This journal provides immediate open access to its content under the Creative Commons BY 4.0 license. Authors who publish with this journal retain all copyrights and agree to the terms of the above-mentioned CC BY 4.0 license.

DOI: 10.2478/seeur-2023-0056

MOTHERS AND CHILDREN OF THE REPUBLIC OF SRPSKA: LOCATING NATIONALISM IN PRONATALIST DISCOURSE IN POST-WAR BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Nikola Lero
University of Sheffield, Faculty of Social Sciences,
United Kingdom
lero.nikola1991@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Two phenomena have been present in multiethnic/multinational Bosnia and Herzegovina since its independence from SFR Yugoslavia: massive depopulation and strong nationalism(s). Although nationalism influences which nation/ethnic group should produce and how, the links connecting these nationalistic ideologies and pronatalist population policies in the country/entity have been, almost paradoxically, left on the margins of the previous studies. This paper asks to what extent nationalist ideologies are present in the pronatalist population policy discourse in the Serb-dominated entity Republic of Srpska and what nationalism it is. After developing Spectrum of Nationalism(s), a framework underlined by Siniša Malešević's views on nationalism and ethnicity as ideologies, the paper provides an overview of Bosnia's demographic processes and brief insights into Republic of Srpska pronatalist policies through a semi-structured literature review. Keeping in mind that media profoundly influences public opinion, discursively moulding policy debates, two most recent cases of pronatalist campaigns and programs in the Republic of Srpska: Let Our Children Be Born and National Programme of Demographic Revival, are analysed via critical discourse analysis (CDA). Selected media articles predominantly cover the period from 2018 onwards, concentrating on the

commentaries of the ruling SNSD political nomenklatura. The analysis displays the powerful influence of nationalism on the discourse on population policies. However, on the spectrum of nationalism(s), civic nationalism seems only to be pro forma defined, while in RS's reality, the abovementioned path has continued toward an ethnonationalism direction.

Key words: Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina, nationalism, population policy, critical discourse analysis

INTRODUCTION

While this paper was being written, Hayat TV - one of the most popular media networks in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnia; B&H), published an article by Amir Saletović (2021) under the name of *Demographic breakdown of the smaller B&H entity: Sarajevo will in five decades have more population than the entire Republic of Srpska.* This populistic title comes as no surprise as terms describing Bosnia's current demographic trends (e.g., demographic catastrophe) are often politicized throughout Bosnia's media landscape.

Nevertheless, Bosnia is indeed going through severe demographic challenges. Since its independence from SFR Yugoslavia in 1992, the country's population has decreased by over 25%. Lukić Tanović, Pašalić, and Golijanin (2014) outline the ongoing depopulation process in post-war Bosnia, emphasizing massive emigrations, low birth rates, high mortality, and aging population. Likewise, many recent studies affirm these insights on the Bosnia level (Kadušić & Suljić, 2018) and the Republic of Srpska (Mastilo et al., 2020), a highly autonomous Serb-dominated entity. Besides this robust depopulation process, another one shapes today's Bosnia reality: nation-building. This process, present even in the post-Dayton period of institutionalized peace, is multiple, incorporating, at least, nation-building processes of (Bosnian) Serbs, Bosniaks, and Croats, the three dominant ethnic groups (Bieber, 2005), entrapped in a web of complex opposing nationalistic ideologies. But how are the processes of population politics and nation-building linked? The answer, and this paper's starting point, is relatively straightforward - both processes define *who* and *how* should reproduce. This comes as no surprise. Nationalistic ideologies play, have played, and will continue to play a crucial role in defining population policies, especially pronatalist ones. As elucidated by King (2001), this interplay is profoundly entangled with the question of which nation or ethnic group is deemed worthy or desirable in the nation-state. The perpetuation of these ideologies not only carves out a space for cultural dominance and identity assertion but also subtly navigates the complex waters of ethnocentrism and power dynamics. In this context, pronatalist policies

become a battleground for the negotiation of cultural hegemony, where reproductive rights are often involved with the politics of identity and belonging.

While the political systems of Bosnia and the Republic of Srpska (RS) have been extensively explored in the context of nationalism, the connection between these ideologies and the country's population policies has remained largely unexamined. This oversight stems from the need for more clearly defined pronatalist policies at both state and entity levels. Nevertheless, the RS has recently initiated several pronatalist campaigns and programs, notably as it continues its nation-building as a quasi-state (Osobka, 2011) and emphasizes Serb-led nationalistic narratives (Touquet, 2012; Hebda, 2017). The integration of nationalist ideologies into the RS's population policies, however, remains unclear. Given the significant role of media in shaping public opinion and influencing policy debates (Liddiard, 2003), this paper investigates the extent to which nationalist ideologies permeate the pronatalist population policy discourse in the RS, guided by the insights of King (2001), and seeks to identify the specific nature of the nationalism involved.

The methodological strategy in this paper purposefully detaches from previous quantitative studies and applies a highly in-depth qualitative approach. Initially, a semi-systematic narrative literature review, as defined by Snyder (2019), is conducted to map fundamental studies and offer a comprehensive overview of critical phenomena. Consequently, it starts by outlining the current demographic trends in Bosnia/RS. Next, the paper delves into uncovering the political and ideological agendas behind the pronatalist campaigns in the RS by analyzing media articles through critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA is based on the understanding that 'language both shapes and is shaped by society' (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 4), inevitably constructing how a specific concept is socio-politically and culturally understood. The focus is on articles published from the 2010s onwards, which includes an examination of two pronatalist population policy initiatives in the RS: the 'Djeca Nam se radjala' (Let our children be born) campaign launched in 2018 and the National Programme of Demographic Revival, introduced in 2019. The selection of media outlets was based on their popularity and political stance within RS. These include a) RTRS/SRNA, state-funded, right-leaning news agencies; b) BN TV, a highly influential, far-right, private media outlet; and c) BUKA, a popular, investigative and left-leaning media network in both the RS and Bosnia.

After introducing the topic and providing methodological insights in Chapter One, Chapter Two elaborates on the theoretical framework of nationalism, linking it to the notion of the nation's reproduction. A brief review of Bosnia/RS's current demographic trends and RS

pronatalist measures is presented in Chapter Three. The analysis of the two cases mentioned above is presented in Chapter Four, while Chapter Five covers the final remarks.

SPECTRUM OF NATIONALISM AND REPRODUCTION OF THE NATION

One phrase is so massively used (and overused) in today's academia and media that it is becoming vague, even a cliche. That phrase is *nationalism is on the rise*. Regardless, this is a factual trend considering the politics of Trump, Orban, Erdogan, Shinzo Abe, or the growth of extreme-right parties in the EU (Bieber, 2018). However, this trend is not to be debated. What should be challenged is what precisely is interpreted as nationalism.

Although nationalism has been present since the late 19th century, at least as a scholarly term, the most relevant theoretical examination of the concept started in the 1980s. Smith (1986) traces the nation's roots in the *ethnie*, perceiving nationalism as a movement specifically to enhance the activities of a selected nation, while Anderson (2006) tracks nationalism as an imagined community of socially constructed membership or comradeship. Gellner (2008) perceives nationalism as an idea where only one ethnicity is dominant (or one culture) within the nation-states' borders. Malešević (2013, p. 85) contextualizes the roots of nationalism in a "centrifugal ideologization" merged with the "cumulative bureaucratization" over an extensive timeline, where nationalism becomes an unavoidable byproduct of the nation-state building processes. However, he does not frame nationalism on a binary positive vs. negative division. On the contrary, he urges postmodern academia to reexamine the groupist discourse on national and ethnic identity issues, arguing that current theoretical and methodological approaches overemphasize and reinforce (often unaware of it) so-called identitarianism. His principal critical position is toward the academic permutation of the concept of ideology with the present, often blurry, use of the notion of identity (Malešević, 2006). As seen, a scholarly agreement, at least to a certain point, exists. However, it is essential to understand that nationalism is not a coherent and unitary concept.

The initial categorization of nationalism is into ethnic and civic, as Smith (1991) proposes. These two types present the starting and the ending points on what I call a spectrum of nationalism - a diverse ideological continuum of different subvariants of the concept. This spectrum heavily impacts the realities of which nations/ethnic groups should be (re)produced and in which way. The first end of the spectrum - ethnonationalism, offers a type of nationalism that places a specific ethnic group at its core. That ethnic group considers its members to have shared ancestry, language, and often religion (Smith, 1986). Likewise, tradition, religion, and common symbols/myths play a critical function (Repič, 2006). This ethnic-centred approach

to the idea of the nation creates a colossal number of negative implications on the questions of the production and reproduction of the nation, forcing traditional gender roles within the biding patriarchal framework of the heterosexual family. Yuval-Davis (1989) argues that this type of nationalism predominantly perceives women within their reproductive roles as they become the 'mothers of the nation'. Likewise, Karaman (in Juliane 2011, n/a) says, "If the woman does not want to be a Mother, Nation is on its way to die." Additionally, ethnonationalism commonly places the burden of the nation's reproduction on women of the selected ethnic group, frequently limiting the reproductive rights of minority groups or enhancing those of the "chosen" one, concurrently restricting immigration. On the other hand, civic (or cultural) nationalism heavily differs from ethnic nationalism. This type of nationalism, historically commonly present in France, Canada, or the US, originates from liberal Western thought, placing the individual at the centre of its ideology (Brubaker, 1996). It is marked by individual/citizen-centred identity, inclusive and open membership, human-rights orientation, and promotion of personal freedoms (Larsen, 2017). On the contrary to ethnonationalism, civic one, regarding the reproduction of the nation, theoretically does not generate intense divisions or promote extreme population or pronatalist policies based on belonging to a specific ethnic group. On the contrary, it aims to include all nation members, commonly challenging traditional values and pursuing egalitarian gender norms while fostering multiculturalism and diversity as the main virtues. Ignatieff (1993), in his *The Balkan Tragedy* ", claims that this type of patriotic nationalism of equality of its members is present in the West, while the Eastern European countries, as well those in the Balkans like the former Yugoslav states, incline toward ethnonationalism.

This analysis demonstrates that ethnic and civic nationalism significantly influence the ideological underpinnings of a nation's creation and reproduction. Ethnonationalism tends towards exclusivity, whereas civic nationalism focuses on inclusivity. However, in practice, population policies often represent a complex mix of both types. King (2001, p. 371) synthesizes insights from various feminist scholars, noting that population policies, especially in fertility, immigration, and citizenship, often mirror government leaders' intentions to shape the national character or identity. Similarly, Camiscioli (2001) observes how these policies historically and contemporarily contribute to specific groups' 'production and reproduction', focusing on France. Yuval-Davis (1989) examines national reproduction and demographic strategies in Israel, while Marchesi (2012) explores the biopolitics of the Italian nation. Ferree and Brown (2005) also investigate nationalistic pronatalism policies in England. These

examples underscore the importance of viewing population policies as a political issue within the context of nation-states.

CONTEXTUALIZING REPUBLIC OF SRPSKA IN THE BOSNIAN DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Bosnia and Herzegovina gained independence from SFR Yugoslavia in 1992, leading to a nationalistic, inter-ethnic conflict from 1992-1995, primarily involving Bosnian Serbs, Bosniaks, and Croats. This conflict, detailed by Morus (2010), resulted in widespread displacement and casualties. The Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995 marked the beginning of a post-conflict era for Bosnia, emerging as a multicultural, multiethnic, and multi-confessional nation. Despite being a unified country, it is divided into two autonomous entities: the Republic of Srpska, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Brčko District (Campbell, 1998). However, Bosnia's unity is more formal than functional, as evidenced by the 2013 census showing significant ethnic divisions. The Republic of Srpska is predominantly Serb (over 90%), whereas the Federation is mainly Bosniak (about 70%) and Croat (nearly 30%), with other minorities making up a small fraction (Agency for Statistics, 2016). Professor Asim Mujkić (2007) describes Bosnia as an 'Ethnopolis,' a community where ethnic groups hold political primacy. Within this framework, multiple nation-building initiatives coexist, including those aligned with Serbia and Croatia and others focused on the state. The Republic of Srpska, for instance, pursues a Serb-led nation-building narrative. Bosnia's complex political structure defies straightforward categorization as unitary or federal, incorporating unique elements in its political model. Therefore, this subchapter will simultaneously discuss demographic trends in Bosnia and the Republic of Srpska, recognizing their interconnected nature.

Post-war Bosnia and RS have been facing diverse demographic courses since the 1992-1995 war until nowadays. The principal challenges of substantial depopulation are, among others, high emigration, low fertility rates merged with increased mortality, and, finally, an aging population. The first and most potent demographic trend is extensive emigration. The country is passing through the third wave of (e)migration, predominantly to the EU countries (Kačapor-Džihić & Oruč, 2012). According to the National Statistics Agency, more than half a million people have left the state since 2013 (Boračić-Mršo, 2019). However, not only did this wave of migration affect the ongoing demographic processes but also the first and second ones, which covered refugee migrations during the war and multiple schemes of internal and

regional migrations in the post-war period. Suljić and Kadušić (2018, p. 76) reflect on this, mapping numerous modifications migration caused:

Not only did forced migration cause demographic changes but it also gave rise to numerous political, social and economic issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Forced and voluntary migration caused depopulation, changes in sex and age composition, enhanced aging process, ethnic homogenization of certain regions, etc., along with numerous economic problems such as low life standard, decline in economic growth rate, unemployment, unfavourable social conditions etc. Consequently, adverse economic factors in Bosnia and Herzegovina have intensified the post-war economic emigration.

Over the past three decades, Bosnia has experienced a significant population decline, exacerbated by emigration and the impacts of war. The population decreased from 4.3 million in 1991 to 3.1 million currently, with a predicted further reduction to 2.6 million by 2050, according to Worldometer (2021). Bosnia's low Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is a crucial factor in this demographic trend. TFR represents the average number of children a woman is expected to have during her reproductive years, considering the age-specific fertility rates of the period (Alkema et al., 2011). To maintain a stable population, a TFR of 2.1 is necessary. However, Bosnia's TFR is far below this threshold, with one of the lowest fertility rates globally. In 2018, Bosnia's fertility rate was 1.26, continuing a downward trend since 1992 and showing no signs of stabilization (World Bank, 2021). Comparatively, according to the Institute for Statistics of RS, the Republic of Srpska reports a slightly higher TFR of 1.34. This persistent decline in fertility rates, alongside migration and war effects, has contributed to the ongoing population decrease and is a crucial factor in the following demographic trend to be discussed.

Further, both Bosnia and the Republic of Srpska are meeting the increasing aging of their population. This comes as no surprise as almost every European country encounters this issue without any visible implications that it will change (Douglass et al., 2005). The UN World Population Aging 2019 Study charted Bosnia as one of the leading European countries concerning population aging, predicting it will reach a median age of more than 50 in the following decades. Similarly, on the level of RS, 'the age structure of the population and the comparison between the two censuses also confirm the aging trend of the population' (Rokvić & Drinić, 2019, p. 54). Interestingly, Pašalić (2012) determines population aging as a critical long-term trend that will affect the population dynamics in Bosnia and Herzegovina, although migration has been at the core of the discourse on the country's demographic decline since the war.

As seen, Bosnia and Herzegovina are facing a depopulation process mainly caused by emigration, decreasing birth rates, increasing death rates, and population aging. The same situation is on the level of the Republic of Srpska. Bosnia and the RS do not differ in the current demographic trends. On the contrary, RS experiences all the dominant (de)population dynamics as those experienced at the state level. So, the next question should be: What population policies tackle those issues? This paper aims to avoid the potential analytical trap of discussing it at the country level, as the domain of population politics falls within the scope of entity authorities in the world's most complicated governance system, as the Guardian names the Bosnian one.

Regarding population politics, which are state measures taken toward mapping causes of population trends that should be research-based and non-discriminatory to any society member (Gavrilović, 2000), there is a limited number of studies regarding the Republic of Srpska. Marinković (2010) outlines that the Republic of Srpska (RS) has implemented pronatalist population policies across four legislative domains, each overseen by different ministries. These domains include labour rights with incentives like extended maternity leave, health measures for pregnancy and motherhood, and child, parent, and family protection offering various allowances and support. Additionally, social protection policies focus on providing economic support to mothers and children, all managed by multiple RS ministries. Kuprešanin (2014) also examines these incentives, highlighting economic support for mothers and couples as a predominant feature and noting the RS Government's "Third and Fourth Children Fund." Majić and Marinković (2014) comment on the dispersiveness of legislative acts, emphasizing the need for a more systematic and focused approach to distinguish between population and social policies. From this brief overview, several conclusions emerge:

1. The legal framework for these measures is fragmented, spread across various documents without a unifying structure.
2. The implementation involves multiple ministries and state institutions, leading to a lack of coordination.
3. The RS's approach leans more towards social rights within the child-parent-family nexus rather than forming a comprehensive, cohesive pronatalist strategy.

FIXING THE WHITE PLAGUE: LET (SERB?) CHILDREN BE BORN

In the societal landscape of the Republic of Srpska, one observes a demographic phenomenon characterized by dwindling birth rates, colloquially and somewhat problematically termed as 'bijela kuga,' or 'the white plague.' This nomenclature, steeped in historical continuity, resonates with a disquieting echo across various ex-Yugoslav nations, as Jansen and Helms (2009) have elucidated. The term' bijela kuga' embodies a lexicon of loss and decay, reflecting deep-seated anxieties about national and cultural survival in the post-Yugoslav space. It serves as a linguistic artifact, revealing the undercurrents of collective memory and identity politics in the region. Thus, this phrase, more than a mere demographic descriptor, becomes a symbolic marker of the existential fears and socio-political tensions that underpin the discourse on population dynamics in these transitioning societies.

Recently, the discourse surrounding 'bijela kuga' has been invigorated within the media narratives of the Republic of Srpska. A 2016 article by BN TV, titled 'White Plague is wiping out cities throughout RS,' articulates growing anxieties about the region's demographic future, shadowed by this phenomenon. This journalistic endeavour asserts that the delay in childbirth by women, who are contextually portrayed as 'brides' and 'mothers,' is a principal contributor to this 'white plague' (BN TV, 2016, para. 6). In a similar vein, a 2019 BN TV feature critiques Milorad Dodik, the influential leader of the SNSD party and Serb member of Bosnia's Presidency, often referred to colloquially as 'Baja' (The Man) (Mujanović, 2014). The piece, 'SNSD- Serbs are disappearing with Dodik' (BN TV, 2019), frames the low birth rates in the RS as a metaphorical 'disappearance of the Serbs,' conspicuously omitting other ethnic groups in the entity. This narrative paradoxically condemns the nationalist politics of the SNSD while simultaneously perpetuating an ethno-nationalist rhetoric. Furthermore, a video report by RTRS, the public broadcaster of RS, with the title 'White Plague Ravens villages of Semberija,' infuses a sense of impending crisis about the future of this North-Eastern region of RS.

To fight against 'the white plague,' the RS Government launched a pronatalist campaign, "Djeca nam se rađala" (loosely translated into "Let our children be born") in 2019. At a crowded football stadium in Banjaluka, the *de facto* capital of the RS, Milorad Dodik (SRNA, 2019, para. 2) proclaimed:

> Society has a feeling and a need to focus on issues of birth and to support everyone, mothers primarily, to make easy decisions regarding that, counting on omnipresent societal support. He resumed that 'the only thing that matters is to have a big family'.

Like Dodik, Željka Cvijanović, the current president of the RS, stated that besides economic pronatalist actions, the government should 'restore the family's role in society.' On the other hand, the RS prime minister Višković linked the question of reproduction to the RS's strengthening and survival as a political entity. He reckoned on the other instant that lawyers, sociologists, and religious communities also have to deal with the white plague (Info Brčko, 2020). Similarly, Đajić (RTRS 2019, para. 3), the director of the "Djeca nam se rađala" foundation, in the show Vikend Jutro remarked that 'we should animate nation's awareness about making descendants,' adding:

> What is more beautiful than a child, than the smell of a baby...We also need to incorporate the patriotic charge, meaning that if you do not have three children, you are putting in question the survival of the state itself, which is the case with us.

While Dodik and Cvijanović spotlight the so-called traditional values by emphasizing the necessity of having 'strong' families, they also view childbearing as a role primarily for women, meant for mothering children in the quasi-state of the Republic of Srpska. According to Višković and Đajić, this is indeed the case. They indicate that survival and reproduction are not just responsibilities but also patriotic duties toward the entity, enforcing heteronormativity and patriarchal values. Further, Đajić refers to the RS as 'the state,' although it is constitutionally a political entity ("entitet" in Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian), thus raising questions about the nation's continuity by emphasizing the need for descendants. Referring to Sokol (2014), who notes that RS is still in the process of nation-building, the pronatalist policies of RS are deeply connected to this project. These policies lean towards ethnonationalism, viewing mothers predominantly as 'guardians of the cultural identity' (King, 2001). This approach was strikingly evident in the 2021 campaign for January 9th, the controversially celebrated Independence Day of the RS, which was declared unconstitutional. In Banjaluka, numerous billboards featured a photo of a young mother with a newborn, surrounded by various RS symbols - the flag, emblem, and a line from the anthem, as illustrated in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1. RS's Independence Day billboard photo featuring a young woman and a newborn. Source: RTRS (2021)

However, who is 'us' in the campaign 'Let our children be born' is not clear, making localization of the RS pronatalist discourse of nationalistic ideologies on the spectrum of nationalism troublesome. On the one hand, BNTV recognizes people in RS as Serbs, producing disturbance about the RS's future as the 'state of the Serbs.' On the other hand, neither the ruling politicians nor the entity broadcaster explicitly names the distinct ethnic group, like Serbs, in these campaigns. Therefore, ethnonationalism's core idea, identity, and reproduction of one specific ethnic/national group are not always present in the discourse surrounding pronatalist campaigns.

However, in 2011, Dodik (Bursać, 2011, para. 2), who was at that moment president of the RS, donated funds to the foundation "Sveti Vušašin," which advocates traditional orthodox Serb values, noting:

> When we studied the demographic trends in Republika Srpska, where we estimate that over one million and 200 thousand people now live, i.e., Serbs, and the tendency we have seen in the last ten years in terms of birth rates ... I must introduce to you a dramatic fact that in 2050 only 560 thousand people will live here.

In his article 'Life after the Serbs', Bursać (2011), an award-winning Bosnian journalist, points out that Dodik's media statements during this period might represent the only instance where he explicitly aligned the RS population with a single ethnic group, the Serbs. He framed the issue of low birth rates in the RS as a matter primarily concerning the reproduction of Serbs, thereby disregarding other ethnic groups. Dodik's donation to a foundation promoting Serb orthodox values, along with Višković's suggestion that religious institutions should address the issue of low birth rates, indirectly echoes Velikonja's (2003) assertion about the significant role of religion in nation-building processes in Bosnia. Concretely, in the case of the Republic of Srpska, it is a *sine qua non* to acknowledge the influence of the Serb Orthodox Church, known as SPC, on the dominant political narratives about the nation's reproduction. Moreover, the links between SPC and pro-patriarchal discourse on pronatalism in the local and regional media landscape play a massive role in developing a robust political agenda for right and far-right parties. Consequently, the discourse on pronatalism and reproduction in the RS not only leans towards ethnonationalism but also subtly incorporates elements of ethnoreligious nationalism.

Two years after the "Life after the Serbs" article, Dodik, as the president of the RS, officially and openly said that Serbs need a national program led by Serbia, stating that 'we (Bosnian Serbs) have no interest in Bosnia' and that he would like RS and Serbia to unite (BUKA, 2013). Five years later, the National Programme of Demographic Revival of RS started.

UNPUBLISHED NATIONALISM: THE CASE OF THE NATIONAL PROGRAMME OF DEMOGRAPHIC REVIVAL

As previously discussed, population policies remain heavily fragmented and incohesive in the RS's legal framework, although some incentives and measures exist. Pronatalist initiatives are essentially constituted as short-term campaigns as "Djeca nam se rađala." However, an interesting, long-term, large-scale project sprung up a couple of years ago.

Željka Cvijanović, the current RS president, announced in the Palace of the President in 2018 the beginning of the "National Programme of Demographic Revival." She proudly emphasized that it would tackle legally neglected population decline issues in the RS (SRNA, 2018). Cvijanović added that it principally centres on the RS's demographic reconstruction, mentioning multiple economic incentives and announcing a government-funded study in progress concerning RS population policies' future. However, she did not elaborate on the program's name or that Serbia backed this project financially. A year later, the announced study, "Demographic development and population policy of the Republic of Srpska - analysis

of the situation and proposal of measures," was completed and presented (Predsjednikrs.net, 2019). The research was done by experts from the RS and Serbia, led by the Centre for Research in Demography (CDI) from Banja Luka, the de facto capital of the RS. Interestingly, the complete study has yet to be published. Only a summary of the allegedly massive inquiry has been made accessible to the broader public on the CDI website. Besides short methodological insights that unveil that predominantly women were interviewed on the questions concerning starting a family and that pro-family-centric policy should be the core of population policies of the RS (CDI, 2019), not much info is given. Non-governmental and international organizations provided additional acumens into the National Programme's concrete measures with temporary access to the study. In a BUKA magazine article (Isojević Dobrijević, 2019, para. 3), shared by the pro-feminist *Vox Feminae* media platform, named "Population policies in RS encourages young students to give birth," a harsh critique of the study was given, insisting that:

> The results of this analysis show that women in our society believe that the state should pay for the birth of children, and population policy, which is already indirectly implemented in schools, encourages young students to give birth and convinces them that a traditional family is the only future for a young girl. The vision of parenthood imposed on young people does not leave enough space for different reflections on this topic. Tradition and the patriarchal framework are so strong that there is no room for anything else. A woman exists only to give birth, and in ideal circumstances, the state is there to provide financial support for that act.

Feminist and international organizations heavily criticized the parenthood narratives in the study, narratives that are inscribed upon women, eliding the participatory role of men. These critiques further unravel the layered complexities in the survey's methodology, identifying a labyrinth of suggestive questions. Moreover, the pedagogical strategies of pronatalist education in high schools are brought into question, spotlighting a monolithic portrayal of young women's identities being inexorably linked to reproduction, a responsibility ostensibly owed to the 'state.' However, within this contested terrain, the voices of women interviewed in the CDI study only partially articulate a different narrative. Their responses do not straightforwardly challenge their maternal roles. On the contrary, these women seem to embrace motherhood, not as a contested site but as an almost axiomatic aspect of female existence in the RS, their dialogues orbiting primarily around the economic recompense they anticipate from the state. This phenomenon, however, might not be a straightforward capitulation to patriarchal constructs. Instead, it could be perceived as a hidden navigation of

gendered survival within the RS's socio-cultural milieu. Blagojević, as echoed in Majstorović (2011, p. 288), frames this as a 'self-sacrificing micro-matriarchy,' a nuanced existence that operates within the expansive shadows of a macro-patriarchal framework.

In the discursive landscape of the National Programme for Demographic Revival, one witnesses a potent encapsulation of nationalistic ideas, bifurcating into dual domains: the suggested population/pronatalist policies in the CDI study and the milieu of the program's realization. The CDI study's methodology is emblematic of a gendered focus, positing women as the primary custodians of the nation's demographic future, subtly scripting them into the narrative of pronatalist responsibility. Voices from NGOs and feminist organizations critique the infusion of patriarchal and traditional values within the study, refuting to paint a picture where maternal figures are central to population policies, as those align closely with an ethno-nationalistic ethos. Nonetheless, the study conspicuously abstains from other hallmarks of ethnic nationalism, such as marginalizing women of minority backgrounds or overtly privileging dominant ethnic groups like the Serbs. On the contrary, the CDI study advocates for expanding families as a decision embracing all ethnicities and national groups (CDI, 2019), embodying a vision of inclusivity and individual rights - elements reflective of civic nationalism. Thus, the program emerges as a complex mosaic, interweaving strands of both ethnic and civic nationalism. Nevertheless, to fully deconstruct this paradox, one must delve into the contextual domain of the program's genesis. It calls for a detailed reading, one that situates these nationalistic narratives within the broader socio-political fabric of the Republic of Srpska, interrogating the spaces between ethnic allegiance and civic engagement.

In the conceptual contours of the National Programme of Demographic Revival, one discerns a distinct undertone of separatism, a narrative that subtly but significantly eclipses the Republic of Srpska's integral relationship with Bosnia and Herzegovina. This narrative analytically and politically severs RS from the demographic discourse of the nation. Moreover, the program envisions RS as a sovereign entity in legal and factual terms, even embedding the construct of a nation within its nomenclature. Still, this articulation shrouds in ambiguity - the 'nation' remains unnamed, stirring debates over the implied prominence of Serbs in this demographic schema. Simultaneously, the project unfolds as a confluence of political and scientific endeavours between RS and Serbia, the latter often perceived as the cultural and historical 'motherland' of Bosnian Serbs. Serbia's pivotal role in the ongoing narrative of Serb nation-building within RS becomes evident. These contextual dynamics, encompassing the program's development, articulate a discursive continuum of ethnonationalist aspirations for the self-determination of RS as an autonomous enclave within Bosnia and Herzegovina. Such

a discourse subtly questions the presence and potency of civic nationalism ideals within the program, hinting at a complex interplay of identity, sovereignty, and belonging in this geopolitical mosaic.

CONCLUSION

In the Republic of Srpska, a Serb-led entity within multiethnic Bosnia, the ongoing nation-building process elucidates the intricate entanglement of national reproduction with the tenets of nationalistic ideologies, particularly in the milieu of profound demographic challenges. RS's landscape, devoid of a cohesive pronatalist policy, nonetheless reveals an intricate dance with nationalistic ideologies, a revelation borne out through a critical discourse analysis of media narratives around the pronatalist campaigns' Djeca Nam se radjala' and the 'National Programme of Demographic Survival.'

Within this discursive realm, the imprints of nationalism on population policies are strikingly evident. Traversing the spectrum from ethnic to civic nationalism, RS's narrative journey unveils a complex trajectory. The campaigns embody civic nationalism, heralding inclusivity and non-discrimination across ethnic lines, coupled with economic and social incentives. Nevertheless, this facade of civic inclusivity belies a deeper ethnonationalist current, subtly woven into RS's socio-political reality. Under the guise of preserving the nation, a nation not explicitly named yet implicitly understood, the media and political rhetoric in RS frame pronatalist policies as vital to the survival of the Serbs, thus embedding core ethnonationalist ideologies. This narrative is further reinforced by the valorisation of traditional values, societal endorsement of large heterosexual families, and the perceived indispensability of childbearing for national continuity, occasionally intertwining with ethno-religious nationalism. Particularly poignant in the 'Djeca Nam se radjala' campaign and the 'National Programme of Demographic Revival' is the portrayal of women, discursively constructed as the 'mothers of the nation.' This portrayal, as King (2001) articulates, is emblematic of ethnonationalist ideologies, positioning women as custodians of cultural identity, thereby entrenching their roles within the discourse of national reproduction.

Regrettably, the Republic of Srpska (RS) appears to be entrenched in a discursive continuum that has remained consistent with its historical and ideological moorings. This positioning, steeped in a deeply-rooted narrative, suggests that within the ideological spectrum of nationalisms, the RS's discourse on pronatalist population policies, though interspersed with elements of civic nationalism, is indubitably and forcefully gravitating towards the ethnic

extremity. Consequently, the pendulum of nationalistic ideologies does not merely oscillate but instead leans with considerable weight toward the ethnic end of the spectrum. This inclination towards ethnonationalism within RS's pronatalist discourse underscores a persistent cultural and ideological narrative, one that situates women at the pivotal junction of national reproduction, echoing historical patterns and ideologies.

In conclusion, and as a capstone to the findings of this research, it is pertinent to introduce an ethnographic vignette from the Slavonia region, as chronicled by Nada Sremac, an anthropologist hailing from the former Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Her work, 'Nismo mi krive' ('It is not our/women's fault'), penned in 1940, resounds with contemporary relevance in the annals of anthropological discourse for over eight decades. Sremac's insightful observation, as recounted in Brenko (2006, p. 65), serves as a poignant testament to enduring societal narratives:

> When you are in the country, my dear, and you hear the bells ring for a young woman, then ask: 'Was it tuberculosis?', and if they answer no, then you'll know she has miscarried.

REFERENCES

1. Agency for statistics of Bosnian and Herzegovina. (2016). Census of population, households and dwellings in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2013 - Final results
2. Alkema, L., Raftery, A. E., Gerland, P., Clark, S. J., Pelletier, F., Buettner, T., & Heilig, G. K. (2011). Probabilistic projections of the total fertility rate for all countries. *Demography*, *48*(3), 815-839.
3. Anderson, B. (2006). Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism. Verso
4. Bieber, F. (2005). Post-war Bosnia: Ethnicity, inequality and public sector governance. Springer.
5. Bieber, F. (2018). Is nationalism on the rise? Assessing global trends. Ethnopolitics, 17(5), 519-540.
6. BUKA. (2013). Dodik: Srbima treba jasan nacionalni program. Retrieved from https://www.6yka.com/novosti/dodik-srbima-treba-nam-jasan-nacionalni-program
7. BN TV (2019, April 8). *SNSD - Srbi nestaju sa Dodikom*. Retrieved form https://www.rtvbn.com/3947681/snsd-srbi-nestaju-sa-dodikom
8. BN TV. (2016, May 16). *Bijela kuga briše čitave gradove u Srpskoj*. Retrieved from https://www.rtvbn.com/3818054/Bijela-kuga-brise-citave-gradove-u-Srpskoj
9. Boračić-Mršo, S. (2019, September 2). *Za šest godina BiH napustilo više od pola miliona ljudi*. Retrieved from https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/odlasci-iz-bih/30142260.html
10. Brenko, A. (2006). Bijela kuga. *Etnološka istraživanja*, (11), 51-64.
11. Brown, J. A., & Ferree, M. M. (2005). Close your eyes and think of England: Pronatalism in the British print media. *Gender & Society*, *19*(1), 5-24.
12. Brubaker, R. (1996). *Nationalism reframed: Nationhood and the national question in the new Europe*. Cambridge University Press.
13. Bursać, D. (2011, September 3). *Život poslije Srba*. Retrieved from https://www.6yka.com/novosti/zivot- poslije-srba
14. Camiscioli, E. (2001). Producing Citizens, Reproducing the "French Race": Immigration, Demography, and Pronatalism in Early Twentieth-Century France. *Gender & History* 13 (3): 593 – 621.
15. Campbell, D. (1998). National deconstruction: Violence, identity, and justice in Bosnia. U of Minnesota Press.
16. CDI. (2019). DEMOGRAFSKI RAZVOJ I POPULACIONA POLITIKA REPUBLIKE SRPSKE - analiza stanja i prijedlog mjera. Retrieved from http://cdi-bl.org/resources/data/Demografs%D0%BAi%20razvoj%20i%20populaciona%20politi%D0%BAa %20Republi%D0%BAe%20Srps%D0%BAe%20%E2%80%93%20analiza%20stanja%20i%20prije dlog%20mjera%20.pdf
17. Douglass, C. B. et al. (2005). Introduction. In: C. B. Douglass (ed.). *Barren States: The Population "Implosion" in Europe*, Oxford and New York: Berg, pp. 1 – 28.
18. Gavrilović A. (2000): Porodilje- ciljna grupa populacione politike. Socijalna misao, Časopis za teoriju i kritiku socijalnih ideja i prakse broj 3-4.

19. Gellner, E. (2008). Nations and nationalism. Second edition. Cornell University Press.

20. Hebda, W. (2017). The Republic of Srpska-Quo Vadis?. *Serbian Political Thought, 16*(2), 39-53.

21. Ignatieff, M. (1993). The Balkan Tragedy. *The New York Review of Books, 40*(9), 13.

22. Info Brčko. (2020, Januar 14). *PREMIJER RS SE PITA ZAŠTO MLADI LJUDI NE SPAVAJU ZAJEDNO I NE RAĐAJU DJECU: TREBAJU NAM SOCIOLOZI, PRAVNICI, VJERSKE ZAJEDNICE*...Retrieved from https://www.infobrcko.com/vijesti/item/22326-premijer-rs-se- pita-zasto-mladi-ljudi-ne-spavaju-zajedno-i-ne-radaju-djecu-trebaju-nam-sociolozi-pravnici- vjerske-zajednice.html

23. Isojević Dobrijević, M. (2019, November 13). Populaciona politika u RS: "DRŽAVNI" PRITISAK NA ŽENINO TIJELO I PRAVO NA IZBOR!. Retrieved from https://www.6yka.com/novosti/populaciona-politika-u-rs-drzavni-pritisak-na-zenino-tijelo-i- pravo-na-izbor?fbclid=IwAR0qQi2Y8D8OYDMp0H1tL-0gBBbhrpflMpTHgN79FQRF- tyJA9I0Sex46s4

24. Jansen, S., & Helms, E. (2009). The white plague: National-demographic rhetoric and its gendered resonance after the post-Yugoslav wars. *Gender dynamics and post-conflict reconstruction*, 219- 243.

25. Juliane, M. (2011). Gender and Nationalism in Serbia: The impact of political ideology on women's human rights. GRIN Verlag.

26. Kačapor-Džihić, Z., & Oruč, N. (2012). Social Impact of Emigration and Rural-Urban Migration in Central and Eastern Europe. Final Country Report. Bosnia and Herzegovina.

27. Kadusic, A., & Suljic, A. (2018). Migration and demographic changes: The case of Bosnia and Herzegovina. *European Journal of Geography, 9(4),* 75-86.

28. King, Leslie (2001). Demographic trends, pronatalism, and nationalist ideologies in the late twentieth century. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 25 (3): 367 – 389.

29. Kuprešanin, J. (2014). Populaciona politika kao dio razvoje politike. *SVAROG, 9,* pp.11-121

30. Larsen, C.A. (2017). "Revitalizing the 'civic'and 'ethnic'distinction. Perceptions of nationhood across two dimensions, 44 countries and two decades." *Nations and Nationalism* 23.4. 970-993.

31. Liddiard, M. (2003). Welfare, media and culture. *Social Policy, OUP*, 84-109.

32. Machin, D. & Mayer, A. (2012). How to do critical discourse analysis: A multimodal introduction. SAGE Publications

33. Majić, A. & Marinković, D. (2014). POPULACIONA POLITIKA I PLANIRANjE PORODICE U REPUBLICI SRPSKOJ–STANjE I TENDENCIJE. HERALD, (17).

34. Majstorović, Danijela. "Femininity, patriarchy and resistance in the postwar Bosnia and Herzegovina." *International Review of Sociology* 21.2 (2011): 277-299.

35. Malesevic, S. (2006). *Identity as ideology: Understanding ethnicity and nationalism*. Springer.

36. Malesevic, S. (2013). *Nation-states and nationalisms: organization, ideology and solidarity*. Polity.

37. Marchesi, M. (2012). Reproducing Italians: contested biopolitics in the age of 'replacement anxiety'. *Anthropology & Medicine* 19 (2): 171–188.

38. Marinković, D. (2010). Demographic development and implementation of population policy measures in the Republic of Srpska. *Zbornik Matice srpske za drustvene nauke*, (131), 33-43.

39. Mastilo, Z., Pašalić. S. Đurić, A., & Marković, D. (2020). Demographic Trends and the Educational System of the Republic of Srpska. *Economics*, *8*(1), 93-113.

40. Morus, C. M. (2010). Violence Born of History/History Born of Violence: A Brief Context for

41. Understanding the Bosnian War. In Barria, L., Roper, S. (Eds.) *The Development of*

42. *Institutions of Human Rights* (pp. 65-81). Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

43. Mujanović, J. (2014). The Baja class and the politics of participation. In Arsenijević D. (Ed.). *Unbribable Bosnia-Herzegovina: The Fight for the Commons,* (pp. 135-144.) Baden-Baden: Nomos

44. Mujkic, A. (2007). We, the citizens of Ethnopolis. *Constellations, 14(1),* 112-128. doi: 10.1111/j.14678675.2007.00425.x

45. Osóbka, P. (2011) "System konstytucyjny Bośni i Hercegowiny". Warszawa:Wy

46. dawnictwo Sejmowe.

47. Pašalić, S. (2012). Demographic Losses in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1991-2011. *Republic Center for war crime research, the Hague: ICTY*.

48. Predsjednikrs.net. (2019, September 9). Na inicijativu predsjednice Republike Srpske predstavljena naučno-istraživačka studija "Demografski razvoj i populaciona politika Republike Srpske – analiza stanja i prijedlog mjera". Retrieved from http://www.predsjednikrs.net/rs/na-inicijativu- predsjednice-republike-srpske-predstavljena-naucno-istrazivacka-studija-demografski-razvoj-i- populaciona-politika-republike-srpske-analiza-stanja-i-prijedlog-mjera/

49. Repič, J. (2006). "Po sledovih korenin": Transnacionalne migracije med Argentino in Evropo. Univerza v Ljubljani, Filozofska fakulteta, Ljubljana.

50. Roković, G., & Drinić, L. (2019). Analysis of Demographic Changes in the Rural Areas of the Republic of Srpska. АГРОЗНАЊЕ, 20(1), 45-55.

51. RTRS. (2019, August 17). *Đajić: Povećanje nataliteta mora biti najvažnija tema u Srpskoj*. Retrieved from https://www.rtrs.tv/vijesti/vijest.php?id=347832

52. Saletović, A. (2021, Januar 14). *DEMOGRAFSKI SLOM MANJEG BH ENTITETA: SARAJEVO ĆE ZA PET DECENIJA IMATI VIŠE STANOVNIKA NEGO CIJELA REPUBLIKA SRPSKA*. Retrieved from https://hayat.ba/demografski-slom-manjeg-bh-entiteta-sarajevo-ce-za-pet-decenija-imati- vise-stanovnika-nego-cijela-republika-srpska/331947/

53. Smith, A. D. (1986). The ethnic origins of nations. Blackwell Publishing

54. Smith, A. D. (1991). *National identity* (Vol. 11). Reno: University of Nevada press.

55. Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research, 104*, 333-339.

56. Sokol, A. (2014). War monuments: Instruments of nation-building in Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Politička misao, 51*(05), 105-126.

57. Sremac, N. (1940) Nismo mi krive (Slavonska žena). Gospodarska sloga, Zavod za proučavanje seljačkog narodnog gospodarstva, Kako živi narod, vol. 3, Zagreb.

58. SRNA. (2018, December 3). *CVIJANOVIĆEVA NAJAVILA NACIONALNI PROGRAM DEMOGRAFSKE OBNOVE SRPSKE*. Retrieved from http://www.srna.rs/novosti1/648288/cvijanoviceva-najavila- nacionalni-program-demografske-obnove-srpske.htm

59. SRNA. (2019, September 9). *Cilj povećanje nataliteta*. Retrieved from http://srna.rs/novosti1/721491/cilj---povecanje-nataliteta.htm

60. Tanovic, M. L., Pasalic, S., & Golijanin, J. (2014). Demographic development of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the Ottoman period till 1991 and the modern demographic problems. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 120*, 238-247.

61. Touquet, H. (2012). The Republika Srpska as a strong nationalizing state and the consequences for postethnic activism. *Nationalities Papers*, *40*(2), 203-220.

62. Velikonja, M. (2003). Religious separation and political intolerance in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Vol. 23). Texas A&M University Press.

63. World Bank. (2021). Fertility rate, Total for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Retrieved from https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN

64. Worldometer. (2021). Bosnia and Herzegovina Population. Retrieved from https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/bosnia-and-herzegovina-population/

65. Yuval-Davis, N. (1989). National reproduction and 'the demographic race in Israel. In Woman-nation-state (pp. 92-109). Palgrave Macmillan, London.