarian-authoritarian values* and *Ethnicity*. For the other variables in the model, these coefficients are smaller, suggesting that they play a weaker role. This suggests that voters' personal war experiences are a sizeable factor in their decision whether to vote for a party or not. Our further robustness tests, however, do not offer solid clues about the direction the effect of *Personal war experiences* takes.⁴ This could be the case for a number of reasons: from specificities of party systems in individual countries to the possibility that party preferences in the region can be a matter of identity that war experiences have generated that is

⁴ These robustness checks can be found in the Appendix in Table A5.

conceptually distinct from policy preferences. This question is beyond the scope of this article, but will be the subject of our further research.

[Table 4 and Figure 4 about here]

Conclusions

In January 2020, the President of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić, during his visit to Serb-populated areas of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, stated “There will be no ‘storms’ and no tractors in the future of the Serb people.” (Tportal 2020) Vučić obviously referred to Croatia’s 1995 Operation Storm that defeated the Serb Krajina statelet and led to the exodus of nearly 200,000 Serbs, many of them escaping violence on their tractors and other agricultural vehicles. Mere days following Vučić’s statement, at the commemoration of the Markale massacre in Sarajevo, proceedings were interrupted by a local man who demanded that the ceremony clearly states that the people killed by mortar shells on the Markale market died at the hands of the Bosnian Serb forces. (Glamoč 2020) Such episodes are standard in Southeast Europe, even decades after the disastrous wars of the 1990s. However, does the fact that war has a significant role in politicians’ public discourse or in the everyday social and political lives of the people mean that war memories structure the nature of political competition? Our article strongly suggests that they do.

We demonstrate that war memory in Southeast Europe is not only the subject of historiographical contestation (Kasapović 2019), but is also one of the principal sources of ideological and policy differentiation among political parties, as well as one of the strongest determinants of voter choice. Voters choose which parties to support based on the level of their agreement with the parties’ positions on the way recent war past should be remembered. Parties in turn take different positions on war memory and these positions are significant determinants of their general ideological profile and placement on the left-right continuum. We believe these lessons from post-conflict societies of Southeast Europe are portable across geographic and time contexts. A growing body of research shows that traumatic divisions such as wars can remain embedded in social relations and political competition for decades after the violence ends in societies as diverse as Peru, El Salvador, Sri Lanka, and Sierra Leone (Wood 2008). There is nothing contextually so specific about the

experiences of war trauma in Southeast Europe that would disqualify the lessons from this region being applicable across a wide range of cases, though obviously this needs to be empirically tested. We argue that how political players conceptualize public memories of such traumatic events is the principal mechanism that keeps these events and the resulting divisions politically relevant – most often with disastrous consequences, regardless of context.

As Kubik and Bernhard (2014) have shown, the implications of contentious fractures in collective memory and their active politicization are nearly uniformly negative. They destabilize institutions and poison public discourse. They heighten political contention to the levels of debates over legitimacy, thus complicating coalition- and consensus-building, as well as governance. They thus result in more polarized forms of party pluralism and lower levels of inter-personal trust, which can have negative effects on the development of cultural and social capital and economic growth. Does this mean, however, that the societies of Southeast Europe, or other contemporary post-conflict societies, will remain prisoners of their past for decades to come? After all, as Lipset and Rokkan's argument suggests, political divisions remain salient as long as the underlying issues have not been resolved (Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2009), and in many post-conflict societies memories of past wars do not seem to be resolved. Our analysis does not offer much cause for optimism. We firmly believe that the only way for the spiral of politicization of war memory to be broken in Southeast Europe is for the societies of the region to have a clear European future. As Kitschelt et al. (1999) have argued more than two decades ago, only new relations, institutions, and development may gradually help historical legacies recede into the past.

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Table 1. Descriptives of parties' issue/policy positions

	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
Left-right position	5.72	1.59	2.33	9.07
War memory	4.68	2.15	0.86	8.83
Economic policy	4.90	1.06	1.67	8.33
Libertarian-authoritarian values	5.86	1.84	2.15	8.92
Nationalism	5.67	2.34	0.75	9.78
Minority rights	5.45	2.22	0.57	9.29
Military policy	5.50	1.93	1.38	9.53

Table 2. Descriptives of the *Propensity to vote* score and congruence variables

	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
Ptv score	1.88	2.83	0	10
War memory congruence	7.77	1.57	0.88	10
Nationalism congruence	7.69	1.52	0.56	10
Military policy congruence	7.64	1.79	0.47	10
Minority rights congruence	7.65	1.69	0.57	10

Table 3. Determinants of parties' left-right positions

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	B	S.E.	Sig.	B	S.E.	Sig.	B	S.E.	Sig.
War memory	-0.56	0.06	***	-0.19	0.05	***	-0.09	0.05	†
Economic policy				0.52	0.08	***	0.52	0.08	***
Libertarian-authoritarian values				0.56	0.06	***	0.49	0.09	***
Nationalism							0.00	0.08	
Minority rights							-0.14	0.05	**
Military policy							0.09	0.05	†
Constant	8.42	0.31	***	0.58	0.65		0.81	0.60	
Country controls	Yes			Yes			Yes		
n	69			69			69		
Δ Adj. R ²	51.42% (53.25%)			82.18% (84.02%)			84.57% (86.40%)		

Note: †p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001; Δ Adj. R² indicates the improvement in explained variance when compared to the model with only country controls

Table 4. Analyses of respondents' party preferences

	B	S.E.	Sig.	B	S.E.	Sig.	B	S.E.	Sig.
War memory congruence	0.83	0.02	***	0.41	0.02	***	0.38	0.02	***
Nationalism congruence				0.57	0.03	***	0.65	0.03	***
Military policy congruence				0.25	0.01	***	0.17	0.01	***
Minority rights congruence				0.31	0.01	***	0.27	0.01	***
Libertarian-authoritarian values				0.86	0.02	***	0.68	0.02	***
Economic policy preferences				0.56	0.02	***	0.49	0.02	***
Personal war experiences							0.52	0.04	***
Ethnicity							0.68	0.02	***
Religiosity							0.07	0.01	***
Education level							0.09	0.01	***
Social class							0.40	0.02	***
Gender							0.07	0.01	***
Age							0.29	0.02	***
Political interest							0.12	0.01	***
Non-voter							0.11	0.01	***
Government coalition							0.40	0.43	
Year of founding							-0.02	0.02	
Constant	-0.84	0.40	*	-1.23	0.42	***	1.82	3.70	
Country controls	Yes			Yes			Yes		
n	Total/Respondents/Parties 115337/10736/69			Total/Respondents/Parties 115337/10736/69			Total/Respondents/Parties 115337/10736/69		
Δ AIC	-1971			-9814.3			-14652.6		

Note: †p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001; Δ AIC compares the model to a model with only the country controls.

Figure 1. Creating the stacked dataset

$$\hat{Y}_{\text{Social class-party 1}} = b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2$$

$$\hat{Y}_{\text{Social class-party 2}} = b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2$$

Resp. ID	Gender	Age	Ptv score - party 1	Ptv score - party 2	$\hat{Y}_{\text{Social class-party 1}}$	$\hat{Y}_{\text{Social class-party 2}}$
1	0	24	1	7	3	6
2	1	32	4	7	4	9
3	0	67	6	6	5	4

Resp. ID	Party ID	Ptv score	$\hat{Y}_{\text{Social class}}$	Age	Gender
1	1	1	3	24	0
1	2	7	6	24	0
2	1	4	4	32	1
2	2	7	9	32	1
3	1	6	5	67	0
3	2	6	4	67	0

Figure 2. Distribution of party positions on war memory

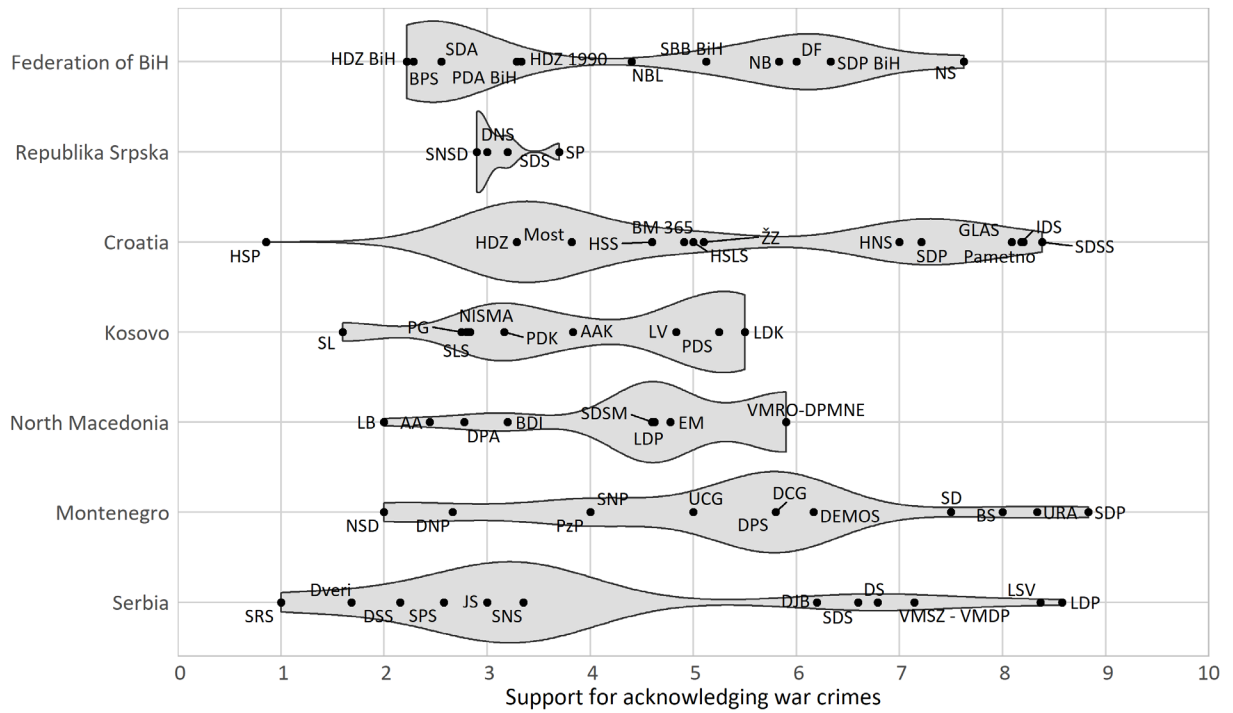


Figure 3. Parties' left-right position and stance toward war memory

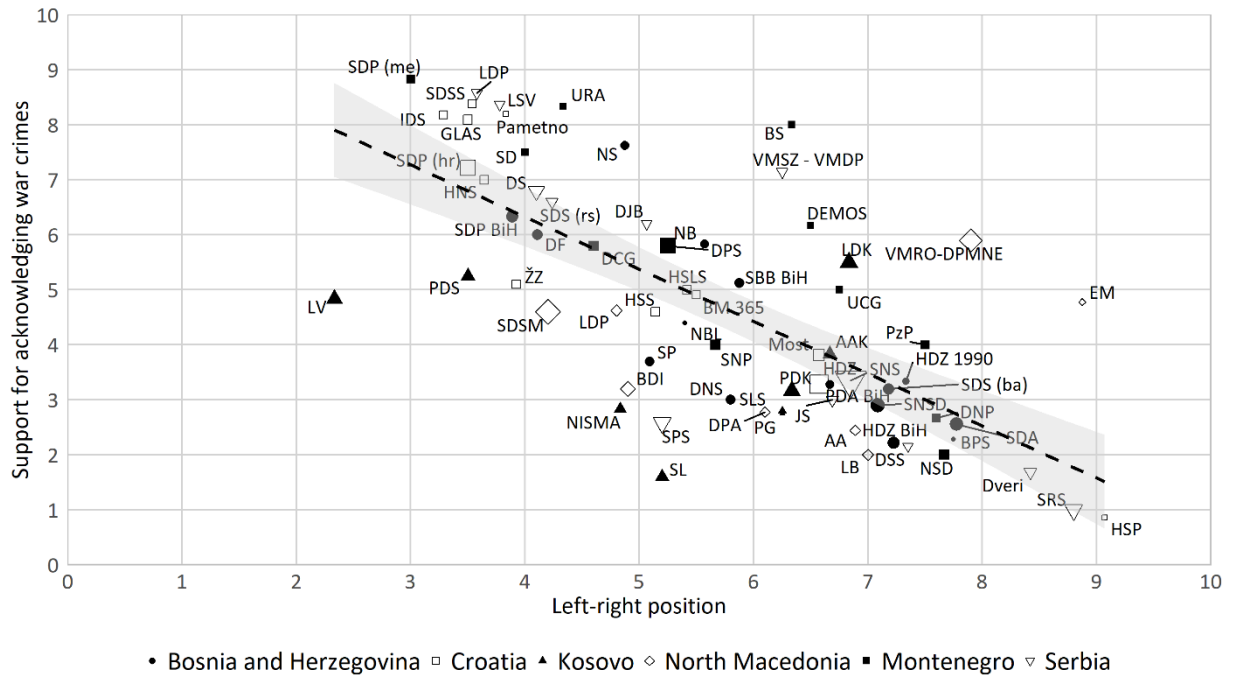
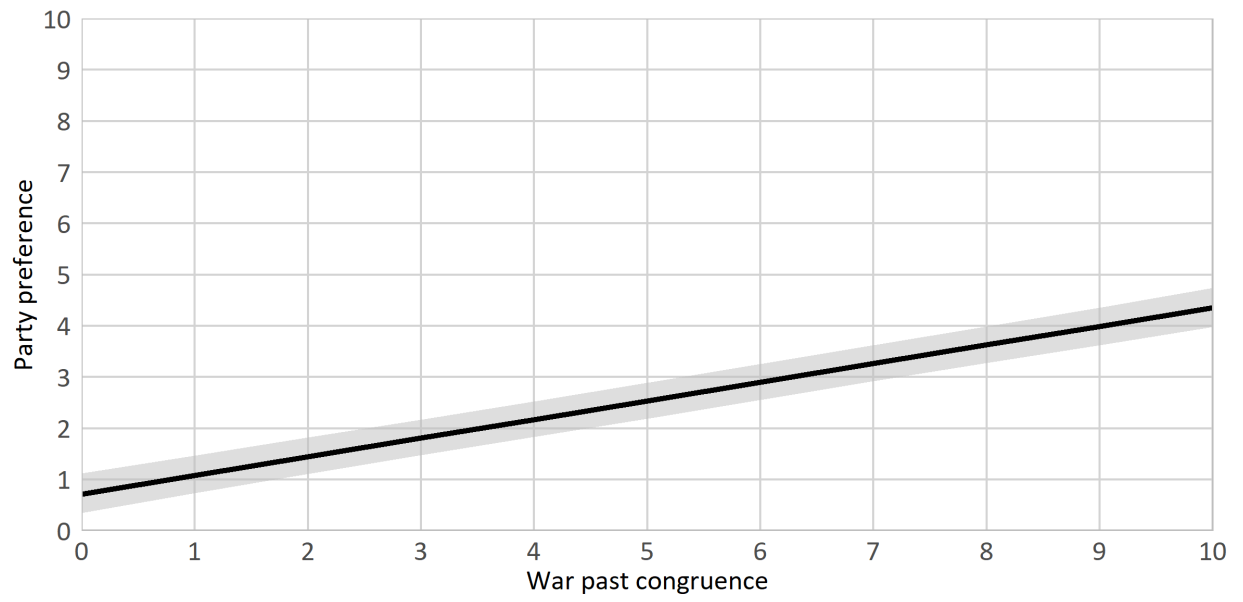


Figure 4. Relation between war memory congruence and party preference



Appendix

Table A1: List of all parties included in the analysis

Country	Acronym	Original name	English name
BIH	BPS	Bosanskohercegovačka patriotska stranka	Bosnian-Herzegovinian Patriotic Party
	DF	Demokratska fronta	Democratic Front
	DNS	Demokratski narodni savez	Democratic National Alliance
	HDZ 1990	Hrvatska demokratska zajednica 1990	Croatian Democratic Union 1990
	HDZ BiH	Hrvatska demokratska zajednica Bosne i Hercegovine	Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina
	NB	Nezavisni blok	Independent Bloc
	NBL	Nezavisna bosanskohercegovačka lista	Independent Bosnian-Herzegovinian List
	NS	Naša stranka	Our Party
	PDA BiH	Pokret demokratske akcije	Democratic Action Movement
	SBB BiH	Savez za bolju budućnost BiH	Union for a Better Future of BiH
	SDA	Stranka demokratske akcije	Party of Democratic Action
	SDP BiH	Socijaldemokratska partija Bosne i Hercegovine	Social Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina
	SDS	Srpska demokratska stranka	Serb Democratic Party
	SNSD	Savez nezavisnih socijaldemokrata	Alliance of Independent Social Democrats
	SP	Socijalistička partija	Socialist Party
HRV	Bandić Milan 365	Bandić Milan 365 - Stranka rada i solidarnosti	Bandić Milan 365 - Labour and Solidarity Party
	GLAS	Građansko-liberalni savez	Civic Liberal Alliance
	HDZ	Hrvatska demokratska zajednica	Croatian Democratic Union
	HNS	Hrvatska narodna stranka - liberalni demokrati	Croatian People's Party - Liberal Democrats
	HSLŠ	Hrvatska socijalno-liberalna stranka	Croatian Social Liberal Party
	HSP	Hrvatska stranka prava	Croatian Party of Rights
	HSS	Hrvatska seljačka stranka	Croatian Peasant Party
	IDS	Istarski demokratski sabor	Istrian Democratic Assembly
	Most	Most nezavisnih lista	Bridge of Independent Lists
	Pametno	Pametno	Smart
	SDP	Socijaldemokratska partija	Social Democratic Party of Croatia
	SDSS	Samostalna demokratska srpska stranka	Independent Democratic Serb Party
	ŽZ	Živi zid	Human Blockade
KXK	AAK	Aleanca për Ardhmërinë e Kosovës	Alliance for the Future of Kosovo
	LDK	Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës	Democratic League of Kosovo
	LV	Lëvizja Vetëvendosje	Self-Determination Movement
	NISMA	Nisma Për Kosovën	Social Democratic Initiative
	PDK	Partia Demokratike e Kosovës	Democratic Party of Kosovo
	PDS	Progressive Democratic Party	Progresivna Demokratska Stranka
	PG	G.I. Pokret Za Gora	Movement for the Gora
	SL	Srpska lista	Serb List
	SLS	Samostalna liberalna stranka	Independent Liberal Party
MKD	AA	Aleanca për Shqiptarët	Alliance for Albanians
	BDI	Bashkimi Demokratik për Integrim	Democratic Union for Integration

	DPA	Partia Demokratike Shqiptare	Democratic Party of Albanians
	EM	Edinstvena Makedonija	United Macedonia
	LB	Lëvizja Besa	Besa Movement
	LDP	Liberalno-demokratska Partija	Liberal Democratic Party
	SDSM	Socijaldemokratski sojuz na Makedonija	Social Democratic Union of Macedonia
	VMRO-DPMNE	Vnatrešna makedonska revolucionerna organizacija – Demokratska partija za makedonsko nacionalno edinstvo	Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity
MNE	BS	Bošnjačka stranka	Bosniak Party
	DCG	Demokratska Crna Gora	Democratic Montenegro
	DEMOS	Demokratski savez	Democratic Alliance
	DNP	Demokratska narodna partija	Democratic People's Party
	DPS	Demokratska partija socijalista	Democratic Party of Socialists
	NSD	Nova srpska demokratija	New Serb Democracy
	PzP	Pokret za promjene	Movement for Changes
	SD	Socijaldemokrate Crne Gore	Social Democrats
	SDP	Socijaldemokratska partija	Social Democratic Party
	SNP	Socijalistička narodna partija	Socialist People's Party
	UCG	Ujedinjena Crna Gora	United Montenegro
	URA	Ujedinjena reformska akcija	United Reform Action
SRB	DJB	Dosta je bilo – Restart	Enough is Enough
	DS	Demokratska stranka	Democratic Party
	DSS	Demokratska stranka Srbije	Democratic Party of Serbia
	Dveri	Srpski Pokret Dveri	Dveri (Doors)
	JS	Jedinstvena Srbija	United Serbia
	LDP	Liberalno-demokratska partija	Liberal Democratic Party
	LSV	Liga socijaldemokrata Vojvodine	League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina
	SDS	Socijaldemokratska stranka	Social Democratic Party
	SNS	Srpska napredna stranka	Serbian Progressive Party
	SPS	Socijalistička partija Srbije	Socialist Party of Serbia
	SRS	Srpska radikalna stranka	Serbian Radical Party
	VMSZ - VM DP	Vajdasági Magyar Szövetség - Vajdasági Magyar Demokrata Párt	Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians - Democratic Party of Vojvodina Hungarians

Table A2: Items in the trauma scale

Have you had recurrent and bothersome thoughts or memories about a traumatic war-related event?
Have you had recurrent distressing dreams about a traumatic war-related event
Have you had a recurrent sense of reliving past war trauma in the present such as flashback kinds of experiences?
Have you had persistent intense emotional or physical distress at exposure to cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of war trauma (inside or outside yourself)?
Have you had persistent avoidance behaviors, thoughts, or feelings related to war trauma such as avoiding certain conversations, ideas, or activities that arouse painful memories?
Have you had persistent loss of memory for important parts of a war trauma?

Table A3: Policy statements in the voter and expert survey

War past	
Voter survey	Expert survey
We do need to acknowledge the harmful acts committed to other groups by members of my national group during the war	How do you estimate the position of each party towards acknowledging harmful acts committed against other groups during the war?
Nationalism	
Voter survey	Expert survey
The first duty of every young person is to honor his/her country's history and heritage	How do you estimate the positions of the following parties towards nationalism? [Promoting a cosmopolitan vs nationalist societal view]
The world would be a better place if people from other countries were more like this country	
I would rather be a citizen of this country than of any other country in the world	
It is important that my country performs better than other countries	
School should teach children to love their country unconditionally	
Minority rights	
Voter survey	Expert survey
Minorities should have the right to schools in their own language	How do you estimate the positions of the following parties towards ethnic minorities? [Supportive vs opposing more rights for ethnic minorities]
Minorities have the right to their own independent TV, news programs, and radio	
Minorities should have the right to have representatives in the legislature	
Minorities should have the right to their own autonomous local government and police in the local communities where they are the majority	
Small territories where most of the people belong to a minority should have the right to completely separate from this country or to join another country	
Military policy	
Voter survey	Expert survey
Mandatory military service should be reintroduced	How do you estimate the positions of the following parties towards the military? [Supportive vs opposing making the military stronger]
Maintaining diplomatic relations is more important than having strong armed forces	
More investments in the armed forces are necessary, even if it means spending less on social services	
Armed forces should demonstrate their strength more often through military exercises and parades	
Our armed forces should have a purely defensive purpose	
Economic policy	
Voter survey	Expert survey

Important sectors of the economy should be nationalized	Parties can be classified in terms of their stance on economic issues. Parties on the economic left want government to play an active role in the economy. Parties on the economic right emphasize a reduced economic role for government: privatization, lower taxes, less regulation, less government spending, and a leaner welfare state. In your view, which position best describes each party's stance on economic issues?
The government should reduce the differences in income	
The government should guarantee everyone a minimum standard of living	
People should receive unemployment benefits until they find a new job	
Public services would work better if they were privatized	
Libertarian-authoritarian values	
Voter survey	Expert survey
The government should make abortion more difficult	Parties can be classified in terms of their views on democratic freedoms and rights. "Libertarian" or "post-materialist" parties favor expanded personal freedoms, for example, access to abortion, active euthanasia, same-sex marriage, or greater democratic participation. "Traditional" or "authoritarian" parties often reject these ideas; they value order, tradition, and stability, and believe that the government should be a firm moral authority on social and cultural issues. In your view, which position best describes each party's stance on democratic freedoms and rights?
The government should be allowed to prevent the media from publishing certain stories	
The government should encourage women to stay at home to take care of the children	
Same-sex couples should be allowed to get married	
Parties should be obliged to have more female candidates on their lists	
Parents should be allowed to spank their children	

Table A4: Analyses of respondents' party preferences, with an alternative operationalization of War memory congruence

	B	S.E.	Sig.
War memory congruence	0.31	0.02	***
Nationalism congruence	0.69	0.03	***
Military policy congruence	0.19	0.01	***
Minority rights congruence	0.23	0.01	***
Libertarian-authoritarian values	0.67	0.02	***
Economic policy preferences	0.49	0.02	***
Personal war experiences	0.52	0.04	***
Ethnicity	0.69	0.02	***
Religiosity	0.08	0.01	***
Education level	0.09	0.01	***
Social class	0.40	0.02	***
Gender	0.07	0.01	***
Age	0.31	0.02	***
Political interest	0.11	0.01	***
Non-voter	0.10	0.01	***
Government coalition	0.41	0.43	
Year of founding	-0.02	0.02	
Constant	1.91	3.70	
Country controls	Yes		
n	Total/Respondents/Parties		
	115337/10736/69		
Δ AIC	-14439.2		

Note: †p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001; Δ AIC compares the model to a model with only the country controls.

The operationalization of war memory on the side of voters is in Table 4 based on the average position of voters on five statements, instead of one statement. These five statements are 1) we do need to acknowledge the harmful acts committed to other groups by members of my national group during [war], 2) my country should help other group members to return to their homes, 3) members of other groups deserve some form of compensation from my country for what happened to them during [war], 4) members of my national group should try to repair some of the damage they caused in other nations, 5) members of my national group owe something to other groups because of the things they have done to them.

Table A5: Analyses of respondents' party preferences, exploring the direction of the effect of Personal war experiences and respondents' war memory views

	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	S.E.	Sig.	B	S.E.	Sig.
Party position on war memory	0.07	0.09		0.16	0.09	†
Personal war experiences (raw)	-0.02	0.01		0.04	0.02	*
Party position on war memory*				-0.01	0	***
Personal war experiences (raw)						
Constant	4.47	7.42		4.12	7.43	
Respondent controls		Yes			Yes	
Party controls		Yes			Yes	
Country controls		Yes			Yes	
n	Total/Respondents/Parties 115337/10736/69			Total/Respondents/Parties 115337/10736/69		
Δ AIC	-14652.5			-14660.6		

Note: †p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001; Δ AIC compares the model to a model with only the country controls.

In Table A5, we explore how personal war experiences affect party preferences. Specifically, we test whether personal war experiences increase the preference for parties with specific war memory views. To do so, we build a variation of the model presented in Table 4 where everything remains the same, except that we exclude the \hat{Y} conceptualization of *Personal war experiences* and the measure for *War past congruence*. Instead, we interact in Model 2 the party position on war past with the respondent's personal war experiences, here modelled as a composite 0-6 variable capturing respondents' yes-no answers to our six questions capturing their war experiences. For war trauma, the dummy indicates whether a respondent answered yes to at least one of the six trauma symptom questions. Though the interaction term is significant, the size of the effect is non-substantial.

Figure A1. Parties' left-right position and stance toward war memory by country

