

THE CONTEMPORARY CROATIAN INTELLECTUAL DEBATE ON THE EUROPEAN UNION

By

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the content of the Croatian intellectual debate on the European Union and on the process of Croatia's accession to the EU. The main argument of this thesis is that even though since the beginning of the 1990s Croatian political elites have been declaring a certain desire for Croatia to join the EU, a nationalist and isolationist attitude has dominated both in political discourse and in the intellectual debate, prolonging in this way the accession to EU integration. In order to analyse the differences between Eurosceptic and Euro-optimistic authors I have used content analysis method, focusing on the works of a selection of politicians, scholars and journalists whose work reflects different positions in the debate.

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the 1990s, Croatia has gone through several political turbulences, both in its internal and external political sphere. From democratic development under Socialist Yugoslavia, through war and independence, and finally to European integration, modern Croatian history presents a rich platform for political, social, and economic research and analysis. This thesis presents such an attempt, with a particular focus on Croatia's path to European integration.

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the content of the Croatian intellectual debate on the European Union and on the process of Croatia's accession to the EU. The main argument of this thesis is that even though since the beginning of the 1990s Croatian political elites have been declaring a certain desire for Croatia to join the EU, the nationalist and isolationist attitude have dominated both in political discourse and in the intellectual debate, prolonging in this way the accession to EU integration. Only since 2004 can we see a change in the debate, when Croatian intellectuals turned to an analysis of contemporary European political, economic, and social issues, reflecting in this way Croatia's interest in joining the EU. Therefore, in the first part of the debate that I will present, there is going to be an obvious dominance of Eurosceptic authors, while the Euro-optimistic ones will see growing presence in the latter part of the debate.

Since I believe that the national intellectual debate both shapes and reflects such discourse, in this thesis I will analyse contemporary works of Eurosceptic and Euro-optimistic public intellectuals¹ and present their evaluation of the EU and of Croatian accession, focusing on

¹ Here I am referring to the term found in: Justine Lacroix and Kalypso Nicolaidis. 2010. *European Stories: Intellectual Debates on Europe in National Contexts*. In this category they include "a scholar who addresses a

the issues of national identity, sovereignty, and cooperation with the ICTY etc. In this debate I will focus on the work of politicians, scholars and journalists whose work reflects different positions in the debate to the greatest extent. I will analyse statements from the first Croatian President Franjo Tuđman, from members of the Croatian Government from the 1990s, members of the Croatian Academy of Science and Arts (HAZU – *Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti*), university professors, politicians who are active in public debates, and some journalists. The criteria for selection is their involvement in Croatia-EU relations, whether as politicians or as observers and analysts. In both cases, I have focused on the work that leads to as clear mapping of the debate as possible, so that both the Eurosceptic and Euro-optimistic positions can be included in the debate.

As mentioned, the positions of intellectuals are grouped in two major categories: “Eurosceptic” and “Euro-optimistic”. The umbrella term “Eurosceptic” goes in line with Sharon Fisher’s (2006) categorizations and her definition of nationalists, as opposed to Europeanists, which are seen as those who tend to put national interests first and stress the importance of national sovereignty, even at the risk of international isolation, and includes “personalities ranging from patriots and defensive nationalists who supported state sovereignty and self-determination in the early 1990s to chauvinists and aggressive nationalists who continued to use nationalistic rhetoric well after the new state was secured” (2006:12). Moreover, in the case of Eurosceptic nationalists, hand in hand with the attempt to protect national sovereignty, culture, identity etc. comes the criticism of the EU for its distortion of the abovementioned national elements. During the 1990s a dominant figure in this camp was President Franjo Tuđman, with his ideology being kept alive by authors like Miroslav Tuđman, Dubravko Jelcic, Miroslav Medjimorec, Nenad Ivankovic, Ljerka Hodak

lay public either in national or transnational context, but in not necessarily politically active in the sense of the French *intellectuel engagé*.” Also, “national debates among these intellectuals all shape – and reflect, in more or less distorted ways – the dominant opinions of their fellow citizens” (2)

etc. who stayed faithful to the idea of Croatian sovereignty being the highest value one must preserve, even at the cost of international isolation. Authors like Miroslav Tudjman, Ljerka Hodak are University Professors who were active in Croatian politics in the 1990s. Authors like Dubravko Jelcic, Davorin Rudolf and Nedjeljko Mihanovic are members of Croatian Academy of Science and Arts. Nenad Ivankovic and Zoran Vukman spent most of their careers as journalists in Croatian daily newspapers.

Secondly, the category “Euro-optimistic” can be defined also by using Fisher’s definitions – in this case by using her definition of “Europeanists”.

The “Europeanists,” in contrast, believed that the brightest prospects for their countries’ futures lay in integration into Western structures, and they were more prepared than “Nationalists” to tailor their domestic policies to comply with the requirements of EU membership. They were generally more inclined to support modern, open, and tolerant forms of expression and to see their countries as multicultural entities. (...) Although many “Europeanists” could be considered patriots, they generally did not put the nation before democracy itself. Those “Europeanists” who were patriotic tended to have a more positive definition of the nation than did the “Nationalists,” who often defined the nation based on a negative, exclusive principal (Fisher, 2006: 11)

Authors like Dejan Jovic, Ivo Goldstein, Ivan Prpic, Damir Grubisa, Davor Rodin etc, who are University Professors of Political Science and History, generally argue in favour of Croatia’s accession to the EU and criticize nationalist politics led in the 1990s, but also tend to critically evaluate the political and social situation in the EU and Croatia’s accession process, in order to encourage progress. I have included them in this thesis since they have written extensively on the European Union and on Croatia’s relation with it. They have provided invaluable analyses of both the Croatian isolating nationalism and antagonism towards the EU, as well as on the EU issues, like political system of the EU, EU Constitution, identity issues in the EU etc.

The structure of this thesis is the following: in order to fully understand the issues that were at the centre of the debate, I will start off by giving a historical context for the debate. I will

point out the key events that were happening both in the domestic and international political arena, but that were relevant to Croatia's relations with the EU, and which influenced the debate to a great extent. In this contextualisation I will cover themes such as first multi-party elections in Croatia, the break-up of Yugoslavia, the war that followed, international recognition of Croatia, the role of ICTY in Croatia's accession to the EU, changes in the Croatian government, as well as the internal changes and dynamics in the EU. I will analyse what was the reaction of the European Community to Croatia's attempt to declare independence, and to the escalation of the armed conflict. Furthermore, the EC's engagement in the war and in the post-war phase is also going to be analysed in this chapter. Particular focus is going to be given to EU's post-war initiatives for establishing a peaceful cooperation among the states of former Yugoslavia, and how these initiatives were welcomed among Croatian politicians. Also, as a condition for eventual integration with the EU, Croatia was supposed to deal with the problems coming from the 1991-95 war. Therefore, the issues of war crimes and war criminals, cooperation with the ICTY, return of Serbian refugees and involvement in the political affairs of Bosnia-Herzegovina come in to the focus of Croatia-EU relations. Not surprisingly, these events, and the way that they were treated by Croatian politicians, will have an enormous impact on the Croatian national debate on the EU.

After placing these crucial events into the historical context, I will proceed with the analysis of the debate itself. This chapter is organized in the following way: I will follow the chronological structure presented by Skoko² (2007:355), who identifies five stages in Croatia-EU relations: a) 1991. Aggression on Croatia: a year of great expectations and Croatia's disappointment with Europe; b) 1992. European recognition of Croatia: regaining hope and turning back to Europe; c) 1995-1999. War aftermath and process of democracy-building: era of Europe's disappointment in Croatia; d) 2000. Croatian institutional approach to the EU: the

² Božo Skoko is a professor at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb. He is a former journalist and editor with Croatian Television.

era of new hope and great expectations; e) 2004. Declining support among Croatian citizens for EU accession: critical evaluation of the EU. One exception from this structure is that I will present the first two stages in the same section, since the time period was very short (1991-1992) and often both stages are a coherent part of the same discussion. Throughout these stages I will analyse the content of the debate in order to show what kind of attitudes towards the EU were dominant among Croatian intellectuals in each specific time frame.

CHAPTER 2 - HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF CROATIA-EU RELATIONS

In this chapter I will present the historical background of Croatia's and EU's political development in the last 20 years, with particular accent on their bilateral relations. By doing so, I will set out the context for the analysis of the Croatian national debate on the EU, since my main argument is that this debate reflects the national attitude towards the European Union. Therefore, this chapter will point to crucial moments in internal and external relations of Croatia and of the European Union but, of course, cannot touch upon all major events and personalities from this period. I will start with the democratic transition in Croatia, with the proclaimed independence, international recognition and war. These events included significant involvement of the international community and therefore were reflected in the national debate on the EU. Furthermore I will briefly explain the developments between Croatia and the EU in the second half of the 1990s, with the emphasis on EU's initiatives and Croatia's distancing from the EU. Next, I will focus on the phase of rapprochement that started in 2000 and I will conclude with Croatia's referendum in 2012 which confirmed Croatia's path towards the EU. In this chapter I will also include a brief overview of some crucial moments in EU's political development in the last 20 years.

First years of Croatia's independence

During the last years of Socialist Yugoslavia the first democratic political parties started to form: the first one was the Croatian Social Liberal Party (HSLS), formed in 1989, and the second, and more important one, was the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), formed in the same year and led by Franjo Tuđman. Tuđman was a former Tito's General, a historian and

a politician with strong national affiliation. One Tudjman's main ideas was to *reunite* the nation on the basis of overcoming past internal conflicts that had emerged in the Second World War, and that had been a thorn in the Croatian nation, especially creating a strong division line between the Croats living in Yugoslavia and the ones living in the diaspora. As Bartlett (2003: 34) identifies,

his [Tudjman's, B.F.] appeal was for "national reconciliation" between the various elements of Croatian society, in particular between the left and right wing, between the ideological descendants of the communist Partisans on the one hand, and of the fascist Ustashe on the other. The other plank of the party platform was a rebalancing of power and influence between Croatia's Serbs and Croats. In the programme of "national reconciliation" the privileged position of Serbs in the upper echelons of power was to be swept away

After the first multiparty elections, held in April and May 1990, HDZ won the majority of the seats in the Croatian Parliament. In the analysis of Peskin and Boduszinsky, such an outcome was to have a significant influence on the future development of Croatia.

The HDZ and its founder and leader, Franjo Tudjman, were swept into power on a wave of nationalist, pro-independence and anti-Serb sentiment in 1990. Tudjman and the HDZ held a virtual monopoly on political power in Croatia for a decade, buttressing their rule with strong control of the media, disregard for parliamentary institutions and an extensive clientelist network (Peskin and Boduszinsky, 2003: 1124)

The new Croatian government brought a new Constitution for Croatia, which was no longer called the Socialist Republic of Croatia, but the Republic of Croatia, "which declared Croatia to be the homeland of the Croatian nation, appearing to exclude the Serbs from their previous position of civic equality. It proclaimed the republic's sovereignty and its right to secede from the Yugoslav federation" (Bartlett, 2003: 36). This constitution changed the status of Serbs, who consisted around 12% of Croatia's population at that time. Until that point Serbs were constitutionally treated as a *constituent nation* in Croatia, while with the new constitution their status changed to *national minority* and caused dismay among the Serbian population" (ibid). However, even before the new constitution was introduced, Serbs proclaimed the

“Autonomous Province of Serb Krajina” (SAO Krajina) and initiated a “Log revolution” by blocking the roads between Zagreb and Dalmatia.

In June 1991 Croatia declared its independence, but due to EU’s intervention imposed a 3 month moratorium on the decision. These events presented an introduction to the war that followed, for which Ramet (2010: 259) identifies that “Croatia’s post-communist transition cannot be discussed apart from the dramatic impact of the War of Yugoslav Succession, fought on the territory of Croatia for four-and-a-half years (1991-5).” The escalation of the conflict was followed by the UN arms embargo, and as Bartlett concludes “[i]t seemed as if the whole of Croatia would fall to the far greater strength of the JNA. However, before that could happen, Milosevic and Tudjman, under pressure from the EU which had convened a peace conference in The Hague, came to an agreement to end the war” (Bartlett, 2003: 40). The UN’s troops were deployed to secure the borders of SAO Krajina, which remained more or less stable until 1995 and the Operations *Flash* and *Storm*.

When the Yugoslav crisis exploded, 12 European states were working on deepening their integration, which resulted in agreeing on “The Treaty on European Union” (TEU) in late 1991. TEU, also known as the Maastricht Treaty, was signed in 1992 and entered into force in 1993. “It is a major EU milestone, setting clear rules for the future single currency as well as for foreign and security policy and closer cooperation in justice and home affairs”.³ Phinnemore stresses the importance of the Maastricht Treaty by concluding that “the goal of ever closer union was to be furthered” by creating “an entirely new entity, to be called the European Union” (Phinnemore: 2007: 33).

At the same time Croatia was fighting a diplomatic battle to ensure its international recognition. As mentioned, the initial response of the international community to Croatia’s

³ http://europa.eu/about-eu/eu-history/1990-1999/index_en.htm, accessed 16 May 2013

(and Slovenia's) declared independence was a request to postpone the decision for three months, during which further negotiations of the future of Yugoslavia could take place. After the moratorium expired, on the 8 October 1991, Croatia proclaimed its independence. However, at this point the newly established state was still not internationally recognized. For that purpose, the so called Badinter Commission, an arbitrary commission, was established by the European Community in order to give its expert opinion, among others, on the issue of Croatia's right to self-determination and international recognition. Upon the positive opinion of the Commission, except on the issue of minority rights, but due to Germany's support, Croatia was recognized as a sovereign state by the European Community on 15 January 1992. "When Croatia seceded from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1991, Croatians were optimistic that their new-found independence would accomplish two things: Croatia would be recognized as a sovereign state for the first time in its national history and would "return" to its rightful place in Europe" (Razsa, Lindstrom, 2004: 628). It seemed as the first desire got fulfilled and that the second is on its way to being fulfilled.

In the meantime Croatia got involved in the war in neighbouring Bosnia-Herzegovina, where a substantial number of Croats lived and which Tudjman had a desire to incorporate the parts they inhabited into the Republic of Croatia. Supposedly, Tudjman made an agreement with Milosevic in Karadjordjevo to divide Bosnia-Hercegovina between Croatia and Serbia. The importance of this issue for the context of this thesis is that it can be argued that it was exactly the involvement in this war that distanced the European Community from Croatia. As Bartlett (2003: 65) argues, "[t]he drive to incorporate the Bosnian Croats in the affairs of Croatia, even as far as incorporating parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina into the territory of Croatia, has also been a key aim of Croatia's foreign policy, and one which has had the effect of blocking Croatia's progress towards developing its European identity, instead pulling Croatia back into

an association with the Balkans". The war in Bosnia-Hercegovina lasted until November 1995, when it was ended by the "Dayton agreement".

One additional crucial event from the war in Croatia happened in 1995, a few months before the abovementioned Dayton agreement, and that was the launch of two major offensives against the Krajina Serbs, known as military operations *Flash (Bljesak)* and *Storm (Oluja)*. With this military operation Croatia regained the whole territory of Krajina, but at the dramatic cost of the enormous expulsion and killings of the Serbian population. The consequences were dramatic, and can be analysed on several levels. In the case of this thesis they will be analysed in the context of how Croatia's image shifted during the war, reaching a peak with operation *Storm*. In this regard, Fisher explains that

Throughout the 1990s, the HDZ presented Croatia as the "victim" of war, which although mostly true in the battle with the Serbs in 1991–1992, was not the case in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1993–1994 or during the 1995 police and military operations Flash and Storm that reunited Croatian territory and freed the Krajina region of Serbian control. These operations were marked by the expulsion of some 200,000 ethnic Serbs from Croatia and the murder of approximately 2,500 civilians. (Fisher, 2006: 74)

The return of the refugees and the prosecution of war crimes are going to be one of the major stumbling-stones in Croatia's relations with the European Union, since the opening of the EU accession process is going to be conditioned on resolving these issues. "In subsequent years, the main reasons for Croatia's pariah status were the Tudjman government's slow progress in returning ethnic Serbs who had been expelled, the HDZ's tendency to treat Bosnia-Herzegovina as an extension of the Croatian state rather than as an independent entity, and the country's lack of cooperation with the ICTY" (Fisher, 2005: 82). However, such military success gave Tudjman even more political credibility in domestic politics, and at that point he was "at the pinnacle of his power and popularity" (Bartlett, 2003: 47). Unfortunately, the end of the war did not bring a transition to consolidated democracy in Croatia, since Tudjman was "determined to carry through an increasingly authoritarian approach to Croatian state-

building, and, captivated by the increasingly influential Herzegovinian lobby, pursued his (and their) desire to incorporate the Herzegovinian region of Bosnia into Croatia” (*ibid*).

In 1995, when the war in former Yugoslavia was finally over, the EU accepted three new member states - Austria, Finland and Sweden - that joined Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark, Ireland, United Kingdom, Greece, Spain and Portugal in an enlarged European Union.

Post-war phase

Despite the evolution of *weak democracy*, all this time Croatia was receiving the assistance of the EU in order to restore its economy and to enable a functioning democracy. In 1996 a new framework was launched by the EU - the Regional Approach - which included Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and was aimed at providing assistance in implementing the Dayton and Erdut agreement and in promoting political and economic stability. However, “the Croatian government had an ambivalent attitude towards the EU”, since it enjoyed the economic benefits but “did not like the way in which the EU was placing Croatia diplomatically alongside the Balkan states from which it was doing its best to establish a separate identity” (Bartlett, 2003: 74). Another dispute in Croatia-EU relations was the one over the jurisdiction of The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), UN’s court established in 1993 with the aim to prosecute war crimes that occurred on the territory of former Yugoslavia. The role of the ICTY in the bilateral relations is explained as “a key condition for closer relations [of Croatia, B.F.] with both the EU and NATO” (Bartlett, 2003: 78). However, Tudjman was highly reluctant to the idea of an international court which would prosecute Croatian *defenders* that were fighting a *defensive Homeland*

*war.*⁴ However, crimes have been committed during the *Homeland War*, as well as in the operations that were being undertaken on the territory of Bosnia-Hercegovina. The following insight by Peskin and Boduszinsky reflects Tudjman's – and consequently Croatia's official – attitude towards the ICTY:

Tudjman's persistent non-cooperation and criticism of the ICTY as an anti-Croat institution primed public opinion against the court and established the rhetorical strategy that the right wing would use to undermine the new government's moves toward increased cooperation with the tribunal. Tudjman steadfastly refused to recognise the tribunal's right to investigate Croatian war crimes committed during operations Flash and Storm (Peskin and Boduszinsky, 2003: 1124).

As a result of Tudjman's politics came distancing between Croatian and EU officials.

Before I move on to the moves of the new government that came to power in 2000, I will briefly reflect on the final regional initiative presented by the EU. The Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) was introduced in 1999, and it was “the last and most comprehensive effort” (Lampe, 2006: 290) by the EU, the one that was “much more wide-ranging” (Bartlett, 2003: 74) than the Regional Approach. “In contrast with the Regional Approach, the SAP was developed with the intention of offering higher incentives and more demanding political and economic conditions, together with more emphasis on the need for regional cooperation” (Fisher, 2005: 82). As Bartlett suggests, it was precisely the emphasis on the promotion of intraregional cooperation which was “decidedly unpopular in Zagreb, where it was seen as potentially leading to the recreation of a Yugoslav-style federation of the “Western Balkan” states. No self-respecting politician in Zagreb could be seen to be associated too enthusiastically with such a policy” (2003: 76). It is worth mentioning that already in 1997 Tudjman initiated an amendment to the Constitution that forbade Croatia from entering any kind of Balkan association. In the same year, during the campaign for presidential elections, Tudjman used the slogan “Tudjman, not the Balkans”,

⁴ Here I am using the term *Homeland War*, as it is the Croatian official term for the armed conflict that happened on Croatian territory between 1991-95

which reflect to a great extent his rejection of the idea that Croatia might be seen and treated as a *Balkan* country. Moreover, “Tudjman rose to power on the promise that he would free Croatia from the so-called Balkan darkness of Yugoslavia and ensure its return to its rightful place in Europe” (Lindstrom, 2003: 319) and it seemed now like the Europe itself is pushing Croatia back to the Balkans. From another point of view one could conclude that

Croatia’s unfavourable position in the eyes of the West undoubtedly stemmed in part from Franjo Tudjman’s dismal democratic and human rights record in the 1990s. The Tudjman regime suppressed critical media outlets, supported Croatian secessionists in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and fought the extradition of indicted war criminals to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). The Council of Europe cited these reasons for postponing Croatia’s membership until 1996. The European Union raised the same factors in blocking Croatia’s request to start membership talks in 1997 (Razsa, Lindstrom, 2004: 629).

The same year that Tudjman was re-elected as Croatia’s president, the EU started the process of membership negotiations with 10 countries of central and eastern Europe: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. The Mediterranean islands of Cyprus and Malta were also included.⁵ Also in 1997, a new treaty came into power – The Treaty of Amsterdam – which “builds on the achievements of the treaty from Maastricht, laying down plans to reform EU institutions, to give Europe a stronger voice in the world, and to concentrate more resources on employment and the rights of citizens”.⁶

Rapprochement phase

With Tudjman’s death on 10 December 1999, with a new – centre-left – government being elected, as well as with the new President in office, a new era in Croatian politics and in Croatia’s relations with the European Union was marked. “After the HDZ’s defeat in the 2000

⁵ http://europa.eu/about-eu/eu-history/1990-1999/index_en.htm, accessed 16 May 2013

⁶ http://europa.eu/about-eu/eu-history/1990-1999/index_en.htm, accessed 16 May 2013

parliamentary and presidential elections, many Croats believed that their election results alone would lead the EU to rush the country through the integration process, allowing it to catch up with other Central and East European states” (Fisher, 2005: 83). Both the new Prime Minister, Ivica Racan, and the new President, Stjepan Mesic, openly declared their willingness to reactivate Croatia’s accession to the EU, which meant – among other – to fully cooperate with the ICTY, to enhance the process of Serbian refugees return to Croatia, to terminate any pretensions towards Bosnia-Hercegovina, and to work on consolidating democracy and human rights in general. The new government and new President were warmly greeted from the EU. In November 2000, the EU and Croatia organized a Balkan Summit in Zagreb where “negotiations for a Stabilization and Association Agreement were promptly announced” (Bartlett, 2003: 84), and in October 2001 the Agreement was signed, with the objective “to establish a close and lasting relationship based on reciprocity and mutual interest, which should allow Croatia to formalise and strengthen the existing relationship with the European Union”⁷. As Bartlett interestingly identifies, “in that way Croatia became the last country of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire apart from Bosnia-Herzegovina to formally announce its intention to “return to Europe” through integration with the EU” (2003: 84).

However, not all the plans and wishes for quick rapprochement ran smoothly, and first and most transparent obstacles were related to the cooperation with the ICTY.

In April 2000, the Racan government did agree on a new declaration on cooperation with the ICTY, according to which perpetrators of war crimes would be punished on an individual basis, irrespective of their nationality or position. (...) Nonetheless, throughout the Racan government’s term in office, most cabinet representatives gave the impression that they were only cooperating with the ICTY because of international pressure, as they were reluctant to speak openly about war crimes committed by Croats. President Mesic proved to be one of the few exceptions in encouraging Croats to deal with their past (Fisher, 2005: 86)

The first major shock that came from the ICTY was related to General Blaskic. Blaskic was running military operations in Bosnia-Hercegovina during the Croat-Muslim war and when

⁷<http://ec.europa.eu/world/agreements/prepareCreateTreatiesWorkspace/treatiesGeneralData.do?step=0&redirect=true&treatyId=140>, accessed 15 May 2013

indictment came from The Hague he voluntarily surrendered. In March 2000, only two months after the new government was elected, Blaskic received a forty-five year sentence. “In despair, the new Prime Minister Ivica Racan complained “Why did they do this to us? Why now?” (Bartlett, 2003: 81). This episode depicts the core of the problems that the new government was facing, in the context of cooperation with The Hague – even though they declared their commitment to fulfil the tasks and demands from the EU, on several occasions they proved inefficient in doing so. I will briefly mention two other – even more “famous” – cases of Croatia indictees, and these were the cases of General Bobetko and General Gotovina. Janko Bobetko was a Croatian Army general and Chief of the General Staff during the *Homeland War*, and in 2002 he was indicted by the ICTY for crimes against the Serbs. Bobetko refused to accept the indictment and the government refused to extradite Bobetko. In April 2003 Bobetko died and, as Fisher says,

Although Bobetko’s death relieved the Racan government of negative long-term international repercussions regarding cooperation with The Hague, the case was significant since it marked the first time that Racan “took the lead” in criticizing an indictment rather than waiting until after right-wing forces had mobilized against cooperation (2005: 88)

However, this episode resulted in “the biggest impasse in relations between Croatia and the West since the time of Tudjman’s rule” (*ibid*), since the UK and Netherlands halted the ratification of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Croatia.

Still, the crisis was yet to peak with the case of General Ante Gotovina. Gotovina was a General during the *Homeland War*, and one of the key military staff in Operation *Storm*, and he received indictment on the account of war crimes committed during this operation. “Although the Racan government pledged that it would hand over the generals, it did not move as quickly as promised, and Gotovina went into hiding, refusing to be tried by a foreign court” (Fisher, 2005: 87). From 2001 to 2005 Gotovina was at large, and throughout this time Croatia’s negotiations for accession to the EU were under blockade. Even though Croatia

received the status of candidate country in 2004, the condition for opening the accession negotiation was full cooperation with the ICTY. Only in October 2005, when Chief Prosecutor of the ICTY Carla del Ponte gave a positive opinion on Croatia's cooperation with The Hague, were accession negotiations launched.

As for the second most important condition that Fisher (2005) identifies – “treating Bosnia-Herzegovina as an independent state” – for Racan it was “the least painful, particularly since Tudjman’s involvement in Bosnia-Herzegovina was never popular among most ordinary Croats”. On the other hand, slow progress was being made in the context of the third condition for enhancing the integration with the EU, and that was the issue of the return of the Serbian refugees that had fled the country after the military operations *Flash* and *Storm* in 1995. Fisher says that

In May 2000, the parliament did take an important step toward meeting EU requirements on minority rights by approving amendments to the constitutional Law on Minorities. However, that legislation was only meant as a temporary measure, and the passage of an entirely new law experienced repeated delays, finally gaining approval in December 2002. Moreover, Racan was uncomfortable about making any grand gestures toward ethnic Serbs, and the number of returnees was minimal (Fisher, 2005: 85).

Even though Racan’s government faced several severe crises in relations with the European Union, and often those crises were used by the nationalists to promote their discontent with the government, in the following elections in November 2003 this government lost the elections, but mostly because of public dissatisfaction with the country’s poor economy.

In 2003 The Treaty of Nice came into power and its main aim was “to reform the institutions so that the EU could function efficiently after reaching 25 member countries”.⁸ In 2004, while Croatia’s accession negotiations were still on hold, “eight countries of central and eastern Europe - the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia - joined the EU, finally ending the division of Europe decided by the Great Powers

⁸ http://europa.eu/eu-law/treaties/index_en.htm, accessed 16 May 2013

60 years earlier at Yalta. Cyprus and Malta also become members”.⁹ In 2007 Romania and Bulgaria also entered the EU. A significant moment occurred on 29 October 2004 when the “Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe” was signed. Also known as the Constitutional Treaty, it was supposed to “simplify the EU’s treaty base and overall nature” and clarify “what the EU can do, and how it does it, without significantly increasing the EU’s competences” (Church and Phinnemore, 2007: 54). Its aim was to “streamline democratic decision-making and management in an EU of 25 and more countries”.¹⁰ In order to come into power it was supposed to be ratified by all 25 member states of the EU. However, its ratification failed in France and in the Netherlands, which led to a political crisis in the EU. A substitute was found in the form of a new treaty – The Lisbon Treaty – which was signed in 2007 and came into power in 2009. “This Treaty makes it possible to adapt the European institutions and their working methods, strengthen democratic legitimacy and consolidate the Union's core values. It thus provides the Union with the legal framework and means necessary to meet citizens' expectations”.¹¹ In this way the constitutional crisis was overcome, while the economic crisis came to the headlines.

The return of HDZ

In 2003 a new government was installed by the reformed HDZ, with its new leader and Prime Minister Ivo Sanader. The change in government did not change the country’s pro-EU political direction, as “the HDZ has proved itself a strong advocate of EU membership not just in word, but also in deed, and the party has even accepted limitations on national sovereignty to help push integration forward. The government has not only increased

⁹ http://europa.eu/about-eu/eu-history/1990-1999/index_en.htm, accessed 16 May 2013

¹⁰ http://europa.eu/about-eu/eu-history/2000-2009/index_en.htm, accessed 16 May 2013

¹¹ http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/institutional_affairs/treaties/lisbon_treaty/index_en.htm, accessed 16 May 2013

cooperation with the ICTY, but also tackled other problems relating to Croatia's past" (Fisher, 2005: 89). However, as mentioned, the association process was constantly inhibited due to the ICTY's Chief Prosecutor's negative opinions on Croatia's cooperation with the Tribunal, and remained like that until the fall of 2005, when accession negotiations were launched.

In the same period national support for the EU integration was declining, and resulted in "popular frustration" as Fisher (2005) calls it. In her analysis of public opinion polls, she identifies that the "population has become increasingly anti-EU" and displays results by which "in December 2003, 73 percent of Croats supported EU membership, but that level dropped to just 53 percent one year later, while 41 percent were against. After the delay of Croatia's accession negotiations in March 2005, public backing fell below 50 percent" (2005: 90). However, Fisher considers that this decline of public support "should not necessarily be seen as a rise in nationalism among the population", but rather as a manifestation of dissatisfaction with the government "as both Racan and Sanader abused the EU role", and as dissatisfaction with the politics of the EU towards Croatia, with regard to the "perceptions of unfair treatment on the part of Brussels" (*ibid*). Fisher's overall conclusion on the public (dis)trust towards the EU is highly reflective on the entire bilateral relations of Croatia and the EU, and she concludes that

Croats' current lack of support for the EU is based not entirely on recent events, but also on the past. (...) Croatian citizens' distrust of the EU developed early in the 1990s, based partly on the Union's efforts to keep Yugoslavia together and its inactivity in stopping the wars. Other Croats have complained of Europe's lack of sympathy and solidarity with Croatia during the war (2005: 91)

As for the relations of Croatia and the EU in the second half of the 2000s, the negotiation process and its 35 chapters were concluded by mid-2011. In this period Croatia was fully cooperating with the ICTY, and "there was also praise from the European Parliament in February 2008 for Croatia's efforts in assuring propitious conditions for the return of Serb refugees; of the 280,000 Serbs who took flight from Croatia during 1991-5, about 130,000

had returned by that date” (Ramet, 2010: 275). However, a major set-back came in 2009 when Slovenia blocked negotiations with Croatia, which caused further delay in the accession process, and resulted in Prime Minister Sanader’s resignation. On 1 December 2011 the European Parliament voted “yes” on Croatia’s accession to the Union, and on 22 January 2012, in a national referendum, 66,27% of the voters (with 43,51% turnout) declared support for Croatia’s accession to the EU.

In this chapter I have set out the context for the Croatian national debate on the EU, which I will analyse in the following chapter. The main focus of this contextualisation was on the historical overview of Croatia’s political development, particularly in regard with the EU related issues. Such contextualisation was necessary since the political issues here discussed were the central issues in the national debate. So, in order to understand the nature of the debate I have introduced and briefly explained the most important events that are going to be reflected in this debate.

CHAPTER 3 – THE DEBATE

The structure of this chapter is the following: I will present different narratives in the Croatian debate on the EU and on Croatia's accession to the Union focusing on several distinctive stages in Croatia-EU bilateral relations. I will follow the chronological structure presented by Skoko¹² (2007:355), who identifies five stages in these relations: a) 1991. Aggression on Croatia: a year of great expectations and Croatia's disappointment with Europe; b) 1992. European recognition of Croatia: regaining hope and turning back to Europe; c) 1995-1999. War aftermath and process of democracy-building: era of Europe's disappointment in Croatia; d) 2000. Croatian institutional approachment to the EU: era of new hope and great expectations; e) 2004. Declining support among Croatian citizens for EU accession: critical evaluation of the EU. One exception from this structure is that I will present the first two stages in the same section, since the time period was very short (1991-1992) and often both stages are a coherent part of the same discussion.

Croatia and the EU at the beginning of the 1990s: “The return to Europe”

In this section I will analyse different interpretations of the relations between Croatia and the European Community/European Union that occurred at the beginning of the 1990s. In the first decade of Croatia's independence, Franjo Tuđman was the key politician and ideologist of Croatian nationalism, and therefore, in this section I will firstly present his rhetoric and

¹² Božo Skoko is a professor at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb. He is a former journalist and editor with Croatian Television.

attitude towards Western Europe and western integrations. Jovic¹³ identifies that “Tudjmanist discourse dictated Croatia’s domestic and foreign policy throughout the 1990s” (2006:12), and this Tudjmanist discourse had a significant influence on other public intellectuals – both on the critics and advocates. Secondly, I will present the narratives of other scholars, and their reflections on this era, in order to grasp a wider picture of Croatian debate on the EU in the 1990s.

Tudjman’s statement from 1991 fully reflects his attitude and expectations of Croatia towards the EU, as well as his vision of Croatia’s geopolitical position:

We hope that the European countries and the EU will understand that the Croatian struggle for its territorial integrity, its freedom and democracy is not only the fight of the Croatian nation, the fight against the restoration of socialist communism . . . but the fight for normal conditions when Croatia can join Europe, where she historically belongs (quoted in: Lindstrom, 2003:317)

There are several issues addressed in this statement: first, the notion that Croatia is in a struggle, and that she is fighting not only for freedom, democracy, and territorial integrity (which can all be seen as core European values), but it is fighting its way out of socialist communism and into the “normal” Europe, where the country “historically belongs”. All of the mentioned elements can be explained under the umbrella term of “the return to Europe”, since Tudjman’s discourse points to both the “historical evidence” of where Croatia belongs and contemporary evidence that the country is in a process of transition towards European values and standards. And not only that Croatia historically belongs to Europe, but the desired “return from the dark of the one-party totalitarianism to Central European and European civilization circle is based on Croatia’s history, culture, geography, economy and mentality, which can contribute to European diverse collectiveness” (Tudjman in Jelcic, 2009:114). Moreover, Tudjman believed that this “return” was only symbolic, because in spatial and

¹³ Dejan Jović is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb. He is also a Chief Analyst of Croatian President Ivo Josipović.

political terms Croatia always was, and still is a part of Europe (*ibid*, 116). When it comes to European integration, in 1992 Tudjman stated that “Croats – according to their historical tradition - are the most open hearted advocates for peaceful European integration of sovereign people”. However, in his words, Croats “tend aspire for their own political, cultural, and developing identity (*razvojni identitet*) in united Europe, in the frame of alliance of the states (*u okviru saveza republika*) if possible, or under its own flags, if democratic agreement is not possible” (*ibid*: 118). Again, Tudjman is confident about Croatia being an integral part of Europe, and has a positive attitude towards the process of integration in 1992. However, it is obvious that sovereignty and distinctive identity are crucial for his idea of Croatia’s further development, and only by keeping up to this doctrine could Croatia join the alliance; if that is not possible, Tudjman is determined, Croatia can pursue its development under its own flag, on its own. However, he was still counting on European help in the process of Yugoslavian break-up, and he stated in August 1991 that international recognition of Croatia would be the most effective means to stopping the bloodshed, because it would internationalize the armed conflict and would force Serbia to start negotiating peace (Tudjman in Mijatovic, 1999:165). As for the (partial) international recognition that was proclaimed in February 1992, he stated that “independent and sovereign, internationally recognized Republic of Croatia, as a state of new Europe, is an important guarantee of permanent political stability in Southeast Europe” (Tudjman in Jelcic, 2009:139).

Pavao Novosel¹⁴ (1991), when addressing the European reaction to Croatia’s “return”, stated that it is becoming more and more obvious that Croats are living in an illusion when hoping that Croatia’s geographical position, history, culture, civilization, and national character can ensure its position in Europe, even as a “minor partner” or a “poor relative” (*ibid*, 26). Croats had a full right to believe that Europe would treat Croatia as its partner, he believes, especially

¹⁴ Pavao Novosel was a Professor of Communicology at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb

because Europe is obliged to protect Croatia on account of Croatia's historical role as "the shield against destructive invasion from the East", at the moment when Croatia itself is under attack of the "barbarians from the same part of the world from which Croatia has defended Europe for so long" (*ibid*). However, in the moment of the "clash of the civilizations", instead of help, Europe was giving Croatia warnings (regarding minority issues), underestimations (regarding the possibilities of its survival as an independent country), threats etc. and therefore was leaving Croatia, a country that is an integral part of Europe, on its own (*ibid*, 27). However, even though Croats were disappointed with such a reaction from Europe, he believes that Croats must not psychologically alienate themselves from Europe, but must focus more on the issue of self-definition, in order to learn "who we are, what we are, and according to that, what kind of place we deserve in this new world" (*ibid*).

Therefore, we can see in Novosel's analysis that Tudjman's argument – the one that legitimizes Croatia's Europeaness on geographical and historical account – was quite appealing among other intellectuals as well.

Stanko Lasic's¹⁵ *Three essays on Europe* present a very interesting work since the three essays published in this book were written in 1990, 1991, and 1992, as the crisis in former Yugoslavia was developing. Therefore, we can analyse how his image of Europe changed in these crucial years. In the first essay he points out that Croats can have only European orientation, even though he identifies Europe as a space of "permanent conflicts, competitions, aggressions, and power hungers, which produce compromises and, more or less, balanced relations" (1992: 7). In such an arrangement, Croats, being a small, oppressed, and peripheral people, can only hope for crumbs, but should know how to get the best out of it (*ibid*: 8). One year later his disappointment is even stronger and he stated that

¹⁵ Stanko Lasić was a Professor of Croatian Literature at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb

Europe was a symbol of freedom, democracy, and people's right of self-determination, and therefore we saw Europe as a natural ally, even though it looked at us with surprise and had a disdain smile at our desire to constitute ourselves as a historical subject. We did not want to see that face of Europe, but we kept relying on her as our only ally. Luckily, we did not pay a price too high for our illusion. We gained a valuable experience and it could be fatal to forget that experience (ibid: 15)

The author offers an explanation that when he talks about Europe he actually refers to the European Community (EC), because the EC dominates Europe, even though Europe is more than just the EC (ibid:18). He is stunned by the paradox that the moral and intellectual role models in Europe are becoming statistic (*etatisticki*), para-statistic, and neo-statistic factors, like the EC or KESS (Conference of Security and Co-operation in Europe). The outcome of such a situation is that there are two dominant discourses in Europe: the first promotes freedom, equality, justice, human rights, and people's right to self-determination, and the second in which these issues are being adjusted in accord with (supra-)national interests (ibid:26). In the final essay he concludes that the biggest European sin of all is the fact that Europe is surrounded by crime (for which it is responsible as well) but is constantly living in denial, refusing to see crimes going on, and just keeps finding excuses in order to proceed as if there is nothing going on. In the case of the war in Croatia, the author explains that Europe is pretending there is nothing to be done in this case of "barbaric rampage in the Balkans" (ibid: 48).

As we can see, one novelty that Lasic brought to the debate is the notion that the EC was seen responsible to stop the war in former Yugoslavia, and since it failed, a feeling of disappointment was developed.

Bozo Skoko (2007) highlights that already in the 1980s a significant number of Croatian citizens desired Yugoslavia's break-up so Croatia could become an independent country and return to the "West-European civilizational circle", and had hoped for help from the European Community, especially from the countries with whom Croatia has a shared history and culture

(2007:352). However, the same Europe that Croatia was counting on was confused with the aggression that was going on in Yugoslavia and did not know how to respond to the demand of the republics that wanted to become new states on the map of Europe (ibid). Due to such enthusiasm over state independence and disappointment with the rest of the world, Croatian people had started questioning their own identity, even though “European affiliation” remained a constant feeling (ibid, 354). Such an “unsuccessful return to Europe” sealed both the contemporary perception on the EU, as well as the bilateral relations between the EU and Croatia in the 1990s, he concludes (ibid).

Skoko emphasises what I have already concluded in Lasic’s case – that the dominant discourse of that time was that Croatia should count on Europe’s help in resolving the crisis that came out of Yugoslavia’s dissolution – and moreover, when he uses the term aggression he depicts also a dominant image of Croatia’s position in the war that escalated – a victim of an aggression.

Dejan Jovic (2011) identifies that Croatian “sovereignists” (*suverenisti*) had problems with the EU’s failed attempts to resolve the Yugoslav crisis: firstly, before the fall in 1991, the EC was opposed to the idea of Yugoslavia’s break-up, believing it could lead to conflict which would endanger both people from Yugoslavia and European safety in general (2011: 11). When it became obvious that conflict could be ended only by armed intervention, the EC turned out to be inefficient. “From such a relatively failed attempt of the EC to prevent the war in former Yugoslavia, and especially the fact that it did not support Croatia from the beginning – a state in which the official discourse was the one of Croatia being exclusively a victim in that conflict – gave a lot of motives for constructing a discourse of Croatian Euro scepticism. A lot of Croats were asking themselves “Where was Europe when Croatia needed help” (ibid).

Jovic's comment puts a final piece to mosaic, and reflects upon the feeling of disappointment with the EC, which has led to resentment and distancing from the Europe.

To summarise this section: one of the dominant ideas in the early state-building phase was that Croatia, despite its seven decades of Yugoslav integration, belongs to Europe, particularly to the Central-Mediterranean part of Europe. Such assumptions were widely spread and supported with notions on geographical position, culture, and shared history with Central European countries. Following from such an assumption there was a real expectation that Europe would recognize Croatia's "return" and, moreover, would help Croatia with its struggle to leave Socialist Yugoslavia and to move towards democratic Europe. However, such presumptions did not become reality, and from such a dynamic and unpredictable relationship we can see how the narratives and image of Europe twisted and turned within a period of only a year or two. From a symbol of freedom and democracy to hypocrit, and from a desired "return" to unexpected disappointment, this phase is dominated by mixed feelings and images of Europe.

Croatia and the EU in the mid-1990s

In this section I will present how the narratives about the EU changed during the 1990s. Again, I will analyse Tudjman's rhetoric, as well as the rhetoric of other public intellectuals and their work, both written in the 1990s and afterwards.

As Skoko (2007:354) identifies, soon after the international recognition of Croatia, which gave hope that Europe could be "the protector of the young Croatian state", the Croatian government was openly declaring their commitment to Croatian membership in the EU.

However, war and the slowing down of the democratic process led to criticism from the international community and prolonged “Croatia’s European future”.

As I have mentioned at the end of the last section, both the relation with, and therefore the image of Europe twisted and turned several times in a short period, which can be clearly seen from Skoko’s short but clear-sighted comment.

Rados (2005:142) says that Tudjman’s first disappointment in Europe was during the weapons embargo when Croatia was under attack by Yugoslavia People’s Army (JNA), and the second was when the new Balkan association was trying to be created. “Tudjman was freaking out on the idea of Western Balkans and of integrating in Southeast Europe” (*ibid*). Jovic (2006) identifies the same antagonism that Tudjman developed from the mid-1990s:

The EU-Croatian relationship worsened after April 1997, when the EU introduced the Regional Approach policy for countries of the Western Balkans. The very concept of the ‘Western Balkans’ was unacceptable to Croatia, as it linked the country with its former Yugoslav neighbours and Albania, rather than with East Central European states, which had begun accession talks with the EU. Tudjman’s radical nationalism led Croatia from Yugoslavia, but it now threatened to take it back to the ‘Western Balkans’, and not – as initially promised – to the European Union. Tudjman angrily responded to the concept of Western Balkans, seeing it as evidence of Europe’s hostility towards Croatia (2006:6-7)

For these reasons, the focus of this section will mostly be on the interpretation of the EU’s concept of the Western Balkans, since it dominated in Croatia’s debate on the EU.

Tudjman was confident that the EU was trying to force Croatia back to some form of Balkan, ex-Yugoslav integration, while he insisted that Croatia belonged to Central Europe, with countries like Slovenia, Austria, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Poland (Tudjman in Tudjman and Ljubicic, 2007:26). When Croatia got accepted to the Council of Europe he repeated that Croatia was determined in its refusal to join any kind of regional Balkan or South-East European integration. Tudjman was clear that such an integration would “withhold Croatia’s return to the sphere where it geographically, historically, and culturally belongs, and it would be a political and diplomatic defeat equal to the military defeat at Bleiburg” (*ibid*,

37). Moreover, his determination not to enter some kind of regional integration did not stop at public speeches; in 1997 he initiated an amendment to the Constitution which stated that “[i]t is prohibited to initiate any process of association of the Republic of Croatia with other states, if such an association would or could lead to restoration of the Yugoslav state community or any new Balkan state union in any form” (quoted in Jovic 2006:92). Tudjman explained this intervention as a “historical constitutional amendment, which politically expresses, and constitutionally determines a firm and consensual conclusion of Croatian struggle for national freedom and state independence: Croatian people will never again enter some Yugo-Balkan state union!” (Tudjman in Tudjman and Ljubicic, 2007:48).

When such a strong reluctance towards an EU initiative is coming from the President of a state which should be involved in the particular initiative, I can only conclude that Croatia’s image of Europe was not a positive one, but neither was Europe’s image of Croatia. With the case of Constitutional amendment we can interpret this move as an institutionalized antagonism towards the EU initiative. Such antagonistic attitudes led Croatia to the isolation by the end of the decade.

However, it is interesting to move this analysis into more contemporary sphere, and to see how Tudjman’s politics are being interpreted in the post-Tudjman era.

Ten years later, on a round table “Croatia and the Western Balkans”, most prominent Eurosceptics discussed and defended Tudjman’s politics towards the EU and criticized the EU for pushing Croatia towards a “Third Yugoslavia”. Miroslav Tudjman¹⁶ believes that there was a lot of pressure on any attempt of “small peoples and new states” to create an independent politics and to practice their own sovereignty (Tudjman in Tudjman and Ljubicic, 2007:78). Europe was not interested in historical arguments or Croatian national interests, but only paid

¹⁶ Miroslav Tuđman, son of Franjo Tuđman, is a Professor of Information Sciences at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb

attention to the interests of international system, he claims. Finally, Croatia was denied access to the EU and NATO, so it could be forced in a regional integration (*ibid*). Ljerka Hodak¹⁷ stresses that many people – both on the right-and-left wing of political system – try to forget that it was Tudjman who directed Croatia towards the Europe and the EU, and if Tudjman agreed on Croatia's integration in the Western Balkans he would surely have trust and support of international community (Hodak in Tudjman and Ljubicic, 2007:102). Still, Tudjman's firm belief that such integration is not in Croatian interest paid off eventually, since the EU revised the regional approach to certain extent in 1999 (*ibid*). Davor Domazet-Loso¹⁸, in his article entitled “Western Balkans is the clone of Greater Serbia” points out that Western Balkans must be avoided in order not to repeat 1918 or 1945 all over again (*ibid*, 148). When referring to the correlation of the Western Balkan concept with “New Yugoslavia”, Hrvoje Hitrec¹⁹ argues that through the idea of the Western Balkans, which was abstracted in 1993 by British foreign policy, a Third Yugoslavia was being created slowly, against the will of Croatian people who had created an independent and sovereign Republic of Croatia (*ibid*, 210).

In this brief but clear analysis, we can identify that even today there is no doubt among Eurosceptics that the EU was trying to push Croatia towards some new Balkan integration – possibly a Third Yugoslavia – and that Tudjman was right to stand against such initiative, even at the cost of isolation. Since the image of the EU was mostly based on the evaluation of EU's approach towards Croatia, we can conclude that in the late 1990s this image was anything but positive.

¹⁷ Ljerka Hodak was a member of Croatian Parliament, vice president of Croatian Government and was a Minister of European Integrations 1998-2000

¹⁸ Davor Domazet Lošo is a retired Admiral of Croatian Army

¹⁹ Hrvoje Hitrec is a novelist. He was a member of Croatian Parliament 1995-2000 and was a Minister of Informing in 1991

Jovic (2006) explains the importance of such narratives in the context of national debate on the EU, and how this relationship and antagonism towards the idea of the Western Balkans reflected on the dominant image of Europe. At this point the EU was compared to Yugoslavia, and Brussels to Belgrade “as the Unprincipled Other, the one that cannot come to terms with the existence and sovereignty of the Croatian state. Europe was now a new ‘artificial creation’, a project based on the unrealistic idealism of its visionaries, on unworkable principles of multi-national ‘federations’ – and not on the ethnic unity of its population and shared memories” (*ibid*, 9). In his comprehensive analysis Jovic continues explaining that

The areas of conflict in this new Europe are to be more-or-less the same as those in the former Yugoslavia: consensus vs. ‘majoritarisation’, nation-state vs. loose union of sovereign states, confederalism vs. federalism, right to opt out vs. compulsory subordination to a distant centre of power. In addition to this, Tudjman argued, Europe is based on an illusion that a new European culture will emerge and that it will successfully replace the existing small identities. This will not happen – the historical, religious and recent ideological differences were here to stay. The bloody collapse of Yugoslavia (which was united by a much more coherent ideology and more ethno-historical similarities than the new Europe) should teach us a lesson – that these differences should not be neglected. They will ultimately, Tudjmanists believed, make any new federal Europe as unlikely as it was the case with a federal Yugoslavia (*ibid*)

Ivo Goldstein²⁰ highlights that even though Tudjman basically did insist on Croatia’s prompt accession to the EU, claiming that “Croatia was always a part of Europe”, in his public speeches he would often stress that Croatia gained its independence in a hostile environment (Goldstein, 2010:210). In 1999, after he found out about ICTY indictments, Tudjman stated that Croatia was aiming towards the EU, but not under any circumstances and that accessing such integration was not the first and only goal (*ibid*). Goldstein draws our attention to the non-compatibility of Tudjman’s ideology and the values of the EU. Tudjman created and promoted national and state mythologies, which the liberal and democratic EU had gone through long time ago. Tudjman was seeking a place for Croatia in the EU with no

²⁰ Ivo Goldstein is a Professor in Modern Croatian History at the History Department, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb

understanding of EU values at that time, and when the two ideologies confronted, Tudjman became an anti-Europeanist (*ibid*). By rejecting an offer made by Central European countries to join CEFTA in 1993, because of the false idea that Croatia could join the EU directly and without cooperating with other ex-communist states, he led the country to isolation on the international level (229).

A valuable contribution comes from Goldstein who identifies that in the antagonism between Croatia and the EU it was actually the case of the opposing ideologies – exclusive nationalistic in the case of Tudjman and liberal-democratic in the case of the EU. Tudjman's reaction to this clash was not going towards compliance with European values but turning away from the European integration.

Dubravko Jelcic²¹ considers that Tudjman was neither a Eurosceptic nor a Euro-fanatic. In his words, Tudjman was not a Eurosceptic because he knew where Croatia, a country with central-European and Mediterranean identity, belongs to. However, he could not be a Euro-fanatic either, because his experience, his leadership wisdom, and his feeling of personal responsibility directed him not to rush into a new integration without evaluating mutual interests and preconditions, no matter how appealing it may look at first sight (Jelcic, 2009:15). From the current perspective, Jelcic argues, we can see that Tudjman was right to be sceptical towards the EU integrations, because their treacherous attempt to install a loyal government in Croatia was then more than obvious (2009:17). In his words, Tudjman was aware of the possibility that communist internationalism and totalitarian integrationism, camouflaged with verbal democracy, transformed itself into a global Europeanism which would then oppress all the small nations that were trying to access the EU (2009:19). “This danger of globalist-Europhilic Yugo-communist totalitarianism presents a severe threat to

²¹ Dubravko Jelčić is a member of Croatian Academy of Science and Arts. During the 1990s he was a member of HDZ (Croatian Democratic Union)

Croatia” and “Tudjman will accept the EU only if it reforms itself as a community of equal states and nations. Since he did not support a supra-national Yugoslavia, he will never support a supra-national EU, and not because he is a nationalist, but because he is a patriot” (2009:20). Since the fall of the Berlin wall, the EU started displaying its hidden agenda to turn itself into a supra-national unitarian state, with a tendency to erase the identities of its member states. Because of these insights, Jelcic concludes, Tudjman’s politics towards the EU can be summed up in the following statement: We belong in Europe and we want to join the European Union, but only with our own identity, upright, and without being dictated the requirements (2009:22).

To summarize: after the initial phase of Croatia’s “great expectations” of European Union, came a phase of distancing, mutual disappointment and failed cooperation. European initiatives were seen as an attempt to push Croatia back to some kind of Balkan integration, one like she had just recently left. Due to such a dominant interpretation of the EU’s initiatives, harsh criticism was being deployed, which led to antagonistic relations with, and distorted image of the EU. Tudjman, enjoying his authority as the president who had freed the country, was heavily influencing the dominant discourse on the EU, and that integration, with all of its regional initiatives, was seen as a reincarnation of Yugoslavia. Under the explanation of protecting its sovereignty, Croatia went in the direction of international isolation which highly influenced the narrative on the EU.

Rapprochement of Croatia and the EU – changes in the 2000s

As explained in the previous chapter, significant changes happened in Croatia in 2000, and it seemed that the Tudjman’s legacy is going to be overcome quickly and easily, and that Croatia is soon to become a new member of the EU. However, it soon became obvious that

such progress is not likely to happen, but at least there was more or less constant determinism of political elites to lead Croatia to the EU. Dominant stumbling-stones on this path to the EU were cooperation with the ICTY, regional cooperation, return of the refugees and politics towards Croats in Bosnia-Hercegovina, since the resolution of all of these issues was conditioned by the EU if Croatia wanted to start accession negotiations.

Goldstein identifies that after the elections in 2000, the new government made progress on the international level which the former government had failed to succeed in for years: Croatia got accepted into NATO's Partnership for Peace program, WTO and CEFTA and in November 2000 the EU's Regional summit was held in Zagreb, leading to the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between Croatia and EU (Goldstein, 2010:289). The new president, Stipe Mesic, also contributed to a better international position of Croatia by abolishing nationalistic exclusivism, political incorrectness, and autocratic governing style, which were characteristics of Tudjman's rule (*ibid*). It appeared as that the new government was on the right track to inaugurate Croatia in the EU in the immediate next round of enlargement and to fulfil its primary international strategic goal, but they failed (*ibid*, 290). Goldstein acknowledges that Croatia was facing bigger challenges in the accession process than the countries that accessed the EU in 2004 and 2007 (Goldstein, 2010:334). This was due to negative experiences from that massive enlargement that made the EU raise the standards for accessing countries, and in combination with the enlargement saturation, the accession negotiations lasted very long and produced significant Euro scepticism in Croatia (*ibid*, 335).

Miroslav Medjimorec²², when referring to cooperation with the EU that took place in the 2000s, says that the conditions imposed by the international community, in order to suspend the blockade imposed upon Croatia on the international level, included general

²² Miroslav Medjimorec was an assistant of the Minister of Foreign Affairs (1992-1999) and has worked as diplomat (2000-2005)

democratization, freedom of media, ceasing to help Croats in Bosnia, enabling the return of Serbs, cooperation with the ICTY, and maintaining human rights. In an ironical manner he concludes that the new government, the one that won the elections in 2000, accepted all this conditions, and soon became “the role model of democracy in the region” (2002:113). At the same time, the author identifies, the social and economic situation had worsened, the politics of the 1990s started being neglected, Croats in the Bosnia-Hercegovina were left to the mercy of Sarajevo, and the diaspora was once again becoming a political enemy. As for the shift in the politics towards the Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Jovic makes a different stand point, arguing that “[i]n Bosnia, Croatia began to follow the European line of action, by supporting international institutions, rather than ethnic Croats and their nationalist party, the HDZ of Bosnia-Herzegovina” (Jovic, 2006:14). Furthermore, Medjimorec believes that the EU was trying to push Croatia back to the Balkans and force it into some regional associations (2002:114), and that Croatia had improved her international position and reputation, but only by endangering her permanent national interests and goals. The result of such foreign policy was political, economic, and moral decline in the country and a reward for such humble obedience was completely unsure. He identifies that Croatia had accepted to get tied to the Western Balkans, had started questioning the foundations of Croatian sovereignty, and had accepted ICTY indictments which were politically motivated and were not based on real evidence etc. The author concludes that Croatia was fully subordinated to Europe without almost any independent foreign policy decision making (*ibid*).

When discussing the changes that occurred in the year 2000, Jovic says that “the anti-Tudjmanist coalition (and even more so the new President) had a very different vision of Europe than that of their predecessors” and that “the new narrative was based on the notion that isolation was neither desirable nor viable in the long-term. In order to

survive as a state, Croatia must join European institutions” (2006:13). Jovic concludes that

The new discourse was pro-European, and much more realistic with respect to the place of Croatia within structures of the enlarged European Union and (eventually) of the enlarged NATO. Instead of competing with Belgrade over Bosnia-Herzegovina and for domination in the region, Croatia re-directed its foreign policy interests towards the West.

In Jovic’s analysis I would like to stress his notion that the new discourse was much more *realistic*, since isolation was finally being replaced with cooperation – both regional and wider-European.

On the other hand, Mihanovic²³ argues that Tudjman would never support this “sycophant and toady political architecture of accessing the EU” and he would consistently support that “our European train goes directly to Europe, and not over the Balkans, or towards some vague direction towards the CEFTA” because Croatia finally got rid of “Balkan primitivism, slavery, tyranny, misery and economic backwardness” where “legendary Turkish corruption plunders, as well as the blood-revenge mentality, militarism and organized crime” (2010:422).

He believes that Croatia’s accession to the EU should not include absolute obedience and Tudjman was firm in rejecting “fetishes of the arrogant eurocracy from Brussels”. When analysing the post-Tudjman era, which is marked with pro-EU politics, Mihanovic concludes that during the Racan’s, Mesic’s and Sanader’s “vassalic government we have fallen in an obeisance manner to our knees in front of the EU. Undoubtedly, and non-arguably, in the period 1992-2000 Croatia was at the highest level of its sovereignty and had its destiny in its own hands” (2010:626).

²³ Nedjeljko Mihanovic holds a PhD in philology and he is a member of Croatian Academy of Science and Art. In 1992 he was a Minister of education and culture and in 1994/95 he was the President of Croatian Parliament

Again, the idea of some regional cooperation is completely undesirable from the perspective of nationalists, since they are confident that such an initiative would inevitably lead to a new Yugoslavia. Interestingly, more than a decade of interference in the politics of Bosnia-Herzegovina was never meant to be set out as the basis of legitimate cooperation, neither was such interference seen as a negative thing.

Zoran Vukman²⁴ (2001), in his criticism of the new government, is confident that Croatia is definitely “going towards new Yugoslavia, reinterpreted in new geopolitical context of Western Balkans, Southeast Europe, or even false Mitteleurope” (2001: 199), and even though Croats have always dreamt of Europe, that Europe is pushing Croatia to the Balkans (*ibid*, 58). In his analysis the aim of such EU and US strategy is to weaken and disintegrate Croatia so Serbia can take new leadership in the Balkans (*ibid*). In a “Balkan monetary and customs union”, he claims, Croatia will inevitably have to absorb economic migrants from Bulgaria, Albania, Serbia, Romania, and Bosnia, which will lead to “civilizational impact due to cultural and civilizational disproportion with the Balkan states Croatia will be forced to integrate with” (*ibid*, 88). As for the issue of Bosnian Croats, he claims that they are being isolated and cut off Croatia (*ibid*, 124) and that they are on the way to “complete disqualification and transformation in a minor minority” (*ibid*, 122). Finally, in his analysis of the cooperation with the ICTY, he says that such cooperation is “an absolute abatement of Croatian sovereignty, from its military to juridical segment, and a major insult to the dignity of the Croatian people” with “Chetniks getting amnesty and Croatian generals are supposed to be put on a trial” (*ibid*, 21). By putting emphasis on “alleged Croatian war crimes”, all the crimes which were committed as a part of “undoubtful and systematic genocide of Serbian aggressor over Croatian people” will be forgotten (*ibid*, 102).

²⁴ Zoran Vukman is a columnist in Croatian daily newspaper *Slobodna Dalmacija*

Ivo Banac²⁵ (2000), in his article published in the Croatian weekly *Feral Tribune*, says that the *Homeland War*, with a capital “H”, is not a sacred war, but it is a tragedy above all. And just as in any war there are heroes, and as he points out, there are criminals as well, and one should not justify one own crimes on the account that someone else is covering up their own war crimes. Racan’s government cannot prove its maturity by covering up war crimes. However, he concludes, so far the new government is different than the old one only by its declarative refusal to obstruct cooperation with the ICTY.

Radovan Pavić²⁶, among other things, stresses that “Croatian accession to the Eunion means entrance (and obedience) to the society that has left Croatia in 1990/91 to the mercy of Serbian internal and external aggression, waiting for Croatia to be conquered” (2005:73). Moreover, when it comes to the issue of the return of the Serbs (an issue that Medjimorec also touches upon, which is seen as a process that the EU is insisting on) he goes as far as stating that “by intensifying the return of also the militant “greater Serbs” (which is one of the conditions for accession) a critical mass can be created that could insist on new/old Plan Z-4 that would enable Serbs to create a state within a state” (2005: 74). Unfortunately, such an attitude reflects both the antagonism that returnees came across both on the institutional level and local level. As Koska (2008: 192) identifies “[i]t was not until 1998, following the introduction of the Program for Return, that significant, but still very low numbers of Serbian refugees began to return. Local Croatian communities, however, were often a very unfriendly environment. A number of social and institutional obstacles prevented Serbs from having an easy reintegration”.

²⁵ Ivo Banac is Croatian historian and politician. He was a history professor at Yale University, Central European University, and University of Zagreb. He was a president of Croatian Helsinki Committee

²⁶ Radovan Pavić holds a PhD in Geography, and he is considered to be one of the founding fathers of Croatian geopolitics as a discipline. He was a Professor at the Faculty of Political Science

To summarize: in 2000, a significant shift occurred in Croatian politics with Tudjman's death, HDZ's election defeat and with a pro-EU government getting in charge. By engaging in cooperation with the EU, and especially by accepting the Western Balkan scheme, the new government opened Croatia's path to the EU accession process. However, as presented in this section, there is no consensus whether this new development was more in line with Croatia's position, or was a threat to Croatia's sovereignty.

Critical evaluation of the European Union

So far I have presented different narratives on both the EU itself and on Croatia's accession to this European integration. I have shown both approval and criticism for "the return to Europe" phase, isolation phase, and rapprochement phase. In this final section I will present and analyse new topics that started dominating the debate on the EU, which include a discussion on identity, on the European political system, the EU constitution etc. in order to present that nationalist and Eurosceptic discourse started declining.

In his article published in 2005, Ivan Prpic argues that with EU accession all member states managed to overcome historical antagonisms, gain economic prosperity, and achieve political and social soundness. Therefore, the author believes that accession to the EU is a desirable goal of almost all the states that still are not members of the Union (2005: 43). As for the process of integration he identifies that it is based on "universal enlightenment and liberal values", and that the existence of nation-states is not endangered, but national culture is losing its influence in political system (*ibid*, 49).

Here we can see, there was an explicit change in discourse, which followed Croatia's institutional approach to the EU. Accession to the EU is being perceived as a desirable goal

which does not impose a threat to the existence of nation-states; an argument that was often used by the Eurosceptics for non-cooperation with the EU. However, it is worth noting that in 2005 there still was a strong ambition among the EU states towards the enlargement, a trend which declined since 2008 and the economic crisis.

Zvonko Posavec (2006) analyses the influence of the EU on the state, constitution and people. In regards to the first one, he believes that all three basic elements of the state – territory, population, and sovereignty - are losing their meaning (2005:123). He says that territory is being more and more “internationalized and supranationalized” and is becoming less attached to a specific space, the population is becoming more mobile and disregards the state territory, and since 60% of legislation is being drawn up in Brussels national parliaments are losing their influence and are becoming “venues for local public entertainers” (*ibid*). Next he discusses the issue of constitutions, for which he believes that it is primarily an element of the state, with the role in its legal foundation. From that point he says that even though the EU is not a state, there is a general idea that the EU needs a constitution. The main reason for the EU to get a constitution is to recover from its legitimisation weakness and to set an orientation for further development (*ibid*, 124). As for the third issue, regarding the people, his main concern is reflected in the idea that in the nation state it is the people who are seen as the basis for the government’s legitimisation. The EU’s problem is the legitimization comes from the nation states, and not on its unitary people (*ibid*).

For Davor Rodin (2004:215) the central issue is the one about the deficit of democratic legitimacy that can be seen to derive from the lack of European people, which would be the bearers of democratic will of Europeans. Rodin believes that European peoples should start making a distinction between their cultural-historical identity and their political identity, as a prerequisite for establishing a democratic legitimisation of the EU. “Sovereign would become European political people, which is not the same as culturally-historical peoples of Europe

that are not under a threat with such a distinction” (*ibid*, 248). New Europe should unite on political bases, with political and constitutional protection of national identities that is going to enable political legitimisation for new European politics (*ibid*: 249).

Both Rodin and Posavec focus on an important aspect of the EU’s political system, and that is the one on the democratic deficit. As I have mentioned in the introduction, this approach can be seen as a constructive analysis and criticism. However, in the case of the two authors, we can identify their suggestions on how a certain crisis can be overcome in order for the EU political system to acquire more legitimacy. Such a solution was implemented in the Lisbon treaty, which gave more power to the European Parliament.

At the point when it seemed that the European Constitution was going to be ratified, Damir Grubisa (2005) identified that “such European Constitution represents a compromise between federalist political ideas, intergovernmental politics, and national interests of member states” (2005:53), and one of the main accomplishments of this Constitution for Grubisa is that it reduces the democratic deficit of political institutions of the EU (*ibid*, 59). However, he points out several dilemmas around an EU constitution: whether EU needs it and whether it creates a European super-state; whether Brussels is becoming too powerful in its political decision-making; and whether a Constitution can bring any concrete benefits to EU citizens (*ibid*, 74-75).

Another issue that can be identified both in the work of Posavec and Grubisa is the notion on the power Brussels is accumulating, and that the decision making that influences all EU member states is being concentrated in one centre. Interestingly, the same comment can be found in both Euro-optimistic and Eurosceptic camp, since Posavec and Grubisa generally have a positive attitude towards the EU and therefore present the former, unlike Nenad Ivankovic, whose work I present next, and who falls within the latter camp.

Nenad Ivankovic²⁷ (2011) focused on the (mal)functioning of the EU to a great extent, reflecting on the crisis in Greece, unemployment in Spain, Portugal, and the crisis in the Eurozone in general. In his opinion, it was the loss of monetary sovereignty that has run Greece into crisis, and believes that a similar course of development might take place in Croatia. As for the Croatian context, firstly he identifies that there has not been a serious and inclusive public debate about the costs and benefits of accession, and that the EU is presented as an unquestionable goal for Croatia (2011:7). Although he admits that the EU is “historically a successful project”, he points out that significant number of people are protesting throughout the EU due to austerity measures (2011:8). He criticizes both the EU for its strict bureaucracy, but also criticizes the mentality of Croatian pro-Europeans who believe that membership in the EU is sort of a *deus ex machine* that is going to resolve all the troubles in the state (2011:223). His solution is that Croatia should be more like Switzerland or Norway – to have economic ties with the EU, but to stay outside of the integration and to form an *authentic* Croatia, as an alternative to the EU (2011:211).

We can see here also the influence of the economic crisis that rattled the EU in the late 2000s, since the problems of austerity measures, monetary sovereignty and crisis in the Eurozone come into focus. Ivankovic also brings to this debate the notion that Croatia should pursue neutrality in the international political arena. However, as mentioned, Jovic pointed that “isolation was neither desirable nor viable in the long-term. In order to survive as a state, Croatia must join European institutions” (2006:13).

²⁷ Nenad Ivanković is a Croatian journalist. In 2003 he formed a political party called “Independence and Prosperity” (*Samostalnost i napredak*) for which he stated that was oriented liberally-conservative and that it opposes Croatian accession to the EU and NATO

Marjan Bosnjak²⁸ (2010) covers around 30 topics that are related to the EU and to Croatia's accession, focusing firstly on the loss of sovereignty that is seen as an inevitable result of the Lisbon treaty, due to which Croatia is going to "lose all of its attributes of an independent state and, with only 4.3 million citizens, is going to become one of the smallest provinces within the multinational state" (2010: 15). In a political sense, Croatia will become a "statistical error", due to its marginal representativeness of less than 1% (2010:21). The author regrets that there has not been a proper democratic debate in Croatia on the EU, especially because he highlights that Eurobarometer polls for the period 2005-2009 show that Croats do not want to enter the EU (2010:35). Further on he presents his radical argument that the origins of European integration (as we know it today) was set not in the work of Monnet and Schuman, but within Nazi politicians from the 1940's. "The undisputed fact is that they [Schuman and Monnet, B.F.] are not the conceptual architects of political unification of Europe, since there are numerous evidences showing that it was the Nazis and their collaborators around Europe who had developed detailed plans for unification" (2010:300). The author develops such an argument by using the quote of Josef Göbbels from 1945 saying that "in 2000 Europe will be a united continent" (2010:293), or that Hitler's associates used the phrase "European Community". Such a comparison seems more like conspiracy theory and not a serious debate on the European Union.

As for the identity issue, Kresimir Petkovic²⁹, in his article published in 2007, identifies that the EU was facing another crisis, which happened one year after the EU constitution failed in the referendums. In this crisis, he argues, a significant problem was related to democratic and legitimization deficit, which calls upon rethinking some fundamental questions of the European project, like the question of European identity (2007:807). "If subjects of a certain regime do

²⁸ Marjan Bošnjak is Secretary General of a political party "Croatia Only" (*Jedino Hrvatska*) that declares itself as a party focused on preserving Croatian national sovereignty gained in the Homeland War, and that opposes Croatia's accession to the Western Balkans, to the EU and NATO

²⁹ Krešimir Petković is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb

not identify themselves with it, its legitimacy is questionable; without legitimacy, there cannot be either effective or efficient government, and the endurance of the regime is uncertain” (ibid). Petkovic believes that ethno cultural elements of identity are crucial when building a community and stable political regime, and therefore the paradigm of constructing transnational political identity leads to uncertain results. He concludes that “universal rights and political institutions on the European level have not been able to dismantle nation-state loyalties, and it is dubious whether there is any possibility for such a thing to occur” (ibid, 821).

Cipek³⁰ (2005) points to a correlation of problems of legitimisation of the political system and those of forming a European identity, and believes that without a European identity, there cannot be proper legitimisation of the politics of the EU (2004: 139). Moreover, he is confident that it is not possible to form a European nation, since such a project is lacking “common myths, idea of a single homeland, but a common European culture as well”, and continues that there are better chances to form “a European demos, based on more participation of European citizens in the democratic institutions of the Union” (ibid, 142).

Interestingly, both Cipek and Petkovic identify that democratic deficit is streaming out of the lack of European identity, which gives a new insight into the possible solutions for the problems that were addressed by Posavec, Rodin and Grubisa.

Rudolf³¹ fears that within the EU, bigger nations will not have a problem preserving their national identities – language, culture, traditions - albeit smaller nations are going to have more problems and are going to face more risk in preserving their national identities (2011:111). He is confident that the states of Europe are facing a new political, sovereign, independent entity and that a European State is being created (ibid: 113). In such a new union,

³⁰ Tihomir Cipek is a Professor at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb

³¹ Davorin Rudolf is a member of Croatian Academy of Science and Arts. He was a University Professor of International Law

national sovereignties are going “to melt”, and the main role of the nation-state is going to be preservation of national identity (*ibid*). However, he concludes that even though the EU is not the best solution for Croatia, it still is the only solution, because the only alternative is “rotting on the European periphery” (*ibid*, 115).

This position brings a new point of view to the debate, since it sees the main role of nation-states in preserving national identities, and not in EU policy making.

Slaven Letica³² makes a similar argument when he points out that Croats have the right to be fearful of losing their national and cultural identity in the EU, since it is a real threat to small European nations, just like the Croatian nation, and Croatian language and culture are not influential in European proportions (2011: 42). He is confident that within the EU identities of bigger European nations are going to dominate, and that it is not likely that in the next 20 years European identity will become as important as national identity (*ibid*, 43).

In the introduction of the book entitled “Croatian Identity in the European Union” (2003), Stjepan Baloban³³ draws our attention to the distinctive subordinating Croatian mentality, developed through centuries of different integrations (Austro-Hungary, Yugoslavias), that makes Croats believe that it is normal to have “powerful others” decide on Croatian interests (2003:5). Having in mind that the experiment with “Eastern integrations” failed, even though communism shattered important identity foundations such as family, religion, culture, and nation, Croatia was then facing Western integration and should openly promote its national identity in order to “feel in Europe as in her own house” (2003:9). This approach reflects the idea that joining the EU would lead Croatia to a “new Yugoslavia” and therefore the EU poses similar threat to Croatian identity as the communist regime did. However, if national identity manages to be preserved, Croatia could become an equal member in the EU.

³² Slaven Letica is a Professor of Sociology at the School of Medicine, University of Zagreb. He was a member of Croatian Parliament 2003-2007 as an independent member of Croatian Party of Rights

³³ Stjepan Baloban is a Professor at the Faculty of Theology, University of Zagreb

To summarize: when Croatia's accession came into realization, and the negotiation process was opened, new kinds of topics started dominating the debate on the EU. In the same period, the EU went through a political crisis which also reflected in this debate. It seems that only in the second part of the 2000's Croatian debate left the burden of Tudjmanist discourse behind and started focusing on more contemporary issues. Therefore, only in this time period I can identify the dominance of Euro-optimistic approach, however it may seem critical on the European project at certain points.

CHAPTER 4 - CONCLUSION

The Croatian intellectual debate has been following the developments of Croatia-EU relations from the beginning of the 1990s, and until today it has reflected upon dominant issues that has characterized this relation. And as I have argued in the thesis, the analysis of the national intellectual debate shows that Croatia's attempt to join the EU was more of an empty phrase for the first decade and a half of its independence, because the intellectual debate reveals high level of nationalist isolationism and antagonism towards the EU. At first, in the centre of the debate was the notion of the "Return to Europe", which was supposed to legitimize both the international recognition and prevent – or once it escalated – stop the war in former Yugoslavia. The idea of this "Return" was based on the geographical and historical legacy of Croatia and, as I have shown in the first part, soon proved to be inadequate for Croatia's attempt to "Return" to Europe. After initial enthusiasm, came disappointment which led to isolation, until the changes in 2000. However, as I have presented, the instalment of the new government does not necessarily mean that an entire decade of malfunctioning democracy could be resolved. Therefore this government did not even open the negotiation process with the EU, but made significant progress. This progress was mostly related to the cooperation with ICTY, to regional cooperation, and to the politics towards Serbs in Croatia and Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina. And such progress had a dramatic influence on the Croatian intellectual debate, since it was strongly attacked by the nationalists, but criticized to a certain extent by the Europeanists as well. When the negotiation process finally started, most of the debate changed its focus on the implications of Croatia's accession and on the EU's internal structure and affairs.

The main limitation of this thesis is a certain bias towards a political science perspective. It goes without saying that there has been an invaluable contribution to this debate from legal studies, economics, sociology etc. Still, I have limited my research in this way in order to keep my findings coherent and comparable. Some further research could include a broader spectre, more authors and numerous disciplines. Translating all the authors from Croatian to English was quite a challenge as well. However, precisely because of that, this thesis has even greater value, because in the year when Croatia is accessing the EU many Croatian intellectuals and their work are becoming more accessible for a wider audience.

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