

**God, Guns and Guerrillas: On the Piety and Politics of Nationalism and
Irredentism in Kosovo**

Benjamin Gavin

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Abstract: This paper is organized into two parts. First, it examines the perennial question in academia pertaining to whether or not ‘nations and nationalism’ are constructs of European modernity or if they have existed in variable forms throughout the trajectory of history. The paper explores this question through the writings of influential academics in the field since the end of The Second World War. It ponders a primary question in this debate on the nature of religious nationalism vs. ethnic nationalism and whether their roots in the pre-modern era can be definitively distinguished from nationalism in the Modern Era. Turning to Kosovo, a seat of both Serbian religious nationalism and Albanian ethnic nationalism it then questions whether contemporary circuits of power have reverted to romantic national ideas of ethnically pure states by supporting the KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army) and its post-conflict predecessors in Kosovo. It ends with a discussion about the consequences of this process of reversion in the 21st century.

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II. Reflecting on the Moment by the Author: (22/08/2011)

On 22 July 2011, an explosive device detonated in the center of Oslo. Roughly an hour and a half later, while Norwegian authorities focused on the chaotic site of the bombing, a Christian, Caucasian, Norwegian citizen opened fire at a social-democratic youth summer camp sponsored by Norway's ruling party. To date, the gunman, Anders Behring Breivik, has admitted to the facts of the massacre and has stated that his actions were justified by his intentions. These intentions were outlined in *2083: A European Declaration of Independence*, a 1518-page manifesto, in which he fulminates against Islamic immigration and multiculturalism in Europe and claimed that Europe's Christian history was under siege. It was sent out electronically hours before the attacks.

Breivik states that a significant impetus that caused him to turn toward the trigger was the 1999 NATO bombings of Serbia in partnership with the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). Breivik, like Serbia and Russia (and even the United States until shortly before the 1999 NATO bombing), considered the Kosovo Liberation Army an Islamic insurgency illegally taking arms against and promoting secession from a legitimate state – Serbia. But Breivik also saw, and cited in his Manifesto, another dimension that disturbed him: Christian Europe, via NATO, abandoning its Christian brethren in Serbia to side with Kosovar Muslims.

If this view on the KLA and NATO collaboration was powerful enough to compel domestic terrorism in peaceful Norway, it is certainly worth examining in the context of religious nationalism.

And at the time of writing, riots are raging and border crossings between Serbian and Albanian-controlled Mitrovica are burning. While at the same time Germany's Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle is stating that an ethnic partition of Kosovo's northern region Mitrovica, Europe's newest Frozen Conflict, is completely off the table even though Germany was one of the most ardent supporters of an ethnic partition of Kosovo in 1999. It is prudent to look at how the role of religion and ethnicity in contemporary European society and the events in Kosovo in 1999 interact, although the relationship is tenuous at best, and still reverberate across Europe and the Globe in the summer of 2011.

III. The Preface:

Balkan Bias: The Problem with Balkan Historiography

There are two main issues at stake when dealing with the historiography of Kosovo, and the historical literature on the Balkans in general. The first is a Western problem, and it was simply put by historian Mark Mazower: 'Writing off Balkan violence as primeval or unmodern has become a way for the West to keep the desired distance from it.'¹ National violence in the West has been interpreted as an inevitable product of politics and economics, while at the same time the West has often quickly reverted to the well worn 'ancient ethnic hatreds' axiom when it comes to violence in the Balkans.

The second, and more problematic, is personal bias. The problem of bias operates on many different levels in relation to the historiography of the Balkans. It is difficult, even for the most objective academic, to remain on the fence regarding issues of genocide and ethnic cleansing. Remaining aloof to evil is nothing to be proud of as an academic; some situations require judgment calls and the Balkans often do. That being said, the historiography of the Kosovo conflict is replete with academics, journalists, authors and policy makers choosing sides. One need only read one of Alain Finkelkraut's articles during the 1991-1995 conflict of Yugoslav secession to see an unmistakable Croatian bias.² Or listen to one of then American Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's sound bites from Rambouillet to hear an outright anti-Serb sentiment. The Rambouillet meetings occurred before the bombing of Serbia and presumably at that time the USA was completely objective in its analysis of the Kosovo situation.

Balkan bias is not mere rhetoric; rather, it stems from a cruel legacy of ethnic violence that has permeated Kosovo from its bloody reincorporation into Serbia at the end of World War I. Leon Trotsky, traveling the region as a journalist for *Pravda* in 1912 and 1913 reported the atrocities instigated by Serbian troops as the Albanians fled south: 'The horrors actually began as we entered Kosova: entire Albanian villages had been turned into pillars of fire.'³ And a Carnegie Endowment for International Peace report stated that 'houses and whole villages [were] reduced to ashes, unarmed and innocent populations massacred en masse, incredible acts of violence, pillage, and brutality of every kind... with a view to the entire transformation of the ethnic character of regions inhabited exclusively by Albanians.'⁴ Instances such as these strongly crystallized the bias among Serbs, who saw the retaking of Kosovo as a historical vindication for five hundred years of repression by Muslim Turkish occupiers, and, similarly, among Kosovar Albanians whose ancestors were victims of slaughters during both World Wars.

Unfortunately, bias still penetrates the Kosovo question today, as an example from March 2008 demonstrates. After Kosovo declared its independence in 2008, the Frontline Club, the respected London-located press club, held a forum on Kosovo's independence. In his opening

¹ Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: A Short History*, (Modern Library, 2002) 154.

² See: Alain Finkelkraut, *Dispatches from the Balkan War and Other Writings*, (University of Nebraska, 1999).

³ Iain King and Whit Mason, *Peace At Any Price: How The World Failed Kosovo*, (Cornell, 2006): 31.

⁴ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars* (Washington, 1914): p. 151. In Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Cornell, 1984): 296.

remarks Misha Glenny, a former Balkan correspondent for *The Economist* and author of several books on the region, stated that the process of independence was mismanaged and that the Ahtisaari plan, one proposed by Finnish diplomat Martti Ahtisaari to resolve the status of Kosovo in Serbia, would not be a solid pathway to lasting peace in Kosovo. In the exchange that followed, a journalist and member of the current Kosovar government, immediately accused Glenny of being a Serbian sympathizer. He charged that obviously Glenny believes that Kosovo still should be part of Serbia, despite Glenny's firm retort that he said nothing of the sort.⁵ In fact, a review of the transcript would show that while Glenny had criticized mismanagement of the process, he had made no assertion that Kosovo should be part of Serbia. A parsing of the exchange reveals the depth and reflexive nature of biases that are deeply held. For the Kosovars, the issue was black and white: Glenny was either *for* or *against* them, with no middle ground. For this particular Kosovar, despite his credentials as a journalist making him at least theoretically grounded in objectivity, it was impossible to criticize the process without delegitimizing the outcome.

The problem of bias related to Serbia and Kosovo has been long been evident even in historical literature. Perhaps the most-read book in English about the Balkans is Rebecca West's interwar travelogue, *Black Lamb Grey Falcon* (it also is part history, mythology, theology, art history, anthropology, and an exploration of sexuality). West's pro-Serbian bias stands out on nearly every page. When West enters plains of Kosovo, she remarks: 'Kosovo, more than any other site I know, arouses that desolation...It has a look of innocence which is the extreme of guilt. For it is crowded with the dead, who died in more than their flesh, whose civilization was cast with them into their graves. It is more tragic than even its own legend'.⁶ Over the course of the book, it becomes exceedingly clear that her bias regarding the Balkans is also rooted in the perspectives of a British woman on the eve of the Second World War and reflects in her feelings and fears about what was happening on the continental climate at the time. Keeping in mind that West's travels took place from 1936 to 1938 in the charged atmosphere of the late interwar years, we are prone to forgive her racist attitudes as products of the contemporary *Zeitgeist*.

Of the best available studies is historian Miranda Vickers' *Between Serb and Albanian: A History of Kosovo*. Vickers is acutely aware of the problems of historiographical bias when doing her research on Kosovo. In the preface to her book she states: 'Albanian and Serbian scholars, most of whom are nationalist in orientation, have totally different theories about the ethnic development of Kosovo'.⁷ Vickers goes on to present Kosovo as a site of struggle and of push and pull for Serbia, first with the Turks and then with Albanians since pre-modern times. Vickers' work is a historical documentary, not theory, but she does lend credence to the conceptualization of both Serbs and Albanians as established pre-modern national communities before the accoutrements of statehood. This gives weight to the interpretations of nation by such scholars as Anthony D. Smith, Adrian Hastings, and Benedict Anderson who saw the nation as a fusion of the mythical and the imagined immemorial with its political construction in modernity, often in the form of statehood. This theoretical approach to understanding nationalism will undergird this paper.

⁵ The Frontline Club, *Independent Kosova*, (25/03/08). Podcast episode available at itunesU-The Frontline Club/Independent Kosova.

⁶ Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, (Viking, 1941): 838-839.

⁷ Miranda Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian: A History of Kosovo*, (Columbia, 1998): xii.

Part 1: Theory, Religion and the Past Tense (History)

Chapter 1 – On Modernity

1.1 On Nationalism and Modernity

In 2008, long after becoming one of the most distinguished academics in the field of nationalism studies, Anthony D. Smith admitted to those interested: ‘There is no simple or single terrain identifiable as that of “nations and nationalism,” despite our efforts to mark out clear boundaries, nor perhaps has there ever been one.’⁸ That does not mean that certain theoretical paradigms, or schools of thought, have not become embedded in academic, judicial, media, popular, diplomatic and political circles. After the Second World War, historical scholarship on nations and nationalism solidified into in a few readily identifiable dominant discourses. Concurrently, different academic disciplines developed different theoretical and analytical frameworks for the study of nations and nationalism, often ignoring the ‘classic debate’ among entrenched historians regarding whether or not nations and nationalism are primordial and divine or whether they are the byproducts of modernity.

This section will present a broad historical overview on the understanding of ‘nations and nationalism’ through an analysis of the ‘efforts to mark out clear boundaries,’ or create pervasive paradigms, by analyzing the theoretical constructions of some of the field’s most prominent scholars and influential writers in recent scholarship on the study of nations and nationalism.⁹ It will also touch on the failure by almost all observers (scholarly, strategic and diplomatic) to predict the fall of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. Later, it will introduce the concept of irredentism and its effect on ethnic nationalism in the post-Soviet and post-Yugoslav period and geographies and will offer a brief history of Kosovo, as well as attempt to situate Kosovo within the broader debate on nationalism and the related ideas of religious and ethnic nationalism. Because the issue of Kosovo is understood in decidedly religious terms by the Serbian community and decidedly ethnic terms as it relates to the Albanian Kosovars, it is important to understand the root systems that anchor both positions. It will trace the independence and recognition of Kosovo mindful of Patrick Geary’s theorization that this actually acts as a sanctioning agent for an idea popular among some 19th century romantic elites -- that ethnic purity of a state is the only way to prevent genocide.¹⁰ Finally, it will explore the consequences of this so-called ‘Kosovo Precedent’ on the international stage.

The debate on the modernity of nationalism is just that: an ongoing debate. Consequently, it is up for constant challenge and revision. In fact, by challenging the pervasive paradigms we are able to learn more than by uncritically accepting them as fact, a true joy of historical scholarship. The usual suspect called in as delineating a birth for the ‘classic debate’ on the relative modernity of nations and nationalism is 1789, the age of revolutions in Europe. The German historian Reinhart Kosseleck theorized that 1789 represented the dividing line for modernity when he introduced the concepts of ‘space of experience’ and ‘horizon of expectation’ as a way to conceptualize the schism between the pre-modern and modern worlds.¹¹

⁸ Anthony D. Smith, ‘The Shifting Landscape of “Nationalism”’, *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Vol. 8, No. 2, (2008): 318.

⁹ Ibid, 320.

¹⁰ Patrick Geary, *The Myth of Nations*, (Cornell, 2003): 12.

¹¹ Reinhart Kosseleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, (Massachusetts, 1985): 269-275.

Koselleck explains that before 1789, the 'space of experience' for most members of society was closed, meaning that the majority of the population was bounded by cultural, most oftentimes religious, norms and geo-specific particulars, and the past constantly imbued the present by religious views on the nature of time itself and accepted and defining socio-economic relationships such as serfdom and the guild system.¹² To Koselleck, the pre-Modern era was an era of *cyclical time* and *cyclical time* was determined by God, whereas after 1789, a new 'horizon of expectations,' or the *present future* was unveiled to the participants in the new European societies. With the onset of industrialization and the urbanization of the population, no longer did the burdens of the past so fully determine the expectation for the future, and men became more free to choose their own destinies regardless of birth status and location, both social and geographic. Time became *linear* to participants in this new society.

While Koselleck's main intent was to show that a shift occurred in man's awareness of historical time from a cyclical to linear progressive model, his analysis of modernity as a construct and as a product of man's growing awareness of historical time itself and man's recognition of the schism in historical time in which they were participating is also quite useful to gain a better understanding of the modernist view on nationalism. Koselleck's analysis is a precursor for some of the most prominent modernists, including Eric Hobsbawm and Ernest Gellner. If the modernist assumption is to be accepted as fact and 1789 represents the origination of Modernity in Europe by shedding its religious and socio-cultural determinist aspects, then it follows that the era of European nationalism ushered in by the French Revolution must also be a secular phenomena, for it relies on its distinct break from religious control of society, of man's personal lives, and of the calendar.

In the wake of the Renaissance, Reformation and the French, American and Industrial revolution(s), with the shift from agricultural to industrial society, and as a result of the Copernican revolution and Enlightenment, man's expectations in Western Europe diverged from previous experience. The Middle Ages were defined as a time when populations were controlled by priests and princes and in an attempt to mark a break with this construct, *self-determination* entered the vocabulary of European and peripheral societies. The long-held belief in the divine nature of European royals was challenged. As kings' crowns crumbled and a queen's head rolled under the duress of their own peasants across Europe, the Modern Era gave way to new forms of governance -- namely forms of elite democracy. The elite classes who took over the governance of Europe from its kings had little conception that the peasants who worked their estates should also be included in the process of 'national' politics¹³. In Germany, with this political revolution, new notions of a primordially determined nation-state fortified along 'natural' ethnic, linguistic and cultural lines emerged as part of the dominant discourse in the new politics of Europe.¹⁴

It was in this charged atmosphere of the late 18th and 19th centuries, that German thinkers such as Fichte, von Humboldt, and Herder espoused and gained currency for a mythical and cultural approach to the determination of nations and national space in the new European landscape, an approach primarily centered on language, even though the German example hardly fit their idea of a Germanic 'nation' existing since the first century.¹⁵ While the role of religion,

¹² *Ibid*, 277.

¹³ Geary, 19.

¹⁴ Geary, 21.

¹⁵ Geary, 22-25.

especially the Protestant Reformation played a role in defining the German identity, the German federal state that formed in 1871 did *not* exclude Bavarian Catholics because the cultural and linguistic similarities trumped the role of sectarian religion. Tragically, in the twentieth century, these romantic ideas of united German speaking communities were revived and revitalized by Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany in its quest to dominate parts of Central and Eastern Europe. For all its historical follies, this type of romantic nationalism has not yet lost its sway, and for our purposes, the recent crusade for an ethnically and linguistically united Albanian community in the southern Balkans can also be seen through this paradigm.

In contrast to the German linguistic determinism espoused by Fichte and Herder, the French philosopher Ernest Renan offered a new theorization of the nation as a spiritual and uniting force. In his famous essay at Sorbonne in 1882, he introduced the ‘voluntaristic’ concept, which offered a less exclusive notion of belonging than the predominant German *Zeitgeist*.¹⁶

Modernist scholars like Hobsbawm and Gellner would later assert that the underpinnings of our current conception of nationalism were born in the formation of the modern era.

Modernists assert that nationalism is a product of the particular circumstances of the early modern era, notably the waning influence of the sacred texts, the rise of industrial capitalism, urbanization, mass education and literacy campaigns, combined with the discrediting of the idea of royalty, and the subsequent need for a new mechanism to control the population and provide for military mobilization. Thus, the nation-state, regardless of its trappings, was the only suitable, and – indeed inevitable – option for the reorganization and governance of society in modern Europe.

The Modernist school tends to downplay the religious architecture of modern era nationalism and often treats the role of religion in society as an impediment to nationalist mobilization because of its paramount and universalistic tendencies. This error caused the modernist camp to be caught by surprise as socialism was swept from the scene in the years between 1989 and 1991. While Modernists downplayed the role of religion in the formation of nationalism, and many analysts wrote it off as all but dead during the Cold War, when socialist Europe began to disintegrate in 1989, politicians and elites across the socialist sphere quickly learned how to harness the power of history and religion, particularly the national histories of Eastern Orthodoxy, to (re)assert national identities and to mobilize lethal nationalisms across the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. This will be addressed further in chapter 2.

1.2 Setting the Stage: Five decisive events

Before discussing the Modernist debate itself, it is essential first to provide context to the era in which the conceptualization of nations and nationalism as modern constructs was formed. In the 20th century, a few important pivots, or what we can call ‘seismic’ events, irrevocably shifted the landscape of the scholarship of nations and nationalism. These decisive shaping events – the successful Bolshevik Revolution, the concurrent collapse of European imperial rule with the end of the First World War, and the emergence of German irredentism in the period between the two world wars – occurred in a relatively short time and with profound and powerful

¹⁶ Ernest Renan, ‘What is a Nation?’, (Sorbonne, 1882). Full text available at: http://www.cooper.edu/humanities/core/hss3/e_renan.html (01/03/2011).

repercussions. These were subsequently followed by two more pivotal and defining events – WWII and the collapse of the Soviet Union.

First, the successful Bolshevik revolution in the formerly Russian imperial lands created the Soviet Union (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics). First, the successful Bolshevik revolution in the formerly Russian imperial lands created the Soviet Union (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics). The initial revolution proclaimed self-determination for nationalities. But soon after the revolution, a centralized system of institutionalized ethno-federalism emerged, emanating from Moscow out to its constituent republics, an arrangement which lasted de facto until the 1991.¹⁷

The second, and essentially concurrent, event was the nearly wholesale collapse of imperial rule in Europe after the First World War, creating a spate of new states supported by the prevailing idealistic notions of self-determination propagated by Woodrow Wilson and the League of Nations. This had particular impact in the formerly Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian imperial frontiers across Southeastern Europe. Emblematic of the Western view of the Balkans is that it was during this time that the term, “*Balkanize*” entered the English lexicon, meaning to ‘divide (a region or body) into smaller mutually hostile states or groups.’ This Orientalist *leitmotif* regarding the Balkans as a space and peoples disconnected from Europe and divided among themselves, persists in Western thought until this day.¹⁸

The third decisive influence was the rise of German irredentism in the years preceding the Second World War. Irredentism is essentially the call for political and economic unification or reunification among peripheral cultural or co-ethnic communities that are isolated from the core cultural or ethnic community. The claims for union or re-union of a cultural community that has been separated territorially from its co-ethnics can emanate from the periphery or from the center or both. In the former, peripheral communities see themselves as in some way economically disadvantaged or deliberately politically discriminated by the state in which they currently reside, as is the case with the Tetovo region in Macedonia or Kosovar Albanians during the Yugoslav era. This can drive desire and sometimes action for union with the core community with potentially violent consequences as witnessed across the Balkans and Caucasus as the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia disintegrated.¹⁹ But, as was the nature of German irredentism in the interwar period, sometimes irredentism’s most potent sources of income can actually emanate from the core, not the diaspora. This is evident in the German example as the movement for unification spread from the core of Berlin to Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Saxony, Galicia, Siebenburgen, and Bessarabia.

In the context of the historiography of modern nations though, and our case study in particular, two later events, both intricately tied to the three events described above, may have

¹⁷ For an excellent review on the particularities of Soviet nationality policy in the early Bolshevik era see: Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*, (Cornell, 2005).

¹⁸ For a thorough examination of the dominant discourse regarding the Balkans in the West, see: Maria Todorova, ‘The Balkans: From Discovery to Invention’, *Slavic Review*, Vol. 53, No. 2, (Summer, 1994): 453-482.

¹⁹ See: Rogers Brubaker, ‘National Minorities, Nationalizing States, and External National Homelands in the New Europe’, *Daedalus*, Vol. 124, No. 2, (Spring, 1995): 108-111.

had the most profound impact on scholarly interpretations of nationalism in the late twentieth century.

First was the absolute economic and human devastation of the Second World War, as well as its particular brand of mechanical and brutal atrocity against humanity, specifically along racial and religious lines (mainly by the Nazi regime towards European Jews and Slavs and the Japanese Army against the Chinese civilian population). The scope of the hatred and the magnitude of the atrocity severely discredited any notion, certainly any Western academic notion, of race or racially defined and distinct communities as a politically and internationally legitimate bedrock of nations and nationalism in the post-war era.²⁰

Second, the domino-like collapse of the Soviet Union from its tiny Baltic republics to the Caucasus, its ensuing break with satellite states, the revolution in Bucharest, the wars in the Caucasus, and the bloody fall of Yugoslavia from 1989-1999 caused many scholars to question why nearly everybody got it wrong and did not see the collapse coming. This constellation of symbiotic events opened a Pandora's Box of nationalism-related questions from Europe to Central Asia and quickly (almost overnight in some instances) disoriented the dominant paradigm in studies on nationalism. With the end of the Cold War and, consequently, the erosion of conventional interpretations of nationalism, scholars and diplomats needed to quickly re-work their theories on nationalism. Unfortunately for the constituent populations of these regions, while scholars theorized, nationalist academics, politicians, clergy, and rank-and-file citizens picked up guns and rallied in the name of religion, self-determination, population unification and nationalism across post-Soviet and post-Yugoslav space.

1.3 Modernism in a Post-war world

For the reasons cited above, primarily the undermining of the previous discourse on nationalism caused by the Second World War, it is most pertinent to begin our analysis on the classic debate in the years following the regime of Nazi Germany. In post-war academia, a number of scholars presented their theorizations of nations as a construct of modernity. Eric Hobsbawm, Elie Kedourie, Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson are among the most influential modernists of this era. Both Gellner and Hobsbawm focused on the emerging role of the state engendered by the Age of Revolutions.

Gellner, echoing Kosseleck's earlier theories on historical time, focused on the rise of industrial society, the breakdown of agricultural society, and the mass migration and education of formerly rural inhabitants. He saw the changing landscape of physical and social mobility that manifested as migration from the periphery to the core, from subject to citizen, and from peasant to factory worker as the necessary antecedent factors in the rise of modern day nationalism. In other words, Gellner characterized nationalism as a phenomenon predicated by the rise of modern and industrialized Europe and the waning of the imperial power structures that had dominated the European order for centuries.²¹

²⁰ Anthony D. Smith, 'The Shifting Landscape of 'Nationalism'', *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Vol. 8, No. 2, (2008): 320.

²¹ Ernest Gellner, 'Nationalism', *Theory and Society*, Vol. 10, No. 6 (Nov. 1981) 753-776.

For his part, Hobsbawm, a Marxist, borrows his definition of nationalism from Gellner: to these scholars, nationalism is ‘primarily a principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent.’²² Hobsbawm enriches this definition, however, via a Marxist and modernist approach to nationalism, emphasizing that the need for structuring the new industrial and liberal society made the state the only workable alternative in post-1789 Europe. While these two scholars shared many views, one of the most important contributions of Hobsbawm’s work in the eyes of Modernists was his critique of Gellner’s analysis of nationalism as top-down. Up to this point, the analysis of the modernity of nationalism had been primarily seen as a process designed by elites to control the masses in the new industrial and urbanized European society. Hobsbawm, on the other hand, posited that it was essential also to analyze nationalist sentiment at the grassroots level, asserting, in essence, that the sense of belonging created by elite nationalizing ideologies may not have penetrated the new European society as deeply as scholars had first believed. Hobsbawm urged that a better understanding of the feeling of national belonging by ordinary citizens, was a vital gauge of the actual capacity of nationalist sentiment to and its ability to mobilize the populations in the new European nations.

The elite approach was also an important component for another prominent post-war scholar, Elie Kedourie. Kedourie, a modernist despite scholarly antagonism between him and Gellner, believed, like Hobsbawm, that nationalism was a product of the manipulation of particular historical and geographic circumstances by elites in modern Europe. Kedourie believed that nationalism, at heart, was an exclusionary ideology manipulated by elites to divide communities. Kedourie is perhaps most widely known for his assertion that the lasting impact of nationalism is essentially the codification of self-determination as a legitimate notion in the international community.²³ This sentiment would later be echoed by medievalist scholar Patrick Geary as the essential component of 19th nationalism and its utility value for attaining political autonomy from imperial powers. And in the context of this paper’s later study on the independence of Kosovo, Kedourie seems to be correct.

In 1983, Benedict Anderson unleashed *Imagined Communities* on the scholarly community. Since its publication it has, perhaps, become the most influential, most widely read and most quoted work on nations and nationalism in the last two decades. This chapter will not rehash the significant amount of scholarship produced on Anderson’s work, but it acknowledges the importance of Anderson’s influence and certain key precepts. Although Anderson is, in essence, a modernist, what is important to take from his work is his emphasis on the influence of increasing technological capacity to disseminate information and the utility of language and printed text in forming a national consciousness, be those texts be newspapers in Germany or novels in France.

In other words, he points to the use language (more and more widely disseminated via increasingly sophisticated technology) as a consolidating factor in national identification among rural communities. By tracing the development of Magyar nationalism (among others), Anderson advanced the concept that these early cultural and linguistic nationalisms were the first stepping-stones to the political nationalism of later generations in the Modern Era.²⁴ Anderson posits that

²² Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, (Oxford, 1983): 1. In: Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1870: Programme, Myth, Reality*, (Cambridge, 1990 (2010)): 9.

²³ Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, (Blackwell, 1960): 23, 57-86.

²⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (Verso, 1983): 101-111.

because of technological advancement in the printing realm, combined with the distribution capacity of an industrialized Europe, local literature was now widely available in the vernacular, causing a decline in influence of the sacred texts and such languages as Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Arabic. The waning of sacred texts helped to promote the new languages of Europe. French, German, or Hungarian became sacred components of the nation to the people who spoke it in cafes and read its words in novels and newspapers.

Adrian Hastings, certainly not a modernist in orientation, reminds us that Anderson's assertion, albeit valuable as a concept, is not entirely grounded in historical facts. When Anderson discusses the ebbing of the relevance of the sacred texts and languages, he treats Latin as sacred to Catholicism and Greek as monolithic to Orthodoxy, even though, as Hastings points out, by the end of the tenth century that the Bible had already been translated into twenty different vernaculars and that Christian masses were celebrated (and still are) in Armenian, Arabic, Coptic, Greek, and Ethiopian. Hastings notes also that in the 980s Kievan Rus, the early principality that would later become imperial Russia, would be converted by Byzantium and that shortly after Saints Cyril and Methodius and later Kliment would set about devising a Slavonic liturgical language that could be understood by its mainly illiterate and peasant converts across Russia and Southeastern Europe.²⁵ The fact that the Orthodox churches developed a vernacular Slavonic tongue understandable for the mainly peasant society eventually led to today's autocephalous, essentially ethnically federalized nature of Orthodox churches. This should not be underestimated in the scholarly domain and represents a shortcoming in Anderson's analysis.

During the heyday of modernism in the 1980s, other scholars of history were developing more fluid conceptions of the nation as both a pre-modern and a modern construct. These theorizations often centered on ethnic or cultural roots and the pervasive role of religion. These frameworks are most pertinent for this chapter and for our later analysis of Kosovo. On the other side of the fence from the modernists were the Medievalist scholars, the most prominent being Adrian Hastings. Another notable scholar on nationalism is Anthony D. Smith, though he is better described as *on the fence*, rather than *on the other side* of it and more recently, Patrick Geary, who while being a medievalist historian has a mixed modernist orientation as he has posited that nationalism as we experience today, especially the ethnic nationalism that exploded in the Balkans and Caucasus in the post-socialist landscape, is a product of 19th century romantic poets and politicians. He goes on to point out, however, that these elites used pre-modern myths and symbols as well as claims to medieval inhabitation (often the result of a migration which displaced the other inhabitants) to galvanize secessionist movements for political autonomy from the imperial powers of the era.²⁶

Most Medievalists focused primarily on medieval England as the emblematic 'proto-nation', existing well before modernity.²⁷ While these scholars did not challenge the idea that the nation-state was a modern construct, they argued that there exists a deeper cultural memory and a connection to myths and symbols far pre-dating 1789 within given groups that, in fact, constituted the national idea or nationalist sentiment used by modern-day statemakers to legitimize their construction, Geary states that 'the international community, including even

²⁵ Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*, (Cambridge, 1997): 194-195.

²⁶ Geary, 1-14.

²⁷ Hastings (1997), 35-65.

pluralistic societies such as the United States, accepts the basic premises that people exist as objective phenomena that the very existence of a people gives it the right to self-government. In other words, we assume that somehow, political and cultural identity are and have the right to be united.’²⁸ Geary’s assumption certainly fits into the international community’s interpretation of Kosovo as having a right to exist, but challenges then, whether or not it sanctions some form of irredentism in the form of unification of the ethnic Albanian community in the southern Balkans.

The position put forth by the Medievalists, scholars oriented by ethnic and Biblical considerations, challenged the dominant discourse that nations themselves were products of modernity. Rather, they argue, that nationalism may be modern, but nations may not.²⁹ To better understand this concept as it relates to the broader historiography of nationalism, we must now examine the role of ethnicity and religion in modern nationalism and the rather particular role of religion as a marker of ethnic identity in the Balkans, with the notable exception of Albania, a religiously heterogeneous state.³⁰

1.4 Modernism and Religion

As referenced earlier, a main problem with the Modernist view of nations and nationalism is that if one accepts that nations are a wholly modern construct, they are, by definition, inherently secular. By extension, this discredits the role of religion with its pre-modern origins and its other-worldly frameworks, making it difficult to explain the enduring religious identification and religious symbolism in the construction of modern states. This section will broadly discuss the relationship between ethnicity, religion, nation, and nationalism and show how closely related and symbiotic these often are. For their part, all of the Modernist scholars mentioned above downplayed the role of religion in fomenting nationalism.³¹ The absence of a discourse surrounding religion by the main Modernist scholars leaves the reader wondering if Modernists purposefully left out the religious aspect of nationalism because it would impede their arguments about the modernity of nationalism.³² This is because if Modernist, and oftentimes Marxist, scholars were to acknowledge that religion, something almost wholly pre-modern, was a pervasive factor in modern nationalism it would dissuade the argument that nationalism is a product of elitist manipulation from the 18th century forward.

This portion of the chapter explores the correlation between the elements present in both religion and the nation and in both religious rhetoric and nationalist discourse. If we examine closely the relationship between religion and nationalism, we see common themes present in both discourses. Both the confessional community and the nation share a cult of ‘imagined community,’ but perhaps the most important correlation between religion and the nation lies in how both confessional communities and nations share a belief in the sacred.³³ Both share the use of sacred stories (indeed, sometimes ‘creation stories’), sacred sites, sacred space, sacred

²⁸ Geary, 12.

²⁹ Anthony D. Smith, ‘The Shifting Landscape of ‘Nationalism’’, *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Vol. 8, No. 2, (2008): 316-328.

³⁰ Ger Duijzings, *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo*, (Columbia, 2000):157-175.

³¹ Barbara Ann Riefer, ‘Religion and Nationalism: Understanding the Consequences of a Complex Relationship’, *Ethnicities*, Vol. 3, (2003):215-240.

³² *Ibid*, 216.

³³ *Ibid*, 217.

symbols, and sacred figures to help explain and justify their beliefs and actions, whether as a confessional community or as a nation.

The next chapter will broadly outline the relationship between the religious community and the nation. It will identify and trace lines of continuity between pre-modern religious tradition and modern national traditions, with a focus on the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Balkans. That is not to say that this author posits that the modern nation-state is merely a continuation of religious community organizational structures. That would be too simple a construction; instead, my aim is to show how pre-modern religious elements were important factors in fostering and growing national consciousness in the Balkans during the late 19th century and that these seeds were reinvigorated as potent focal point for the mobilization of violence after socialism and ethno-federalism failed in the former Yugoslavia.

To do that, first it is important to re-conceptualize the traditional understandings of the process of nation formation and the advent of nationalism in Europe. Instead of musing whether nationalism is a product of modernity, it is more useful for our study to utilize the model of European nation building and nationalisms as having three distinct but inter-related phases in Europe as espoused by such academics as Ina Merjadnova.³⁴ This conceptualization proposes three phases of nationalism from West to East Europe in a line of succession from 1789 to the early twentieth century.

1.5 Competing Conceptions of Nation Building

First, there is the horizontal and ‘voluntaristic’ nation exemplified by France and discussed by Renan after the Revolution; second, there is the romantic and divine Germanic-styled linguistic nationalism, or *Volksgeist*, that suggested the nation exists ‘before’ and ‘above’ the people’s realization of it; and, third (and most important for the topic of this study), there is the Eastern European variation of nationalism born of its juxtaposition against the Romanov, Ottoman, and Habsburg dynasties in the 19th and 20th century. This third and Eastern phase is essentially a secessionist nationalism, whose power and fuel rested in its *differentiation from the imperial overlord*, oftentimes directly and antithetically related to the imperial power’s religious aspect. Consequently, the use of pre-modern religious symbolism as a legitimizing force is present in almost all Eastern European nationalisms of this era and still is today.

It is essential also to understand a key dimension of this three-fold framework – the religious implications. The first phase related to France, which was Catholic, and by its famous Revolution shed the religious burden of Catholic universalism in favor of the secular and progressive nation-state, another universalist construction. The second was primarily a product of the Protestant Reformation, the German-originated split that encompassed much of Western Europe and the consequent dismissal of Latin from the liturgy, which related to the Protestant conceptualization of linguistic connection and assimilation among populations who spoke a like tongue. The third phase was primarily Orthodox which relied on its Orthodox traditions, especially the autocephalous nature of its churches and vernacular liturgy, along with romantic notions of previous empires such as the Greek, Bulgarian, and Serbian to gather support for uprisings against the Islamic Turk and Catholic Austrian control in the Balkans.³⁵

³⁴ Ina Merdjanova, ‘In search of Identity: Nationalism and Religion in Eastern Europe’, *Religion, State & Society*, vol.2 8, no. 3, 2000: 242-244.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 233-259.

While the West may have seen this utilization of religion as backward or archaic when juxtaposed against the secularizing trends of Western Europe, it has been forcefully argued by the likes of Mark Mazower that these secessionist movements were attempts by the rebelling Balkan nations to demonstrate their desire to leave the imperial age behind and join the ranks of modern European states. But as the 1913 Second Balkan War between Serbia and Bulgaria in (which was fought mainly in present day Macedonia a geography which both Bulgarians and Serbs claimed as their own historic territory) demonstrated, these new notions of nationhood in the Balkans quickly turned internecine in order to lay claim to land once inhabited by their respective ancestors. For it was during this era that the notion of Old Serbia stirred again.

After the Second Balkan War in 1913, Serbia controlled the area north of the river Vardar in Macedonia all the way down to the present-day border of Albania. Kosovo and Vardar Macedonia are, therefore, the main geographic centers for the dream of Old Serbia and this epicenter became the framework for the ambitions of Radovan Karadzic, a psychiatrist and academic, and Vojislav Seselj, a lawyer and leader of the Serbian Radical Party. Both were Bosnian-Serb generals during the wars in Bosnia and Croatia, and each called for a Greater Serbia in Bosnia-Herzegovina and a restoration of Serb dominance in Kosovo in the early 1990s.

But this same geography also overlaps almost perfectly with the ideal of Greater Albania, first proposed in 1878 at the First League of Prizren, which petitioned the great powers to recognize Albanians as a separate ethnicity and envisioned an ethnic Albanian state in the southern Balkans.³⁶ This 'dream' was revitalized in 1913 and invigorated in sentiment during the Italian occupation in Second World War (we will discuss this in more depth later). Consequently, both populations, Serb and Albanians, have deeply entrenched and competing visions for this same particular geography. Albanians have cherished the idea of unification for nearly a century. Serbs have prized the concept of re-unification and restoration of their medieval kingdom centered in Kosovo even longer.

Taking this three-pronged approach reveals a different and more textured trajectory for nationalism in Europe than the primarily monolithic debate between primordialists and modernists. When we realize that the nationalisms that sprung up across Europe borrowed elements from one another, remaking them in alignment with particular historical and cultural circumstances, we also can see that nationalism, in general, borrows and assimilates the elements that make its particular brand a productive and compelling emotional force for its peoples. Because most of the cultural differences in the Balkans are organized along religious lines, it is only natural that religious nationalism was, and is, the most productive, potent, and lethal brand of nationalism in the Balkans in the past, as well as in the present. There is nothing more sacred than God, and if God sanctions your nation as Serbian mythology propagates, there is nothing more sacred than your nation.

1.6 Clashing Civilizations?

As historian Mark Mazower mentioned in the preface, one problem in dealing with conflicts in the Balkans is that they are too often oversimplified by Western academics. Writing

³⁶ Christopher Merrill, *Only the Nails Remain: Scenes From The Balkan Wars*, (Rowman and Littlefield, 1999):229; Miranda Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian: A History of Kosovo*, (Columbia, 1998); 43-56.

off the Balkans as a historical zone of ‘civilizational’ interplay, and, therefore, a site of contemporary and future conflict has been in vogue for nearly a century now.³⁷ It was Winston Churchill who famously said, ‘The Balkan peoples are loaded with more history than they can bear.’ But since Samuel Huntington’s famous 1993 essay in *Foreign Policy* this orientalist personification has taken a very prominent role in policy.³⁸ Huntington proclaimed that the wars of Yugoslav secession were the consequence of geographic and historic particularities of the Balkans and posited that the ‘clash’ of civilizations’ underway in the Balkans would be a primer for the new zones of conflict in the post-Communist world.

Huntington contended that because the Balkan peninsula was the meeting point of three of Europe’s most significant continental empires – the Ottoman, the Habsburg, and the Romanov – and that because each of these empires also varied by their religious preference, Islam in the Ottoman, Catholicism in the Habsburg, and eastern Orthodoxy in the Romanov, the Balkans were not only a zone of imperial ambition, but of ‘civilizational’ differentiation and, therefore, represented the new challenge to peace in the post-Soviet world. Huntington believed that after socialism fell in Yugoslavia, these pre-20th century conceptions of identity, rooted deeply in religious traditions, had re-emerged as the dominant dividing lines among the warring factions. But Huntington’s brush stroke was too broad in general and far too broad for the Balkans, in particular. Huntington fell into the common and simplistic trap that, as Ivo Banac puts it, ‘Because South Slavic cultural diversity is really religiously based, there have been numerous attempts to link the country’s divisions to religious intolerance.’³⁹

³⁷ Maria Todorova, ‘The Balkans: from Discovery to Invention’ *Slavic Review*, Vol. 53, No. 2, 1994: 453-482.

³⁸ Samuel Huntington, ‘The Clash of Civilizations’, *Foreign Policy* (1993): 22-49.

³⁹ Ivo Banac in: Sabrina Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, (Westview, 1999): xvi.

Chapter 2: Ethnic and Religious Roots of Nationalism, or Religion, Ethnicity and Nationalism

2.1 Anthony Smith and Patrick Geary on Pre-Modern Ethnicity and Modern Day Nationalism

While Smith proposed that markers of pre-modern ethnic identity lay at the heart of modern national consciousness, he also was quick to assert that ethnicity itself was a malleable identity, one that could change over time through assimilation and migration or in response to current political dynamics.⁴⁰ This is particularly true in the Balkans, where, because of mass migration and imperial colonization, religious identity also became a marker of ethnic identity. This identity was subsequently used to demarcate social and political standing, as well as territorial delineation according to religion during the Ottoman and Habsburg occupations of the Balkan peoples.⁴¹ The comparisons and contrasts between ethnic community and religious community are perhaps among the most difficult to define in the scholarship of nationalism. But in the Balkans, for better or worse, the predominant conception of religious preference as the principal demarcation point between ethnic communities has resulted in horrific violence for and between the Albanian, Serbian, Croat and Bosnian peoples. (The following chapter revisits this issue in more detail). Because the religious connection between past and present offers us the most pertinent theorization on nations and nationalism for our study of Old Serbia and Greater Albania, we will revisit this dynamic throughout the thesis.

To back his claim on the duality of nations and nationalism as being *both* primordial and modern, Smith offers definitions of three essential categories - ethnic community, nations, and nationalism. In Smith's mind, these constitute the correct components required for the successful conceptualization of nations and nationalism today. Smith states: 'Here I define *an ethnic community* (or *ethnie*) as a named human population of alleged common ancestry, shared memories and elements of common culture with a link to a specific territory and a measure of solidarity; a '*nation*' as a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties; and '*nationalism*' as an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population some of whose members deem themselves to constitute an actual or potential '*nation*'.⁴²

Smith strengthens his argument for the dual nature of nations and nationalism when he admits that: 'Given these definitions, we should recognize that: 1) most nations are modern, and so is nationalism as an ideology and movement; 2) *ethnies* have emerged in every era, and many have been durable; 3) many nations are formed on the basis of pre-existing *ethnies* and the ethnic model of the nation remains extremely influential today; 4) would-be nations that lack a dominant ethnic base often have great problems in forging national consciousness and cohesion.'⁴³

Smith believes that better understanding the grey area between pre-modern ethnic and sometimes religious identity and the political construction of the nation in the modern era is the

⁴⁰ Anthony D. Smith, 'Culture, Community, and Territory: The Politics of Ethnicity and Nationalism', *International Affairs*, Vol.72, No. 3, (1996): 446-447.;

⁴¹ Ivo Banac in: Sabrina Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, (Westview, 1999): xvi-xvii.

⁴² Anthony D. Smith, 'Culture, Community, and Territory: The Politics of Ethnicity and Nationalism', *International Affairs*, Vol.72, No. 3, (1996): 447; Note: Italization is mine.;

⁴³ *Ibid*, 447.

‘key’ to solving some of the vexing questions of the international order today.⁴⁴ Smith criticizes the emerging academic argument advanced by John Breuilly that nationalism, by virtue of its invocation by elites to mobilize sentiment among non-elites, is a distinctly political concept. Breuilly goes further and argues that nations themselves are then a byproduct of nationalist mobilization, and state-making can, in fact, *create* ethnic and cultural identities instead of the other way around.⁴⁵ While this formulation does not ignore the cultural dimension, Smith feels it treats the role of ethnicity and culture as secondary and risks diminishing the dynamics of ethnicity and culture as an essential part of the equation.

Smith argues that modern states can serve to crystallize ethnies and strengthen national identities but the markers that initially bind the ethnie are symbols, which can be pre-modern or modern. Symbols such as holy sites, iconic and creation myths, hero figures, heroic battles, and symbols of religious identity often have deeper historical attachment for a given population than the modern state. Consequently, when a modern state needs to mobilize for conflict, these ‘deep’ religious or cultural attachments are often invoked to sanction and legitimize violence against an enemy, real or perceived.

These symbols and stories can also be wholly modern - consider the highly intentional effort by the early Bolshevik regime to create, tell, and make sacred to the Soviet Union their version of the October Revolution and, via print and film, to make larger-than-life icons out of Soviet heroes. These were meant to create powerful unifying touchstones and identifiers, and were without deference to a religion.⁴⁶ But in other cases, indeed most cases, these symbols and stories have pre-modern and often religious antecedents.⁴⁷

An example that drives home Smith’s point on the importance of pre-Modern symbolism, can be found in Armenia. While the years of institutionalized ethno-federalism during the Soviet Union formally codified an Armenian national identity and demarcated Armenia territorially, the collapse of the Soviet system allowed nationalist politicians to crystallize a nationalist and irredentist stance among Armenians in the Southern Caucasus. A focal point centered on the role of Christianity in Armenia’s past and the vivid historical memory of genocide at the hands of Ottoman Muslim occupiers. Much like for the Serbs, it is very difficult to claim that a pre-modern Armenian national consciousness – mainly centered on creation myths and the role of Christianity in the territory and Armenian holy sites, which Smith calls the ‘territorialization of memory’ – did not exist before the modern state.⁴⁸ Therefore, as Smith argues broadly, the concept of ethnic identification among Armenians precedes the creation of the modern state structure, and despite repeated attempts by the Soviet leadership to soften this crystallization, the pre-modern identity, combined with catalytic memory of the Turkish genocide, has remained embedded in the collective consciousness. After the Soviet Union disintegrated, these symbols

⁴⁴ Anthony D. Smith, ‘Ethnic election and national destiny: some religious origins of nationalist ideals’, *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 5, No. 3, (1999): 331-355.

⁴⁵ Smith (1996), 448.

⁴⁶ Frederick Corney, *Telling October: Memory and the Making of the Bolshevik Revolution*, (Cornell, 2004).

⁴⁷ Patrick Geary, *The Myth of Nations*, (Princeton, 2002):

⁴⁸ Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*, (Cambridge, 2007): 131.

were a magnetic enough uniting force to mobilize nationalist and extraterritorial violence in Nagorno-Karabakh between the Armenian and Azeri populations.

Another of the most notable scholars to recently produce work on the ethnic roots of modern nationalism is medieval, but still mainly in the modernist camp, historian Patrick Geary who believes that it was 19th century poets and scholars that drew on previously existing forms of collective identity, or ‘group identity’ as a political tool to gain autonomy and independence from the multi-ethnic empires that populated Europe at the time and, in turn, created what we understand as nationalism today.⁴⁹ Geary agrees with other historians and points out that the European world at the turn of the 21st century looks remarkably like it appeared at the turn of the 20th. That the idea that nationalism in its historic forms was dead in Europe after the Second World War, was a silly endeavor indeed. With the fall of socialism, a resurgence in all that was pre-modern once again became ‘in vogue’ and ethnic identity once again came to fore of European relations, especially in the former Soviet Union and the Balkans and the emotion-laden term ‘ethnic cleansing,’ which sought an ethnically pure territorial state, was coined in the post-socialist 1990s.⁵⁰

Geary states that, as a medieval historian, he cannot ignore the pre-modern roots of the crisis of today and noted that the rhetoric of the post-socialist 1990s was heavily infused with the rhetoric of the medieval European era, citing Kosovo as a prime example.⁵¹ He states that, ‘Early medieval historians, not accustomed to being at the center of political debate find their period of history suddenly pivotal in a contest for the past and their rhetoric being used to lay claims to the present and the future.’ Geary goes further and argues that, ‘Unfortunately, policy makers and most scholars of both East and West generally know very little about this period and even less about the process of ethnogenesis that brought European societies into existence. Probably no other period of history is as obscure and obscured by nationalist and chauvinist scholarship.’⁵²

Geary’s strongest argument is that in the modern world, the ethnic nationalists of the 1990s are using medieval arguments to lay ethnic and territorial claims on land regardless of its present inhabitants. The parallels of this to Kosovo and its Albanian inhabitants are so blatant that they need no further elaboration. Geary posits that, ‘this double standard allows Lithuanians to repress Poles and Russians, even as they demand their own autonomy, and Serbs to claim both historically “Serbian” areas of Bosnia inhabited by Muslims and areas of Croatia inhabited by Serbs.’⁵³ And the crux of all of this is what Geary finds most disturbing: the fact that, at large, the international community seems to be sanctioning the idea that nations and people are ‘fixed and immutable’ and that just because a people ‘exist,’ it legitimizes their the right to self governance.⁵⁴ Geary characterizes this as an international cop-out with the international community sanctioning the idea of ethnically pure states as the ‘only alternative to genocide.’⁵⁵ Part 3 of this thesis will examine the process of nation-state construction as it applies to the

⁴⁹ Patrick Geary, *The Myth of Nations*, (Princeton, 2002): 17-8.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*: 4.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 7-8.

⁵² *Ibid*, 9.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 11.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 12.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 12.

territory of present day Kosovo and it would be wise to keep Geary's theories close at hand and top-of-mind.

2.2 Adrian Hastings and the Biblical Roots of Modern Nationalism

Perhaps the most relevant, albeit fairly or unfairly maligned, other scholar for this paper's purposes of understanding the intersection between the historiography of nationalism and the situation in Kosovo through the lens of competing notions of Old Serbia and Greater Albania is Adrian Hastings. Because we will re-visit Hastings concepts as they relate to Orthodoxy and Islam in particular in Part 2, I will offer here only a quick sketch of some of his dominant themes outside of his most influential work, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion, and Nationalism*.

In his other works, Hastings emphasizes the role of religion, particularly Christianity, through the utilization of holy sites and the often destructive notion of 'chosen peoples.' Hastings, like Smith, also believed that nations and nationalism were not specifically modern constructs, and he placed a strong emphasis on religious identification and the importance of myths, holy sites, chosen peoples and iconic symbols in the collective memory of certain communities.⁵⁶ Hastings went as far as to posit that the Abrahamic tradition and its understanding of Israel as a 'consecrated nation' laid the framework for the rhetoric of the sacredness of the nation espoused in the modern era.⁵⁷ Hastings believes that without the Biblical tradition of the Old Testament, the concept of the nation-state is almost unimaginable and he believed that we are witnessing the resurgence of this type of nation-state model today.⁵⁸

Mindful of Hastings' precepts, another method of situating Kosovo in the historiography of nations and nationalism is by viewing the nation, or at least parts of it, as what is commonly referred to as a holy land. Similarly, consider Mount Ararat for Armenians or Solomon's Temple for the Jews. Hastings undoubtedly felt that certain religious communities, such as the Israelites, the medieval English, or the Serbs under the Ottomans had a horizontal national consciousness that was created or codified by religious identification, common practices, the use holy sites and patron saints and fueled by the memory of heroic battles, like that in Kosovo in 1389. While the reification and Orientalist interpretations of the Serbian Orthodox tradition in Old Serbia may be overplayed by Western scholars and journalists, it is not without domestic merit. Elites in Serbia have played upon this history continuously from the 18th to the 20th century as was apparent when, in 1989, Slobodan Milosevic addressed the Serbian nation from Kosovo Polje, the site of heroic battle. Or when, in 1948, the Serbian Orthodox bishop Emilian stated that 'besides the name of Christ no other name is more beautiful or more sacred' than that of Kosovo to the Serbs.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Adrian Hastings, 'Special Peoples,' *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (1999): 381-396.

⁵⁷ Adrian Hastings, 'Holy lands and their political consequences', *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2003): 32.

⁵⁸ Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion, Nationalism*, (Cambridge, 1997): 200.

⁵⁹ Quoted from: Sir Ivor Roberts, 'Kosovo: cradle of civilization or albatross?' lecture at the Oxford center for Islamic studies July 3rd, 2008. (can be found on itunes U)

In one of his final lectures, Hastings, espousing a pre-modern view, characterized the Crusades of western Christendom in Palestine as a nationalist venture. He stated that “‘The Holy Places’ turned into the ‘Holy Land,’ a recognizably political entity, something no longer to be visited on a pilgrimage with sacred intent but instead to be conquered and ruled, delivered from its Muslim oppressors just as it was in Biblical times.”⁶⁰ This rhetoric has an obvious correlation with the Serbian re-conquest of Kosovo and Metohija in the First World War. For Kosovo was Old Serbia, and it, too, was destined to be delivered from its Muslim oppressors, this time in the form of the converted Albanians, and the site of the resurrection of the Serbian nation. Without Kosovo, the new Serbian state could not exist in congruence with the long-held idea of the Serbian nation, especially without its religious heartland. In the First Balkan war, when the Serbian Army moved south, Kosovo was central to the Serbian campaign as a recruitment tool, as well as a central theme in the political campaign for the territory delineation of the new Serbian state. The message being, regardless of who inhabited Kosovo in 1913, Kosovo was Serbia because of its historical significance as the seat of Serbian culture and religion.

In an earlier essay, Hastings links ‘Biblical times’ to medieval times or, in the case of Serbia, to the Serbian Empire of the 13th and 14th centuries also known as ‘Nemanjan times.’ He asserts that nationalism in Serbia cannot be considered a product of modernity because of its mystical relationship with the Serbian Orthodox church and symbols of religious identity so deeply embedded in Serbia’s campaign for modern statehood.⁶¹ It was the revival of pre-modern myths and religious symbolism that fueled Milosevic’s fire in the 1990s, and Hastings claims that the capacity of those myths to galvanize had not changed much over time.⁶² Hastings basically asks, if a pre-modern myth could legitimize modern nationalism, how truly modern is that nationalism?

While certainly less than objective in his literature (a strong, albeit subtle, Albanian bias pervades his work), British historian Noel Malcolm takes a slightly different but still supernatural, or sacred, route to the Serbian interpretation of Kosovo’s historical significance and identity creation. When we see a historian with a bias built on the other side of the fence still allude to Kosovo with supernatural references, it suggests credence in this analysis. Malcolm refers to Kosovo and the 1389 battle of Kosovo Polje as a ‘totem’ or ‘talisman’ of Serbian identity.⁶³ This emphasis on ancient Serbian mythology that originated in Serbia itself continued through the 20th century as Western academics and popular publications such as the *Time Life* series played heavily upon the simplification of the religious and epic tradition of Kosovo in the mind of the Serbs.⁶⁴

It is true that many orthodox Serbians regard Kosovo as a *de jure* holy land, and seat of their rich medieval culture. And, in fact, it was. Just as Istanbul was once Constantinople, Kosovo was once the heart of the Serbian people, and remember that the Albanians, at that time, had not yet converted *en masse* to Islam (which occurred between the 15th and 17th centuries) and so shared the Orthodox faith with the Slavic inhabitants, making the contemporary question over

⁶⁰ Adrian Hastings, ‘Holy lands and their political consequences’, *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 9, no. 3, (2003); 29-54.

⁶¹ Adrian Hastings, “Special Peoples,” *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (1999): 386-390.

⁶² *Ibid*, 385.; Duijzings (2000), 176-202.

⁶³ Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History*, (NYU, 1998): 57.

⁶⁴ Edward Stillman et. al., *The Balkans* (Time Life World Library, 1964) 121-135.

the original inhabitants less of a question of ethnicity and more of a question of faith. If Kosovo is a 'Holy Land' because of its Orthodox heritage, then it is hard to conceive that it would be such a focal point for resurrection and restoration of the Serbian nation because there would be no oppressor to deliver it from. But since the battle of Kosovo and the conversion, there have been centuries of demographic transition in Kosovo to the point where Muslim Albanian converts, seen as collaborators in Turkish oppression, made up the strong majority in the early twentieth century as Serbia pressed for statehood and freedom from the Porte. The re-conquest of the 'Holy Land' from the Albanian occupiers was laden with religious symbolism and sanctioned abhorrent violence in the region on both sides as the earlier reference in the Carnegie report suggests. Unfortunately for the Serbs, their historical culture in Kosovo is not seen as a legitimate claim to territory and their historical argument has gained little traction in today's international community, whereas their oppression of the Albanian majority in Kosovo during the twentieth century, under Yugoslavia then Serbia, has legitimized the Kosovar claim to statehood in the eyes of many modern states.

Similarly, Hastings draws on the concept of a 'chosen people' whose dominant narrative contains or relies on a special or predetermined destiny in their collective consciousness as a form of enduring pre-modern nationalism. When analyzing Rebecca West's pro-Serbian bias in her travelogue, *Black Lamb Grey Falcon*, and her interpretation of the Serbs as a chosen people by virtue of their maintenance of Orthodoxy and their fight against the Turks and Austrians, Hastings points out how the Serbs in the early twentieth century relied on this narrative as a justification for their statehood and dominance in the first Yugoslavia. For his part, Hastings stressed that the Serbian nation came to conceive of itself as divine through the sacrifice of Prince Lazar and choice of a heavenly kingdom at the defining Battle of Kosovo in 1389. For Hastings, religious identity, especially those whose doctrinal understanding was rooted in the Old Testament idea of the nation, not the universalistic precepts New Testament, had the ability to mobilize nationalist sentiment long before the modern era. Even if the geography in question did not enjoy statehood, the collective consciousness of the modern state lay in the collective consciousness of the pre-modern nation. This was directly related to the role of religion, particularly the Old Testament and its conceptualizations of Israel as a Holy Land and the Israelites as a 'Chosen Peoples.'

Hastings feels that the Christian world has shaped the way we understand nationalism in a way that other religions have not, and this explains why we see nationalism emanating from Europeans, as Christian nations, more than the result of the rise of industrial and urban culture that occurred in Europe.⁶⁵ But within the Christian world, Hastings sees the autocephalous Orthodox churches of Eastern Europe and Russia as unique and strong cases. Because of their time under Ottoman occupation, and the Ottoman organization of society by religion, the Orthodox world experienced a particular type of nationalism that was not present in other European areas. And in this case, Russia was even more particular. Russia was the only Eastern Orthodox nation to not be subsumed under the Porte. And when the Greek church and Byzantium was overtaken by the Ottomans, Russia declared itself the 'Third Rome,' disavowed

⁶⁵ Adrian Hastings, Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion, Nationalism*, (Cambridge, 1997):

the Greeks for giving in to Catholics and Ottomans and declared itself the home to the last true Christian peoples.⁶⁶

This created and still creates a unique claim in the realm of Eastern Orthodoxy and informs the study of Orthodox religious nationalism. Internal struggles to define the true heir to Byzantium and Eastern Orthodoxy led to a federalized hierarchy within the church and created 'national' churches with distinct vernacular traditions. As a consequence, the Orthodox churches in the Balkans quickly became politicized, and the churches themselves became symbols for the Christian people under Ottoman rule and, as such, best fit into this archetype of pre-modern nationalism. At a minimum, this shows that a political form of nationalism, almost always juxtaposed *against* Ottoman rule and directed by the national Orthodox churches, existed in pre-modern times in direct contrast to many modernist scholars' claims.

It may be possible to attribute this to the fact that during the heyday of modernism, the Orthodox church was subsumed under socialist governments and the will to study the role of Christian Orthodoxy and its pre-modern nationalism was taken for granted by Western scholars. Echoing the sentiment that Orthodoxy has a special place in the role religious nationalism and nationalism as a whole, Hastings wrote in 1996 that, 'if there is one area of Europe today which has absolutely failed to conform its liberal standards of political behaviour, it is Orthodox nationalist Serbia.'⁶⁷ He is indicating that even at the end of the 20th century, the West's understanding of the role of Orthodox churches in fomenting nationalism was and is little understood by Western academics and politicians. Now this paper will turn attention to the role of religion, memory, and myth as it pertains first to religious nationalism, with a focus on Eastern Orthodoxy. Later it assesses the ideas and actions of Serbians, Albanians, and the international community as strategies for legitimizing the production of an ethnically pure Kosovo.

2.3 Nationalism: 'A Secular Religion?'

The role of religion and religious identity in modern day nationalism has been played down by many modernist scholars in favor of the arguments put forth in the previous section, but the relationship between the religion and its capacity to produce nationalism today is difficult to ignore upon a closer look, and dangerous to ignore for, as scholars have pointed out, that nationalism is infused with religious elements it has a stronger propensity to produce violations of human rights and lethal violence.⁶⁸ The religious element of nationalism is especially strong in those cultures that maintain an adherence to the Old Testament and its idea of a consecrated people inhabiting a territorially bounded geography, namely the Israelites and Israel.⁶⁹ The Abrahamic tradition itself, and its three main forms: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam is unabashedly pre-modern. These three major monotheistic religions rely on myths established so far back in history that the only way that they have maintained their staying power is by making

⁶⁶ John Garrard, Carol Garrard, *Russian Orthodoxy Resurgent: Faith and Power in the New Russia*, (Princeton, 2008): 167.

⁶⁷ Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion, Nationalism*, (Cambridge, 1997): 185.

⁶⁸ Barbara Ann- Riefer, 'Religion and Nationalism: Understanding the Consequences of a Complex Relationship, *Ethnicities*, Vol. 3, 2003, 215-43; Adamantia Pollis, 'Human Rights Quarterly, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2003: 339-56

⁶⁹ Adrian Hastings (2003): 29-54.; Hastings (1997), 186-187.

their myths sacred, for the sacred is both eternal and timeless. This next section of this chapter will deal with religious nationalism and the role of the autocephalous Serbian Orthodox church in fomenting nationalism in particular. It is dedicated first to understand the differing roles that Christianity and Islam has played in the broader scheme of 'nations and nationalism,' as well as in the formation of Serbian and Albanians national consciousness. In Serbia, religion, and the Serbian Orthodox Church in particular, plays a major role and in some ways has come to define the Serbian ethnic community.

To gain a better understanding of the relationship between religion and nationalism ,it's interesting to assess the way in which religion and nationalism borrow and play on each other. For this, in keeping with such scholars as Adrian Hastings and Anthony D. Smith, I propose we look at seven characteristics that are present in both fervent nationalism and deeply held religion. While this list is by no means exhaustive, these seven traits are those I deem to be most pertinent to the construct of this paper.

First, both the nation and the confessional community share a 'cult' of *'imagined community.'* That is, members of both communities share a horizontal bond that instructs them to believe that the members of their community are 'brothers and sisters' whom they have never met, and probably never will., The depth of these bonds -- 'brothers and sisters in Christ' or "brothers and sisters in Arms' or "comrades in arms" -- compel the believer that they share something so sacred that is worth dying or killing for.⁷⁰

Second, both emphasize the use of *symbols* and *symbolic practice, or rituals*, in everyday life and, most certainly, in times of crisis.⁷¹ Nations need flags just as Christianity needs the Cross; Judaism, the Star of David; and Islam, the Star and Crescent. Many American schoolchildren, with hands over hearts and eyes on the flag, recite the 'Pledge of Allegiance' to be reminded of the power of symbols to instill nationalism, or 'allegiance' to their flag and country. In this case, the flag iss the symbol, the recitation as the practice. Religious symbolism can work in the same way, by making a powerful connection between a symbol and a practice, consider the Christian ritual of reciting a decade of prayer, rosary in hand.. This reverence of symbols is especially central in Eastern Orthodoxy where the use of icons has been known to save cities from destruction, as well as save souls. An Icon of the Virgin Mary has been used both in Byzantium and Russia to ward off the onslaught of the Ottomans and Poles alike, although to no avail, as the Poles sacked Moscow and the Turks conquered Byzantium.

Third, both share an emphasis on sacred figures. This manifests as patron saints in religious terms and patriots in the national sense, and it is not unprecedented that the patriot is also a patron saint.⁷² One can imagine the cult of Saint Patrick in Ireland, Joan d'Arc in France or Prince Vladimir of Kievan Rus in religious and political terms and a similar cult surrounds secular patriots such as George Washington and Benjamin Franklin in America, Vladimir Lenin or Josef Stalin in the Soviet Union or Mao in China. Saint Sava is certainly an example of this in the Serbian sense, for it was Sava in 1219 who christened the Nemanjan dynasty of his father in Orthodoxy. Later via the cult of ethnic saints, often members of ruling families, Serbia's

⁷⁰ Adrian Hastings, 'Special Peoples,' *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (1999): 381-396. ; Vjekoslav Perica, *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States*, (Oxford, 2002): 5.

⁷¹ Barbara Ann- Riefer, 'Religion and Nationalism: Understanding the Consequences of a Complex Relationship, *Ethnicities*, Vol. 3, 2003, 215-43

⁷² Hastings (1997): 188-189.

religious patriot dimension only grew stronger.⁷³ The same applies to Prince Lazar who died heroically at the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 to save the Serbian soul by not giving into the infidel Muslims and the traitor Vuk Brankovic who has been likened to Judas Iscariot and because it was his treachery that sacrificed Lazar and the Serbian people. Or considers Prince Aleksandar of Novgorod who saved Russia from the Poles on the banks of Lake Peipus in 1242, whose exploits are memorialized, among other places, by the Cathedral of Saint Aleksandar Nevsky, the most glorious cathedral in all of Sofia. Certainly the figure, the religion and the nation can become inextricably linked.

Fourth, both have *geographical considerations*. Both make space sacred, or have *sacred space* as a foundation.⁷⁴ In the contemporary nation-state this is created by borders, extending even the air above a nation-state such that another country cannot fly its planes over 'sovereign (or sacred) air space.' What is and occurs inside a state's accepted and defined boundary is the business of the state and no-one's else lest extenuating circumstances apply (as was the case for the USA and its ending of Shariah law in territorially defined Afghanistan but is not the case in Saudi Arabia). Even in today's modern state and secular system, sacred space still pervades -- think only of Mt. Ararat for the Armenians or Kosovo to the Serbs. Geographical considerations can also be part of a special destiny, such as the doctrine of Manifest Destiny in the United States. For the state, much like a religious or national community, can share a 'special destiny' for its members. This will be touched upon shortly.

Fifth, both produce a *code of conduct* that is befitting and that members are expected to follow.⁷⁵ In the case of religion, it typically is a sacred code of conduct that can both regulate symbolic practice, as well guide the members on the path to eternal salvation. Think about the Ten Commandments and its delineation of mortal vs. non-mortal sins or Christian canon law compared with the literal interpretation of the Koran by Wahabbi Muslims and imposition of Shariah Law in certain territories. In the national sense, the code of conduct is most often found in the legal code governing the affairs of the state, the 'rule of law,' that prescribes the 'can dos' and 'cannots' for its members/citizens.

Sixth and seventh relates to the sharing of *myths*.

Sixth is the sharing of creation myths or myths of origin -- Adam and Eve or Moses leading the Jews out of Egypt in the Old Testament. Almost every culture, religion, and nation in the world shares a myth of origin manifested in any number of ways such as migration, triumph or defeat.. Myths rooted in tragedy often carry the seeds for resurrection, such as the case with Catholic Poland under the U.S.S.R, but that resurrection can mean devastation for contemporary inhabitants. Tragic myths beget human tragedies, as we have seen with Palestinians in the Middle East or the Albanians in Kosovo.

Seventh is what Anthony D. Smith has termed the myth of 'ethnic election' or what Adrian Hastings calls the 'special destiny' of 'chosen peoples.'⁷⁶ Certainly the Jews of Israel or the Serbs after Kosovo fit into a category that bridges both the national and spiritual worlds. But

⁷³ *Ibid*, 7-9.

⁷⁴ Ann-Rieffer, 216-217.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 217-218.

⁷⁶ Anthony D. Smith, 'Ethnic election and national destiny: some religious origins of nationalist ideals', *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 5, No. 3, (1999): 331-355.; Hastings (1999), 381-396.

for nations, this need not always have a religious zeal to it; certainly, the Soviet Union believed that it had a special destiny to liberate the masses from the oppression of industrial capitalism or Nazi Germany believed that it had a special destiny to promote the Aryan race. These myths are perhaps as dangerous as myths born of tragedy and loss because not only do they justify the control of a territory by any means necessary, they also legitimize the destruction of other peoples, countries, and faiths in the name a particular 'special destiny.'

2.4 Islam and Nationalism

While the antithetical nature of Islam will be discussed more in the next section, it is important to make note of it in the context of this part of this paper. Adrian Hastings writes that, 'Nations are not constructed by Islam but deconstructed.'⁷⁷ Hastings attributes this to a number of factors involving the universalist and political nature of Islam which envisions a community of believers instead of a community of nations and does not recognize race or ethnicity under God. But first and foremost, Hastings believes that Islam is incompatible with nationalism because of Islam's insistence of one universal language as the language of God and his believers – Arabic. Hastings states that Islam is not a culture 'of translation but assimilation' and sees the fact that Islam is insistent upon Arabic and that the recitation of prayer be in Arabic as the most distinguishing factor in Islam's inability to produce the type of nationalism that fomented in Europe and the Christian world.⁷⁸ Instead of producing vernacular understandings of scripture and tying them national or state identities, the cultural impact and impulse of Islam is essentially to Arabize. Certainly this is not the case all over the Islamic world, as one need only look towards the Shi'ite split in Iran or at Albania, Turkey or the Caucasus to see how localized forms of Islam maintained their weight against Arabization up until very recently when Wahabbi Islam has made headway's in these communities.

Another factor that Hastings points out is that Islam, while deriving from the Abrahamic tradition places much less weight on the Old Testament than does Christianity, and, unlike Christianity, Islam never incorporated the Jewish texts and, as such, never consecrated the idea of the nation-state in the way Jews and Christians have. Hastings also points out the tendency of the Catholic church to put more emphasis on the New Testament and the universalist 'gospel for all nations' aspects of Christianity can be seen as a deviation from the earlier understandings of scripture as it pertains to nations. Perhaps this is because in its formative years, the Catholic church was the church of empires and to quell rebellion in the fringes of empire it was pertinent to offer the rebellious entities a path to membership in the imperial community without provision to become a part of the ruling ethnicity. In essence, it became another form of dominance.

Absent such a foundation, the Islamic world did not envision its community as a community of nation-states and instead as a community of believers under God. This impeded the process of nationalism in the Islamic world until the twentieth century when Turkish and Egyptian nationalism emerged to the fore. But even this can be interpreted in the context the Coptic and Armenian Christian communities who envisioned autonomy or outright freedom within a territory dominated by Muslims in the era of crumbling imperial power. While the push by Turkey or Egypt to join the system of states emerging in the early twentieth century can be seen in light of the third wave of nationalism discussed by Schieder and Merjadnova earlier. In the next section we will discuss the contemporary impediments to nation-state construction and

⁷⁷ Hastings (1997), 201.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 200-1.

European styled nationalism imposed by radical Islam in the context of the formation of an Islamic Emirate in the North Caucasus instead of a federation of different, but free, ethnic states.

On the almost completely other side of Islam and its tendency towards linguistic universalism is that of Eastern Orthodox Christianity which is infused with vernacular languages and is organized as a federation of autocephalous national churches. Consequently, Eastern Orthodoxy and its institutional organization plays a more influential role in fostering ethnic and religious nationalism.

2.5 Serbian Orthodoxy

Before delving into the Kosovo Myth and its particular role in modern Serbian nationalism, it is prudent to discuss some other key elements that have helped to shape the role of the Serbian Church and Orthodoxy as durable elements of nationalism within the Serbian community across the Balkans. Understanding more about the role of Orthodoxy in the Serbian community in the past can help illuminate how the religious dimension of nationalism was used by Serbian elites such as Milosevic, Karadzic, Seselj, and the ubiquitous warlord, gangster, football hooligan Arkan and his wife the turbo-folk and nationalist singer Ceca among many others in the 1990s.

Perhaps the most pertinent place to look first is the relationship of the Serbian Orthodox Church with the other dominant religions or ideologies in the region during different historical eras. It's pertinent to focus mainly on three key historical periods: Ottoman Islam from the mid 15th century to the early 20th; the wartime fascist, and openly Catholic, Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna Drzava Hrvatska* – NDH), and Yugoslavian Communism from the end of the Second World War until 1991. Although the timeframes for these experiences vary from five centuries to five years to fifty years, each left an indelible mark on the Serbian Orthodox community and the role and influence of the Church hierarchy in particular. In more recent years, one could point to the Serbian churches' relationship with the self-declared autocephalous Orthodox Churches of Macedonia and Montenegro, as well as the loss of Serbian sovereignty over holy sites, monasteries and the Pec patriarchate in Kosovo,⁷⁹ to find contemporary manifestations of the pattern.

Although at first counterintuitive, an analysis of the relationship between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Ottoman Muslim imperial establishment lends strength to the arguments for pre-modern archetypes of modern-day nation states. This is due to the political nature of religion within the Ottoman Empire itself, which included organizing the empire's subjects, including minorities, into constituent religious bodies, or confessional communities, known as the *millet* system.⁸⁰ This did much to foster 20th century nationalisms heavily infused with Orthodox symbolism among its subjected peoples, the Orthodox Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian communities in particular. Hence, because of Ottoman approaches to organizing religious and political institutions, the role of the Serbian Orthodox Church as the arbiter of Serbian nationhood was solidified in the pre-modern Ottoman era. If it is understood that the

⁷⁹ Sabrina Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, (Westview, 1999): 107-109.

⁸⁰ Smith (1999), 344-347.; Vasiliki Georgiadou, 'Greek Orthodoxy and the Politics of Nationalism', *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (1995): 295-315.

dominant discourse regarding Kosovo in the Serbian imagination is actually a construction of the pre-modern era, one romanticized in the process of 19th and 20th century statehood, it is possible to analyze its trajectory through the modern era and into the post-modern world. Adrian Hastings states that “Serbian identity was indeed established in the middle ages under the Nemanya dynasty in a way that has remained essentially unchanged.”⁸¹ (Note the Nemanya dynasty ruled from 1166-1371.)

Another build on this phenomena is by Dr. Ger Duijzings, Dutch cultural anthropologist at the University College London. He believes that ‘although nationalism is a modern phenomena, it frequently draws on ‘traditional’ values and symbols, borrowed particularly from kinship and religion, to instill feelings of belonging to the wider and more abstract collective that is represented by the nation.’⁸² Thus, understanding the historical context of Ottoman occupation allows us to better recognize how the Orthodox identity of the Serbs became so deeply entrenched as a fusion of political and religious nationalisms, with special emphasis on the Kosovo Myth as tragedy and a site of redemption. In this case, it was localized and ‘fixed’ from the pre-modern to modern era by the fact that the Serbian Orthodox church was the only visible identifier of belonging to the Serbian ‘nation’ for nearly five hundred years post-Kosovo as the cultural and religious center for Serbs.

Being recognized as an Orthodox Serb under Ottoman rule denoted a derelict political status in the broader Ottoman society, with the penalty of excessive taxes and such public markers as being banned from carrying weapons or wearing the colour green or building homes that rose higher than Muslim neighbours, in sharp contrast to the lots of Bosnian or Albanian Muslims. As a consequence, over time, the Serbian Orthodox Church came to denote a sacred suffering, even beyond the Kosovo battle, which reinforced an eternal bond with other Serbs, and more firmly ‘fixing’ and localizing the Serbian identity, and Kosovo’s emotional and symbolic role in it over time. For more than 500 years after the Battle of Kosovo,, as *raya*, or Christian subjects of an Ottoman ruler, with no Serbian state-structure to speak of, being Serbian meant being Serbian Orthodox. ***Religion and ethnicity became one and the same.*** During Ottoman occupation, the Orthodox Church became the only arbiter of ‘nationness’ among the Serbian people, and the myths surrounding Kosovo would become the emotional backbone of the Serbian epic struggle for centuries to come.

The second enforcement agent for the role of the Serbian Orthodox church occurred over the course of only five years, but with profound effect. Its mark would help to galvanize war between Serbia and Croatia in the early 1990s. In particular, the memory of wartime persecution by the Nazi collaborating, fascist and Catholic state in Croatia shaped the place of Orthodoxy in the post-Yugoslav re-invigoration of religious nationalism among Orthodox elements in the broader Serbian community. During the Second World War, much of Serbia’s cultural and religious heritage was destroyed in Croatia, particularly in the Krajina, an area of longstanding Serbian settlement in southern Croatia. (It might also be noted that this is where the Serbian-Croatian war began in 1991 and where the Croatian army, with logistical help from the United

⁸¹ Hastings (1999): 386.

⁸² Ger Duijzings, *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo*, (Columbia, 2000): 32.

States and subsequent contractors, finally ethnically cleansed Croatia of its Serbian population in Operation Storm in the waning days before Dayton.⁸³⁾

The loss of Krajina's cultural and religious heritage in WWII was a haunting repeat of a *leitmotif* that has characterized Balkan conflicts since the pre-modern era – the intentional destruction of religious heritage as a means of ethnic cleansing. In response an estimated 200,000 Serbs fled the Krajina, most never to return. And in 2004, as Kosovar Albanians rioted and burned down churches across Kosovo, the pattern of destruction and desecration of religious sites asserted itself once again as it had in both Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia beforehand.⁸⁴

In particular, memories of persecution during the Second World War by the Ustase, a fascist Croat paramilitary party in charge of the concentration camps and the coziness of the Croatian wartime leadership with the Vatican, have further embedded the continued myth of the Serbs as a suffering and heavenly people destined for both suffering at the hands of different religious groups and resurrection from them. The persecution and forced conversion of the Orthodox community in Croatia to Catholicism. and the destruction of Serbian Orthodox heritage created a climate of distrust between the two republics that endured until the bitter and brutal waning days of Yugoslavia when the sides once again came to blows.⁸⁵

The Croatian push to independence in 1991 was accompanied by a few blatantly Catholic reconstructions, the first being the push for canonization of Cardinal Stepanic, leader of the Catholic community in wartime Croatia, and suspected collaborator with the Ustase regime, another being the restitution of the red and checkered wartime NDH flag as the central icon of the new Croatian flag, and seen even on the livery of Croatia's national soccer team. And perhaps most obvious: was Croatian President Franjo Tudjman's 'crude vision of [Catholic] Croatia as the buttress for Europe against the barbaric forces of the East, Orthodoxy and Islam.'⁸⁶

Despite the fact that Yugoslav socialism was conventionally, "godless," scholar Michael Sells, and others, have interpreted the Wars of Yugoslav Secession in nearly purely religious terms, citing 'the religion identity' as the elemental factor in the instrumentalization of genocide by all sides in Bosnia and Croatia the early 1990s.⁸⁷ While the Kosovo myth played a vital role in the resurrection of Serbian religious nationalism in the 1990s, the wars were fought in Bosnia and Croatia while Kosovo, often cited as the volatile powder keg of Yugoslavia, remained

⁸³ See: Charles King, *Extreme Politics: Nationalism, Violence, and the END of Eastern Europe* (Oxford, 2010).

⁸⁴ Michael Sells, 'Crosses of Blood: Sacred Space, Religion, and Violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina', *Sociology of Religion*, Vol. 63, No. 3, (2003) 309-331

⁸⁵ Sabrina Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, (Westview, 1999): 102-104.

⁸⁶ Sells (2003): 316.

⁸⁷ Christopher Marsh, 'The Religious Dimension of Post-Communist "Ethnic" Conflict', *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 35, No. 5, (2007): 811-826.; Ivan Ivekovic, 'Nationalism and the Political Use and Abuse of Religion: The Politicization of Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Islam in Yugoslav Successor States', *Social Compass*, Vol. 49, No. 4, (2002): 523-536; Vjekoslav Perica, *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States*, (Oxford, 2002).

conspicuously quiet. With this understanding of Serbian Orthodoxy, it is time to consider the Kosovo Myth itself and its particular role in Serbian nationhood and nationalism.

2.6 Conclusion: Part 1

Clearly the debate on the modernity and construction of nations and nationalism is not over. With new international developments in a dynamic environment, secessionist movements, and ‘phantom’ states popping up and staying ‘frozen’ around the globe, new theories shall gain weight and old theories will lose water. Nationalism, as it is practiced today, is most likely a product of the Modern Era but without a solid understanding of the pre-modern, especially religious, underpinnings, it’s impossible to get a complete picture or fully understand the drivers of nationalism. A strict adherence to the orthodoxy of modernism fails to fully explain the galvanizing power of pre-modern mythology in modern day nationalism.

Paradoxically, religion still has the power to produce atrocities, a characteristic that has not changed since the Crusades. Just consider 9-11 terrorist attacks on the U.S., the strength of Al-Qaeda’s global jihad, or the daily strife in the North Caucasus. In the context those examples, among other, it’s impossible to ignore the factor of religion, a pre-modern phenomenon, as an instrumentalizing factor in the violent equation. Whether or not fundamentalism is nationalism is not our primary concern because the violence perpetrated against humans is directed at the ‘nations’ to which they belong. And because of the trajectory of history, oftentimes what is both state-based, as in the American nation, and what is faith-based, as in the Christian ‘nation’ are congruent.

But this is not always the case. Later this paper will examine Albanian nationalism in Kosovo, not as religiously based nationalism, but with a focus on how the modern and secular nationalism of the Kosovars trumped the pre-modern and religiously based nationalism of the Serbs. The author suggests that this was the deciding factor in the Kosovar success. Had the Kosovar nationalism been based on religious rather than ethnic identity, it could not have won the sympathy of the international community. But the question arises, and this is what I hope to accomplish by paper’s end, what does the sanctioning of ethnic nationalism in the case of the Kosovars mean to the norms of nation state production in the Modern Era and has it brought us right back to the romantic, and dangerous, idea of ethnically pure statehood as legitimate on the international stage?

Part 2: On Kosovo

Chapter 3 – On Memory and Myths

3.1 The Ephemeral State, the Timeless Nation

In this section the term ‘nation’ will be used in this sense: The ‘nation’ is a collective identity formed through shared language and cultural norms and, as such, is a precursor to the formally territorialized and codified ‘state’. Thus the ‘nation’ as a pre-modern construction, and the ‘state’ as modern construction, are separate but fused entities and still remain separate entities in mind (popular) and body (political) to most members of both. This is particularly pertinent to both Serbs and Albanians because the ideas of Old Serbia and Greater Albania, as both ‘nations’ spread further than their ‘states’ attest. Both the Serbian and Albanian nations extend further than their accepted state borders in both physical and emotional senses, and in past and present tenses. The tension created from the reality that this understanding of their respective ‘nations,’ based on ethnic and religious foundations are incongruent with their modern ‘states’ is presently our focus.

This chapter will deal primarily with the role of memory and the 1389 Battle of Kosovo in the mobilization of modern Serbian nationalism, the next chapter will discuss ethnic nationalism in the form of post-socialist irredentism in Albania and the Albanian community in the Balkans through the prism of the idea of ‘Greater Albania,’ or the phrase that contemporary nationalists prefer: ‘ethnic Albania. It will build on the contrast between Islam and Christianity by expanding on how in Albania, due to an amalgamation of religious congregations within the Albanian community ethnicity, in particular the use Albanian language, came to trump religious divisions when it came to the idea of a unified Albanian state in the Balkans.’⁸⁸ This approach is necessary to better understand the nationalism that arose after the fall of socialism in both countries. It is essential to first understand the way in which both communities ‘remember’ their histories, as well as the way in which they ‘imagine’ themselves today.

3.2 On Memory

Attempting to create a theoretical framework to better understand the ‘sociomental topography of the past’, scholar Eviatar Zerubavel informs us that the way that memory is collected and processed is both collective and particular. Each individual is informed by the collective and layered identities with which he or she associates most closely. They can be family ties, ethnic groupings, membership in a nation, or even as fans of sporting teams. These associations are known as *mnemonic communities*.⁸⁹ Each person can be a member of any number of *mnemonic communities*. The belonging to these communities inform the way the individual sees the ‘social shape of the past.’ Therefore, certain events take on different meanings to different peoples. Thus the way one remembers a football match is informed by the team he or she supports and has an emotional connection with. The situation in Kosovo is seen very differently by the Serbs and the Albanian community, and both could legitimately be said to remember Kosovo as site of defeat, persecution, and resurrection but for different reasons. With different but similar implications, they both envision the space as a part of their ‘nation’ regardless of the state of the state.

⁸⁸ Duijzings (2000): 157-165.

⁸⁹ Eviatar Zerubavel, *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past*, (Chicago, 2003): 1-11.

Zerubavel believes that ‘acquiring a group’s memories and thereby identifying with its collective past is part of the process of acquiring any social identity, and familiarizing members with that past is a major part of communities’ efforts to assimilate them.’⁹⁰ This is certainly the case in Kosovo. But *mnemonic communities* also often clash with one another on the ‘true’ history of an event or place and inevitably clash on the meaning of that history – these are known as mnemonic battles, and Kosovo is certainly one of the most famous in this regard.⁹¹ Zerubavel ponders whether it really matters who settled first in Kosovo. Or is it the way in which Kosovo is **remembered** and interpreted as a site of loss and injustice and therefore resurrection and redemption by both Serbs and Albanians more important than the claim to its original inhabitance?

Another method of inquiry on memory and how historical memory can ignite contemporary action is by German historian Wulf Kansteiner. Gaining a better understanding of the production, modes of transmission (media), interpretation, and interplay between collective and individual memories (and one might also say academic vs. popular memory) is the primary concern of Kansteiner.⁹² He proposes that historians stop using psychoanalytical techniques and inquiries geared towards the individual to derive their understandings as it relates to the formation of collective memories. For it is the collective memories or, rather personal memories and stories morphed into collective representations through media that tend to legitimize large-scale ethnic and religious violence for those who perpetrate it. When the Kosovo riots and the images of Albanian boys tearing down Orthodox Crosses were seen on Serbian television, individual acts became collective representations of violence.⁹³ Kansteiner instead urged an inter-disciplinary approach to memory that involves cultural studies as much as history itself. Most importantly, Kansteiner believes that the relationships between ‘memory makers, memory users, and the visual and discursive objects and traditions of representations,’ are the most relevant structures through which to study collective memory.⁹⁴ Studying this relationship is especially relevant when it comes to understand the representation of Kosovo and the Kosovo Myth in the Serbian and Albanian communities.

This section will first look at the theoretical groundings of seeing the significance of the past by using the mountains of the Caucasus and Montenegro as a guide to help better understand the situation in Kosovo. Then it will look at Kosovo through the contrasting perceptions of the main surviving communities in Kosovo from a religious and ethnic standpoint - the Orthodox Serbs and the memory of Old Serbia and the mostly Muslim Albanians and their central idea of Greater Albania.

3.3 National Pasts, Modern States

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 3.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 109.

⁹² Wulf Kansteiner, ‘Finding Meaning In Memory: A Methodological Critique Of Collective Memory Studies’, *History and Theory*, vol. 41 (2002); 179-197.

⁹³ Interview with Jelena Spasic (25-02-2011).

⁹⁴ Kansteiner (2002), 197.

As alluded to in part one, the years between 1989 and 1991, both the hallowed halls of academia and in the innermost rings of the Pentagon, many debates occurred concerning a profound new fear: that a new era of ‘suicidal nationalism’ would spread like wildfire across the steppes of the former Soviet Union and the Balkans and into Eastern Europe, eventually encompassing all of the post-Socialist space.⁹⁵ When George H.W. Bush took the stage in Kiev in 1991 and reminded the Soviet Ukrainians that ‘freedom’ and ‘independence’ were NOT interchangeable words, he echoed the sentiment of many among his security advisors that if the Soviet Union disintegrated there was a very, very, very real chance of wide-scale ethnic or ‘national’ violence breaking out.⁹⁶ But if we read deeper into his words, it may be possible to infer that what he really meant was that just because an ethnic grouping considers itself a ‘nation’, it doesn’t mean it requires an independent state of its own.⁹⁷

Much to American policy makers’ surprise, on the whole, the dissolution of the Soviet Union was a *relatively*, albeit not wholly, peaceful affair. Across the Caucasus, ethnic war flared, and in Moldova, separatists from the Trans-Dniestr region waged a brief and successful war against Moldova with the help of the Russian Army and armaments from the Soviet base in Kolbasna. Analysis shows that this war had very little to do with ethnicity or religion and was based mainly in the geo-politics of the moment and for the economic benefits of elites in Trans-Dniestr. Instead, it was after the war that identity politics and the linguistic dimension of the conflict came to the fore.⁹⁸ But these were the exceptions, rather than the rule. On the other side of the Black Sea, small pockets of violence also erupted, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union merely set the stage for Chechnya and Tajikistan to enter a decade marred by bloody civil wars.

Where the violence occurred, it was limited to small areas where the Soviet Union had officially recognized the political, administrative, and cultural rights of a specific minority. While this policy had its utility in the days of the Supreme Soviet inasmuch as Moscow could use the ethnic minority, whose status as Associate Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) depended on Moscow, to peddle influence in the Soviet Socialist Republics (SSR). Its direct consequence was violent conflict as the SSRs claimed independence and the ethnic minorities did not want to hand over their sovereignty to the ethnic majority. Just like in Kosovo, *mnemonic battles* were brewing across post-Soviet and post-Yugoslav space as each ethno-federal republic was rediscovering their ‘national’ past, oftentimes based on religious juxtaposition with its neighbors,

⁹⁵ Washington Times, ‘Bush Senior Clarifies ‘Chicken Kiev’ Speech’, (23/05/2004). Full text available at: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2004/may/23/20040523-101623-2724r/>

⁹⁶ Jack Matlock and Joanne J. Meyers at the Carnegie Council for International Affairs discussion on, *Superpower Illusions: How Myths and False Ideologies Led America Astray—and How to Return to Reality*. Full text available at: http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/resources/transcripts/0264.html/res/id=sa_File1/SuperpowerIllusions_Matlock.pdf

⁹⁷ George Herbert Walker Bush, ‘Remarks to the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of the Ukraine in Kiev, Soviet Union’, (01/08/1991). Full text available at: <http://www.artukraine.com/old/historical/gbush.htm>

and attempting to use it as a mitigating strategy for modern statehood. In some places this was successful, in the sense that the secessionist entity now controls the territory it fought for, others not. But in retrospect, the violence in prior Soviet territories was not as wide-scale as feared, but still try and tell that to the ethnic groups in the North Caucasus that have experienced two decades of continuous violence and repression.⁹⁹

In the early 1990s, ethnic groups were re-claiming their ‘national’ pasts, and nowhere was this more prevalent than in the Caucasus and Balkans and while the violence in the former Soviet Union was less wide spread than feared. The dissolution of Yugoslavia, however, would take many more years and cost many more lives. The *mnemonic battles* over the history of Yugoslav geography that began in the 1980s became the massacres of the 1990s. It’s important to assess this from a theoretical standpoint. The *mnemonic communities*, or how the one group remembers, celebrates, curates and codifies its collective identity in juxtaposition to another, are almost endless in the Caucasus and they radiated (and still radiate) out from the mountains and into the frontiers of Imperial Russia and the Ottoman Empire.

In today’s electronically-connected world, where the modern nation-state retains its utility as spokesman for ‘its’ people in international relations, but is losing its legitimacy as a spokesman or barometer for the sentiments of its internal population, a remarkable shift back to ethnic or pre-modern identity by members of larger state structures is taking place. Take for instance, the Russian Federation in the North Caucasus or the Tatar and Bashkir Republics, or the Chinese Autonomous republics of Xinjiang and Tibet to name only a few. And very often the religious element is the most pervasive and firmly fixed in these mnemonic battles. But, the fall back to religion does not automatically mean the fall back to ethnicity; indeed, the ethnic identity can be superseded by the homogenization of religion. This is particularly true of Orthodox Islam, a phenomenon covered shortly in this paper. The modern nation-state has proved persistently and remarkably incapable of incorporating and representing the litany of cultures that compose most nation-states, especially those born out of the fallout of the First World War, namely the Russian, Ottoman, and Austrian empires, where because of imperial extension, minority cultures do not fit neatly into the identity construct which the particular nation-state embraces as its dominant narrative today. This same phenomenon is playing out elsewhere with the same intensity and complexity – consider the Tibetans and the Uighurs in the Peoples Republic of China, for instance.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Note: The Caucasus holds a very special place in the *mnemonic communities* of Russians, Circassians, Georgians, Turks, Azeris, Ossets, Armenians, Avars, Cossacks, Lezgins, Vainakhs (Chechen and Ingush), and Dagestanis. It was not unlike the Balkans, only the mountains are bigger, the socialist penetration smaller, and the ethnic variations far greater and more complicated.

¹⁰⁰ Note: Let us leave post-socialist space quickly and discuss the enduring communist (if only by name) state – the Peoples Republic of China and its failing program of ethno-federal control. Consider China’s western provinces: Tibet and Xinjiang. Both are in the midst of *mnemonic battles* with the CCP to retain their collective cultural identities in a “globalized” or “Han-ified” China. Tibet is the seat of Tibetan Buddhism, and because of its religious construct, most Tibetans will never cede their loyalty or identity to Han Beijing. Xinjiang is the home of the Uighurs, a Turkish speaking Muslim group who, also because of a religious construct, will never

3.4 A New Kind of Community: Religion Trumps Ethnicity

A caveat must be provided for an interesting development of late in the Caucasus that signals a shift in the way *mnemonic communities* are being formed around religion instead of ethnicity. Consider the movement to establish an Islamic Emirate in the North Caucasus and the spread of wahhabi'ism from Afghanistan and the Arabian Peninsula. In these cases, the *mnemonic community* that was previously organized along ethnic and cultural lines, is being subsumed under the banner of Orthodox Islam, which does not recognize ethnicity as the structure of social organization within the *Umma*, the community of followers of Islam.¹⁰¹

While almost all of the North Caucasus peoples outside of the Ossetian's and Cossacks, practice some form of Islam, mostly mystical Sufi'ism, most ethnic groups still adhere to old ethnic rules or laws when it came to the organizational structure of society. Until recently the *Teip* or clan system in Chechnya was the predominant mode of social organization. This is very similar to both the tribal system in Montenegro and Albania, as well as the Sunni, Sufi, Bektashi, Shi'ite splits in Albanian Muslim religious communities. One need only hear the old Chechen joke that after Stalin deported huge numbers of Chechens to Central Asia for supposedly siding with the Germans in WWII, no Chechen ever went to Soviet prison.¹⁰² -- The Chechen social organization relied on the aforementioned pre-Soviet social infrastructure, the *Teip* system, and administered justice according to Chechen cultural norms. This is again much like the Albanian *Kanun*, which governed Albanian feudal society, even during Ottoman occupation, both systems sanctioning the blood feud and both detracting from the ability of the controlling state or imperial order to administer its own laws. But, as the 'globalization' of Islamic guerilla movements has reared its head more recently, a notion of a Wahhabi styled Islamic insurgency has grown in the Caucasus challenging the pre-modern *Mnemonic communities* that endured even through the Soviet era. And lending credit to Hastings assertion that nations are not constructed but de-constructed by Islam. A new form of *Mnemonic socialization* is taking place where due to the loss of a war of national liberation, which Chechnya originally was, now the militants are fighting for an Islamic Emirate with Shari'ah law as their principle doctrine of social governance. The continued pressure in the forms of kidnappings, torture, and persecution

cede identity or loyalty to Han Beijing. Different religions, but the same primal identity rooted in their particular faiths and juxtaposed against the common culture of the Chinese state. It is a safe assumption that most Tibetans and Uighurs consider themselves Tibetan or Uighur before they consider themselves Chinese. The same can be said, if not more forcefully due to the revitalization of Orthodoxy and imperial history in Russia since the late 1990s, for Chechens, Balkars, Karachai, or Cherkess, or even the Cossacks in the North Caucasus. The collective history and identity of a particular ethnic group, once again, supersedes state history, state ideology and state identity. Lenin is rolling in his grave.

¹⁰¹ Hastings (1997), 200.

¹⁰² BBC, Jonathan Dimbleby: Journey Across Russia, Episode 2 (06/18/2008). Full video available at: http://www.56.com/u33/v_NTg3MTYxNzQ.html (22/08/2011).

of relatives by Russian troops have made religion, and the funding it procures from the Middle East, and integral part of the modern day insurgency in Chechnya.¹⁰³

While Serbian propaganda played the international Jihad dimension to its apex in Kosovo, this type of religious infusion into nationalism did not occur within the Albanian communities across the southern Balkans, for Albanians have maintained ethnicity, not religion, as the driving force for Albanian unification in the Balkans.¹⁰⁴ This is most likely because the Albanian community is religiously heterogeneous and should Albanians have used religion as an impetus for Albanian nationalism, the chance for a fractious split along religious lines would detract from the broader project of Albanian nationalism.¹⁰⁵ Although appealing to Orthodox Serbs in the 1990s, the Islamic element was heavily played upon by the Serbian propaganda machine as Kemal Kurspahic, Bosnian-born author, editor and Chairman of the Washington D.C.-based Media in Democracy Institute, points out in a report for United States *Institute for Peace*, Kosovo's Albanian community was malleable for 20th century nationalists and propagandists to make 'others' out of Yugoslav citizens.¹⁰⁶ It was with the weight of history's mythological burden, through the voice of Slobodan Milosevic, and via the lens of the state-run media that the campaign against Kosovo's Albanian "Islamic terrorists" began in 1997. It quickly galvanized support for the idea of a "threatened nation" endangered by irredentist Albanians in the cradle of the Serbian nation, and on state television, Milosevic warned that a "showdown with Albanian terrorists" was imminent.

By placing ethnic origins and religious preference as a forerunner of allegiance to a state, it would seem like the world is falling back to pre-modern versions of *Mnemonic communities* and *mnemonic socialization*, so that perhaps ironically, the ethnic dimension of nationalism in the Caucasus is being trumped by the growing role of Wahabbi Islam, a decidedly pre-modern construct in almost every dimension. But one need not look any further than Western history to see that the modern world was shaped by pre-modern religion, imperialism and colonialism, that arbitrary borders, often drawn to offer a capital advantage to the West or Ottoman establishments, were imposed by the imperial powers across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Perhaps this new-old era where ethnic or national identity supersedes the state is a direct result of the modern 'nation-state' and its cult of 'imagined communities.'

3.5 Old Serbia and The Kosovo Myth: Holy Lands and Heavenly People.

*"Fictitious or true, the Kosovo legend offered a fatherland to the people who had lost it."*¹⁰⁷

~ Veljko Petrovic,

¹⁰³ Witness: Chechen Fighters, Al-Jazeera (22/02.2010). Full video available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07zq8fiG1JQ> (21/08/2011).

¹⁰⁴ Ger Duijzings, *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo*, (Columbia, 2000): 158-65.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 163.

¹⁰⁶ Kemal Kurspahic, Prime Time Crime: Balkan Media in War and Peace, (United States Institute of Peace, 2003) 28-60.

¹⁰⁷ Veljko Petrovic, 'Smisao Vidovana' Zaduzbine Kosova :284 in Wayne S. Vucinich and Thomas Emmert et. al, *Kosovo: Legacy of a Medieval Battle* (Minnesota, 1991).

Nations need myths. But myths are myths and they can be inspiring touchstones or they can be manipulated in dangerous ways because they need not be true so much as they need to be relevant. And when a nation needs its members to ‘kill, die, and lie for it’ myths are often the most powerful motivations in the nation’s arsenal.¹⁰⁸ Most often, the myth is one of creation or migration, it tells the how and why the nation is what it is. The myth can also be one of triumph or loss because that triumph or loss gives meaning again to why the nation exists in its present form. The Kosovo Myth is perhaps one of the most volatile of these myths in the world. We will not do what so many other scholars have done and re-hash all of the poetry that framed Kosovo in such epic terms, instead we shall focus on what the epic tradition has instilled into modern day nationalism. So if you were looking to read poetry in this section, you will not find it here but you can in just about every other study of Kosovo ever written.

It has been, at different times, understood and manipulated such that many lives have been lost in its fog. When the Serbian people were unequal subjects in the Ottoman Empire, the Kosovo Myth explained how that had come to be while still reminding them that their sacrifice was sacred and that a heavenly resurrection awaited them. When in the 19th and early 20th century, the Serbs rose against the Ottomans once and for all the Kosovo Myth was re-invigorated so that it sanctioned horrific violence against the Albanian population in Kosovo. And in 1998 when the Serbian patriarchate publicized a ‘cultural genocide’ occurring against the Serbian nation in Kosovo, it once again brought the Christian Serbs and Albanian Muslims into violent conflict.¹⁰⁹ The Kosovo Myth tells the story of Serbia, but instead of creation or jubilation, it is one of tragedy, sorrow, and loss. Perhaps the reason for its durability and vivid power, it is that it has made tragedy sacred and in the case of Kosovo, tragedy there has begotten considerable tragedy elsewhere, such as in Bosnia.

The national myth is a form of national social engineering, for it gives meaning to the nation. To better understand the power and sway of Kosovo to Serbians, it is important to appreciate the power of the Kosovo myth, especially its religious metaphor, both as a means to bind Serbians through their unhappy history and as a driver in fomenting contemporary tensions. Absent a profound understanding of the Kosovo Myth, the world’s peacekeepers can possibly keep peace, but not solve the problem. For each day that Kosovo is occupied and severed from the Serbian state, the immense power of the myth gains fuel and it becomes an even more relevant and more resonant galvanizing force.

Perhaps the most common approach to understanding this is through Benedict Anderson and his anthropological approach to nations as ‘imagined communities.’ As Anderson states: ‘Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.’¹¹⁰ Consider the critical assets of Kosovo in the minds – imagining – of Serbs: The medieval Serbian (Nemanjan) dynasty’s most spectacular architecture in the form of Byzantine cathedrals and monasteries lay in Kosovo; the patriarchate of the Serbian Orthodox Church sits in Pec; and the monastery in Gracanica is regarded as a jewel of the medieval Serbian world. But if we accept Anderson’s assertion on the role of ‘imagining,’ the myth with the most metaphorical weight lies in a 1389 battle fought at Kosovo Polje, or the Field of the

¹⁰⁸ Vjekislav Perica, *Balkan Idols*, (Oxford, 2002):5.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 13.

¹¹⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (Verso, 1983) 6.

Blackbirds, after which the Serbian people were placed under the Ottoman yoke for five centuries. This foundational event -- complete with treachery, tragedy, heroism and grandeur -- imagines Serbia and Serbians as a heavenly people who sacrificed their earthly possessions, in this case land and freedom, for their place in heaven. As such, Kosovo's importance to the Serbs has less to do with what actually happened in Kosovo and much more to do with the way it is remembered. The facts of battle itself (around which there remains considerable debate) are not the focus; rather it is *the myth of the battle* and the way it has been remembered and re-invigorated in the Serbian collective consciousness that shaped subsequent actions and events.¹¹¹ This informs any inquiry on Serbian nationalism because of the way Kosovo has been instrumentalized by Serbs since the 19th century.

It is difficult to underestimate the significance of Kosovo to the Serbian historical memory and collective identity. To Serbs, Kosovo is part of Old Serbia, where the Medieval Serbian kingdom reigned. The earth beneath Kosovo has been reified and aggrandized by ordinary Serbs, travel writers, and academics through art, literature, poetry, and song into something near mythical as the seat of the Medieval Serbian world and preserver of the original Serbian identity.¹¹² Traveling in the Slavonic provinces of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the 19th century, two British female authors had this to say:

'AND now finding ourselves at Prishtina, in the very heart of Old Serbia, it may be as well to inquire what extent of country is included under the name, what is its history, population, and condition. And here let us give notice, that if once we attempt an explanation which relates to various and conflicting elements of race, language, religion, and political interest... The limits of Old Serbia have then no political definition, nor any definition except that which is assigned them by their Christian inhabitants. This, again, depends on historical associations, so that it is not easy to determine boundaries... From the beginning of Serbian history there must have been districts where the Slavonic and Albanian elements existed side by side. M. Hahn is inclined to consider the Albanians as the aboriginal inhabitants, who vacated the fertile part of the country during the Serbian occupation for centuries. However this may be, both they themselves and the Slavonic inhabitants speak of their immigration as recent; in some places they have come down from the hills within the last fifty years, and constantly talk of returning thither. How far north the Albanians dwelt previous to their last ingress it is hard to determine; but it is certain that the Slavonians shared Albanian territory as far as Durazzo and Elbassan; also that, even before Némania's time, the little Serbian kingdom of Zeta united northern Skipetars

¹¹¹ As the popular, but untrue, story goes, in 1389, on the Kosovo Polje also known as the "field of blackbirds" the Nemanjan dynasty of medieval Serbia and its good prince Lazar fell to Ottoman advances due to the treachery of Vuk Brankovic and the Serbian "nation" was subsequently brought under the Ottoman yoke for five centuries. For a comprehensive assessment of the truth vs. myth of the battle see: Wayne S. Vucinich and Thomas Emmert et. al, *Kosovo: Legacy of a Medieval Battle* (University of Minnesota, 1991)

¹¹² Svetozar Koljevic, "The Battle of Kosovo in its Epic Mosaic", in *Kosovo: Legacy of a Medieval Battle* (Minnesota, 1991) 123-137. Vasa D. Mihailovic, "The Tradition of Kosovo in Serbian Literature", in *Kosovo: Legacy of a Medieval Battle* (Minnesota, 1991): 141-155. Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History*, (NYU, 1999): 58-80.

*and southern Slāvs. Afterwards, the laws of the empire speak of Albanians, both orthodox and catholic, as fellow-subjects with the Serb. Finally, after the breaking-up, first of the czardom, and then of Zeta itself, we find the Albanians under separate princes; but these princes—for instance, Scanderbeg himself—are relatives and allies of the Serbs. ... The Asiatic Turk who conquered at Kóssovo has left few and sparse settlements in the country; the Albanian Mahommedan represents a doubly conquered race. He is a European who has lost not only liberty but religion, whose past is barbarian, his present apostacy, and his future either a sneaking return to his former faith, or slavery to a despotic government administered by foreign officials. The Christians, on the contrary, meeting at their festivals under the walls of the grand old churches, claim as their own all traditions of ancient empire, and of such civilisation as distinguished Old Serbia so long as it was a part of Christian Europe. And if the past be theirs, they have only to look forward to be sure that the future is theirs also; that sooner or later they must become a part of Christian Europe once more. Their kindred of race—often their own near relatives—are living as European Christians in Serbia and Austria; hence they know what is meant by freedom, and there is no confusion, no uncertainty in their prospects for their children, who are educated in the conviction that they at least will be free.*¹¹³

But Kosovo is not only about tragedy for the Serbs but also about liberation as the author's point out 'must' be. When the Serbs rose against the Ottomans in the twentieth century, King Peter's declaration of war stated: 'The glorious and saddened mother of our kingdom where lies the glorious kernel of our state... Here live our brothers by blood, customs, national consciousness, and aspirations.'¹¹⁴ Correspondingly, the slogan 'For Kosovo-Kumanovo' was seen on army banners as they headed south to take back their ancestral and religious homeland.¹¹⁵ By 1913, Kosovo was once again under Serbian control and would remain so until 1999 when the international community bombed Serbia into submission and sanctioned the partition of Serbia.¹¹⁶ – Ironically, providing the equivalent of contemporary fission to the Myth of Kosovo, the Serbian heart was once again stolen by the Great Powers.

3.6 History Re-Written

Serbian scholar, Dimitrije Djordjevic theorizes that 'Each generation rewrites history, inevitably injecting present ideas into the past... Thus, fiction becomes reality in the popular mind'.¹¹⁷ Djordjevic believes this was what occurred as the legend or 'cult' of the Battle of

¹¹³ Lady Georgina Mary Muir (Mackenzie), Adelina Paulina Irby Sebright, *Travels in the Slavonic provinces of Turkey-in-Europe*, (New York, Arno Press, 1877): 212-16.

¹¹⁴ Dimitrije Djordjevic, "The Tradition of Kosovo in the Formation of Modern Serbian Statehood", in Wayne S. Vucinich and Thomas Emmert et. al, *Kosovo: Legacy of a Medieval Battle* (University of Minnesota, 1991): 320.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 321.

¹¹⁶ Iain King and Whit Mason, *Peace At Any Price: How The World Failed Kosovo*, (Cornell, 2006): 37.

¹¹⁷ Dimitrije Djordjevic, "The Tradition of Kosovo in the Formation of Modern Serbian Statehood in the Nineteenth Century" in Wayne S. Vucinich and Thomas Emmert et. al, *Kosovo: Legacy of a Medieval Battle* (University of Minnesota, 1991) 310-311.

Kosovo became justification, indeed a battle cry, for modern day statehood in the late 19th and early 20th century.¹¹⁸ It also served as the central propaganda tool to mobilize Serbian nationalism from the 1980s onward. Regardless of its accuracy, in the late 19th and early 20th century, the legend of the Battle of Kosovo fed a nationalism that envisioned the restoration of a free nation after five centuries of subservience within the Ottoman Empire. It was used to mobilize nationalist sentiment across the whole of Serbia, not just the south, but within Austro-Hungarian controlled Vojvodina as well.¹¹⁹

The “Kosovo Epic” was first sung by illiterate peasant bards, *guslars*, and was accompanied by single stringed *gusle*. In the 19th century, the bard songs were codified by Vuk Karadzic, and later by the Montenegrin prince-priest, Njegos. Via the distribution of printed literature about the Kosovo Epic, the modern era state-builders were able to mobilize the myths to justify the restoration of their holy land in Kosovo by any means necessary during the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, regardless of the fact that the northern Albanian community had been the demographic majority in Kosovo for nearly 300 years. As the first Balkan war began, King Peter I made the restoration of Kosovo an essential priority in the war, thus mobilizing ‘imagined communities’ of Orthodox faithful in Serbia, Old Serbia, and Montenegro for a modern era crusade to their holy land in Kosovo.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the myth was revived and re-invigorated by nationally minded politicians, clergy and respected academics, including institutional academia in the form of writing by the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. But it was no longer the traveling minstrels with their folk songs and *gusles* that sang the Serbs to war and insurrection; instead it was turbo-folk singers who became the messengers and mediators of the discourse surrounding Kosovo.¹²⁰ By utilizing the mythical memory of a suffering and heavenly people with a ‘special destiny’ written by God and claiming that a cultural and demographic genocide was being committed by the Albanian community in Kosovo, the new Serbian leadership was able to create a climate in which the Battle of Kosovo became the central and resonant theme in a new Serbian nationalism.

Consider one particularly deadly manifestation of how the Myth framed behavior: While celebrating Vidovan at a Serbian Orthodox church in Serbian-held Bosnia (Vidovan is, June 28, and for most Serbs commemorates the day of the Battle of Kosovo and the related loss of their empire), Bosnian Serb general Radko Mladic, had this to say: ‘Prince Lazar gave his army the sacrament, and bowed for the Heavenly Empire, defending fatherland, faith, freedom and the honor of the Serbian people. We have understood the essence of his sacrifice and have drawn the historical message from it.’¹²¹ In other words, Mladic drew on the past to justify the massacre about to take place, rooting it religiously in a centuries-long battle against occupation and degradation of the ‘heavenly’ Serbian people and placing it not in the present day but in mythical memory. Mladic instilled in his troops a sense of the divinity of the Serbian nation and thus a divine mission to rid the Serbs of their Muslim occupiers once and for all. Weeks later he presided over the deaths and burials of more than 8,000 Muslim men and boys.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 321.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 316.

¹²⁰ Ger Duijzings, *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo*, (Columbia, 2000): 199-201.

¹²¹ Radko Mladic in *Ibid*: 201-202.

By now, it may seem overplayed by academic, diplomatic, and media communities, but while the actual events in 1997-2008 that freed Kosovo from Serbian domination had more to do with power politics than religion, the reification of the Serbian religious tradition in Kosovo is not without merit. The protection of Serbian religious heritage in Kosovo still is a key issue in solving Kosovo's present status. Simply look at the lasting impact of the 2004 riots or the cries of the Serbian patriarchate that 'cultural genocide' was occurring as Kosovars looted and burned Serbian religious sites during the KLA campaign for the freedom of Kosovo, some of which had been sites of interfaith pilgrimages only a few years earlier.

Keeping the 'from Kosovo to Kumanovo' crusade in mind, another method of surveying Serbian sentiment regarding Kosovo is through Adrian Hasting's 'holy land' conceptualization that will be analyzed more fully in the next chapter. Suffice it to say here that a holy land is inherently territorial and supernatural at the same instant. This can cause dire consequences in the battle for its control, for it seems only natural that a holy land should be occupied by those who consider it holy, not by those who don't. It follows, then, that taking back a holy land by any means necessary can be justified as an act of true faith – returning the holy land to its heavenly people. Kosovo, as the seat of the Serbian patriarchate, can accurately be seen in this regard. In Kosovo this has justification has occurred, both when the Serbs rose against the Turks, and, ironically when the KLA rose against the Serbs. The struggle for the land, not the land itself, became sacred for the Kosovars, while the land itself and the history it contains as site of memory that is sacred to the Serbs.

In today's modern paradigms, the former is more acceptable to norms of international governance. The latter is seen as ethnic cleansing, as is the massacre at Srebrenica, another inherently territorial process.¹²² But why the international community legitimizes some ethnic cleansing, as it did with Albanian and Croats against the Serbs in post-conflict Krajina or Kosovo, and not others, as it didn't in pre-conflict Kosovo and Bosnia, is still up for considerable debate.

¹²² Bette Denich, 'Dismembering Yugoslavia: Nationalist Ideologies and the Symbolic Revival of Genocide', *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 21, No. 2, (1994): 367-390.

Chapter 4 – On the Nationalism of Irredentism

4.1: ‘First and foremost stands the *national question*’¹²³

Territorial disputes, unrecognized space, and the shifting conceptions of ‘nations’ and states in post-socialist Eurasia has become a fact of life for diplomats, politicians, and everyday citizens in the region since the fall of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. The hangover from Ottoman, Romanov, and Habsburg imperialism and then socialist ethno-federalism in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia created a number of seemingly intractable national, cultural, and territorial conflicts commonly referred to as Frozen Conflicts. The geographies of these conflicts range from the Caucasus to the Mediterranean to the Balkans from Nagorno-Karabakh to Cyprus to Kosovo, and now this appellation can be extended to the Serb-controlled north of Kosovo in a sense creating a ‘phantom state’ within a Frozen Conflict.¹²⁴

The most common approach to first understand, then solve, these conflicts is to empirically and specifically analyze one aspect of the conflict from the top-down and the inside out. By this I mean that the most common approach tends to focus on the military, social, political, or economic realms of the unrecognized space and then moves outward from the unrecognized region and its elites, to their obvious interplay with the neighboring states and the neighboring populations. For instance, to examine the situation in Kosovo and among Kosovar Albanians, we must also consider Albania and Albanians in Albania for neighborly retribution and irredentist tendencies, as well. This approach also has a predilection to aggrandize the present tense and the role of the international community while downplaying the enduring effects of the area’s historical, cultural, and religious connections and/or disjunctions with their neighbors, seeing them merely as relics of the past. Consequently, the approach also misconstrues the utility of these antecedents as a compelling force for mobilization. This chapter seeks to break this trend by taking a slightly different approach to one of these territorial disputes in the Balkans – Kosovo.

Putting aside all of the bias, the inhabitants of the rugged strip of land from Slovenia to Salonika and from Ararat to Abkhazia have proved themselves virtual reservoirs for academics in the field of nationalism in the twentieth century. Perhaps no other region has been studied more heavily in the last two decades. Throughout the history of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the aforementioned ‘other’ has rendered itself in many forms, but for our current examination the Ottoman, Romanov, and Habsburg dynasties in Russia, Central Asia, and Central Europe are the most relevant examples. These imperial orders presided over decidedly multinational empires. In all three, the transition from imperial regions to modern statehood in the twentieth century was fraught with what is commonly referred to as the ‘national question.’ Imperial and later international intervention only expanded the complexity of the already intricate ‘national question’ in the Balkans.

As the European imperial dynasties crumbled in the wake of the First World War, new political ideologies, namely geo-specific variations of Marxist socialism on one side, and

¹²³ Leon Trotsky, *The war correspondence of Leon Trotsky: The Balkan Wars 1912-1913*, (Monad, 1980, first published 1913), 12.

¹²⁴ The term ‘phantom’ state was coined recently by Charles King in an Op-ed for the New York Times and is more fitting for these types of conflicts, but as ‘Frozen Conflict’ is the name most often used, I will rely on that term.

variants of industrial nationalism or fascism on the other, emerged triumphant in these formerly imperial regions. The process of institutional ethno-federalism embarked upon by Lenin and Stalin in the early days of the Soviet Union (at that time Stalin was the Soviet Minister of Nationalities), later became a frame of reference for the new multinational and multi-ethnic Yugoslavia after Tito's partisans triumphantly declared their new state – Yugoslavia – across the Balkan Peninsula in the wake of the Second World War.

After the war ended, peace was consolidated and maintained by Tito through a system of give-and-take among the different ethnic republics, primarily by revising the constitution in 1946, 1963 and 1974 with related revisions in administrative authority over national republics and autonomous provinces to preempt and pacify unrest across Yugoslavia.¹²⁵ In essence, because Tito understood the complexity his artificial state, he declared that nationalism did not exist, that there were only Yugoslavs in Yugoslavia. This very socialist construct was at odds with Yugoslavia's own ethno-federal construction. Upon the dismissal of Aleksandar Rankovic in 1966, a Serbian nationalist who had been particularly hard on Kosovar Albanians and then head of the Yugoslav secret police, any signs of nationalism within Yugoslavia were quickly and deliberately quelled by Tito. In 1981 two important events occurred. The first was the death of Tito, whose dynamic persona and intolerance to outspoken nationalism had held nationalist sentiment at bay since the Second World War. The second event was the 1981 riots in Kosovo, which first began as a student protest at Pristina University for better dormitory conditions and better food when a cockroach found in a student's cafeteria food. But within days, it encompassed and enveloped almost all strata of Albanian society in Kosovo, giving voice to widespread disillusionment with the Yugoslav government. During the unrest, a fire broke out at the Pec patriarchate in Kosovo which was quickly publicized and roundly condemned by Serbian media. The media coverage of Kosovar Albanians demolishing and burning Serbian holy sites and the imagery and the anger it evoked in Serbians, has since become a *leitmotif* in Kosovo.¹²⁶ This *leitmotif* will emerge again, later in this chapter, in the context of rioting in Kosovo in 2004 and 2007 in which much of Kosovo's Serbian heritage was desecrated and destroyed.

From 1989 to 1991, both the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia began their federal dismantling process and their formerly ethnically designated republics began their independence processes. At this point, the 'national question,' which plagued both federations in the beginning of the twentieth century, once again came to the forefront of international relations.¹²⁷ While the fears of a great war in the former Soviet Union weren't realized, there were sporadic violent conflicts, mostly unheralded in Western media, such as in Nagorno Karabakh, which reflected the complexity of Soviet nationality policy. But the dissolution of Europe's continental multinational federation – Yugoslavia – was of a different nature.

To gain a better understanding of the conflict in Kosovo, this chapter will explore Kosovo from the outside-in and from the past to the present as a geography caught between two competing conceptions and two legitimizing strategies for the same territory, namely the romantic ideas of

¹²⁵ Miranda Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian: A History of Kosovo*, (Columbia, 1998): 146-181.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, 197-8.

¹²⁷ See: Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Cornell, 1984).

Old Serbia which we have previously discussed and that of Greater Albania, or as is preferred by today's Albanian nationalists, 'ethnic Albania.' Each of these strategies was fostered by Serbs and Albanians proponents respectively.¹²⁸ The Old Serbia vision re-imagines and romanticizes what once was while Greater Albania imagines a romantic vision of something that will be in the future. And- Kosovo is the epicenter for both of these visions.¹²⁹

Kosovo itself is a mainly Muslim region situated at the crossroads of the Balkans, south of Serbia and north of Albania, and the strategies to legitimize, or de-legitimize, its existence have been the product of two different visions for Kosovo, each emanating from its neighbors to the north and to the south. The first portion of this chapter explored the 'nation' and the role of religion on the discourse surrounding the modernity of nationalism, with a focus on the Eastern Orthodox Church, the power of myth in the formation and fueling of collective memory, and the Balkans. This paper also has examined the conflict in Kosovo through the prism of Old Serbia and the Kosovo Myth. Now this paper examines the other side of the conflict in the idea of Greater Albania and the ethnic nationalism, or irredentism, of the Kosovar Albanians. Finally, it will move onto NATO's bombing campaign of 1999 and examine the role of the international community and *Realpolitik* in fostering or de-legitimizing the visions of Old Serbia and Greater Albania on the international stage. Ironically, both visions are deemed lacking in legitimacy, which raises the question of what legitimacy actually is when it comes to the terrain of nation-state construction today. Perhaps legitimacy is merely derived from those who offer it.

We shall now move past the classic debate and discuss the shifting landscape of nations and nationalism in light of the paradigm shift caused by the collapse of Socialism in Europe and the Soviet Union. Specifically, we will focus on the irredentism that emerged in this era and in these geographies. After 1991, the terms *post-Soviet space* and a trend toward the nationalism of irredentism emerged in the lexicon of academics and pundits alike. New academic research on nationalism, identity, irredentism and self-determination in post-Soviet space or the post-Communist world became a common thread across American and Western European universities.¹³⁰ Now, the term 'modernist' became passé, the only acceptable label as an academic was that of a post-modernist. Western academics became engaged with the supposedly 'new' questions of ethnicity and nationality in a post-Soviet, post-Yugoslav, or post-Communist world. But on the ground, bloody secessionist, unionist, sectarian or civil conflicts (usually depending on *who* applied the words), emerged in such places as Transnistria the Caucasus, and Central Asia.. Some academics, historians, geographers, and anthropologists, such as Francine Hirsch, Charles King, Rogers Brubaker, and Christoph Zurcher, have concluded that the main factor contributing to emergence of the post-1991 conflicts was not ancient cultural differentiation, but, in Rogers Brubaker's words, the *institutionalized multinationality* embarked

¹²⁸ 'Albania and Kosovo: What happened to Greater Albania?', *The Economist*, 18/01/2007. <http://www.economist.com/node/8558447>

¹²⁹ Note: And to a lesser extent parts of the Metohija, Montenegro, and the Tetovo region in Macedonia.

¹³⁰ Charles King, *Extreme Politics: Nationalism, Violence, and the END of Eastern Europe* (Oxford, 2010) 34-36, 80-102., Brubaker, Rogers. "Nationhood and the national question in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Eurasia: An institutional account" *Theory and Society*. Vol. 23, No. 1 (1994): 47-78.

upon by Lenin and Stalin, and later by Tito, that continued until 1991. To fully draw the picture, it will be important now examine the national pasts of today's modern states in the Balkans, their foundations and their time and experience as members of socialist federations.

4.2 The Triadic, or is it Quadratic, Nexus?

As the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia began to disintegrate in the early 1990s, and with it their previous assumptions on the character of new national movements across Eastern Europe and Central Asia, scholars began theorizing about the role of stranded ethnic diasporas in the newly minted states. The first threats of serious irredentist conflict since the Germans in the interwar period presented themselves as ethnic Russians became Kazakh citizens and ethnic Serbs became Croatian citizens. Many scholars, diplomats, and generals feared for the worst, and in the former Yugoslavia, Caucasus, and Tajikistan they were right.

Perhaps the most famous theorization on the role of trans-state Diaspora communities in successor states emerged in a series of essays by American scholar Rogers Brubaker (they later were collected in the book, *Nationalism Reframed*), in which he emphasized the utility value of 'nations' as they were codified by the socialist federations in the post-1989 and post-Soviet landscape. Brubaker developed a *dynamic* 'triadic nexus of 'antagonistic nationalisms' in the form of *external homelands*, *nationalizing states*, and *national minorities* and displayed their constant intersections. It quickly became a hallmark piece of the post-Soviet studies literature.¹³¹

As previously stated, Brubaker first posited that the new nationalism in post-Soviet space was a product of the *institutionalized multinationality* imposed by the Soviet state, which served to both favor and benefit certain ethnic groups, and oppress and exclude others. The resentment built up over the Socialist and ethno-federal era, he warned, could cause serious territorial challenges in the post-Socialist sphere. Second, Brubaker challenged scholars to admit in the context of the 'triadic nexus,' that in the post-Soviet and post-Yugoslav landscape, issues of nationalism, irredentism, and territoriality were inextricably linked due to the ethno-federal policies of the previous administrations, not only to historical ethnic and religious variations, and that the relationship between the three was constant and dynamic. To strengthen his argument, Brubaker showed this process as it related to Croatia in the early 1990s.¹³² Later this paper examines, Brubaker's nexus in the context of the Kosovo equation and offers a suggestion for a reworking the nexus for other nationalist and irredentist quests for self-determination and legitimacy in the 21st century.

For purposes of examining the status of nationalism and irredentism in Serbia and Albania, it is important to acknowledge the foundational processes of their births as states. As alluded to in part 1 of this paper, the third wave of nation-state construction in Europe was located in the East and Southeast and was juxtaposed against the imperial rule of the Ottoman, Russian, or Austrian Empires. They were, therefore, secessionist at core and relied on religious symbolism to bind their populations. For the new countries that had been subsumed by Ottoman rule, almost all were irredentist by nature also due, in large part, to the Ottoman system of organization by religion, which had the outcome of linking religion and ethnicity. Thus as the new Serbia and Albania came into being as states in the late 19th and early 20th century, both

¹³¹ Rogers Brubaker, "Nationalizing States and External Homelands in the New Europe" *Daedalus* vol. 124 no. 2 (1995): 107-132.

¹³² *Ibid*, 120-127.

states stranded many co-ethnics and co-religionists in their neighbor's state. Almost as quickly as these states were born, the irredentist dream of reunion among their co-ethnics began. The 'greater' appellation that applies to the ideas of Greater Greece, Greater Serbia, Greater Albania, and Greater Bulgaria all stemmed from this era and were a direct product of the Ottoman religious organization of subjects that helped to feed the irredentist dreams in the region to this day.¹³³

Turning to the aforementioned Brubaker and his conceptions of post-Soviet irredentism and theory of the 'triadic nexus,' is helpful to gauge nationalism and irredentism in Serbia and throughout Albania. It works for both before independence, when Kosovo was part of Yugoslavia, and for after *de-facto* independence in 2008; however, the variables have inverted. In other words, before independence, first Yugoslavia, then Serbia and Montenegro, was the *nationalizing state(s)*, Albanians were the *national minority* (of Serbia, though they made up the majority in Kosovo), and Albania the *external homeland*. Today the equation is inverted for Serbs are the *national minority* in Kosovo, the Kosovar government of Hashim Thaci is the *nationalizing state* (including UNMIK and KFOR as will be discussed below), and Serbia the *external homeland*. In the context of historical ironies, this is a rather contrarian designation seeing as Kosovo is regarded as the original homeland by Serbs and as the original homeland of the Kosovars who consider themselves part of the Albanian ethnic community.

But Brubaker's original assessment misses a key component of the Kosovo, Albania, Serbia interrelationship in the 21st century and for this another variable, with two subsets must be added into the equation. These will factor into the final chapter of this thesis. First is the role and actions of the international community and the second is the competing interests and conflicting understandings of the situation -- members of community that support independence and those who will not recognize independence oftentimes due to the presence of secessionist entities within their own state. This is complicated further still if we are to add that the international community's presence as an occupying force during the KLA ethnic cleansing of Serbian civilians after the conflict and the riots in Kosovo in 2004 and 2007. This also puts UNMIK, KFOR and the entire judiciary of Kosovo in the position of *nationalizing state* in Brubaker's nexus.

To successfully resolve the question of Kosovo's status, an enrichment of Brubaker's nexus to include the role of the international community in Kosovo is needed, along with clarification in international and internal law. Nevertheless, Brubaker's early 'triadic nexus' stands as a useful base for this reconfiguration and for irredentist conflict in the post-Soviet and post-Yugoslav spheres. (This stands only as long, however, as the secessionist entities are primarily concerned with **at least acting as a liberal democratic state.**)

Perhaps the assumption that this was the path in post-Communist societies was taken for granted in the early 1990s, until the impact of durable combat on these societies played out. In both Russia and Chechnya, protracted conflict brought out the religious element in both fighting forces. In Chechnya what began as a secessionist movement concerned with national liberation morphed into an Islamic insurgency, whose primary concern is to unite the various Caucasian Muslims under one Islamic Emirate and Shari'ah.

¹³³ William W. Hagen, The Balkans Lethal Nationalisms, *Foreign Affairs*, July, 1999: 53.

This type of conflict is replicated in places like Afghanistan and Somalia where the militants fighting do not envision a ‘state’ as we know it, and, therefore, do not fit in Brubaker’s nexus. This is in part because the emphasis in Islam calls for the elimination of ethnic designation, thereby changing the irredentist into a religious dimension. And it is in part because of the emphasis on religion to motivate and justify the conflict combined with the concern over the politics of religion in the aftermath as the only end point of the fight. This makes such conflicts particularly intractable, with or without intervention by the international community. On the other side, when the guerillas are concerned with becoming a ‘state like entity’ with dialogue and membership in the international community, Brubaker’s nexus still applies.

4.3 ‘The Benefits Of Ethnic War’

After Kosovo’s declaration of independence in 2008, a spate of literature on what has become known as the ‘Kosovo Precedent’ was produced from both sides of the international community. The ‘Kosovo Precedent’ itself will be discussed in more detail later in the thesis, but a summary of the opinion factions is that essentially, the Kosovo decision is seen by separatist entities as legitimizing self-determination for secessionist regions that never held republic status in post-Soviet and post-Yugoslav regimes. Western powers state, however, that a unique set of circumstances created Kosovo and therefore the Kosovo declaration of independence should be judged by its uniqueness, not its comparability to other secessionist entities. Since the declaration, the international community has been divided in their views of this delicate issue.

The academic world is also divided. Some academics, notably Peter Hewitt and Klejda Mulaj, have supported the move and written pieces before the declaration that served to legitimize the Kosovar actions from resistance to independence, although the Balkan bias mentioned in this paper’s preface pervades both pieces.¹³⁴ Others have seen it as political expediency circumventing customary international law. The best work done on the subject is Charles King’s 2010 work, *Extreme Politics: Nationalism, Violence, and the End of Eastern Europe*. King’s work provides a broad overview of post-Soviet nationalism studies and contains some very interesting interpretations on the ‘everyday’ character of nationalism in post-Soviet space by not subscribing to any specific theoretical framework. Instead, it seeks a more post-modern accounting of the situation, while simultaneously giving credence to both modernist and primordialist camps, demonstrating that *both* understandings are utilized by elites to manipulate the meaning of nationalism in the post-Soviet space.

One chapter of King’s book though, addresses the so-called ‘benefits of ethnic war,’ and Kosovo plays a central role in the discussion. First, King believes that in Kosovo, the international community, and particularly the NATO military alliance by allying with a secessionist army in a region of a recognized state that did not enjoy federal status – particularly one that openly promoted ethnically irredentist propaganda with a neighboring state in the form of Greater Albania – has re-defined its role in a myriad of ways. King states that, whether it likes it or not, the international community ‘had set a clear precedent, despite repeated denials by

¹³⁴ Klejda Mulaj, “Resisting an Oppressive Regime: The Case of The Kosovo Liberation Army”, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 31, No.12, ()1109.; Henry H. Perritt Jr., *Kosovo Liberation Army: the inside story of an insurgency*, (Illinois, 2008).

Western governments for how territorial issues were to be treated across the post communist world.¹³⁵

Second, and perhaps more relevant, is simply that the elite circles in Kosovo have benefited immensely from their *de-facto* status. And in Kosovo's case this is not limited to benefits from international peacekeeping forces and huge subsidies, but also via illegal channels as well. King points out in regards to Eurasian de-facto state like entities that 'The territorial secessionists of the 1990s have become the state builders of the early 2000s, creating de-facto countries whose ability to field armed forces, control their own territory, educate their children, and maintain a local economy has in some instances approximated that of the recognized states of which they are still notionally a part.'¹³⁶ King goes further and asks the obvious and not altogether rhetorical questions: "Why be mayor of a small city when you can be president of a country? Why be a lieutenant in someone else's army when you can be general of your own?"¹³⁷ This sentiment mirrors Brubaker's work of in the 1990s in which he stressed the practicality of nations for the economic benefits of post-Soviet and post-Yugoslav ethnic elites. After a thorough reading of King's work, it would seem that Brubaker's assumptions on the utility value of nationhood for post-Soviet and post-Yugoslav ethnic elites as a bargaining tool in the international community, written in the mid-1990s, remain relevant today.

The following sections will examine the 20th century history of Kosovo and its relationship to Albania and it will question what it means that Kosovo is inhabited by ethnic Albanians and discuss the repercussions for this dynamic on the ethnic Albanian community in the Balkans. It then discusses the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and its relationship with the NATO and the international community, as both struggled to define their own legitimacy after the fall of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia during the Kosovo crisis in the late 1990s. In conclusion, the paper will question what it means that the international community is willing to sanction ethnically pure states in certain geographies while it vehemently denies the same right to do so in others and the implications of such ambiguity.

¹³⁵ Charles King, *Extreme Politics: Nationalism, Violence, and the End of Eastern Europe* (Oxford, 2010):132.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 104.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, 131.

Chapter 5 – Today’s Reality Doesn’t Really Have That Much to do with Religion, Does It?

5.1 Albanians and Kosovo:

In the intricate Balkan mosaic, the roots of the Albanians are the most difficult to.¹³⁸ Some believe they are descendents of Illyrians, but one thing is for certain: they have a linguistic identity wholly distinct from those around them which has for years alienated and separated them from their Slavic and Greek neighbors. In his most prodigious work, *Nationalism*, Elie Kedourie argues that linguistic identity is one of the primary legitimizing factors in “national self-determination.”¹³⁹ Kedourie boldly states that ‘people who speak an original language are nations, and second, that nations must speak an original language’¹⁴⁰ This yields a set of questions that do not yet have answers. If to speak Albanian means to be Albanian, regardless of whether or not you come from Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro or Albania, does that mean that an Albanian nation, albeit in four states, already exists? Also, in specific regards to Kosovo, there is no other major state in Europe in which the majority population of one country is both ethnically, religiously, and linguistically dominant and in congruence with a neighbor state (if we call Kosovo a state, and make an exception for Switzerland). Even Northern Ireland, while sharing a linguistic background, is still demographically dominated by British Protestants.¹⁴¹ This makes deciphering the true nature of Kosovo’s nationalist movement a difficult task.

An old Albanian joke plays that whatever religion allows us to carry a weapon is the religion of Albanians. As the Ottoman Empire organized its subjects according to religious preference, the Albanian communities that converted to Islam, starting from the late 15th century but with much more haste and *en masse* during the 16th and early 17th centuries, enjoyed special status within the empire. While this allowed the Albanian Muslims certain privileges during Ottoman rule, it also served to alienate the Albanian community from its previous allies and Christian brothers in arms, i.e. the Serbs and Italians.¹⁴² If we remember that Albania’s most famous hero was an Orthodox, Prince Skenderbeg, who resisted Ottoman incursion and that by almost all accounts Albanian (along with Hungarian, Italian, and Andalusian) divisions fought alongside the Slavic armies at the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, we see that for quite some time the Serbian and Albanian communities lived side by side and in communion with one another.¹⁴³

As many of the Albanians under Ottoman rule converted to Islam, however, the alienation began due to the structural organization of people by religion in the Ottoman Empire. This also made visible the Albanian perspective on Kosovo, which also cites historical injustice as a legitimizing force. To understand the early framework for political conceptions of an ethnically united Albanian, it is useful to begin in 1877-8 with the Russo-Ottoman war and the following Serbian insurrections against the Ottoman empire. These, in turn, led to the formation of the first League of Prizren where the Albanian community drafted the concept of unifying as an Albanian state. In a letter to the British delegation at the Congress of Berlin, the League of Prizren stated, ‘Just as we do not want to be Turks, so we shall oppose with all our might anyone

¹³⁸ Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History*, (NYU, 1998): 22-40.

¹³⁹ Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, (Blackwell, 1960) 57-86.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 62.

¹⁴¹ Although an argument could be made that many of the Protestants were Scots, which share a Celtic identity with the Irish.

¹⁴² Paulin Kola, ‘*In Search of Greater Albania*’ (C. Hurst & Co. Ltd, 2003): 6.

¹⁴³ Malcolm (1998), 59-80.

who would like to turn us into Slavs or Austrians or Greeks, we want to be Albanians.’¹⁴⁴ The Balkans Wars of 1912-1913 finally severed Ottoman rule in Europe and Serbia gained its full independence from Ottoman rule. While regaining control of Kosovo, the Serbian army wreaked havoc on Turkish occupiers and its former favored sons, the Muslim Albanians.

The Treaty of London 1913, which ended the First Balkan War, effectively cut Serbia’s route to the sea through Albania. Even so, it did carve parts of the Albanian community into four different states: Macedonia (Tetovo), Montenegro, Serbia (in Kosovo) and Albania. One can effectively point to this separation as the precursor to the idea of a modern day Greater Albania. From 1913 to the Second World War (with a brief Austro-Hungarian occupation from 1916-1918 during World War One), the situation for Albanians in Serbian territory was bleak. Albanians suffered severe discrimination by the Serbian authorities who denied that there were any ethnic minorities in their southern regions. In this campaign, language and education rights were suppressed and Albanian numbers were probably halved in the 1921 census.¹⁴⁵ When the Second World War broke out, the Albanian Kosovars were eager to side against Serbia and joined forces with fascist Italy to occupy Albania, Kosovo, and parts of Macedonia and Montenegro from 1941-43. This was the closest realization of the Greater Albania aspirations that would unify all Albanians into a single state. This would later resurface in propaganda campaigns, for the ruling Albanian party in Kosovo, the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), and KLA in the 1990s.¹⁴⁶

From 1974 to 1989, Kosovo maintained itself as one of two autonomous provinces of Serbia proper (the other being the multi-ethnic Vojvodina in the North). Although the region enjoyed autonomy, it was without the right to secession accorded to full republics. It was the poorest region in Serbia, with still a 36% illiteracy rate in 1971, despite it receiving the most government funds. In fact, Edvard Kardelj, a founder of the Second Yugoslav Republic, noted as early as 1977 that unless the economic conditions improved and the ethnic tensions were abated, Kosovo would quickly devolve into violence.¹⁴⁷ Student protests in 1981 evoked a harsh Serbian police response in which nearly half of the adult population of Kosovo was “arrested, interrogated, interned, or reprimanded,” between 1981-1988.¹⁴⁸ This yielded a tension that penetrated Kosovo for the most of the decade and perhaps forced the Albanian community to identify more strongly with its Albanian neighbors in the south as a cultural coping mechanism.

By 1990, Serbia’s new leader, Slobodan Milosevic, had successfully stripped both Kosovo and Vojvodina regions of their autonomy and set about subjugating the local government and media structures to Belgrade. As a result, most of the ethnic Albanians left the civil service and their state run positions. That year, the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK)

¹⁴⁴ Full text of the ‘Resolutions of the League of Prizren’ are available at:
http://www.albanianhistory.net/texts19/AH1878_2.html

¹⁴⁵ Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Cornell, 1984): 297-298.

¹⁴⁶ For comprehensive survey on Greater Albania see: Tim Judah, “Greater Albania?”, *Survival* (International Institute for Strategic Studies), vol. 23 no. 2 (2001).

¹⁴⁷ Sabrina Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia: 1962-1991*, (Indiana University, 1992):194.

¹⁴⁸ Klejda Mulaj, “Resisting an Oppressive Regime: The Case of The Kosovo Liberation Army”, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 31, No. 12, 1106.

was formed and Pristina University literature professor Ibrahim Rugova was elected its leader. The LDK, which espoused non-violent resistance, would be the pre-eminent political entity and ideology from 1991-1995, but was trumped after the Dayton Accords by the KLA. In 1990, the LDK sponsored a referendum on independence from Serbia, in which 87% of the eligible voters in Kosovo elected for independence. On the same day that Slovenia declared independence from Yugoslavia, the separate Albanian parliamentary assembly approved independence of Kosovo.¹⁴⁹

After attempting to gain recognition of Kosovo as an independent state by the European Community on December 23, 1991, Rugova and the rest of the LDK offered a three-part ultimatum to the Yugoslav government on the resolution of the ‘Albanian question in Yugoslavia.’

1. It stated first, that if the external and internal borders of Yugoslavia remained unchanged, the Albanian community living in Kosovo, Macedonia (Tetovo), and Montenegro should be given the status of nation, not national minority, within Yugoslavia.
2. Second, if only the internal borders of Yugoslavia were to be altered, the Albanian community in Kosovo, Macedonia, and Montenegro should join together to become an Albanian republic within Yugoslavia, enjoying equal status in the Yugoslav system of states.
3. Third, if the external borders of Yugoslavia were to be altered, the Albanian community in Yugoslavia would by referendum and declaration unite with Albania proper and there would be an ethnically undivided state in the southern Balkans congruent with the lines drawn by the first Prizren League of 1878.¹⁵⁰

This ultimatum cannot be cast in any other light than that of an irredentist dream of breaking up a state, regardless of the current position of the Kosovar leadership and the Ahtisaari plan banning the re-unification of Kosovo with any of its neighboring Albanian populations. The next portion of this debate will focus on whether or not this is still true, why and why not.

While Kosovo’s independence went unrecognized by the outer world, it solidified and codified a divide between the Albanian run private system and Belgrade that could never again be bridged. Thus, beginning in 1991, Milosevic and Serbia were engaged in war across the western Balkans, the greatly feared and predicted conflict in Kosovo did not materialize into open violence. Kosovar Albanians peacefully went about setting up a system of parallel institutions in Kosovo where Albanians ran the private sector and Serbs the public. And after a bizarre incident which alleged the poisoning of Albanian schoolchildren at a sports arena in Pristina, most Serbian children and Kosovar children did not attend the same schools and Albanian language institutions were set up in the private sector.¹⁵¹ Even the children inhabiting the segregated space, lived wholly parallel lives. In a climate such as this it is not so difficult to see how such polarized views of the ‘other’ became embedded in both the Serbs and Albanians of Kosovo.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 1106..

¹⁵⁰ Vickers (1998), 253.

¹⁵¹ Iain King and Whit Mason, *Peace At Any Price: How The World Failed Kosovo*, (Cornell, 2006), 38-40.; Vickers (1998), 259-263.

5.2 A Greater Albania or an Independent Kosovo?

While poet and academic Christopher Merrill was traveling the Balkans during the wars of Yugoslav secession and succession, he traveled to the offices of the LDK in Prishtina to meet with Kosovar academic, social linguist, and translator Rexep Ismajli. During their encounter, Ismajli informed Merrill about the situation in Kosovo, and Merrill stated, 'he did not mince words. The reunification of Albanians in Kosova, western Macedonia and Albania was inevitable, he (Ismajli) said, because Greater Albania was a valid political idea, as well as cultural fact, notwithstanding eighty years of war and division. War in Kosova would thus be international in scope,' this exchange occurred during the wars of the early 1990s while Kosovo and the Albanians inhabiting it remained conspicuously quiet in the context of the violence in the rest of Yugoslavia.¹⁵² Still, one can see, without doubt that irredentism, not independence, was the dream of the Albanian community in Kosovo. Whether this truly has ever changed is debatable; perhaps if it was not for the international community's insistence that irredentism was not 'a valid political fact,' Greater Albania would today exist. It raises this question though, what is ethnic nationalism when the ethnic community practicing the nationalism is separated from its co-ethnics by only an artificial border? The line between irredentism and ethnic nationalism is a very thin and permeable one indeed.

The most prominent explanation for the Kosovo declaration of independence in 1990 was the recognition of the Albanian minority as merely a nationality, not a nation, in Yugoslavia. The demands went further only one year later. But immediately a question arose if it was ethnic Albanians who petitioned for and attempted to gain independence from Yugoslavia in the form of Kosovo. Were they fighting for the independence of Kosovo or for injustice perpetrated against Albanians in Serbia? What then, was the basis of their mobilization?

Many Albanians believe that the region, along with portions of Macedonia and Montenegro, are natural extensions of a 'Greater' Albanian nation that has, like the Serbian nation, been artificially divided by its neighbors and awaits its modern restoration. In the revised edition of *Burn This House*, expanded to add a chapter on Kosovo, Jasminka Udovicki questions why the 'ferment' and unrest in Kosovo was coming to a fore in 1999, even as Pristina University gave lectures in Albanian, and Albanians held some of the highest positions in the federal administration of Kosovo. For her part, Udovicki categorically states that 'The single most powerful engine driving the ferment was the abiding resolve of Albanians-articulated during WWII at the 1943 Bujan Conference-for all Albanians to live in one state.'¹⁵³ Udovicki's claim is supported by the ultimatum issued by Ibrahim Rugova, the then leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), to Yugoslavia in 1991.

Does this mean that the fears of a renewed violence over the idea of Greater Albania are founded? Tim Judah thinks not, but he believes this because of how different the experiences of formerly Yugoslav Albanians and Albanians from Albania were over the last fifty years, arguing that it has made it very improbable for them all to agree on any cohesive political strategy for unification.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Christopher Merrill, *Only the Nails Remain: Scenes From The Balkan Wars*, (Rowman and Littlefield, 1999): 227

¹⁵³ Udovicki, (Duke, 2000)

¹⁵⁴ Tim Judah, 'Greater Albania?', *Survival* (International Institute for Strategic Studies), vol. 23 no. 2 (2001): 9-10.

I somewhat disagree with Judah's assessment, although I recognize its merits. The real reason that the discussion on Greater Albania seems momentarily muted (it did not seem that muted as I traveled in Macedonia and heard stories at the dinner table from a young Albanian, not more than 21 years old that the dream of Greater Albania is not at all dead and he dreamed of unification and Albania becoming the 'biggest' state in the Balkans outnumbering the Serbs), is first and foremost because the international community simply will never sanction such a blatantly irredentist move on behalf of the Albanian community. In retrospect, it would create a precedent far more dangerous than the 'Kosovo Precedent... Although, with the renewed discussion over the partition of Kosovo's North, it could offer hope to irredentists that once again, the international community is sanctioning border shifts in the region.¹⁵⁵ Second, and perhaps more relevant, is simply that the elite circles in Kosovo have immensely benefited from their *de-facto* status. The next Chapters will examine Kosovo from the Albanian perspective and will seek to understand the Albanian nation in the southern Balkans and what an Albanian nation means for those states surrounding Albania with large Albanian populations. I It also will explore what repercussions this notion has on the international stage, such as legitimizing the idea of ethnically pure states to stay further conflict.

5.3 Enter the KLA: Islamic Insurgents, Criminals, or Freedom Fighters?

We will begin our examination of the rise of the KLA in the present. Recent accusations of war crimes against Kosovo's last two prime ministers shed light on how legitimate their positions are today. From there, we will go back in history to the beginning of the 20th century and follow the evolution of the resistance in Kosovo into the KLA of the 1990s and the politicians of today. We will question the notion of whether claims of 'historical injustices' are a sufficient factor to elicit international recognition and support of legitimacy for a secessionist movement. Then we will question the validity of the NATO/US/KLA relationship and discuss whether presence of NATO and the U.S. were the legitimizing factor in the KLA equation. And what exactly they legitimized, was it what Geary feared about the sanctioning of ethnically pure states as a prevention tool against genocide? Or was it that unilateral self-determination of ethnic minorities is a valid political action on the international stage?

On 23 June 2009, the former prime minister of Kosovo was arrested in Bulgaria near the border of Macedonia on charges stemming from a Serbian arrest warrant. But Agim Ceku was no run-of-the mill prime minister; the Serbian warrant accused him of war crimes committed in the 1998-99 Kosovo conflict in which he was a guerilla commander for the KLA. He was released in three days, after Bulgaria was forcefully reminded that he was a member of Kosovo's diplomatic community, no longer a wartime rebel. For our purposes, however, a media release by Interpol of 28 March 2006, which attempted to clarify and confirm that no arrest warrant for Ceku had been issued, sheds more light on the narrow interpretation between terrorist and recognized international legitimacy than did the three-day detention.

The release states: "On 10 March 2006, Mr Ceku was appointed Prime Minister of Kosovo. In line with international jurisprudence that international arrest warrants against persons enjoying immunity under international law – such as Foreign Affairs Ministers and Heads of

¹⁵⁵ Novinite, 'EU Drafting Plan for Autonomy of Serbs in Northern Kosovo – Report' (13/08/2011). Full text available at: http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=131114 (18/08/2011)

State and Heads of Government – should not be issued, INTERPOL’s policy is not to process such information, or if already processed and registered, not to maintain it in its active databases in such circumstances... Accordingly, based on the above and the status of the civilian government of Kosovo under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999), the General Secretariat decided to suspend all information concerning Mr. Ceku currently registered in INTERPOL’s databases during the time he continues to serve as the Prime Minister of Kosovo.”¹⁵⁶

While the media report tried to clear up that no arrest warrant was issued for Ceku before 2006, more importantly to understanding the role of the international community in sanctioning legitimacy for Kosovo and the Kosovar government, it essentially states that after Ceku was appointed to his position, he enjoyed diplomatic immunity and, therefore, would be exempt from prosecution for any criminal activity during his tenure a diplomatic member of the international community. Seemingly, Ceku had successfully navigated the transition from terrorist to statesman, with the international community sanctioning almost every move. Because Kosovo was an international protectorate since 1999, his appointment provided him diplomatic immunity within the provisions of international law. He certainly enjoyed ‘The Benefits of Ethnic War.’ Even after his immunity had run out in 2008, his official, or ‘diplomatic’, status still had enough muscle to pull the Bulgarian courts to his side. Even more more pertinent for our survey is Ceku’s successor, Hashim Thaci, whose wartime moniker was ‘the snake.’ Thaci was another former KLA leader, who succeeded Ceku in early 2008. Thaci’s track record includes numerous allegations – involvement in organized criminal activities including murder, drug, gun, and human trafficking, extortion, and most recently, and perhaps most damning, allegations by Dick Marty, a Swiss politician, lawyer and member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. His report to the Council of Europe, which specifically named Thaci 27 times, detailed a ring that harvested organs from Kosovo Serbs after the conflict and during the UNMIK occupation, as well as organizing donors from other countries such as Moldova and Turkey.¹⁵⁷ Most recently, one of Thaci’s closest associates and founding member of the KLA – Sabit Geci – was found guilty of detaining and torturing his co-ethnic Albanians and Albanian Kosovars in Northern Albania who did not participate in the insurrection or cooperate with KLA.¹⁵⁸ As one reads the list of allegations, the most basic questions arise: How can these men, so accused, rise to the rank of prime minister in a relatively widely recognized European country, and especially

¹⁵⁶ INTERPOL, “INTERPOL statement concerning arrest warrant for Agim Ceku” (28/03/2006). Full text available at: <http://www.interpol.int/public/icpo/pressreleases/pr2006/pr200608.asp> (20/08/2011)

¹⁵⁷ Dick Marty, ‘Inhuman treatment of people and illicit trafficking in human organs [provisional version]’, prepared for Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights: Council of Europe, (12/12/2010). ; Paul Lewis, “Kosovo PM is head of human organ and arms ring, Council of Europe reports”, *The Guardian* (14/12/2010). Full text available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/dec/14/kosovo-prime-minister-llike-mafia-boss> (20/08/2011)

¹⁵⁸ District Court of Mitrovica (EULEX), P. nr. 45/2010, (29/07/2011). Full legal brief available at: <http://www.eulex-kosovo.eu/docs/justice/judgments/criminal-proceedings/DCMitrovica/45-2010-sabit-geci/GECI%20VERDICT%20-%20ENACTING%20CLAUSE%20-%20redacted.pdf> (19/08/2011)

Kosovo, which has been internationally occupied by both civilian (UNMIK – United Nations Mission in Kosovo) and military (KFOR – Kosovo Force) personnel since UN resolution 1244 in 1999?

To understand, we must first go back to the birth of the KLA to understand how a ‘shadowy’ guerrilla army came to be allied with arguably the most powerful military force on earth. This is important because in places like Libya right now, the West has once again allied with rebel and guerrilla armies without knowing their structure and composition.¹⁵⁹ The next section will explain the evolution of the resistance movement by Albanians in Kosovo, and the transformation of the KLA from a band of loosely organized guerrilla fighters on the United States’ terrorist watch list to de-facto NATO allies later that year and to political leaders in the new Kosovo. Whether or not they ever truly were Islamic insurgents or freedom fighters, is dependent entirely on your normative perspective.

5.4 The Birth: Failure in Ohio and a Collapsed Pyramid Scheme

By 1995, as the wars of Yugoslav secession in the western Balkans were being negotiated to a standstill at Dayton, Ohio, a conspicuous piece of the puzzle for peace was still missing: the status of Albanians in Kosovo. The late Richard Holbrooke, chief negotiator for the U.S., failed to put Kosovo on the docket in 1995. Because of this failure, the United States and its NATO allies would again be at war with Serbia by the end of the decade. With *de facto* U.S. support, the ‘Islamic insurgents’ in Kosovo would become a liberation army and, in the process, gain legitimacy for their domination of political life in Kosovo that continues to today as well as sanction the idea of ethnically pure states as a preventative measure for future conflict.¹⁶⁰

Most observers point to the inability of Ibrahim Rugova, the pacifist leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo, the political party which espoused non-violent resistance, to gain traction at Dayton as the single most important factor in the rapid rise of the KLA in Kosovo. Dr. Klejda Mulaj, a professor the Institute of Arab and Islamic studies at the University of Exeter, writes that ‘The key lesson that they (the KLA) learned from Dayton was that peaceful resistance would not win Albanian rights. Instead, violence pays. Freedom requires the spilling of blood.’¹⁶¹ Venton Surroi, a Kosovar Albanian social leader Kosovar delegate at Rambouillet and the publisher of *Koha Ditore*, the leading daily newspaper in Kosovo, pointed out in a BBC-documentary on the Dayton Accords that “If there is a message that is being sent to the Kosovars

¹⁵⁹ A litany of articles are available on the subject. Truly, thousands. A few are available below: http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/14/world/africa/14libya.html?_r=1&scp=2&sq=Libya&st=cse&gwh=D361C9D0859B8316D6D21BA96040E66C (17/08/2011) <http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/envoy/libyan-rebels-u-tries-figure-20110322-150042-513.html> (17/08/2011) <http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/commentators/patrick-cockburn-libyas-ragtag-rebels-are-dubious-allies-2335453.html> (17/08/2011)

¹⁶⁰ Note: remember that this was pre - 9/11/2001 and while the term ‘Islamic insurgents’ was already common speech in Russia and Serbia it had not yet entered the lexicon of everyday Americans.

¹⁶¹ Klejda Mulaj, “Resisting an Oppressive Regime: The Case of The Kosovo Liberation Army”, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol.31, No.12, (2008): 1109.

– if you want to draw international attention you have to fight for it. That is exactly it. You need to use violence to achieve your goals.”¹⁶²

The failure of the international community to address the minority rights of Kosovars in the new Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) at Dayton suggested to the Kosovar community that armed violence was the only way to gain international support for Kosovar independence. The movement was gaining popular support among the greater Albanian community, but the KLA still needed a logistical and organizational structure, a way to procure arms, and international attention to gain legitimacy and support. For this, the media and its capability for manipulation would be especially important.

The origins of the KLA are, to use the words of Iain King and Whit Mason, “opaque” indeed.¹⁶³ What most scholars and journalists agree upon is that its origins reside somewhere in the early 1990s. But it should be noted that the history of armed resistance to Serbian dominance in Kosovo is strong and long tenured. After the First World War, Albanian resistance movements made agreements with the IMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization) for armed ‘anti-Yugoslav’ activities, for both had been incorporated into a federation which did not recognize their respective ethnic identities.¹⁶⁴ During the Second World War, much of Kosovo was under Italian occupation. After the Italians fled, Albanian resistance in the form of the Balli Kombetar movement held out in the highlands against Yugoslav partisans until 1945. By the 1960s, Albanian disillusionment with the Yugoslav government once again led to armed resistance, this time in the form of the Revolutionary Movement for the Union with Albania headed by Adem Demaqi, an openly irredentist movement that when uncovered in 1964 had about 300 members.¹⁶⁵ While these groups are a testament to a history of resistance in Kosovo, it hardly can be said that any of these groups were either religious in nature or a true prototype for the KLA as it emerged in the 1990s.

Klejda Mulaj states that the first attacks on Serbian policemen in 1991 by the KLA’s predecessor, the Popular Movement for the Republic of Kosovo (LPRK), ‘went unclaimed and were widely branded as ‘terrorist acts.’¹⁶⁶ Rexhep Selimi, a founding member, stated that the KLA, as it known today, was organized in December 1993. Jasminka Udovicki identifies the first coordinated attack by the KLA as carried out in 1995 in the village of Decani when a Serbian police station was bombed and a gun battle ensued.¹⁶⁷ Other sources point to German secret service training and assistance through an embassy set up in Tirana in 1996 as the beginning of true organizational and martial capability for the KLA.

¹⁶² Venton Surroi in BBC2, “NATO-Moral War”, (12/03/2000) Transcript available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/events/panorama/transcripts/transcript_12_03_00.txt (17/04/2011)

¹⁶³ Iain King and Whit Mason, *Peace At Any Price: How The World Failed Kosovo*, (Cornell, 2006), 41.

¹⁶⁴ Sabrina Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, (Westview, 1999): 303.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 305.

¹⁶⁶ Klejda Mulaj, “Resisting an Oppressive Regime: The Case of The Kosovo Liberation Army”, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 31, No. 12, (2008): 1108.

¹⁶⁷ Jasminka Udovicki, *Burn This House: The Making and Unmaking of Yugoslavia*, (Duke, 2000): 326.

All these accounts are true. This suggests that in the beginning, as is often the early story for many guerilla movements, there was no true structure to the KLA. It was composed of disparate groups of men who had become fed up with what they interpreted as Serbian occupation, and they had decided to fight against it, much like the early IRA in Ireland. What we *don't* know about the origins of the KLA can tell us something too. Because no scholar, journalist, or even KLA members themselves can agree on the precise origins of the group, it suggests that in the beginning the attacks were local, and that the groups were separated, both in geography and overall strategy. We can infer that the earliest KLA attacks were not coordinated guerilla attacks, but were “terrorist” attacks carried out to instill fear, convey anger and provoke reaction by the Serb authorities. Nor were these acts committed in the name of Islamic jihad or in hopes of implementing Sha'riah. Rather, this was an organic movement concerned with national liberation, and perhaps unification with their co-ethnic community in Albania, just as Croatian and Bosnians had waged earlier in the decade all three of which were given intelligence, trained, and armed by the West, especially prominent were the USA and Germany. With two of the most prominent world powers on their side, it was hardly probable that Serbia could hold against the tides of change.

James Rubin, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State during the Clinton Administration had this to say about the early KLA: ‘Killing postmen or killing Serb civilians in cold blood those are terrorist acts that we do believe were wrong and unfortunately that was what the KLA was pursuing at the time.’¹⁶⁸ The KLA members knew the stakes of acts of terrorism as well, as Dugagji Gorani, a Kosovar Delegate at Rambouillet, stated: ‘The more civilians were killed, the chances of international intervention became bigger, and the KLA of course realised that. There was this foreign diplomat who once told me ‘Look unless you pass the quota of five thousand deaths you’ll never have anybody permanently present in Kosovo from the foreign diplomacy.’¹⁶⁹

What is concretely known and accepted is that in 1997, at the funeral of a prominent local Albanian activist suspected of being killed by Serb grenade, three uniformed gunmen (one of whom was Rexhep Selimi) proclaimed membership in the KLA and that the KLA was ‘fighting for a free Kosovo and national unification.’ There were 20,000 in attendance.¹⁷⁰ This statement also positioned the KLA as an openly ethnically oriented and irredentist organization concerned with unification with Albania, driven by the idea of Greater Albania, and with it, its recruitment capability in neighboring states revived. After this public inauguration, the ranks of the KLA swelled, with media members reporting more self-identified KLA everywhere in Kosovo. But the fighters were not only from within Kosovo, but also from the neighboring Tetovo region of Macedonia and Albania.¹⁷¹ As the concept of a revived Greater Albania gained traction and support in Kosovo and neighboring communities, one cannot discount the relevance of trans-national militant networks developing in the region as an impetus for Western intervention. A

¹⁶⁸ James Rubin in: BBC2, “NATO-Moral War”, (12/03/2000) Transcript available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/events/panorama/transcripts/transcript_12_03_00.txt (20/08/2011)

¹⁶⁹ Dugagji Gorani in: *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ Jasminka Udovicki, *Burn This House: The Making and Unmaking of Yugoslavia*, (Duke, 2000): 326.

¹⁷¹ Hugh Barnes, “War in Europe: Kosovo’s fighters will do it their way”, *New Statesmen* (26/03/1999).

cross-border conflict could draw the whole region into war, including an EU-member, Greece, because of Albanian agitation for Greater Albania in Epirus. Because of these fears, many in the West were determined to prevent the logistical capacity for an ethnic Albanian army to emerge in the region.¹⁷²

If the failure for recognition of peaceful resistance was the most important sparking mechanism for Albanian support of armed resistance to the Serbian state, the second was a mainly criminal event, and it occurred across the border in Albania. To wage war, more is needed than a willingness to die for your cause and the support of the people. Weapons are vital. In 1997, the same year as the masked gunmen publicly announced the presence of the KLA, an Albanian pyramid scheme collapsed and drained most of the country's savings with it. In the days that followed, the country's armories were raided by citizens, taking with them an estimated 650,000-750,000 light weapons and ammunition.¹⁷³ At this time, the northern border of Albania was beyond the pale of Tirana, and Kalashnikovs were on the open market for 5\$ in the northern towns of Bajram Curri and Kukes.¹⁷⁴ The KLA now had a ready source of light weaponry, and its members were determined to show that they were not afraid to use them.

It is also important to note that Albania was not the only source of guns, gold or influence that was indirectly funneling guns and money into Kosovo. Another pipeline was Kosovar Diaspora communities. American (and Swiss) Diaspora communities were integral to the KLA success, militarily, as well as acting as a symbol and agent of political legitimization. A Dutch documentary, *The Brooklyn Connection: How to Build A Guerrilla Army* (2005), directed by Klaartje Quirijns, films American-Albanian Florin Krasniqi (whose cousin was the first KLA casualty in uniform), as he raises and doles out funds to political parties, and while he buys uniforms and munitions for the KLA and smuggles them into Kosovo through Albania.¹⁷⁵ The film is based on Stacy Sullivan's book, *Be Not Afraid for You Have Sons and Daughters in America: How a Brooklyn Roofer Helped Lure America into the Kosovo War*.¹⁷⁶ While some KLA funding may have come from Jihadist networks in the Middle East, it was the Diaspora community in America that truly funded its rise.

A complex ecosystem facilitated the rise of the KLA from a few hundred members to thousands of armed soldiers: empathy among the Albanian community in Kosovo, poor economic conditions, a strong sense of historical injustice emanating from Belgrade, capital raised via the drug trade, combined with increased violence by Serbian police and the influx of military authorities.¹⁷⁷ It was not religious solidarity but ethnic solidarity and martial capacity

¹⁷² Chris Hedges, "Kosovo's Next Masters?", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78. No.2 1999: 24-42.

¹⁷³ Barbara Crosette, "U.N. Agrees to Help Government Disarm Civilians", *New York Times*, (14/07/1998). Full text available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/07/14/world/un-agrees-to-help-albanian-government-disarm-civilians.html>

¹⁷⁴ Klejda Mulaj, "Resisting an Oppressive Regime: The Case of The Kosovo Liberation Army", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 31, No. 12 (2008): 1110 ; See also: Jasminka Udovicki, *Burn This House: The Making and Unmaking of Yugoslavia*, (Duke, 2000): 327.

¹⁷⁵ Klaartje Quirins, *The Brooklyn Connection: How to Build a Guerilla Army*, a Quirijns/Amago/VPRO/T Hart/Sullivan production (2005).

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 328-333.; Rachel Stohl, "Arming the KLA", *Center for Defense Information* (25/03/1999). Full text available at:

that bound these soldiers and spurred the rise of the KLA. In the end, two events that occurred outside of Kosovo – the failure of the international community to address the Kosovo issue at Dayton and the collapse of the economy and the subsequent availability of illegal weapons from Albania and abroad – allowed the effective mobilization of a small band of hit and run attackers, sometimes labeled terrorists, to form a coordinated guerilla army in Kosovo between 1995 and 1998.

5.5 How ‘The West’ Saw Things:

To understand the Western point of view with regard to the growing crisis in Kosovo in 1998, it is necessary to focus attention outside of Kosovo itself. On its 50th birthday, NATO was in crisis. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the alliance urgently needed redefinition. NATO’s embarrassing humanitarian failure in the Bosnian conflict would provide the impetus, urged strongly by U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright, for a NATO intervention in Kosovo. This intervention would come in the form of sponsoring a mandatory peace settlement in Rambouillet, France. Rambouillet would be the turning point for gaining legitimacy for the KLA, not because any legal definition had changed, but because at Rambouillet both sides realized who it was they were actually dealing with, what they wanted, and why. With this realization, political expediency, not humanitarian or religious concerns, took center stage on both sides and legitimacy was quickly manufactured.

Understanding the Western stance on Kosovo in 1998 requires an appreciation for how the events in Bosnia - particularly the 1995 massacre at Srebrenica – influenced the dominant discourse among diplomatic and academic communities regarding Western intervention in the Balkans and its role and responsibility in the prevention of such atrocities. A sense of accountability for inaction in Bosnia was plaguing Western governments (and consciences) and the perceived repercussions of supporting an ethnic minority whose human rights were being violated and advocating illegal secession were deemed to be less severe than allowing another Srebrenica or Mostar to occur with the attendant publicity.¹⁷⁸ Serbian anti-terrorist operations which produced large casualties in places like Prekaz and Racak only solidified this sentiment. Although an independent Finnish forensic team later questioned the evidence that the massacre

<http://www.cdi.org/program/issue/document.cfm?DocumentID=692&IssueID=89&StartRow=21&ListRows=10&appendURL=&Orderby=DateLastUpdated&ProgramID=23&issueID=89> ; Peter Finn and R. Jeffrey Smith, “KLA: Rebels With an Uncommon Cause”, Washington Post Foreign Service, (23/04/1999). Full text available at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/longterm/balkans/stories/kla042399.htm> (20/08/2011)

Klejda Mulaj, “Resisting an Oppressive Regime: The Case of The Kosovo Liberation Army”, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 31:12, 1109.

¹⁷⁸ Madeleine Albright in: Michael Kirk, Eamon Mathews, Rick Young (Executive Producers). (22 February, 2002) Frontline 1812: The War in Europe: Part 1, Virginia: PBS. Transcript can be found at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kosovo/etc/script1.html> (20/08/2011)

had occurred at such close range, shedding light on the rather shadowy relationship between the KLA and the USA.¹⁷⁹

While the strength generated by the emerging alliance prevented large scale ethnic atrocities in the short term, the lasting legacy of the shotgun wedding between the KLA and the international community is much murkier. Sanctioning the idea that ethnically pure states are legitimate to prevent civil war in internationally recognized states. Early on, the West underestimated the power of the KLA and had unsuccessfully attempted to prop up its choice for Kosovar leadership, Ibrahim Rugova. Rugova's LDK (Democratic League of Kosovo) had advocated a non-violent approach to secession and Rugova was widely acclaimed for keeping the Kosovars out of the wars of the early 1990s. Rugova and the LDK had always relied on international support and America thought it had found its man for Rambouillet. The KLA had other intentions, however. At the same time that America was talking to Rugova, the KLA was fortifying its positions in towns and villages across Kosovo, though it still was widely regarded as a terrorist organization by most states. The situation was rapidly devolving, attacks on Serbian police were occurring daily, and, in retaliation, Serbian police were using increased force. The West decided it needed to see for itself what was going on in Kosovo, and in early 1998, the U.S. special envoy to the Balkans, Robert Gelbrand, stated: "I know a terrorist when I see one and these men are terrorists." Despite that assertion, only months later, by 26 June 1998, Gelbrand would be at the negotiating table with two KLA commanders.¹⁸⁰

The American approach to the talks at Rambouillet was to intentionally put forth a set of terms known to be untenable to Milosevic, thereby paving the way for international troops on Serbian soil, not just in Kosovo, but in the whole of Serbia. The strategy was summed up by Ivo Daalder, Director of European Affairs for President Clinton's National Security Council team and responsible for coordinating U.S. policy toward Bosnia, as follows: "That's part of the strategy. Get the Kosovars to sign on, get the Serbs to renege, bomb the Serbs, get the Serbs to sign on, deal. That's the strategy."¹⁸¹ The American diplomats were in for a rude awakening when the Kosovar delegation turned up. It was not headed by Rugova, but by KLA leader Hashim Thaci, who would not agree to the terms set forth. The Kosovars did not want autonomy, but independence, maybe even unification with Albania. Nothing less would suffice. For his part, Thaci later reminded the world in a PBS-documentary that "We must not forget that I had 20,000 people armed in Kosovo asking for explanations."¹⁸² Another delegate, Dugagjin Gorani, noted that Thaci told him: "You should realize that if I go back with something my people doesn't want, I may get a bullet in the head."¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ J. Rainio, K. Lalu, A. Penttila, 'Independent forensics autopsies in an armed conflict: investigation of the victims from Racak, Kosovo', *Forensic Science International*, Vol. 116, (2000): 171-185

¹⁸⁰ BBC World: Europe, "The KLA – terrorists or freedom fighters?" (28/06/1998). Full text available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/121818.stm> (17/08/2011)

¹⁸¹ Ivo Daalder in: BBC2, "NATO-Moral War", (12/03/2000) Transcript available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/events/panorama/transcripts/transcript_12_03_00.txt

¹⁸² Hashim Thaci in: Michael Kirk, Eamon Mathews, Rick Young (Executive Producers). (22 February, 2002) Frontline 1812: The War in Europe: Part 1, Virginia: PBS. Transcript can be found at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kosovo/etc/script1.html>

¹⁸³ Dugagjin Gorani in: *Ibid*.

When the American delegation realized that the KLA was not only the new bargaining force for Kosovo but were impeding agreement, they were furious. Ibrahim Rugova recalls Secretary Albright saying: “Do you want this agreement with the U.S. and NATO in Kosovo, or is it that do you not want it, in which case you’ll be left under Serbian oppression and at their mercy?”¹⁸⁴ While it would seem that the West was holding all the cards at Rambouillet, it had also been put in an uncomfortable position. If it put pressure on the Kosovars, and the Kosovars accepted the peace deal, then the West became the *de facto* allies of the KLA, deemed an Islamic insurgent and terrorist organization by Serbia and others. In this position, the West had no choice but to offer some form of political legitimacy to the KLA because, should NATO bomb Serbia, the West was already dealing with them as *de facto* military partners. This is eerily similar to the current case with France’s recognition of the dissident Libyan rebel organizations as the rightful government of occupied Libyan territory. Because France is already dealing with them militarily, political recognition allows France to purchase oil from rebel held territory.

If the West legitimized the KLA’s cause to fight against Serbian ‘aggression’, it would be disingenuous to declare KLA political rule illegitimate. And so, at Rambouillet, NATO forced a peace treaty on the KLA, and the KLA forced an alliance on NATO. As the most powerful military alliance the world has ever known, an alliance with NATO proved to be a legitimizing halo for the KLA delegates present at Rambouillet, one hat has outlasted the KLA and its struggle. After Rambouillet, analyst Chris Hedges, *New York Times* bureau chief in the Balkans at the time, wrote: “The KLA are the new power brokers. Whatever political leadership emerges in Kosovo will come from the rebel ranks, and it will be militant, nationalist, uncompromising, and deeply suspicious of outsiders.”¹⁸⁵ Hedges had already predicted that the shotgun military alliance at Rambouillet would later morph into Western sanctioning of a political regime run by KLA fighters.

5.6 NATO and the Kosovo Conflict 1998-1999

In part, Western diplomats were right. The Serbians did not reply and the KLA had little choice but to sign the peace treaty. Consider Secretary Albright’s telling and blunt remarks at a press conference at Rambouillet. She stated: ‘Let me say that if the talks crater because the Serbs do not say yes, we will have bombing. If the talks crater because the Albanians have not said yes, we will not be able to support them and, in fact, will have to cut off whatever help they’re getting from the outside.’¹⁸⁶ The KLA, rightly, gave credence to her threats and signed onto NATO’s plan.

On 24 March 1999, NATO went to war for the first time in its history. Technically, it did so illegally by engaging without securing the required U.N. Security Council approval, because the Russian Federation and China abstained from voting. NATO bombed Serbia for 78 straight days.¹⁸⁷ The bombing originally prompted a push by the Serbian Army into Kosovo and Western

¹⁸⁴ Ibrahim Rugova in: *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ Chris Hedges, ‘Kosovo’s Next Masters?’, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 78, No. 3, (1999): 24-42.

¹⁸⁶ Madeleine Albright in: Michael Kirk, Eamon Mathews, Rick Young (Executive Producers). (22 February, 2002) Frontline 1812: The War in Europe: Part 1, Virginia: PBS. Transcript can be found at: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kosovo/etc/script1.html>

¹⁸⁷ note: Russia could hardly sign on to a U.N. resolution as it had been fighting Chechen guerillas on its southern flank for nearly a decade, and what had begun as a Chechen separatist

reluctance to set boots on the ground in Kosovo emboldened the Serbian forces, causing a mass exodus of Albanians from Kosovo. This was opposite the intention and expectation of the West. European reluctance to see the first European capital bombed and burning since the Second World War staved targeted bombing of Belgrade until it became apparent that Milosevic would hold out to last minute. The first target was the Serbian television station to cut Milosevic from his ability to propagandize. Over time -- much longer than predicted -- the bombing of Belgrade eventually wore the Serbian state into submission.

On 10 June 1999, UN Security Council Resolution 1244 went into effect in Kosovo, creating the legally and diplomatically troublesome 'Kosovo Precedent.' Kosovo would be occupied by an international force composed of both civilian (UNMIK) and military personnel (KFOR) and would guarantee safety and stability in the region for an undetermined period. Additionally, perhaps to diminish the appearance of seeming to sanction KLA irredentism in Kosovo and Macedonia, the resolution demanded demilitarization of the KLA and ordered all offensive military positions to be abandoned.¹⁸⁸

This has been deemed a farce, if not complete failure. It did not stop KLA fighters from almost causing another war in Macedonia in 2001, when KLA fighters armed the Tetovo Albanians and blocked roads between the Macedonian and Albanian communities in Macedonia. Once again UN troops had to be sent in to secure the roads and borders.¹⁸⁹ While UN 1244 ordered the disbandment of the KLA, it offered former KLA members a path to political legitimacy, mainly because of the inability of the international mission to clamp down on criminality in its founding years. And it emboldened and inspired Albanian separatists in other Balkan countries, specifically in Macedonia, that their separatist dreams would be legitimized. In terms of lawlessness, the early years of independence in Kosovo can be compared to the brief period of independence in Chechnya under Dzhokar Dudayev, a separatist leader, during the 1990s where warlordism reigned supreme.¹⁹⁰

Woefully understaffed and poorly constructed, and perhaps because the international community knew that the real law of the land was administered by the KLA, the new charter allowed for a transition for ex-KLA members from the front lines to political rallies. The international community even accommodated a special police force made up of ex-KLA members and the new Kosovar president, Atifte Jahjaga, was and is well known for her ties to Kosovo's internal police force, as she was deputy director of it for a number of years.¹⁹¹ This can basically be understood as Kosovo's army in training. The question is: will its expertise in

movement in the early 1990s was becoming an archetype for Islamic jihad in the early decade of the 21st century causing Russia to stand firmly in Serbia's camp in 1999 and since.)

¹⁸⁸ UN Security Council Resolution 1244, (12/06/1999). Full text of the Resolution is available at: <http://www.nato.int/kosovo/docu/u990610a.htm>

¹⁸⁹ Robert Hislope, 'Between a Bad Peace and a Good War: insights and lessons from the almost war in Macedonia', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. Vol. 26, No. 1: 140-145.

¹⁹⁰ Witness: Chechen Fighters, Al-Jazeera (22/02.2010). Full video available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07zq8fiG1J0> (21/08/2011)

¹⁹¹ Eastern Approaches, 'Election by Envelope?', *The Economist* (08/04/2011). Full text available at:

http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2011/04/kosovos_new_president (16/08/2011)

guerrilla war be used to defend Kosovo or channeled to terrorize neighboring states with ethnic Albanian minorities? From the post-war murders and kidnappings of Serbs for organ harvest to the riots in 2004 and 2007 which killed many Serbs and destroyed hundreds of Serbian cultural and religious sites, the world, and especially Serbia, saw how farcical this police force actually was and is. Law and order in Kosovo still can only be upheld by international forces, as was witnessed by the recent deployment on 28 July 2011 of NATO forces to border crossings in Mitrovica, when the Kosovar government attempted to take control of them by force and the crossing points were burned by Serbs.¹⁹²

5.7 The Failure of Legitimacy: The 2004 riots and 2008 Independence

Since U.N. Resolution 1244 and the occupation of Kosovo by UNMIK and KFOR, the legitimacy of the KLA has been sealed by its 'technically' inactive status. 'Technically' inactivemeans that the KLA has formally disbanded as called for in UN resolution 1244. If the situation in Macedonia in 2001 was any indicator, however, the KLA and its affiliates in the neighboring states still have access to KLA arms procured from Albania's collapse in 1997. Immediately following the war, former KLA members carried out murder and ethnic cleansing among the Serbian population in Kosovo under the eyes of international observers. In 2004, reinvigorating the memory for Serbs of their Patriarchate being burned by Albanian mobs in the 1981 riots, Albanian mobs once again attacked Serbian enclaves and religious sites in a coordinated manner under KFOR occupation. This time, they were spurred by a spurious and still unfounded drowning of Albanian boys after being chased by a Serbian dog. These attacks were clearly targeted Serbian religious and cultural sites, and most likely were taken under the command of former KLA members.¹⁹³ At some of these sites, the UN troops (German in this case) negotiated for their possessions with the mobs and simply abandoned their posts, in essence offering the enclaves and religious sites under their protection to the Albanian mobs.¹⁹⁴

The riots displayed the inability or perhaps the unwillingness of the international community in Kosovo to protect its minorities, mainly Serbs but also members of the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities and demonstrated the continued mobilization capacity of the former KLA hierarchy among the general populace in Kosovo. It also illuminated how the religious element permeated the conflict. The Albanian community, in an attempt to stamp out Serbian cultural heritage in the region, systematically destroyed Serbian Orthodox Churches and desecrated Serb cemeteries. While the KLA may not have been an Islamic insurgency as Milosevic had claimed, the destruction of Serbian religious sites made the Kosovars guilty of religious and ethnic nationalism. To this end, the international community is also guilty of this charge for its lack of preparedness and 'cowardly' response by some of its members. If this conflict is to be resolved, respect for Serbia's cultural and religious heritage in the region must (my underlining) be respected and an accounting of the abuses since 1999 must be taken by the

¹⁹² BBC, 'Nato takes over Kosovo border posts after clashes', (28/07/2011). Full text available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-14332936>

¹⁹³ Iain King and Whit Mason, *Peace At Any Price: How The World Failed Kosovo*, (Cornell, 2006): 6-16.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 14.

Kosovar government and the international community alike. Only then can legitimacy be established in Kosovo.

What many western viewers saw when they viewed Albanian men tearing down crosses on old Orthodox churches in the Kosovo riots of 17 and 18 March, 2004, was just that, two Albanian men tearing down a cross. To the western mind – where, as discussed in part 1 – for the most part, religious and national identities are long since separated, the removal of the cross and the destruction of the churches were interpreted primarily as ethnic violence. To the Serbs, however, these images weren't just a violent manifestation, they were intrinsically and symbolically violent in themselves. Tearing down the cross on top of a church instead of a flag at City Hall, proved to many Serbs that the actions were directed not at the Serbian state, but at the Serbian people and religion, and that, once again, the Serbian people were witnessing their history in Kosovo being erased. On 17 February 2008, Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia with Hashim Thaci, the KLA commander, becoming its first prime minister. To date, Kosovo has been recognized by 74 U.N. member states. The recognition of Kosovo and the 'Kosovo Precedent' it created, has caused a geo-political rift in interpretation of international law with China and Russia again on one side and western nations, and even EU members, split among themselves. Its consequences were witnessed as early as August 2008, when the Russian Federation invaded the Caucasian state of Georgia, occupied and subsequently recognized South Ossetia, and another separatist entity on the Georgian Black Sea coast, Abkhazia, as independent states.

5.8 The 'Kosovo Precedent'

*"If we decide that in today's world the principle of a nation's right to self-determination is more important than the principle of territorial integrity, then we must apply this principle to all parts of the world and not only to regions where it suits our partners. In this case, the principle of self-determination should apply not just to the peoples living in the former Yugoslavia, but also to peoples, including the peoples of the Caucasus, in the post-Soviet area. We see no difference in the situations of one and the other."*¹⁹⁵

- Vladimir Putin. (Former president, current prime minister of Russian Federation)
The G8 summit in Heilighendamm, Germany, 4 June, 2007.

On 10 June, 1999, the UN and NATO, "determined to resolve the grave humanitarian situation in Kosovo,"¹⁹⁶ adopted UN resolution 1244 creating a UN/NATO protectorate in the province of Kosovo in Southeastern Serbia. This signaled a sea change in the international community's willingness to use force to protect populations on humanitarian grounds (see chapter five). While the establishment of an independent state is significant in its own right, the Kosovo action may have activated even more far-reaching consequences, because it effectively

¹⁹⁵ Vladimir Putin, G8 Summit at Helighendamm, Germany (04/06/2007). For full text of speech see: http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2007/06/04/2149_type82916_132716.shtml (19/08/2007).

¹⁹⁶ See: UN resolution 1244. 6/10/1999.: <http://www.nato.int/Kosovo/docu/u990610a.htm> (20/08/2011)

created a common law precedent whereby sub-federal (sometimes already autonomous) regions can hold referendums, declare self-determined independence and be recognized internationally.

The recently deceased Richard Holbrooke, America's highest ranking diplomat to the Balkan region during the 1990s, had stated that Kosovo does not set a precedent, arguing instead that Kosovo is defined by a unique set of circumstances created by a chain of events including attempted ethnic cleansing, NATO bombing campaigns, U.N. resolution 1244, and its status as a U.N. protectorate. Scholar Rick Fawn believes that the argument of Kosovo's 'uniqueness' may not be convincing, especially to Russia. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation has presided over a number of conflict areas, just as the U.N. has been stationed as a 'protectorate' in Kosovo. The argument that Kosovo is unique is further weakened when we examine the – albeit federal – referendum and disintegration of Serbia and Montenegro in 2006. It seems that a Kosovo-type precedent had already been set by the West at the same time it was trying to convince the world of Kosovo's uniqueness. And the reverberations of the Kosovo Precedent could be felt in the neighboring states and other unresolved territorial disputes around the world.¹⁹⁷ If there is a restoration of rhetoric on Greater Albania in and around Kosovo, or further pressure from the international community, one cannot rule out the reciprocal secession of Republika Srpska, which is presently part of the federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina or even restoration of the Greater Serbia notion in regards to the reunification of Serbia.¹⁹⁸ This can now also be applied to the recent referendum of independence carried out in South Sudan and the rebel war in Libya.

5.9 Conclusion Part 2: Consequences and Question Marks.

Today, Kosovo has become a main route for drug smuggling in Europe. It was ranked 110th on Transparency International's 2010 Corruption Index (32 spots behind neighboring Serbia) and allegations of criminal activity, including organ smuggling, have made their way into almost every level of Kosovar political life.¹⁹⁹ Successful prosecution of Albanian war criminals has been elusive and harassment of and violence against the remaining Serbs continues to be a problem. Recently, when the Kosovar government attempted to take control of the border crossings in the Serb-controlled North, rioting broke out with the border crossings being burned and NATO troops having to be sent in to secure the areas. The Serbian and Kosovar governments seem no closer to rapprochement than they did in 1999 and perhaps even further from it since the Serbian people have watched their religious and cultural heritage destroyed numerous times in the last decade, with little or no protection or recognition from the Kosovar government. The Serbian Patriarchate still resides in Kosovo and this shall remain a thorn in negotiations until Kosovo and the KLA offer recognition of the significance of the religious dimension to Serbs in the region. Still, for the first time in nearly one hundred years, the Albanians in Kosovo are free and there has not been as much of a rise of Wahabbi Islam as has occurred recently in Bosnia. And no call for an Islamic republic has emanated from the Kosovar government, nor have we seen a trend toward unification with Albania. People in Serbian

¹⁹⁷ Rick Fawn, "The Kosovo-and Montenegro-Effect", *International Affairs*, vol. 84 no. 2, (2007): 270-294.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 271.; Liljana Kovacevic, "Analysts Say RS Secession Not Likely", *Southeast European Times*, 11/08/2010.

¹⁹⁹ Transparency International 2010 Corruption Index. Full text available at: http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2010/results (13/08/2011)

enclaves, oftentimes funded entirely by Belgrade, have minimal contact with their Albanian neighbors. While international troops still patrol the streets, Serbian holy sites, and now the borders, the implications for the legitimacy of the KLA regime in Kosovo and for Kosovo itself are no longer limited to the confines of their immediate geography.

Instead, they could resonate in any corner of the globe and their consequences could reverberate to the powers, like the U. S., that legitimized their rule. The implications of aligning with a rebel army, deemed by some to be terrorists, during wartime has created a double standard that will be difficult for the West to explain its way out of across post-Soviet space. One need only look to the Caucasus and South Ossetia or Abkhazia to see this. Echoing Charles King's recent work on *The Benefits of Ethnic War*, I surmise also that political legitimacy has become a sanctioned product of successful terrorism and war waging turned state making. And this was only possible with help of NATO and the West. Blame for this international double standard must lie somewhere and I do not believe it lies with the terrorists or freedom fighters, whatever appellation you prefer, who fought the fight, but with the international community that sanctioned the illegal partition of a state and made self determination merely a matter of recognition by the international community, not on the justifiable grievances of an oppressed population. If the latter was the case, there would not be such opposition to the partitioning of Kosovo's Serbian communities which are obviously not treated equally by the Kosovar government or the occupying international forces.

One does not blame the pit bull who bit back because he was beaten by his handler. Instead, we should blame the handler who trained the pit bull to fight and kill, so the handler could win a bet. That is precisely what NATO did. With the Soviet Union gone, NATO needed a new mission, a re-definition, and it used its personal grudges against Milosevic from Bosnia and bet on their new 'humanitarian' mission and the KLA at the expense of the Serbian population for their own purposes, without examining the underlying layers of the conflict, particularly the religious dimension and cultural heritage of the Serbs. And on August 8, 2008 when Russia invaded Georgia, the dog bit back and the handler lost its bet. The Georgian invasion notwithstanding, the less immediate ramifications of Kosovo's independence may be more damaging to the scope of international politics as what the 'Kosovo Precedent' has really done is, in the words of Patrick Gearty worth repeating one final time, 'By embracing the rhetoric of ethnic nationalism, even while confessing to abhor it, the rest of the world can justify the creation of ethnically "pure" nations as the only alternative to genocide.'²⁰⁰

²⁰⁰ Gearty (2002): 12.

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