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Accessibility

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Abstract

The Kosovo War and the resulting humanitarian crisis of 1990s, gained international attention from the nature of massacres and war crimes, as well as the Serbian government’s systematic ethnic cleansing campaign against Kosovar-majority ethnic group in Kosovo.

Since the military humanitarian intervention in 1999, reconciliation process initiated by the European Union, U.S., and other members in the international community, began almost immediately after the war, in attempt to bring peace to the former Yugoslav republic and territory. However, little effort has been made in attempt to dissect and analyze the causes of the ethnic conflict, such as patterns of ethnic boundaries, given that ethnic tensions continue to challenge the peace-building process.

This thesis research, therefore, investigates ethnic relations and changing ethnic boundaries in Kosovo between the years of 1980 and 2015. It focuses on three main periods: post-Tito years, Milosevic era and the rise of ethno-nationalism, as well as post-conflict period. The research concludes that the ethnic conflict was due to boundary-enforcements at the institutional level, and later by members of ethnic group, which eventually led to the inter-ethnic war.
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Definition of Terms

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO): a military alliance initiated in 1949 by United States, Canada and several Western European countries. Initially it was designed to provide a unified defense against the Soviet Union.¹ Its purpose expanded into promotion of democracy and peaceful resolutions.

Ashkali: a minority group Kosovo and other Albanian-speaking territories in the Balkan. Majority of Ashkali speak Albanian dialects and Romani.²

Gorani: Slavic-speaking Muslims inhabiting different territories in the Balkan.³


Roma: Romani-language speakers who inhabit northern part of Kosovo, Serbia and other parts of former Yugoslavia.⁴

Treaty of Westphalia: a peace treaty signed in 1648 between European powers. The treaty influenced the now-universal principles of state sovereignty, territorial integrity, and non-intervention in internal affairs.⁵

Just War Theory: a theory that incorporates moral and ethical behavior into the framework of what is considered a fair and just war; it calls for an equality, responsibility and accountability of parties waging war.⁶

Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA): A Kosovar-Albanian insurgency developed in early 1990s. Its goal was to obtain Kosovo’s independency from Serbia.⁷

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⁴ Bhabha, “Post-war Kosovo,” 8.
Democratic League of Kosovo (Albanian: Lidhja Democratike e Kosoves): The first Kosovar political party in the 1990s. It was initiated as a non-political organization, concentrating on human rights issues and abuses. However, it evolved into a political party, and by 1991, the organization assumed the responsibility of creating a Kosovar parallel government.

Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedom (CDHRF): a non-political human right organization open to all ethnic groups in Kosovo. Its objective was to monitor human rights abuses in Kosovo.

Yugoslav Army (VJ): A military group in former Yugoslavia. In the 1990s, with the new Serbian government and dissolution of Serbia, VJ became a Serbian military force.

Chetniks: a Serbian nationalist and paramilitary group.

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE): A regional security organization consisting of participating states Europe, Asia, and North America. OSCE work to promote peacebuilding and democracy through negotiations, political settlements and resolutions.
Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM): OSCE mission in Kosovo. The organization monitored the conflict in Kosovo during and after the war.

The Kosovo Force (KFOR): NATO’s peace building force in Kosovo, deployed after the NATO-U.S. air campaign against Serbia. Its responsibilities included peacebuilding, protection of minorities, and monitoring the ethnic conflict.

UNMIK (UN Interim Administration for Kosovo) administration: United Nations civilian peacekeeping force in Kosovo. UNMIK responsibilities were to monitor post-war ethnic conflict, establish institutions in autonomous Kosovo.

Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY): A federation made up of six republics (Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Montenegro), and two autonomous territories, Kosovo and Vojvodina. The federation was dissolved in 1992.

Chapter I

Introduction

Winston Churchill once stated that “the Balkans produce more history than they can consume.”

He captured the complex nature of the region, understandably so given that it has been affected by many wars, from modern times of Ottoman invasion, WWI, WWII, and recently, the conflicts of the 1990’s. Therefore, the region from an outsider’s perspective has often been depicted as one of tumultuous and internalized conflict (rather than foreign influences) with a long history of hatred caused by ethnic differences, tribal and religious conflicts.

As this thesis will demonstrate, the troubles of the 1990’s are not purely rooted at historical differences and conflict, and far from the depiction of an ‘age-old hatred’, rather history and nationalism have been used as a leverage by governments, elites and influencing groups in the Balkans to obtain political goals creating division between ethnic groups. Outsider influences have rarely been a part of the equation when trying to pin-point the roots of the conflict in Kosovo. As we will see in later chapters, Kosovars (pro-U.S.) and Serbs (pro-Russia) were somewhat motivated to stand ground against one-another as both sides believed they were supported by their powerful allies in

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the West or East respectively. Nevertheless, Russia and U.S., to a lesser degree intensified, directly and indirectly, the ethnic division.

Contrary to the common belief that the age-old hatred between Kosovars and Serbs is what led to a full-blown war in 1998, this thesis provides a different understanding of the conflict and ethnic relations in Kosovo. Some of the ‘features’ and ‘symptoms’ that appear to be the root causes of the conflict are the domestic and foreign politics pulling strings for support in different directions. Fear and frustration stemming from economic crises in the 1970s and 1980s, as well as top-down construing nationalism, division, and ethnic hatred – are some of the most prevalent contributing factors that led to the ethnic war in Kosovo and now make reconciliation and peace difficult.

Nationalities and Ethnic Identities

It is not easy to diagnose the process of ethnic troubles or define what exactly led to the latest two-year conflict in Kosovo, since many different important factors played a part, but it is important that we identify the main actors, differentiate the significant groups, and explain what each’s roles in the conflict.

Generally, Serbs are ‘ethnically homogeneous’ and will refer to themselves as Serb whether they are from Republika Srpska, Serbia, Kosovo or elsewhere, perhaps distinguishing themselves by a region similar to how an American would name the state which they are from. In, general, Serbs will self-identify as Serb without the inclusion of a narrower identity. Albanian speaking Kosovars (sometimes only referred to as
Albanians), on the other hand, differentiate themselves from Albanian speakers in Macedonia, Albania, and Montenegro - but also recognize a broader Albanian identity, which is primarily based on a shared language and history. Still, the differences within the Albanian identity persists. For example, *Shqiptare* (meaning Albanian), refers to both, Albanians from Albania, as well Albanian-speakers outside of Albania. Generally, the latter group’s perception of identity is based on the sense of nationhood and unity. This broader identity draws upon history and a sense of pride that Albanians are descendants from a collection of ancient Illyrian tribes such as Albanoi, Dardani, Epirot and others. Just as those tribes were different from one another, yet part of Illyrian identity. Albanian also differentiate themselves depending on the region or ancient history. For example, Kosovars are descendants of Dardanians from the Kingdom of Dardania (current day Kosovo), therefore, they self-identify as Kosovars and part of a larger Albanian identity.

To add to the complexity, outsider influences also shaped the Kosovar and Albanian identities; Roman and Ottoman occupations added another layer of distinction. For example, references such as ‘Latin’ and ‘Turk’, which are uncommon nowadays, were used by Kosovars and Albanians as late as early 1900s - to refer to an Albanian-speaker who is Catholic or Orthodox as “Latin” or a Muslim as “Turk”. Usually these differentiations within the Albanian community and Kosovar identity ceased once the communist ideology swept the region post-WWII, and Albanian nationalism was emphasized in efforts to unite Albanian-speakers against outside threats and occupations like the Ottoman rule.

This belief of a united Kosovars and united Albanian nationhood globally played a role in the 1990s’ rise of ethnic-nationalism and formation of Kosovo Liberation Army
(KLA) group. A common Albanian nationalist identity would provide greater financial support and recruit KLA members, consisting of mostly Kosovars, but also Albanians from Albania and Macedonia.

Comprehensively, a Kosovar can be both an Albanian and a Kosovar, while an Albanian from Albania only identifies as Albanian. A Serb from Kosovo will only identify as a Serb and not a Kosovar, regardless if they are living in Kosovo or Serbia. The sharp distinction between a Kosovar and a Serb living in Kosovo is important to note before I begin with the analysis of ethnicities in Kosovo. These distinctions and self-identifications do not infer that one ethnic group comes from or has more rights over the territory than the other - nor is this an argument I am trying to make at any point during this paper. Rather the thesis will treat and refer to each ethnicity in terms of their usual and preferred self-identification. Additionally, to remain respectful of the two ethnic groups in Kosovo, I will use Kosovar for Albanian speakers in Kosovo (unless it is from a direct quote), and Serb unless I am referring to a Serb from Serbia, in which case I will include the country of Serbia as a clarification. However, Kosovo will be referred to as it stands Republic of Kosovo. The Serbian reference of Kosovo, which is Kosmet or Kosovo and Metohija (Serbian reference of Kosovo since it does not recognize its independence) will not be used. Nor will this thesis use the Albanian spelling of Kosova, rather I will refer to it as Kosovo – a widely accepted adaption of the new republic’s name. Similarly, names of cities and regions will be mentioned according to the sources and may have a mixture of Serbian and Albanian references, for example Prishtina/Pristina, Peja/Pec, Gjakova/Djakovica.
Chapter II
Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology

This chapter begins with the theoretical framework that guides this research, followed by a discussion of ethnicity and concludes with a discussion of how the research was conducted.

Theoretical Framework

Kosovo is remembered for its late 1990’s conflict as well as its long history of unrest and ethnic tensions between the Kosovar-majority and Serb-minority. At a macro level and in the international community, this narrative has been circulated (and continues to be) to described as an old hatred between the two ethnic groups, and its consequences that result from differences between ethnic groups, such as religious beliefs, history, language, and culture. In the case of Kosovo’s ethnic conflict seen from above, a bloody war led to a humanitarian crisis which could only be brought to a halt by an international military intervention. If, however, we zoom in on the conflict on the ground and among neighbors within Kosovo’s society, we will see a different story, a story of people who are, indeed, different in culture, traditions, beliefs and language, but nonetheless share a long history of collaboration, coexistence, love, proximity and understanding toward one-another. This depiction of tolerance, harmony and interaction isn’t ancient history rather it existed within our lifetime. Positive relations existed as
recently as the early 1980s, a time when my Kosovar parents had Serb friends and colleagues. However, by the time my sisters and I came along and the 1990s rolled in, ethnic tensions were obvious and on the way to deteriorating even further. In just few years, the boundaries between the groups moved from porous to concrete: interaction between the two ethnicities was frowned upon and suspicions increased on by both sides. This continues to be the norm even today, despite efforts to diminish it.

What would be almost incomprehensible in the post-conflict society of Kosovo are some of my fondest and earliest memories of Kosovo. Coincidently, they occurred in the Serbian Orthodox Church next door to my home in the town of Shtime back in 1990. The church was located on a mountain, next to our home and the gymnasium university preparatory school, overlooking our town as well as the surrounding villages. Regardless of the wonderful scenic views, I preferred to go inside to light the candles and play around the church. On most days it was empty, except for Sunday afternoons when weddings would take place and I would join in for cake, candy and other sweets. My mother’s main concern was that I would cause harm to myself or the church by playing with candles. However, Popi (as we referred to the church’s priest in Serbian) reassured her that my sister Ana and I were not troublemakers nor were we interrupting his work. The priest was a soft-spoken and kind older man with a long white beard, black hat and robe – who, according to my parents, I believed was God. And they let me believe that with much humor. Sometime during the year of 1991, I went to the church one morning and was quickly escorted out by a new young priest, perhaps in his 30s. He scolded me and told me not to return to the church again. As a staunch Serbian nationalist, as my parents described him, he was not one to associate with Kosovar families and Muslims.
Even with this incident, my parents were not concerned that a Serb would harm us, nor did they feel pressure from society to keep their distance from the Serbian ethnic group. However, over the next two years, ethnic relations began to change rapidly and drastically. By 1992, my parents were no longer in contact with Serbian friends, and my father had been dismissed from his university teaching position – as were most Kosovars, home was confiscated due to my father’s activism and open criticism of Serbian government. Some of my parents’ Serbian friends disagreed with my father’s political ideas and viewed them as a direct attack not simply on the Serbian government, rather on the Serbian ethnic group. And with most of the other Serbian friends, my parents parted ways quietly. It was an unspoken understanding that friendships should end, somewhat out of fear and distrust. The same neighbors and friends who had celebrated Orthodox, Catholic and Islamic holidays together, now stopped doing so. Religions became associated with ethnic groups or the “other.” Religious holiday celebrations became controversial ethnic fetes.

What happened so suddenly happened between 1980 and 1992? How can friends, neighbors, colleagues and others decide to end friendships and contacts without providing reasons or explanations to one-another?

To explain and frame these shifts in ethnic relations, I will use Frederik Barth’s well-known essay “Ethnic Groups and Boundaries” and other sources that will be mentioned later in this chapter. In this essay, Barth argues that although culture, traditions, language, food, often become important “ethnic markers”, they are not the primary characteristics of ethnic group organization, rather, he argues more simply and basically that “ethnic groups are categories of ascription and identification by the actors
themselves."\(^{10}\) Simple we/they differences that persist regardless of how groups interact. In Kosovo’s case, boundaries existed but were porous. Cultural and religious differences existed and clearly distinguished groups, but previously were not problematic and did not matter very much in terms of group relations. Serbs and Kosovars attended the same venues and cafes, worked in same institutions, and occasionally intermarried. Suddenly and progressively, these cultural and religious attributes became the ethnic markers which differentiated the two ethnicities and separated them more sharply into “us” and “them”, hardening the boundaries. Ethnicity, therefore, was manipulated socially according to the shifting political and economic climate of that time.

Looking into these two factors (politics and economics), fear and frustration resulted from economic crises of 1980s experienced in Yugoslavia and the death of Yugoslav leader, Josip Broz “Tito”, which both occasions opened up struggles for power between different republics’ leaders, as well as the fall of the Berlin Wall. All this created a sense of uncertainty among the people of Kosovo. Still, as this thesis will document, the most influential forces and actors of all for deteriorating ethnic relations came from persuasive Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic, who exploited fear and uncertainty facing Serbs as well as all other groups at that time. Shifting from old Communist Party leader to strident Nationalist, he began his campaign through policies and propaganda to exclude Kosovars from politics, state institutions and workforce. By promoting a Serbian ethnic identity and nationalism, he alienated Kosovars who made up approximately ninety percent of the population in Kosovo at that time, while gaining support from Serbs

who were looking for change in terms of a more prosperous country and better living standards.

Examining what was happening with the economy, politics, and Eastern Europe at that time, gives us a different understanding of the conflict, away from the generalization that was based on historical hostility or an ‘age-old hatred.’ This alternative view of events gives us an argument that this hatred between Serbs and Kosovars was not based on difference of ethnicity but a chain of events over almost two decades.

This is not a common understanding internationally or even locally, of conditions that led to the rise of ethnic-nationalism and war in Kosovo. Therefore, this research is dedicated to understanding sudden and negative metamorphosis of ethnic identities. It will suggest patterns of social interaction, and opportunist individual politics that led to the conflict in late 1990, and remnants of which persist today.

This thesis approaches the ethno-nationalistic question by briefly defining ethnicity and reviewing how ethnic boundaries were hardened at the institutional level or by members of ethnic groups. Additionally, I will discuss how ethnic boundaries were changed in Kosovo, and why they were created to include or exclude ethnicities in Kosovo during 1980s and 1990s. To explain these points, I will draw from scholarships of Frederik Barth, as well Andreas Wimmer, James Peoples and Garrick Bailey regarding studies of ethnicity and boundaries. Additionally, I will incorporate works from Julie Mertus, which illustrate ethnic tensions and relations between Kosovars and Serbs by incorporate numerous interviews of Kosovo’s citizens, human rights abuses, and cases that influenced perceptions and division of ethnic groups.
In the case of shifting boundaries in Kosovo, I will address key points of how economic changes, political transitions, leaders, media and citizens of Kosovo helped shape these boundaries during the years 1980 to 1989.

What is Ethnicity?

*Ethnicity*, by definition, is often understood as group identification based on common ancestry, language, culture\(^{11}\) and members of ethnic groups have a “psychological” and “social component” that can unite or divide groups in “us” and “them.”\(^{12}\) These, however, are what Barth describes as the “diacritical markers”, which define subtypes of ethnic categories and groupings that are based on religion (ethnoreligious), region (ethno regional), nationalism (ethnonational), language (ethnolinguistic).\(^{13}\)

Though they do not tell, predict, or define behavior or interaction between groups, the markers help us to see how groups, often arbitrarily as with most social constructions. There are variations which members of ethnic groups choose to identify themselves or


are identified by others. The *situational nature of ethnic identity* is based on social situations that varies in context, for example, an American with a European ancestry would identify as Euro-American, or a Kosovar-Albanian. Others include even more identifications such as Italian-American, which may be broken down in more details and identify as a Sicilian-American – thus making ethnic distinction more complex by further dividing ethnic group which may be belong to a higher level of collection of ethnic groups.\(^\text{14}\) However, immigrant groups are often quite different from those in their home territory. For our purpose, we might better ask: How do Sicilians in Italy perceives and distinguish themselves from their northern neighbors in, say, Tuscany, or in Venice or Milan? Here we can begin to see the sort of internal distinctions critical to understanding Kosovo. In the case of Yugoslavia during Tito’s years, Croats, Kosovars, Serbs, and other groups - often referred to themselves as Yugoslav across the region. Post-Tito years, ethnic identity rose to the fore, further distinguishing and dividing based on ideas of culture, historical background, language and religion with significant status differences.

Here, the earlier Ethno-nationalist groups have two main attributes: origin myth (that is based on the ancestry membership) and history, (historical commemoration of war and conflicts, poetry, songs, dances. that are emphasized to create a distinction between groups or “us” versus “them.”\(^\text{15}\) This is not necessarily a negative attribute, but in times, it can be used to categorize ethnicities negatively, and similarly to early 1990s conflicts in Yugoslavia, where such categorization was used to differentiate, divide groups, and achieve support in favor of ethnic-nationalism. Another attribute mentioned


\(^{15}\) Ibid., 389.
by Peoples and Bailey is the *ethnic boundary markers* – which is important because it identifies a group based on language, culture, physical attributes etc., but it also serves as distinction to another level, so individuals are not only ‘different’ from one group (e.g. Kosovars and Serbs who do not share a common language), but also from a third group that may have similar attributes (e.g., Serbs and Croats who share a common language). Therefore, different historical narratives, religions, and even dialects serve as boundary markers.  

The thesis will trace these ethnic markers in Kosovo, in three important times period, which are explained in the next section.

Research Methodology

To study the case of Kosovo and its evolving ethnic relations and boundaries, I chose to concentrate on four crucial time periods from 1980 to 2015. The first period, which is chapter three, I will be analyzing the years 1980 to 1989, which covers the time following Tito’s death, economic crisis, and the first developments in the rise of ethnic nationalism. Chapter four focuses on the years of 1989 to 1992, addressing civil and political rights of Kosovars and the revocation of Kosovo’s autonomy. During this time, Kosovars were expelled from government positions, Albanian-language schools were closed, home raid and arrests of Kosovars increased. It is these rising tensions and second-class citizenship that led to the creation of parallel education and healthcare institutions in Kosovo. These efforts to provide Kosovars equal rights were met harshly

by the Serbian government and military, and on the other hand, some of the Kosovars were growing tiresome with the lack of positive developments through nonviolent means. It is between the years of 1993 and 1997, as mentioned in chapter five, when the first armed resistance armed groups was formed and became public. It caused division within the Kosovar society, it also gave reasons for Milosevic to intervene with a large military force. During this period (1993-1999) an ideological shift among Kosovars took place, as well as the rise of ethnic nationalism from both sides, and concrete boundaries are materialized. The next chapter focuses on the developments domestically: Belgrade’s ethnic cleansing campaign, massacres and high civilian death rates, which eventually led to a military humanitarian intervention by the U.S. and NATO. The last chapter consists of reconciliation efforts and the status of Kosovo as a new and independent state – it displays difficulties in breaking down the ethnic boundaries created, due to mistrust, fear and ethnic war crimes committed during the two-year war.

This chapter also displays the peace-building efforts in the post-conflict society. This is due to external efforts (such as the EU and the U.S.), financial assistance and economic development through a future membership in the European Union which both Serbs and Kosovars would benefit. Also normalizing of relations between the two countries through prosecution of war crimes, engaging in trade, and other business ties.

These chapters follow trends and developments of ethnic relations between Serbs and Kosovars, as well as tracing how boundaries between the two groups change over a period of thirty-five years. Some of the materials that are used to gather information consist of both primary and secondary sources. They include newspaper articles, United Nations documentation, Human Rights Watch reports, research work conducted by
different authors, including Misha Glenny, Julie Mertus, and Howard Clark. Additionally, personal experiences and observations are used to capture the understanding from the Kosovar side that at times were in contradiction with media portrayal of NATO intervention and the Kosovo war in general. For example, hundreds of thousands of Kosovars fleeing Kosovo during 1998 and 1999 were depicted by media (particularly state-run Serbian media) as results of NATO bombing. Kosovars, including my family, fled due to lack of shelter, food and mostly form fear of being killed by Serbian forces. Other personal accounts from earlier years before the war provide an understanding that Kosovars and Serbs were not always hostile towards one-another. In fact, many Kosovars and Serbs mixed in many occasions and were friends: they worked together, attended family gatherings and festivities, and considered their neighbor who may be from the other ethnic group, as their closest and most trusting friend.

These experiences and illustrations bring a personal and different understanding of the conflict as well as the changing relations of the two groups, relations that otherwise may not be as pronounced or even noted in the media and international world. Nonetheless, they are important not only for understanding the conflict, but also for the ongoing efforts of reconciliations since the intervention in 1999.
Chapter III

Tito’s Yugoslavia: One Yugoslav Identity, Brotherhood and Unity

This chapter covers the Kosovo’s history and ethnic relation following the death of Josip Broz Tito in 1980. As we will see, his death caused uncertainty among the republics, and a struggle for power ensued. This grapple for power was further boosted by economic destabilization caused by high inflation rates and external debt.¹⁷ Republics in Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) Constitution of 1974 which gave the republics rights to self-determination and withdrawal from SFRY. This too provided another reason to fear the separation of the republics from the SFry since the republics had mixed ethnic groups that may suffer from one ethnic group coming to power in an independent state, but also for loss of territory. For example, Croatia consisted of Croat as well as a large Serb population in Krajina. This meant that the six recognized nationalities in Yugoslavia (Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, Serbs, Macedonians, Montenegrins and Bosnians) would risk division and loss of national territory, thus the struggle for power and control. In Kosovo, however, there was no recognition for a Kosovar or Albanian identity, since Kosovar (Albanian-speakers) had an ‘external homeland’ of Albania, similar to Serbia’s territory of Vojvodina in the north part, whose Hungarian-speaking population was considered to have a homeland outside SFry.¹⁸

This fear and race among ethnic groups to obtain and maintain control over territories, was perhaps due to the lack of trust rooted from unresolved ethnic issues of Second World War. A time of territorial disputes and ethnic conflict, remembered for abuses such as Ustasha and Nazi treatment of Serbs, and Chetnik Serbs treatment of Croats. Both sides claimed that the other group has a “genocide nature”\(^\text{19}\) which was revived in the 1990s once more. Similarly, in Kosovo, distrust among Kosovars and Serbs resulting from WWII remained. Serbs believed in a separatist nature of Kosovars hoping to divide Kosovo from Yugoslavia to create a “Greater Albania.”

These were all fears brought to surface once Tito died, and that unity of one nation was beginning to break, while old fears surfaced. The Yugoslav leader, often referred to as the founder of Yugoslavia, was born in 1892 in Croatia to a Croatian father and a Slovene mother. Tito came to power in 1945 as the leader of Yugoslavia and the head of the Communist Party. One of the important objectives for Tito and the Communist Party was for the people Yugoslavia unite under one national identity and one-party system, which they believed would resolve the ethnic-nationalism problems. Additionally, Tito and his party opposed democracy and liberalization, ideologies they believed would endanger the Yugoslav identity and unity by giving voice and personal

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freedom, while capitalist tendencies would urge ethnic-nationalism and ethnic division. Thus, the one-party system based on “Marxist-Leninist” ideology.  

His strategy for achieving unitary identity among ethnicities was due to the ‘blurring of boundaries’ that is, in Wimmer’s words “nonethnic principles are promoted in order to undermine the legitimacy of ethnic, national, or racial boundaries.” This ideology that became known as ‘Titoist’ - was taught in schools, military service, and to Yugoslav citizens, by engaging historical traditions, holidays, and collectivist principles that were common to all ethnic groups through a workers’ self-management. Therefore, deemphasizing one single ethnic culture and traditions that were not shared by all ethnic groups. Workers’ self-management purpose was to add improvements and enhance value of the collective society, by placing the controls on workers rather than with private firms, individualistic-minded management or bureaucratic state.

Between 1952 and 1965, Yugoslavia experienced a boom in economy – and was regarded as one of the world’s fastest growing economies challenging Japan in this

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22 Aleksa Djilas, “Tito’s Last Secret: How Did He Keep The Yugoslavs Together?,” 121.

race. This was short-lived, however, and an economic decline was already beginning to seep in as early as 1960s due to corruption, and later starting in 1970s, overproduction and high national debt. In attempt to stimulate exports, the devaluation of Yugoslav dinar was a strategy approached by the Yugoslav government, however, currency manipulation caused the price of imported goods to increase as well.

Still, even with an economic decline underway, many Serbs and Kosovars alike, including my parents - remembered the 1970s as ‘golden years.’ According to them, it was during this decade that ethnic-tensions, nationalism and crime rates were low. Serbs and Kosovars attended the same universities, worked together and lived in mixed neighborhoods – without regarding one-another as dangerous, or viewing cultural and religious affiliations as problematic. According to them, ethnic troubles only began in 1980s following Tito’s death, more or less, this holds true based on the political and economic dysfunction that were transpiring around this time as living standards reduced by five percent, deficit increased to $3.7 billion by 1979, and foreign debt reached $19 billion by 198. Decrease in imports resulted in extreme measures by conducting gasoline ration for private automobiles, cutting energy consumption at community and household level, medicine, flour, and meats were also in high shortages.

Economic disparities in Yugoslav federations and provinces were salient in 1980s, consequently affecting ethnicities differently. Slovenia, for example, maintained


26 Ibid., 3-4.
almost full workforce with only a 2 percent unemployment rate. Kosovo, on the other hand, suffered from the highest unemployment rates in Yugoslavia at 27.5 percent. Per capita income in Kosovo declined to 27 percent of the Yugoslav average, and Kosovars, on average, continued to earn less than other ethnic groups.27

In addition to the economic situation, fueling national tensions were the Kosovars’ unresolved employment inequality in Kosovo, where Serbs continued to disproportionately hold high-level positions, even as Serb population in Kosovo declined to 13.2 percent by 1980, since relocating to other parts of Yugoslavia meant better pay and higher living standards. The employment statistics for the same year show that among the employed Kosovars, the number was 12.6 points lower than the ratio of Kosovar population in Kosovo. Uniformly, the number of employed Serbs was 12.4 point higher than the percentage of Kosovo Serb population. Economic disparity and overall inequality in Kosovo became central to the growing tensions between Serbs and Kosovars. The Kosovars blamed officials and republics (particularly Serbia) for neglecting to invest and provide equality in Kosovo. Serbs, in turn, blamed the inept Kosovar politicians, who took over in 1970s. 28

Another reason for the ethnic tensions were the high number of graduates coming out of college who faced a tough competition for low number of jobs available. It was these unemployed and educated men that provided strong support for Kosovar national movements, which Tito had become aware in late 1970s. These crises, he believed,


would lead to ethnic tensions and division, if they are not addressed early on. He expressed and need for economic assistance for the province – which he stated, it was not only in the interest of Kosovo, but for the benefit of Yugoslavia.29

Milosevic’s Nationalist Movement: Propaganda and Media Control

Following Tito’s death in 1980, struggle for power among Yugoslavia’s republics and territories began. On one side, Serbian nationalists, some politicians and elites viewed this as an opportunity to create Serbian hegemony, a dominance that Tito had kept under control.30 On the other hand, Kosovars already felt forgotten in Yugoslavia, now they feared that an even greater economic and political inequality was underway. What began as demonstrations in 1981 to protest poor conditions in cafeterias and dormitories, the protests quickly spread to include participants expressing dissatisfaction with high unemployment rates, and the overall treatment of Kosovars in Yugoslavia. Some Yugoslav media portrayed the protests as disturbances from separatist Kosovars with nationalist agenda, these inaccurate accusations diverted the real problems of economic failures – and put focus on nationalism.31 Tanks and military forces were deployed to disburse protestors by force, while the Interior Ministry ordered curfew between the hours of 8 p.m. and 5 a.m.32

29 Julie A Mertus, Kosovo, 29.


31 Julie A Mertus, Kosovo, 29-32.
The treatment of protestors and general uncertainty after Tito’s death invoked fear among many Kosovars of the possible revocation of autonomy in Kosovo and, with it, Serbian takeover if Yugoslavia were to disintegrate. Some Kosovars, although low in numbers, regarded these demonstrations as an opportunity to create an independent state of Kosovo, or even join a unified Albania.

Numerous Kosovar nationalist group emerged during the 1980’s crisis. One party, the Movement for a National Liberation of Kosovo (MNLK) desired a unified Kosovo and Albania, while Communist Party Marxist-Leninist of Yugoslavia (PKNLSH) and the Movement for an Albanian Republic in Yugoslavia (LRSH) called for an equal status of Kosovo as a republic within Yugoslavia. However, as Julie Mertus explains, and contrary to common depiction of the nature of these demonstrations, most protestors from early 1980s demanded better economic conditions and Kosovo’s independent status within the republic – therefore equality with the rest of Yugoslav federations. In contrast, there was a low number of those who were inspired by a Marxist-Leninist or wanted to join Albania.

During this time, Serb nationalist movements were also under way. Kosovo’s Serbs fear of Kosovars was real and perceive. They were largely based on comments and statements from news media, as well as the emerging Serbs intellectuals with nationalists

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33 Julie A Mertus, Kosovo, 34.

34 Ibid., 33.
who spoke of Kosovo Serbs’ plight, and the Serb oppression during Tito’s years. One such intellectual was Dobrica Ćosić, a former journalist and member of Communists Youth, who had once believed on “cultural universalism and eradication of national differences.” His hopes of Tito’s communism declined beginning in 1960s considering that it was diminishing Serbian culture and identity. Furthermore, his interest grew from a unified Yugoslavia to an individualistic Serbian nation, particularly as Kosovars began taking more of a part now in governing the province of Kosovo. He believed that this act was equivalent to handing Socialist Republic of Serbia’s territory to “Albanian communists” and to a “leadership that was fundamentally nationalist.”

Beginning 1980, he saw a chance to finally undue restrictions and oppression of Serbian culture – slowly emerging as an influential Serbian writer with a nationalist position. In his writing, he depicts Serbs as defenders of freedom who have suffered throughout history, surviving fascists and Ustasha genocide. Although he acknowledges occasional evil orchestrated by Serbs (referring to Chetnik movements) which had committed crimes on behalf of “national policy” – his main argument presented that Serbs suffered the most time and time again, which resonated with Serbs who believed they had been victims of Tito’s communism. Ćosić became one of the leading

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36 Ibid., 522.

nationalist throughout the 1980s, calling for a change in constitution to integrate autonomous Vojvodina and Kosovo into Serbia.

Parallel to this time, Slobodan Milosevic, a successful business banker – was a loyalist and good friends of the Communist Party leader and President of Serbia Ivan Stambolic. With his help, Milosevic was appointed the Chief of Communist Party.\(^ {38}\) It was no surprise that he rose up the political ranks since many described Milosevic as a charismatic person who could hide his intentions well, befriend successful and powerful diplomats including U.S. Ambassador Lawrence Eagleburger and banker David Rockefeller.\(^ {39}\) His intentions were to quietly aim for the position of his good friend and Serbia’s President, Ivan Stambolic. He noticed that the political opportunity would come through the dissatisfaction of Yugoslav citizens and rise of nationalism. He quickly gained support in the latter half of 1980s through political rallies he held in Vojvodina and Montenegro, initiating the so-called ‘anti-bureaucratic revolution’ to eliminate the Communist Party and fight bureaucracies that ruled over the autonomous provinces, as well weaken other republics which had considerable Serbian population – all in effort to centralize Serbian authority in Yugoslavia.\(^ {40}\)

The revolution was successful for Milosevic and the transition of power was soon on the way. On November 17, 1988, Kosovar leaders from the province of Kosovo were

\(^{38}\) Doder and Branson, Milosevic: Portrait of a Tyrant, 28.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., 26.

removed from the party and fired from government positions.\textsuperscript{41} By 1989, he managed to
revoke Kosovo’s autonomy, undermining the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution. From this
point, the Serbian government would take full control over Kosovo,\textsuperscript{42} undermining the
supreme authority of Collective Federal Executive body, which he had accused members
of “anti-Serb” agenda.

Solidifying Ethnic Boundaries Through Institution

Milosevic learned over the years that his persuasive power lay in fear and in his
nationalist rhetoric. Although he had gained power and popularity in Kosovo and
elsewhere in Yugoslavia, not everyone supported Milosevic’s nationalist approach, as
well as his media usage to spread hate speech and propaganda. Bogdan Bogdanovic, once
a Mayor of Belgrade and well-liked by Milosevic, explained what happened at the 1989
speech in Kosovo given by Milosevic: "...something happened there, something like
what happens to the character in the Charlie Chaplin film 'The Great Dictator,' when they
wave the flags and he realizes his power, he came to realize he could govern using the
masses. He experienced it.”\textsuperscript{43} Bogdanovic, once close to Milosevic, remained a

\textsuperscript{41} Julie A Mertus, Kosovo, 178.

\textsuperscript{42} Raymond Bonner, “Albanians in Kosovo Fearful of a U.S. Deal with
fearful-of-a-us-deal-with-yugoslavia.html.

\textsuperscript{43} Stephen Engelberg, “Carving out a Greater Serbia,” \textit{Magazine} (The New York
Times), September 1, 1991: accessed October 19, 2016,
Yugoslav nationalist supporter. Of course, this standpoint was not perceived by Milosevic as an opposition, or simple, a difference in opinion – rather a direct attack on Milosevic. Criticism against Milosevic’s nationalist views and influence, that lost Bogdanovic not only the friendship with Milosevic, but death threats and apartment break-ins.44

Milosevic did not stop at anything, he threatened and intimidated other politicians, activist, journalist and media in effort to limit opposing views. Claims of biased reporting in favor of Milosevic and his party were also worrisome to the Serbian public. Political and leader of United Serbian Opposition party, Vuk Draskovic – accused media of biased coverage in favor of Milosevic and his Socialist party. While some Serbs took to the streets in March 1991 to protest against Belgrade Television’s unfair reporting, they also worried that Milosevic had taken steps to ensure he has control of media. This accusation appeared correct seeing that journalists of the state-controlled TV and radio were replaced to ensure that Milosevic was portrayed positively, while some intimidated journalists submissively assumed more of a nationalist and biased tone.45

In 1996, independent radio station B-92 reported on the demonstrations in Serbia where protestors were demanding dialogue with Milosevic and his party. Almost


immediately, the radio station’s broadcasting was interrupted, what was believed to be as an interference ordered by Milosevic’s office. The Ministry of Transportation and Communication (also a government controlled institution) investigated the matter and reported no government interferences occurred. Other ways to control negative newsfeeds were to target foreign reporters and media by shutting them down, such as the case of U.S.-based organization, Soros Foundation, which supported independent media.46

Media coverage slowly shifted to promoting Serb nationalism and promotion of Milosevic’s agenda, perhaps partially out of fear and pressure from the government. One Belgrade station, for example, played a footage of fascist dictator Ante Pavelic meeting Adolf Hitler followed by another footage of Croatian President, Franjo Tudjman and German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl.47 This was an effort to draw comparisons between Hitler and Croats, the video footages served as propaganda to build fear among Serbs throughout Yugoslavia.

In Kosovo, there were approximately 200,000 Serbs who feared Kosovar attacks not necessarily based on personal experiences and witnessing of crimes, rather media story lines which depicted persecution of Serbs. One such story that had left a deep-rooted impact and ethnic accusation came from a Yugoslav newspaper in 1985 -


reporting an attack on Serbian farmer Djordje Martinovic from Kosovo, who claimed to have been attacked by a few young Kosovar men, tortured and sodomized, resulting in injuries that left him hospitalized. The local authorities who were mostly Kosovars took the story as truth and embarked on an investigation but eventually became suspicious of the story. Danas, a publication based in Zagreb, reported that the local municipality that had gathered the first statement, claimed that the injuries were accidentally self-induced which he was embarrassed to admit. The local municipality’s claim was also corroborated by public investigators in Prishtina, where Martinovic had confessed the accidental self-inflicted injury to a Serbian Colonel Novak Ivanovic, as well as Kosovar doctor in Pristina. The case was covered by Albanian, Serbian and Croatian media depicting different story of events, leading the Kosovars and Serbs to be strongly divided over the Martinovic cases. Still, the case gained more attention in Serbia and among Serbian intellectuals who affirmed to protect persecuted Kosovo Serbs and stop the Kosovar genocidal activities by writing a ‘Genocide petition’ to the Serbian Parliament. Other influential people, such as painter Mica Popovic depicted Martinovic as Christ being crucified by Kosovars in their traditional clothing, including the distinguishable wool hats.

This case brought to life claims that were being made by politicians, writers and painters depicting the suffering of Serbs which continued to occur even during 1980s. Serbs in Kosovo related to Martinovic, and feared that this could happen to them and

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48 Julie A Mertus, Kosovo, 100-101.

their families too, while others viewed it as an attack on Serbian nation and religion. Kosovars, on the other hand, argued that this was propaganda given that Martinovic had confessed to both a Serbian Colonel and a Kosovar Doctor. Furthermore, Martinovic claimed that the Kosovars who had attacked him were from nearby village, but later could not name and point out who the perpetrators were. Whether a hate crime was committed or not, it is not clear. What is evident is that the case provided different perceptions and truths among Serbs and Kosovars. Both sides believed themselves to be the victims.

Another case that was far more obvious and unambiguous of its nationalistic tone was the Paracin massacre. In this case, Kosovar murderer Aziz Kelmendi from the Yugoslav Army killed four soldiers in 1987 (one Serb, two Bosnians, and one Croat), before turning the gun on himself. His crime was said to be influenced by Albanian nationalist ideologies. However, possibility of a mental illness mentioned in other reports were often excluded, especially by Serbian media. Similarly, the coverage on the Presidency of Kosovo condemning by speaking out against the crime was reported differently by the Serbian media, who insinuated that there was no remorse by Kosovars nor was there a moment of silence in solidarity and memory of the victims. Other reports extended to include that Kelmendi’s family also had a history of nationalism and was anti-Serb. One report mentions Kelmendi family members’ arrests and confiscation of a gun from the father of the killer, which was found hidden it in his wife’s dimija (traditional Albanian trouser worn by Muslim women) which started the slogan “Pistol in Dimija.” Such stories not only suggested the nationalist and separatist nature of Kosovars, but it also connected Kosovar dressing style, religion and women to
irredentism, separatism and nationalism. And despite the fact that only one of the victims was Serb, the massacre was portrayed as a “prosecution of Serbs.”50

Other famous case in 1991 reported by Croatian newspaper, *The Zagreb Daily* Yugoslav, which documented over a thousand Kosovar pupils who fell mysteriously ill at school in Prishtina. They reported dizziness, vomiting, fainting, stomach pain and hallucination. A few schools in the cities of Gjakova and Mitrovica were mentioned in the article stating that student smelled heavy odor shortly before experiencing headaches, breathing problems and fainting episodes. Another Croatian based newspaper, *Vecernji list*, citing an unnamed person claimed that the incidents were inspired by nationalist ideology of Vuk Draskovic, a Milosevic opponent. The same story in another Yugoslav newspaper *Tanjug* concluded that the Kosovar students attacked Serb classmates and other students at school for poisoning their food and carrying poison in their book bags. The charges were later extended to attacks on Communist Party building, and terrorizing of Serbian population, who locked themselves in their homes out of fear. Another Serbian newspaper emphasized that at least 50 attacks on Kosovo Serbs by Kosovar nationalists took place following the poison incident.51

As if the matters were not complicated enough, more actors, spins in the stories, and pointing fingers at one-another were included. Serbian newspaper, *Novosti*, concluded that Kosovar students were not sick, rather the whole incident was made up by Kosovar separatist in order to draw attention. First, Serbian doctors at a Prishtina hospital


51 Ibid., 188-189.
were prevented by Kosovar doctors from seeing the poisoned patients. Once they did manage to see the students, the symptoms quickly disappeared or were not apparent at all. Second, the newspaper gave accounts of Pavle Krstenovic, a Serb, who had spoken with his Kosovar roommate, a doctor at the hospital where the kids were being treated. The Kosovar doctor had told Krstenovic that the children were playing and chatting in the hospital hallways but were told by another Kosovar doctor to go in their beds and pretend to be sick prior to the arrival of the president of the Executive Committee of Kosovo. As a result of these new news reports, the Serbian community referred to the incident as a “sham” perpetrated by Kosovars since the poison could not “choose” nationalities and only happen among Kosovars student classrooms.52

Other newspapers, such as a Serbian daily mocked the reports by stating that the poison chooses victims based on nationality since only Kosovar children claimed to be sick, while a Croatian daily Vjesnik called the poison a war on Kosovars. On the other hand, Kosovars believed that the poison was a far greater and more dangerous issue: a chemical nerve gas administered by the Serbian army. Medical examinations conducted by Military Medical Academy in Belgrade and Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts agreed that no poison was found on the urine and vomit samples they received. This did not appear to be sufficient answer for Kosovars who asked: “how then were they to explain lines of cars filled with sick children arriving at hospitals?”53 Contrary to the findings by Serbian medical doctors, UN toxicologist reports cited chemical weapons

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52 Julie A Mertus, Kosovo, 189-190.

53 Julie A Mertus, Kosovo, 190-192.
such as Sarin and Tabun found in blood samples, as a chemical found to have been manufactured in Bosnia-Herzegovina.\textsuperscript{54}

Some Serbian newspapers, moved on from claims that the poison never happened to blaming Kosovar parents of poisoning their children as part of an anti-Serb campaign, while another journalist reported the Kosovar Catholic Church as the perpetrator behind the poisoning based on reports of Serbian military who supposedly found several hundred kilograms of drugs that cause nausea and headache, poisoned the children.\textsuperscript{55} The debate by now included politicians, governments, foreign and international organizations, as well as Serbian psychologists and psychiatrist who referred to students as having been poisoned by a “Kosovar nationalist virus” and need to be admitted into “psychiatrist awards where they belong.”\textsuperscript{56} Another Serb doctor referred that the patients instead had “psychological-psychiatric problems… psycho-nationalistic, that culminate in the explosion of the destructive hatred.”\textsuperscript{57}

Interviews of Serbs and Kosovar citizens also reflected reports of Serb or Albanian and foreign media. Most Serbs believed that this was a conspiracy theory or propaganda on the Kosovars side. One Serb responded that he found it humorous to see Kosovar parents rushing to the clinics and hospitals with their children and that he knew this was a fake act.\textsuperscript{58} Many of the interviewees recounted how they felt about the other

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 196.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 193.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 192.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 195.
group as a result of the alleged poisoning. A 21-year old living in Pristina referred to it as “another disappointment for me in Albanians”\(^{59}\) while a Serbian man from Mitrovica called the case “stupid and funny. I didn’t see it personally, because everything happened in the hospitals, but I talked about that with a lot of people.”\(^{60}\)

Regardless of the events, some Serbs still presented a positive view of their Kosovar neighbors, but not of the rest of Albanians as a Serb woman expressed: “there were Albanians in our village. They were indigenous and so were we and with them we never had any problems. They were even brothers-in-oath, godfathers to our children. But Albanians that came later, they were mean.”\(^{61}\)

The media played a major role in two cases: the Martinovic case, which was a topic of discussion for a few years, then the poison of Kosovar school children in early 1990. These incidents provided new perceptions for Serbs and Kosovars. Serbs believed that the Kosovars had a separatist and nationalist agenda, therefore building a case against Serbs that they perceived was false. Kosovars, in turn, believed that this was yet another strategy by Milosevic’s administration to attack and intimidate Kosovars, while Kosovo Serbs either support Milosevic’s nationalist movement or are willing bystanders and choose not to be bothered by persecution of Kosovars.

Nonetheless, the Serbian government, media, and the two cases mentioned here contributed to one major shift in ethnic boundaries in Kosovo. That is, the boundaries

\(^{58}\) Julie A Mertus, Kosovo, 193.

\(^{59}\) Ibid., 214.

\(^{60}\) Ibid., 216.

\(^{61}\) Ibid., 128.
were not only at the institutional level and Serbian government, rather patterns in ethnic relations and boundaries were felt among Serb and Kosovar communities.

**Serbian Orthodox Church and its influence on Nationalist Movement**

Apart from Media, writers and intellectuals, Serb nationalist movement had another supporter, that was the Serbian Orthodox Church. Kosovo holds religious and historical importance for Serbs since many medieval churches are in Kosovo, as well as one of the most important historical battles (Battle of Kosovo 1389) was fought there, the Orthodox Church had a lot of influence in Serb nationalism and the ethnic division in Kosovo. As mentioned earlier, Milosevic used the historical and religious sentiment to gain popularity, power and give rise to Serb nationalism – which came somewhat easy as many Serbs felt that these numerous Serb sanctuaries were proof of their rights over Kosovo. Serbian Orthodox Church support of Milosevic synchronized the call of politicians, writers and religious leaders who shared the same nationalist and expansionist ideology: Milosevic’s notion of “All Serbs in one county.” It isn’t the first time however that the Orthodox Church expressed solidarity to Milosevic. It was visible during his rise to power and toppling of Communism in late 1980, when the Orthodox Church explained that Serbs were victims of Tito’s Communist and in need to protect the Serb national identity. Both Milosevic and the Orthodox Church portrayed Serbs as the victims of reoccurring genocide and even opening the

62 Doder and Branson, Milosevic: Portrait of a Tyrant. 56.
Furthermore, the Orthodox Church continued supporting Serbia in the wars of 1990s situating bishops in war zones where they give blessings to Serbian forces, including the notorious Serbian paramilitary group “The Scorpions” responsible for killings in Srebrenica.

What did the Orthodox Church solidarity with Milosevic mean for Serb and Kosovar relations, and the status of Kosovo? Referring back to Tito’s regime, ethnic tensions were low not because of heavy control by the government, rather its emphasis on unity, common culture and incentives from cooperation. Milosevic’s years brought in a new perspective on ethnicity for both Serbs and Kosovars. This time, ethnic nationalism is no longer discouraged, rather used as tool and redoing of boundaries.

Milosevic mobilized religion, history, and media to create a sense of victimization of Serbs and support for his cause of a Serbian hegemony in Yugoslavia. This came at a time in the 1980s when the country was experiencing an economic decline and uncertainty over the union in Yugoslavia. He exploited fears of Serbs, as well as other groups, by monopolizing media, controlling news and applying propaganda – in effort to paint a different and scarier picture than the reality of the situation in Kosovo. News of Paracin Massacre and poisoning of children told stories that Kosovars were an aggressive ethnic group, who were anti-Serb. Support from writers, painters, Orthodox priests also


depicted a situation where Serbs were yet again victims targeted by other groups.

Furthermore, Kosovo’s status as a Serbian Holy Land was threatened by Kosovars who committed violence against Serbs, gave false stories and accusation of Serbs and the Serbian government – all in effort to annex Kosovo from Serbia and remove Serbs from Kosovo. Thus, the combination of media, religious leaders, intellectuals and such – as trusted leaders and media – all provided a platform for Serb nationalism and ethnic division in Kosovo. These shifts in ethnic boundaries, therefore, resulted from institutionalized efforts to create division rather than the common belief that the 1990s conflicts were based on centuries’ old and endless hatred between people and communities.
Milosevic’s efforts to build strong support and Serb nationalist platform in Yugoslavia translated into a fear for many Kosovars, who in return, were enhancing conformity within their ethnic group, as a protection mechanism against the Serbian regime, and demanding equal rights. They expressed intentions through organized marches, passive resistance and creation of parallel education and healthcare.

One of the most memorable marches, which became a turning point in Kosovo ethnic relations, was the Trepca miners’ march in November 1988. Two thousand Kosovar miners marched to the capital city of Prishtina, in a well-organized and non-violent protest in defense of Constitution of 1974. Although the march was peaceful with no incidents reported, Milosevic deployed military troops to disperse the crowds and proceeded with the revocation of Kosovo’s autonomy under 1974 Constitution of Yugoslavia.65 Many Kosovars, previously feared to be associated with demonstrations, this time they were inspired by miners’ protests, and joined in for one of the largest marches (100,000 people) in the 1980s. Their goal remained to stand with Yugoslavia and its Constitution, and argued for equal representation and equal rights for all ethnic groups in Yugoslavia.66


Another message that emerged from these marches was the non-violent character of Kosovars protests, which contradicted Serb media depiction of Kosovars and Milosevic’s claims that Kosovars were violent and anti-Serb, as well as separatist whose aspiration was the creation of a Greater Albania. Shkelzen Maliqi, a Kosovar philosopher and a member of Kosovo Helsinki Committee quoted in Clark’s book, lists a different agenda and what miners and protesters were trying to achieve:

… they attempted to prove that the Albanians were not as the Serbs presented them and, still more importantly, that the Albanians were different and better than the Serbs. This entire manifestation, which involved the participation of some 400,000 people, went without a single incident, a single act of vandalism or destruction, and even without a single broken window. It took enormous self-control and high motivation to hold back the powerful internal destructive instincts and check the eruption of hatred, anger and rage. We are not as you choose to present us, we do not rape and do not kill but only ‘with dignity’ express our political will which is different from yours.67

In addition, Maliqi pointed out, demonstrators attempted to stay clear of vilifying or grouping Serbs with the Serbian regime, or any insult towards Serbs in general. This was apparent by the slogans protesters held that read “Long live brave Serbian people!” in attempt to ease ethnic tensions in response to demonstrations and strikes.68

These actions would disprove Milosevic’s claims of motivated ethnic aggressions by Kosovars. To counter these nonviolent Kosovar protests, he began an anti-bureaucratic campaign to what he claimed would ‘give back voice and power to Serbs and Montenegrins’ – who were victims in Kosovo. Serbs started protesting in solidarity of this campaign, while many other unemployed Serbs protestors were paid by


68 Ibid., 48.
Milosevic’s office and transported in buses to attend protests, thus the Serb slogan ‘Let’s go to Kosovo.’ It was no longer reported solely in the news media, or from Milosevic’s rhetoric. Pride of ethnic identity and harder boundaries began to expand among Serb population as well, and both the government and people had a common understanding this time: Kosovars were the enemy. Attributes ascribed to Kosovar ethnic groups were given, such as being rapists and baby killers who were “dirty, primitive and nasty… and [Kosovars] embarked on a campaign to make Kosovo ethnically pure by driving Serbs and Montenegrins by a variety of criminal means… and high birthrates.”

Creation of Democratic League of Kosovo

The Serb regime’s plans were not going exactly as Milosevic had hoped. Intensive measures by the government came in numerous forms, such as shutting down protests by force, intimidation and high rates of arrests by engaging police forces, which by now 1990, it consisted almost entirely of Serbs. The arrests and hunger strikers drew protests in Slovenia and Croatia in support of Kosovars whose plight was compared to World War II persecution of Jews. While Milosevic and other Serbian nationalist planned a report, contradicting the Croats and Slovens belief that Kosovars were the victims, claiming that they are aware of a “plans by the Albanian separatist headquarters” including an armed uprising. This report generated fear among Serbs, and in return a

69 Howard Clark, Civil Resistance in Kosovo, 19.

70 Ibid., 19.
protest of 100,000 Serbs in Belgrade was organized and addressed by Milosevic himself.71

Back in Kosovo, authority and responsibility levels of police officers were left unchecked which contributed to intentional and unprovoked confrontation and mistreatment of Kosovar population. Other more extreme cases consisted of Serb police opening fire on mourners returning from a funeral where three individuals were killed and 20 wounded. These instances perhaps were planned efforts to instigate nationalist movement among Kosovar community.72 Nonetheless, Kosovar leaders called for peace, and emphasized on the importance of nonviolent demonstration.

Inspired by miners’ march, the passive resistance took priority – it was shared at the top level, but also individuals started to believe that perhaps this is the only way to liberation and peace. The notion of passive resistance reflected on the daily life of Kosovar citizens and their ethnic identity of the 1990s; as a nonviolent group believing that they had suffered great misfortunes and were victimized for centuries by Turks then Serbs. However, through peaceful negotiations, resistance and expression of solidarity as Kosovars – they would eventually gain equal rights. Peaceful resistance and solidarity was expressed in numerous forms: Kosovar football teams were named Qendresa (meaning ‘standing strong’) and Durim (endurance).73 Similarly, a few friends of mine were given names which indicated the nonviolent nature and determination of Kosovar

71 Howard Clark, Civil Resistance in Kosovo, 51.

72 Ibid., 46-53.

73 Howard Clark, Civil Resistance in Kosovo, 46.
identity of the time: Shpresa (hope), Krenare (proud), and my sister’s name Dardane (girl from Dardania, reflecting on the pride of Kosovar ancestry and ancient history). This sense of pride and identity was felt in my family as well, especially after both of my parents suffered directly as a result of Milosevic’s reforms. My father, who was a Professor of Mathematics, was fired from his position in 1990 together with many other Kosovar professors, doctors, lawyers and other professionals.

As protests expanded from miners, now to educators, my father also organized peaceful marches with his students and Kosovar citizens in the town of Shtime. Their message, organization and delivery was the same as other demonstrations of that time which was evident on my father’s speech at one of the protests: “A wise person said once ‘The soul that endures is equipped with hidden treasure.’ And our motto has always been passive and peaceful resistance with dignity and pride.” Emphasizing endurance, patience and peaceful resistance. However, many of the protests were shut down by police and army forces, including those in our town. Some of the students were arrested, and those believed to be organizers of the protests faced much harsher consequences. As an organizer, my father was arrested 8 times between 1990 and 1992, and questioned frequently at home or on the streets. “These are intimidation tactics” he used to say, and reassured my mother that nothing bad would happen in our family, because to hurt organizers or protesters from these peaceful demonstrations, would cause further riots as well as create a bad image for Serbian authority.

Contrary to this statement, our situation worsened. One evening after my father had been in question at the local police station, four Serbian neighbors who were mostly young men in their twenties, (including a former student of my father’s by the name of
Caki) came to our door and demanded that we open it and told my mother that they
would kill her children first so she can see what they do to Shiptars (a derogatory term for
a Kosovar or Albanian). We were able to make our way out through a back door and go
to a neighbor’s house near-by. My father was released sometimes during the night, but
within days of this incident we woke up to another knock on the door. This time the local
police delivered an order demanding that we evacuate our home within two hours. They
were joined by three armored vehicles and 12 Serb soldiers to control potential crowds of
students and neighbors, or another protest.

Our family was lucky enough to survive the early 1990s systematic persecution.
Many civilians, especially intellectuals –targeted by Serbian authority suffered deadly
consequences. Mikel Marku was a 62 year-old Kosovar lawyer and former chairman of
the Bar Association in Kosovo, was beaten to death while in custody at the local police
station in the town of Peja. Marku was on his way to a funeral when he was stopped
during a traffic check that resulted in his arrest as well as few other family members.74

As human rights violations increased, Kosovar elites and professionals took it
upon themselves to address issues by opposing Belgrade’s reforms, particularly ones
associated with the revocation of autonomy, through “Appeal 215” named after 215
Kosovars had signed in 1989. The year 1990 also saw successful pro-democratic
organizations opening, such as Kosovo’s first human rights group. But the most
prominent was the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), which consisted former
Kosovar politicians from terminated Yugoslav Assembly in Kosovo, and most notably, a

scholar and political activist, Dr. Ibrahim Rugova. The initial role of the organization was unknown, and not necessarily to seek separation from Yugoslavia. But it was the first organization in Kosovo to openly criticize Serbia’s policies. Although the goals of the organization now were to provide better representation of Kosovar and equal rights, its existence signaled a division between the Kosovar and Serb communities. Serbs were not going to belong to an organization that appeared to be anti-government, somewhat legitimizing Milosevic’s claims that Kosovars want separation and break-up of Yugoslavia. On the other hand, such organization gave Kosovars something they could belong to, a voice and representation in a submissive and forgot territory.

Few other changes too place in 1990. Serbia legislator introduced “special measures” which handed over control of both Vojvodina and Kosovo provinces. The following month, the Kosovo Assembly issued a statement declaring Kosovo as a republic within Yugoslavia only to be suspended by Belgrade three days later. Assembly of Serbia outlined in the Program for Attainment of Peace, Freedom, Equality and Prosperity of the Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosovo whose plan was “to ensure that injustice to Serbs and Montenegrins in Kosovo would be made right.” The program also introduced the building of homes for Serbian workers, and made it illegal for Serbs to sell homes to Kosovars. Contrary to the program’s statement that its

75 Besnik Pula, “The Emergence of the Kosovo ‘parallel state,’ 804-805.


77 Julie A. Mertus, Kosovo, 199.

78 Ibid., 199-200.
purpose was to ensure equality, it targeted the Kosovar population exclusively in numerous ways. It underreported Kosovar population in Kosovo, while it encouraged Serbs to have more children and gave financial support Serbian families for each child they have. The government also encouraged Serbs from other part of Yugoslavia to relocate to Kosovo. The incentives included jobs, since positions vacated by the firing of Kosovars needed to be filled, and homes which weren’t necessarily always provided by the government. In my family’s case, our home confiscated in the 1990 was given to the new chief of police from Serbia who had accepted the job in our town.

Another important act of 1990 involved the December election, after the Kosovar governmental body had been dissolved – which meant that Kosovars did not have any direct representation. In response, they protested the election and “vowed not to recognize legitimacy of Serbia and instead, to build a parallel government.”\(^79\) The LDK then began to meet in secret to adopt Kosovo Republic Constitution through clandestine institutions. This shift in position resulted from Serbia’s election and reforms, as well as fear from the unknown fate of Yugoslavia since other republics (Slovenia and Croatia) began to withdraw their membership in favor of independence, beginning in 1991, therefore leaving Kosovo in a vulnerable situation.

In response to changing environment, secret Kosovar elections were held in Kosovo in late 1991, where 89% of the registered voters participated and 99% voted in favor of an independent status.\(^80\) The efforts to bring attention to the deteriorating

\(^79\) Ibid., 204.

\(^80\) Besnik Pula, “The Emergence of the Kosovo ‘Parallel State,” 807
situation did not stop here, a human rights group, *Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms* (CDHRF) was created which welcomed all ethnic groups including Serbs, however it consisted of only Kosovars. The organization’s focus was to monitor human rights violations by opening branches throughout municipalities in Kosovo, while maintaining distance from any political party alliance for several years.\(^{81}\)

A major task that LDK took over (and overlapping with CDHRF) was also to monitor human rights abuses, the party did so by opened branches in towns and villages, and engaging the public in order to monitor and report cases of police abuse – as well as efforts to maintain order within the Kosovar community by discouraging violence and retaliation against police and Serbian authority. As a result, the LDK was able to control Kosovar rebellion, in turn, it believed that the Serbian government would lack reasons to initiate war, expulsion or killing of Kosovars.\(^{82}\) But even within Kosovar organization and communities there were differences in opinions; the CDHRF requested that Kosovars do not to organize or participate in protests due to high deaths from police violence. However, some LDK members insisted that Kosovars should protest even if it resulted in deaths of Kosovars, though they should abstain from of violence. Those who argued that Kosovars should pick up arms and fight were not well received in the Kosovar community and were discouraged by members of organizations.\(^{83}\)

\(^{81}\) Howard Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, 55.

\(^{82}\) Besnik Pula, “The Emergence of the Kosovo ‘Parallel State,” 808.

\(^{83}\) Besnik Pula, “The Emergence of the Kosovo ‘Parallel State,” 808-809.
In summary, between 1990 and 1992, there was another ideological shift within the Kosovar community. The so-called peaceful protests decreased, while Kosovar organizations formed and spoke on behalf of the ethnic group. The ideology shifted from demonstrations for equal rights to negotiations attempts by the organizations. One example was the Association of Philosophers and Sociologist, together with CDHRF and LDK gathered 400,000 signatures in support of ‘For Democracy, Against Violence’ in favor of negotiations with Milosevic. Other means of nonviolent resistance included placement of candles on windows and balconies, or sounding car horns and rattling keys for a minute on specified time on the ‘day of sorrow,’ which were all to express unity and solidarity and keep the Kosovar morale up. But more importantly, these acts of resistance were less confrontational than street demonstrations.84

Albanian-language Schools and Parallel Kosovar Government

The LDK set as priority in the safety of Kosovars and, almost as importantly, to address and solve education issues that had come up after Serbian government obtain full control of Kosovo and moved on to closing Albanian-language schools. For those students who wished to attend university, one of the requirements was the completion of a high school degree at a Serbian-language school, making it nearly impossible for majority of Kosovar students, who prior to 1989 (and since 1970s), attended schools where 90% of the coursework comprised of Albanian language. Additionally, students

84 Howard Clark, Civil Resistance in Kosovo 57-58.
from newly created parallel school could not apply to universities. The LDK took on the task of creating unofficial schools for Kosovars students, even though it was unlawful under the Serbian constitution. Stores and basements were now informal and temporary classrooms, and acted as testing centers for students and professors who were expelled from the University of Prishtina.

Parents also took the responsibility of teaching children as young as first-grade level, to attend class. There was a sense of pride that came with attending school in such deplorable conditions. In our town, there were two high schools and one junior high. Both high schools, which were well-maintained, became Serb schools with no more than 100 students combined. The older elementary school functioned only partially due to a collapse on one side of the building in earlier years. There were nearly 800 Kosovar children who attended in two different shifts and overcrowded classes with no heat in winter time, even at temperatures below 0 degree Celsius. Other difficulties facing Kosovar schools were lack of supplies such as pens and notebooks since many parents who found themselves unemployed now, could no longer afford to purchase supplies for their kids. Teachers encouraged children to write lightly in pencils, so the notebooks could be erased at the end of semesters and reused. There were few children who continued to write in pen, mostly to boast that their families were better off financially, however that also caused accusations from other children that their parents must be employed, and therefore traitors, if they are able to afford additional school supplies.

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There was visible difference between Serb and Kosovar students in our town. Serb students who often times carried newer and more polished book bags as well as clothes which were usually distributed beginning of the school year. We watched them with a slight envy, and some instances resulted in name-calling and scuffles between the children of the two ethnic groups.

These differences in education rights and economic equality aided in hardening boundaries between groups. They spelled out differences and inequalities, which only accelerated the need for Kosovars to form their own support systems, whether in terms of ideology (such as nonviolent movement) or in form of a separate institutions. Both efforts further segregated Serbs and Kosovars, and increased division.

Many Kosovar parents began to teach their children about pride and encouraged them to attend school even in bad conditions. This sense of pride in being a Kosovar in 1990s translated into numerous ways. Similarly, to many adults practicing peaceful resistance and determination, Kosovar children were also taught to attend classes, and the case of police disturbance or beatings – to not be afraid. In the few cases where young children were killed by the Serbian police (who often described as accidental shootings), for Kosovars, they were martyrs and moment of silence were announced to be held across Kosovo at the same time, and for all levels – from kindergarten and up.

University-age students were not spared beatings and killing, nor were such reports hidden by Serb police, in comparison to shooting of school children characterized as accidents. Some of the acts that would most likely have such ramifications included unlawful included sale, purchase or carrying of Albanian-language books and school supplies. For this reason, many university and high school-age students were regularly
stopped and searched for books and other school materials. Some of the students also had to cover-up the field of study as that too warranted questions and intimidation from Serbian forces. One such student was Frasher Demaj, a twenty-year old student commuting 26 miles by bus to Prishtina, he explained how he was beaten by the police, and often experienced searches during his bus commutes. As a student of Albanian History, Demaj often lied that he was studying biology instead – to avoid confrontation over controversial majors such as history and other related fields.  

Most Serbs, however, did not see the situation as expulsion of students from schools, nor were they concerned with the danger those students faced because of the type of book they carried or the subject they studied. Instead, they viewed Kosovars as uneducated bunch of troublemakers who were anti-Serb and anti-establishment. A Serbian student expressed his feeling and thoughts towards the Kosovars in the capital city: "Prishtina is big, big shit. [The Kosovars] are peasants, but don't live in a village -- they are bad people. They don't want to go to our schools -- I don't know why. They don't want to go to school because they are very stupid, believe me." Others who had closer contact with Kosovars understood the situation a little differently. Sreten Ugerich, a Serb professor of Philosophy from Belgrade who was teaching at the Serb-dominated University of Prishtina expressed some sympathy towards Kosovars stating that “When I came, the 'cleansing' of the Albanian staff was done," but still he remained somewhat sympathetic of the discrimination by stating that “if all Serbs were to find an ethical

86 Masha Gessen, “The Parallel University”

87 Ibid
problem to the discrimination, there would be no one left to teach Serbian children.” He viewed the efforts to keep Serbian teachers and professors as being somewhat necessary, believing that Serbian-minority group would face challenges or be absorbed in the Albanian-language schools and culture. His Kosovar friend also a Professor, however, states that she would find it unethical and therefore difficult to support such actions by the Serbian government if she were a Serbian.

In sum, revocation of Kosovo’s autonomy and the rights that came with it (such as Albanian-language schools, and independent Kosovo government) under the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution, gave birth to a new Kosovar strategy. The non-violent movement was inspired by Trepca miners’ peaceful march of 1988. This strategy then was carried out by former politicians, lawyers and educators who saw an opportunity to motivate and organized Kosovar ethnic group to protest their rights peacefully. Believing that the approach was a quick and non-violent route to gain international attention that may lead to negotiations with Milosevic, they acted on the strategy.

The movement further pushed Milosevic to place stronger restrictions on Kosovars’ rights, mobilizing police and military forces to indiscriminately attack peaceful protestors or arrange arrests for any Kosovar who challenged his authority.

Among the Serb and Kosovar communities, ethnic tensions increased. The LDK existence “validated” Milosevic’s point of Kosovars’ separatist agenda, but it also, for the first time, formally divided Serbs and Kosovars politically. Serbs were not going to join the LDK as they perceived it anti-government and anti-Serb, while Kosovars would only

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88 Masha Gessen, “The Parallel University”

89 Ibid
be able to belong to the LDK if they could expect resolutions to the problems they were facing. Thus, this political affiliation and parallel Kosovar institutions further weakened interethnic friendships, divided Serb and Kosovar neighbors, and challenged other mixed ethnic relationships.
Chapter V

Creation of Kosovo Liberation Army and Kosovar Nationalist Movement: 1993-1999

The creation of parallel education and other Kosovar institution left Milosevic highly uncomfortable at the rapid pace that the changes were happening. Through LDK and human rights group, Kosovars were finally somewhat being heard in the international community. In response, Milosevic deployed more security and military forces to restrict Kosovar parallel institutions from engaging in reforms and progression towards a possible democracy. High school and university classes being held in private homes were tracked down and political leaders and human rights workers were questioned and arrested – all as intimidation tactics. However, contrary to Milosevic, some Kosovars were beginning to see that they had not been successful in the early 1990s, developing a belief that perhaps the LDK and Rugova’s strategy came to a halt and was no longer working.

Between 1992 and 1993, a new Kosovar organization emerged in Kosovo, and it had a very different ideology and agenda from the LDK, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). The KLA’s formation was a result of several factors. Besides the perception that the LDK had failed Kosovars, resentment of Serbs and full rejection of Serbian authority from the beginning was felt in the heart of Drenica region Kosovars. These were traditional people who often sang patriotic and folk songs of brave men who fought in previous wars. The lyrics spoke of bravery and sacrifice that Kosovars and Albanians made throughout history, and slaughter of enemies in their lands. These KLA members
were stronger supporters of Kosovo’s full independence from Serbia, and even from Yugoslavia in previous decades. They felt a closeness to Albanian lands, not just Kosovo, and believed themselves to be the last generation to carry on the Albanian Besa (honor) and to protect the ancient lands of Albanians. Though they did not condemn nor go against LDK previously, they regarded the Kosovar organizations of the 1990s as soft on the Serbs and submissive to the Serbian occupation. One of the most memorable men of KLA was Commander Adem Jashari, who is often thought to be the founder of the KLA. He was known for his traditional Albanian dress style, and carrying of Kalashnikov almost always. As his friend explains, Jashari he expressed old Albanian traditions at all times, even singing songs about killing Serbs while engaging in shootouts with Serbian forces. Jashari had explained that the singing at times of war was an ancient Albanian tradition.90

Diaspora Community and its Support for Kosovo Liberation Army

Another influential group that gave rise to the KLA were the Kosovars in diaspora. These were the individuals who had fled Kosovo (mostly to Central and Western Europe) for economic and political reasons. A few thousands of them were also Yugoslav army deserters, who had been forced by law to serve in the old Yugoslav army. But since the early 1990s Balkan wars were underway, many Kosovars did not want to fight along Serbs and against Bosnians and Croats – as a result, secret negotiation ensued

90 Tim Judah, Kosovo: War and Revenge, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 100.
between Kosovar politician and journalist, Veton Suroi, and Croatia’s security chief, Josip Manolic. The agreement made it possible for several thousand Kosovars to be issued identification by the Croatian government. Most of these young men left to work abroad, while other Kosovars joined the Croatian army to fight the Serbs in the.

The so-called ‘defenders abroad’ assisted in bringing the insurgency in Kosovo. A well-known organizer and leader of Kosovars abroad was Bujar Bukoshi, acting as the accountant and manager of ‘Three-Percent Fund’ a program that collected tax from Kosovars in Germany, Switzerland and other countries – based on moral reasons and support for Kosovo. The Three Percent Fund organization existed for few years prior to 1993 (the starting point of KLA), however, the fund had previously served to finance education and parallel government in Kosovo. By 1993, it had another purpose, to finance and a group of armed forces, and in August of that year, the first meeting was held in secret in Macedonia, and an armed resistance group began.

The members of the KLA were mostly between the ages of 20 and 40 with about 30% unemployed. Most of the men had basic or no prior training, while others had some experience from previous service in former Yugoslav army. Arms were smuggled through the Kosovo-Albanian border and mostly consisted of Kalashnikovs and other

91 Tim Judah, Kosovo: War and Revenge, 113-114.


93 Ibid., 16.

small arms, but no army vehicles or heavy artillery. Most of these purchases were financed from Kosovars in diaspora as well as transactions through illegal activities of drugs and extortions.95


The creation of KLA did not translate into automatic support from Kosovars in Kosovo. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the LDK party and Kosovar leader Ibrahim Rugova were not having much success negotiating with Milosevic. To many Kosovars, this translated that the LDK campaign was ineffective. And second, international community’s response in Bosnia and settlement agreement, known as the Dayton Accords – did not include the case of Kosovo, contrary to the hopes of many Albanians.96 Up to 1996, most Kosovars still favored the nonviolence movement over confrontational struggles, but this changed when they failed to attract support by the West.

Rugova and LDK try to convince Kosovars and other that persistence through nonviolent means was the better option, and publicly stated that no such insurgency even existed. Once the KLA made its presence public in 1196, Rugova stated that the small province did not stand a chance against Serb military who were equipped with tanks and advanced weaponry against a group that was lightly armed with Kalashnikovs. This was


also done to discourage Kosovars from supporting the group and stating how dangerous it would be if they did so. He predicted that “in fact the Serbs only wait for a pretext to attack the Albanian population and wipe it out. We believe it is better to do nothing and stay alive than to be massacred.”

Rugova feared that a full-on war in Kosovo would lead to an equal or greater bloody war than the events in Croatia and Bosnia in prior years.

The KLA stood to undermine his and LDK’s efforts by calling on ‘dispirited sympathizers’ in Kosovo who believed in a defense force but previously had been discouraged and kept under control by the LDK. Besides Adem Jashari in Drenica region, another important figure was the young 28-year old commander, Hashim Thaci, the grandson of leader of anti-communist resistance group. Thaci and another young and charismatic leader Ramush Haradinaj, believed that Kosovars had no choice but to start fighting the regime, even without any clear strategy in hand, and contrary to many planners in exile (such as Xhavit Halimi) who preferred military strategy. This group of young leaders represented enthusiasm and change for the Kosovar population.

Rural Support of the KLA

The support for the KLA from rural areas and villages (including Drenica region) resulted from years of brutality and disproportionately high home raids the villagers

97 Tim Judah, Kosovo: War and Revenge, 61.

98 Henry Perritt, Kosovo Liberation Army, 16-19.
experienced. Oftentimes, the raids were accompanied by beatings in front of family members, which were generally against male adults. However, cases of women, elderly and children being beaten were not that uncommon.99

Support for KLA was not strong in cities which had mixed ethnic population, as well as urban elites who maintained the support of a peaceful path.100 Due to this resistance in cities and among educated and elites, the KLA needed a convincing argument in order to attract followers and sympathizers. The armed group tried to tap into the Kosovar ideologies and considered a few options, before settling in for a nationalist agenda. First, the Marxist-Leninist ideology was no longer appealing after Tito’s death and the fall of the iron curtain. Religion, which had played a role in mobilizing Bosnian Muslims, did not have the same attraction in Kosovo even though the majority were Muslims followed by a small percentage of Catholics. Still “Kosovar Albanians were Albanians before they were Muslim.”101 Knowing that the Kosovars identified as Albanians as well, and seeing how Croats, Bosniaks, and Serbs succeeded with an ethnic-nationalistic agenda, they too shall succeed in rallying Kosovars for support the same was.

What was left as an option was to play on the Serbs’ lack of support for a unified Yugoslav identity, and Milosevic’s Serb nationalist ideology. Both made it easy for the


100 Henry H Perritt, Kosovo Liberation Army, 26.

101 Ibid., 29.
Kosovars to characterize Serbs as ‘other’ or ‘foreign’.\textsuperscript{102} Therefore Kosovar nationalism was the best option for support, but it was not going to be achieved by words or actions on the KLA side. Therefore, targeting Serbian forces would serve to instigate retaliatory events against the civilian population, through which, the KLA stood to gain support.

The full support from urban areas only began as civilian deaths increased resulting from attacks by Serbian forces, as well as Serbian civilians in Kosovo who were armed by Milosevic in earlier years. One such incident included Kosovar student, Armend Daci, who was shot and killed by a Serb civilian sniper in April of 1996. Women, against LDK’s advice, demonstrated in the streets. Thus, the early recruitment of KLA fighters consisted of members whose families had been targeted by the Serb regime. By March of 1998, the support for KLA and public perception among Kosovars grew considerably when the Serb forces killed more than 50 members of the Jashari family during a bombing campaign on their homes and property. The victims included children, women and elderly.\textsuperscript{103} The victimization and killing of innocent children gave the message to Kosovars, their families and loved ones were no longer safe under the current regime. It also increased the ‘heroic’ image and popularity of KLA based on the Jashari family links to the organization, a family that represented resistance to years of oppression.\textsuperscript{104}

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 30.


\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 38.
Kosovars began to experience a rise of nationalism similar to the early 1990s Serbian nationalism, when they characterized Kosovars as rapists and baby killers. Now, Kosovars also believed the same about the Serb ethnic group following the Drenica massacres.

Changing Ethnic Boundaries from Institutional to Individual Level

Ethnic groups’ perceptions had taken a new and scary direction beginning the year 1989 when Slobodan Milosevic first became Serbia’s President. His policies of systematic exclusion and discrimination of Kosovars were politically motivated, and the opportunity for him to become a powerful leader was presented in 1980s, at a time that Yugoslavia was facing both, an economic and political uncertainty. Its very existence was on a verge of collapse.

Milosevic saw an opportunity to take control of Yugoslavia and created a Serbian-centered hegemony. This meant that the federations’ six republic members and 2 provinces votes should be targeted first to sway reforms and policies on his favor. That is when he worked to remove Kosovo’s leaders and autonomy –which would challenge his policies as unconstitutional. The best route to win this cause was to mobilize Serbs against Kosovars as well as other republics that viewed his intentions as dangerous.

Milosevic attacked and hijacked the media so the reporting is favorable of his administration, while portraying Kosovars as separatists and terrorist who were out there attacking and raping Serb-minority population. This was validated by both the Paracin massacre, Martinovic case, and the ‘false’ claims of poisoned children. Additionally, the
historical and religious sentiment that many Serbs held over Kosovo, was being portrayed as under attack. Serbian Orthodox church intensified these feelings by committing to Milosevic’s cause, and claiming that Kosovars were raping nuns and killing priests (media reports never elaborated which churches or nuns were attacked, nor did they refer to police reports). Serbs fear and resentments grew as each year passed after 1989.

Kosovars, on the other hand, knew that they did not stand a chance against Serbian military forces and regime, and adopted the so-called nonviolent and passive resistance. This came after the Trepca miners’ march in late 1980s, which attracted almost 400,000 Kosovar without a single incident being reported. At this time, the only way that Kosovars believed they could get the attention of the international community, was through peaceful protesting. A new ideology was born. Intellectuals and professionals that were left jobless from Milosevic’s reforms and revocation of autonomy, came together to organize human rights group, and a parallel government to substitute the interrupted Albanian-language education and healthcare.

Separate institutions resulted in ‘physical separation’ between the two ethnic communities; LDK and Rugova’s efforts validated to Serbs Milosevic’s claims that Kosovars were anti-Serb and separatists. Meanwhile, Kosovars asked themselves how can Serb friends and neighbors support a regime that limits Kosovars rights and persecutes them.

Although many Kosovars and Serbs no longer worked together in the same businesses and institutions, friendships that existed pre-Milosevic era remained somewhat intact. The point that boundaries hardened was the mid-1990s, and the emergence of the KLA group. Serbs feared that Kosovar neighbors and friends may be supporting the
secret group financially, or even be a part of it. Similar feelings were shared by Kosovars as well, a regime that kills babies, mothers and elderly should not be supported by their Serbian neighbors or friends.

On both sides, social dynamics changes took place within and outside the group. Serbs and Kosovars mingling together was seen as unpatriotic and suspicious by both side. Cafes, restaurants and nightclubs were almost entirely homogenous, establishments’ names reflected the ethnic groups history and culture. Similarly, divided kindergarten and elementary schools were given names of heroes or politicians (such as Serbian communist “Aca Marovic”, Albanian politician and writer “Faik Konica”)

The early 1990s shifting ethnic boundaries were a result of Milosevic’s systematic persecution of Kosovars as well as his nationalist movement and mobilization of Serbs mostly through propaganda. As Mertus refers to this period: “…building Serbian and Albanian nationalisms, turning fears and suspicions into chauvinist aggression and Kosovo Albanian victimization into a passive martyrdom that could only have lasted so long before exploding.”

The Passive resistance movement also contributed to some degree of ethnic division. Although its intentions were not to alienate the Serb population, rather to form a coherent and organized movement. This led to different political and ideological beliefs, fear and frustration among both sides.

The KLA, on the other hand, made no effort in keeping positive ethnic relations, rather the tactics were the same as Milosevic’s: promoting strong ethnic division by openly calling other ethnic group’s characteristics as flawed, untrustworthy, and very

105 Julie A. Mertus, Kosovo, 230.
inhumane. This ‘ethnic Serb characteristics’ were ‘validated’ for many Kosovars based on the nature of the massacres committed by the Serbian troops in Drenica.
Chapter VI
Albanian Media and its Role in Rallying Support for the KLA

Unlike Rugova’s participation in international conferences and his support by the West, KLA was considered a disorganized terrorist group and portrayed as such by the Serbian and foreign media. Kosovar media, by contrast, was referring to the group as freedom fighters, and certainly stayed clear of calling it a terrorist group. Rugova also dominated Kosovar media and support, while the KLA leaders were having difficulties bringing the message to Kosovo Albanians saying that there was an alternative option besides the passive resistance, still, it did not yield any improvements. The media was playing the same role as Rugova, showing to the world what was happening to Kosovar ethnic group, a group of people who were peaceful.

However, KLA’s need to reach wider audience and acceptance had another purpose. It was to inform the Kosovar public and remind them that Kosovar politicians and LDK should not be speaking on behalf of all Kosovars, and bargaining away Kosovo territory. The reaction to sporadic massacres were already providing a good amount of support, but without political leaders and elites assistance, who were negotiators with diplomats and the West, they were not going to be very effective.

 Nonetheless, the KLA was convinced that the public was already growing tired, and another opportunity was presented to sway the public on their side when Rugova extended his presidential term unilaterally in May of 1996. This move frustrated many supporters and non-supporters alike, but also the political elites who previously turned
down cooperation with KLA, in favor of remaining loyal to Rugova and his cause. By late 1998, elites’ opinions began to shift, including activist Adem Demaci who had previously dedicated published work and encouraged Kosovars to be pacifist. He became a spokesman for the KLA in 1998.

Now with previous leaders at their disposal, the last step was to get the divided media on their side as well.106

Swaying the Press

Albanian newspapers were generally published outside Kosovo in Macedonia, Albania and Croatia, to avoid the sort of attacks or interruptions by the Serbian government that they previously had experienced in early 1990s. Zeri (The Voice), a Yugoslav magazine in the Albanian language switched into a political weekly in 1990 but was quickly targeted by the Serbian government and closed based on its reporting of events in Kosovo. From its reopening date in 1993, it gave its support to LDK and Rugova. Koha (The Times), was also forced closed between 1991 and 1994. They all served a good purpose. They were independent and did not shy away from criticizing the Serbian government as well as Kosovar leaders.107

106 Henry H Perritt, Kosovo Liberation Army, 31-34.

107 Michael Biggins and Janet Crayne, Publishing in Yugoslavia’s Successor States (New York: Routledge Member of the Taylor and Francis Group, 2001), 167 - 168.
The most prominent and effective newspapers during the war were *Kosova Sot* (Kosova Today) and *Koha Ditore* (Times Daily), as they concentrated their reports around the violence, arrests and killings. Some of the most gruesome massacres, clashes between the KLA and Serb forces, as well as pictures and interviews with survivors of massacres were included on these two daily newspapers. Survivors and witnesses of March 1998 attacks told stories of torture, killings and rapes, and boys aged 15 and up being beaten, executed or having their eye gauged out. A journalist who visited the area in Drenica where the 1998 attacks occurred, corroborated these stories, and depicted signs of torture in the area, including remains of hair, teeth and a jaw bone.\(^{108}\) How surviving members of the family refused to bury the dead, who were now transferred to a morgue in Prishtina, and were under guard, insisting that international forensic experts examine the bodies.\(^{109}\)

I recall that the day after the Drenica massacre in March of 1998. *Kosova Sot* front-page included the bodies of dead children lined up on the floor. The newspaper sold out by noon that day, and many Kosovar neighbors requested to borrow the copy. Similarly, the *Obrije* massacre in September of 1998, the daily newspapers included a warning instead on the front-page – advising people not to read the newspaper if the


reader is under the age of 18, or did not have the heart to see mutilated bodies of the families massacred in Obrije. The articles provided details, such as names, ages, and the circumstances the victims were killed, making the killing far more personalized.

Albanian as well as international media depiction of torture and massacres brought fear to many Kosovars, who had seen the safe horrific victimization of Bosnians and Croats just few years prior. The support for a peaceful resistance was beginning to look bleak for many Kosovars, as well as trust in Serbian neighbors who might turn against them, including my relatives who lived in mixed neighborhoods.

Neighbor Against Neighbor

My family and I lived in a Kosovar neighborhood after we were expelled from our home. However, my aunt’s family in Prishtina and my grandfather in Gjilan experienced a shift in relationship with their Serb neighbors.

My aunt’s next-door neighbor of twenty-five years, a retired Yugoslav army general from Tito’s years, was a Serb whom we addressed as Çiko Çeda (Serbian meaning ‘uncle Ceda’). They shared coffees almost daily in the years prior to the war, throughout Milosevic’s reforms and LDK’s emergence. Following the massacres after 1997 and 1998, the dynamics of their friendship changed. They greeted one-another from their yards, rather than exchanging conversations or sharing a meal. The general’s only son enrolled in the Serbian Special Forces, and stopped talking to my aunt and her family. She no longer referred to him by his name Dragan, rather “the Chetnik”, a term that had entered the Albanian vocabulary to describe someone’s cold-demeanor, as well
as the fear and distrust they felt towards that person. This did not always mean that they were part of Serbian nationalist force known as The Chetniks.

It was clear that the dynamics of close friendship had changed for my aunt and her next-door neighbors. In prior years, both parties trusted their neighbor when traveling and vacations by living their home keys with the other. Now, my aunt feared that her military-age son may be a target by Ceda’s son or his unit, who may eliminate him in retaliation or fear that he would join the KLA. For this reason, my aunt arranged for my cousin to be smuggled out of Kosovo. Her daughters however, were not able to leave until few months later, but she feared that they would be victims of systematic rapes.

In my town, friends of mixed groups who previously enjoyed drinks and meals with the other groups, no longer did so. Insults extended to perceive Serbs as dirty since Orthodox Serbs consumed pork from pigs that previously bathed in open sewage system. Serbs also viewed Kosovars in a similar manner, as human rights activist Andrej Nosov notes the perception of Serbs towards the Kosovars. He writes that “if you’re a Kosovar Albanian, you can only be a baker, a housecleaner, a person who does dirty work. Albanians can’t be intellectuals.”

Serbs usually understood Kosovar to be ‘primitive’ based on their culture and traditions, while their ethnic group as ‘cultured.’ Kosovars believed that peaceful resistance in the 1990s and their history of being the underdog made them the ‘peaceful’ ones and the Serbs were ‘aggressors.’

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111 Julie A Mertus, Kosovo, 232.
These given attributes removed the global Yugoslav identity and placed Serbs and Kosovars into two sharply distinct groups: “us” and “them” and when boundaries are hardened “violent conflict against even one’s neighbor becomes possible,” Mertus explains.

Furthermore, international media contributed to shaping perceptions during the war period as well. Kosovars, including my family, tuned in to listen to international news such as Voice of America, Deutsche Welle, BBC, which gave reports on the situation in Kosovo, negotiations and possible interventions, as well as number of deaths tolls and description of victims.

We also would listen to Belgrade channels reporting on the fights which tended to be very different from the international and Kosovar media, as well as what we were experiencing in our town. Home raids, rapes, killings and arrests were usually not included on the Serbian TV and radio reports, or they were portrayed as home searches of KLA terrorists.

Systematic Killings, Rapes and Torture as Weapons of War

Systematic rape in Kosovo was used as a tool to intimidate and terrorize Kosovars, despite Milosevic insisting to Congressman Rod Blagojevich in 1999 that rape stories were false since “Serb men do not like Albanian women!” In a report by

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112 Ibid., 234.

113 Doder and Branson, Milosevic: Portrait of a Tyrant, 265.
Human Right Watch, 37-pages of 96 cases of rape against women in Kosovo were documented, were at least two perpetrators were involved. The crimes took three forms: they happened during a flight or when women were already displaced, in temporary detention centers set up as ‘rape camps,’ or at the home of the victims, and sometimes in front of family members. Given that rape is taboo in societies in the region, sexual violence and humiliation were used to instill fear. On the same report, director Regan Ralph from a division of Human Rights Watch states that the sexual violence against Kosovar women was ‘an instrument of war’ by Milosevic deliberately done to terrorize the civilian population.  

Kosovar forces had recognized another Milosevic’s tactic, that is, gunfire exchange with Serb forces causes retaliatory actions against the civilian population. As a result of KLA and Serbian military attacks, Kosovo drew attention to the international community more so than before with the LDK’s nonviolent strategies. This appeared to be have been the KLA’s plan in my family’s town before the January 15th massacre.

Five days before the attack on our town, KLA forces kidnapped and killed a police officer in the neighboring town of Slivov. What transpired for the next few days were exchange of gunfire mostly in the hills and mountains surrounding the area, leading Serbs forces to believe that the town of Racak was holding and protecting KLA members. During those few days of fighting, most of the villagers from Racak managed to flee,

however, not all were lucky and some civilians were caught in the crossfire.\textsuperscript{115} Serb paramilitary and police entered the village of Racak (approximately 2 miles from our home in Shtime) on January 15\textsuperscript{th}, killing 45 Kosovar civilians including a twelve-year-old boy.\textsuperscript{116} The massacre occurred sometimes between 4 and 8 o’clock in the morning, based on the screaming we heard coming from a nearby hill. By 10 o’clock in the morning, we witnessed numerous Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) orange Humvees coming in from Prishtina. By mid-day, rumors circulated who was killed and who had survived the Racak massacre. One neighbor describe how her relative had witnessed a woman in her twenties carrying her wounded brother across the hill only to be shot dead by the soldiers from a distance. Another story we heard was that Serbs had thrown a toddler in a well before shooting the mother dead, the perpetrators were described as paramilitary group based on the style of clothing (known to wear dark clothing and ski masks). Witness accounts reported to Human Rights group reported stories of local Serbs being involved in the attack as they explained one woman’s story: “the police stayed on the hill singing songs and calling her relative by name in the Albanian language ("Aziz, come here to see your dead relatives!")", which suggests that local policemen from Stimlje who were familiar with the residents of Racak may have participated in the attack.\textsuperscript{117}


\textsuperscript{116} Samantha Power, A Problem From Hell,446.

American Ambassador, William Walker, the head of OSCE’s Kosovo Verification Unit, recalled seeing one of the victims laying in a ditch with dozens of other victims who were all wearing civilian clothing. This particular victim “was covered with a blanket, and when it was pulled back, I saw that there was no head on the corpse - just an incredible bloody mess on the neck.”

The massacre of Recak did not change the perception of Kosovars who already felt that the only solution to the problems in Kosovo was independence. The difference this time was that for the first time, foreign observers were able to arrive in time to document the incident and report the attack to the world. U.S. and European leaders feared that the same paramilitary units and Serbian forces involved in Bosnian genocide, would act in Kosovo as well.

118 Samantha Power, A Problem From Hell, 446.
Massacres and human rights abuses prompted close to 862,000 Kosovars to flee during the two years of war. The massacres were reminders to the international community that a lack of immediate intervention may soon result in another case similar to Bosnian or Rwanda’s mass genocide. Thus, in March of 1999, U.S. and NATO launched Operation Allied Forces (OAF) campaign against Serbia.\footnote{Andrew Cottey, “The Kosovo War in Perspective,” \textit{International Affairs} 85, no. 3 (May 2009): accessed November 13, 2016, doi:10.1111/j.1468-2346.2009.00816 . 592-597.} Judging by Milosevic’s administration history of war crimes, military intervention was deemed to be a necessary action. As a result, the intervention put forth new standards in international law and human rights by questioning the non-interventionist approach and traditional norms of state sovereignty in times of conflict. Apart from the local violence, the international actions also brought into questioned the legitimacy of NATO’s bombing campaign against a sovereign state, and the possibility of strategic moves by the U.S. seeking to fulfill a national interest agenda.

There are a few popular understandings regarding the U.S. involvement in Kosovo. The first is based on Unites States’ responsibility to protect, as a global hegemon, an idea that was shared by political leaders and political scientist alike. As
mentioned earlier, President Clinton’s failure to intervene in a timely manner in both Bosnia and Rwanda certainly encouraged the military intervention in effort to prevent a genocide from happening in Kosovo. Similarly, former Secretary of State Madeline Albright referred to the U.S. as an ‘indispensable nation,’ stating the American capability to prevent such catastrophe was within the scope. Therefore, the most common claim is that the U.S. involvement was acting on humanitarian grounds and demonstrating its capability to prevent further humanitarian crisis.

Other theories from political scientists are that the intervention was as a result of the new international order, and the dominant power that the U.S. found itself following the fall of the Soviet power. Charles Krauthammer claims that the intervention, as part of the “liberal internationalism foreign policy”, is partially based on humanitarianism – that can perhaps be a cover-up of a national interest agenda such as American primacy of power.\(^\text{120}\)

Contrary to these claims, the U.S-NATO led humanitarian intervention did not abruptly begin and without efforts toward a negotiated solution first. Numerous resolutions were passed in the years prior, particularly in 1998 as civilian casualties increased in numbers. In the fall of 1998, two resolutions aimed to stop the fighting between the KLA and Serbian forces, disarm the KLA, move Serb military out of Kosovo, and start a dialog between Milosevic and Rugova. UN Security Council Resolution 1199 passed on September 1998, expressed concerns for disproportionate and indiscriminant use of force by the Serbian Special Forces, which resulted in civilian

casualties and 230,000 displaced persons, of which, up to 50,000 were left without basic needs of food and shelter. The same resolution also called for “Kosovo Albanian leadership to condemn all terrorist actions.” Placing partial blame on KLA forces as well. On October 24th of the same year, a third resolution was passed which took into consideration the previous ones (resolution 1160 and 1199), but also introduced OSCE KVM (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe deployment of Kosovo Verification Mission). KVM mission members were foreign civilians who remained neutral to the ethnic conflict, but served as observers who monitored and reported Kosovo’s situation to the international community, It was the OSCE-KVM report of the Racak massacre that led to the NATO military intervention.

NATO’s Intervention and Media

Both Russia and China were compliant with the resolutions from 1998, however, they stopped short of supporting a military intervention in Kosovo, and perceived the NATO intervention without UN Security authorization as illegal under international law. The Russian media covered the war in Kosovo and military action against Serbia extensively. Their position on the issue was same as Serbia’s, especially given the fact that they relied heavily on Serbian media and propaganda when portraying the war –


stating that the “refugees were fleeing American bombs.” On the same article, Vladimir Brovkin, a prominent Russian historian, expresses his surprise to learn that among those who believed and referred to media coverage (meaning U.S. and European media) included intelligent academicians and professors.

The bombing campaign created (or revived) the old Anti-American sentiment in Russia, who believed they were coming to the defense of Slavs and Orthodox brothers. In contrast, they believed the NATO was coming to the defense of Muslims with full aggression towards Serbs. While some, such as General Boris Gromov, stated that assisting Serbia with military assistance would indicate the return of Cold War, which was unsuitable after the progress that had been made. Other more patriotic and conservative Russian leaders, like General Lebed, were willing to fight against NATO to reinstate Russia’s dignity. Similar claims were published in the Communist newspaper, Sovetskaya Rossiia, on an article titled ‘Clinton’s Gang Should Face Trial’, which stated that anti-aircraft Russian missiles should be used against NATO and force it to withdraw the bombing against Serbia.

NATO received even more criticism when its pilots struck the Chinese embassy in Belgrade building by mistake. The bombing killed four people and injured 20 others. The

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124 Vladimir Brovkin, “Discourse on NATO in Russia During the Kosovo War,” 550.

incidents prompted another harsh criticism by both China and Russia, calling for the bombardment to be immediately suspended, while Yugoslavia’s ambassador to the UN Vladislav Jovanovic, called it a “war crime.” Other targeted building consisted of Hotel Yugoslavia in Belgrade, believed to be a bunker used by Serbian paramilitary leader Zeljko Raznatovic, also known by the nickname of Arkan.\textsuperscript{126}

Other controversial reporting came from Serbian leaders, media and residents of Nis, where NATO cluster bomb had struck a hospital, outdoor market and residential areas killing at least 15 peopled and injuring 60 others. Nis resident Slavica Dinic recalled how she woke up to loud explosion when a bomb hit her home, leaving her to take cover under a bed with her young daughter. On the other hand, NATO’s military spokesman General Walter Jertz stated that the organization targeted a radio station, and not hospitals or markets. Similarly, defense reports claimed that there were no planes operating in the area at the time of the attacks.\textsuperscript{127}

Still today, the same feelings persist on both sides. The Russian radio and television network (RT) states that “Serbs have legitimate reasons for not being hugely positive about the alliance” or the lack of enthusiasm to join NATO. The same article also points out to the difference in number of civilian deaths reported by Serbia (956 deaths and over 5,000 injured), while Human Rights Watch reported almost half that


number, at about 500. Other damages Serbia incurred as a result of bombardments included $100 billion damage by interrupting business, while foreign economist believes that number to be closer to $29.6 billion.\textsuperscript{128}

Contrary to Russian and Serbian reports, Kosovars strongly supported NATO’s intervention and insist that it was their only hope to put a stop to Serbian regime’s killing and ethnic cleansing of Kosovars. The Serb population was in fear of NATO’s bombings, which were reported to be as indiscriminant acts and even targeting Serb civilian by Serbian government-run news station.

As Kosovars, we hoped that NATO’s air campaign would cause Serbian military to quickly withdraw from Kosovo. This was not the case, and the situation only worsened not because we were afraid of NATO bombings, rather a retaliation by Serbian forces and civilians. Shooting and bombardments in our town of Shtime came from the ground rather than air, and from the surrounding hills where Serbian forces were positioned for the past year. They targeted grocery stores and livestock to reduce food supplies, while homes were raided, valuables stolen then burned down or bombarded. The small Serbian population remained untargeted with their homes intact. Fearing attacks, we remained inside days and even weeks, however once we saw that the Serbs forces closing in in our neighborhood on foot, we fled our home to the nearby village of Rashince, where we stayed with a Kosovar family for the next ten days. This small village now held most of

the Kosovar population from our town and surrounding areas, and some of the families even hosted 50-60 Kosovars at a time in their home.

Basic need, such as food and shelter were scarce, we also feared that the Serbian military were pushing Kosovar into a small area to prepare for an attack. There was no safe place any longer. Although we wished to cross the border to one of the neighboring countries, the journey was dangerous, based on the horrible stories of refugees being targeted as they attempted to leave Kosovo. Around April 10th in 1999, my parents decided to go back to our home after we learned that the neighborhood had been searched and looted by Serbs in town and the Serbian forces, therefore, we believed that the area was no longer perceived as valuable or dangerous to the Serbs. This also gave us an opportunity to retrieve few items (mainly food and clothing) we had left at home, since the host family was also low in supplies. However, we ran into trouble once we heard an incoming car engine across the street from our home, and decided to quickly lay on the ground to avoid detection. Six police officers holding their guns, pulled out of a police vehicle and told us to line up as they interrogated my parents on where we were coming from and what we were doing back in town. During this time, one of the police officers radioed the police station in our town to inquire whether they should kill us or bring us into the police station.

As the waited with our hands up still and paralyzed with fear, one of the police officers who was in his mid-30s, recognized my father as his former professor from more than 10 years earlier. He instructed the other officers to put down their weapons and explained he would take care of the situation from that point. Still, we were not sure if this would end up even worse since he knew my father, and perhaps his activist work in
prior years. This could mean a far worse situation than encountering a short and quick death by a firearm. As he walked us across the street and into our home, he told my father that we should stay inside for the night and not come out under any circumstances. My parents contemplated whether to obey his instructions or attempt to leave. That evening we fled few doors down to a neighbor’s home that had been abandoned mid-construction, believing that the Serbs would be less likely to search a home that was only partially covered and had no doors or windows, in cold temperatures. Within few hours, we witnessed the Serbian forces search our home, then 30 minutes later burned down a lumber business next door.

The following morning, we fled the town with the intentions to reach the Macedonian border by train, a trip which took three days to complete. The train station was near the city of Ferizaj, in a small ethnically mixed village where we would have to spend the night to board the train next morning. Few Kosovars came up during the 10 hours we waited by the open trains station that day. None offered us shelter for the fear of being seen by the Serb residents of the town. As evening approached, a Kosovar boy around 8-9 years-old told my father that his grandfather had sent him to bring us to their home, but not to follow the boy too closely and make sure that we discretely enter their home without being seen by the neighbors. We realized that the host family had planned on taking us in earlier that day, judging by the dinner they had prepared for us, but they were too afraid from their Serb neighbors who were curious and suspicious of refugees from other towns.

The following morning, we boarded the train for a few hours long trip to Macedonia. Once near the border, all passengers were instructed to leave the train and
proceed to walk inside the train tracks and towards the boarder. Serbian forces protected both sides of the train tracks, occasionally pulling people out randomly. Most of them were young men, but also girls and young women. As they protested and we heard their family members cry and plead not to take them away, while most of us continued to walk and did not dare to look back or come to their rescue. Prior to encountering Macedonian border patrol, Serbian forces confiscated our documents, for reasons as one soldier stated: “to make sure you don’t come back again.” By the end of the day we arrived at the gated Stankovic Refugee Camp II near Skopje in Macedonia, where many Kosovars shared similar stories of fleeing, witnessing murder, looting, burning of homes, and beatings. More importantly, we were left stateless and without any documentation of our identity or to prove that we lived in Kosovo. However, we also hoped that U.S. and NATO would soon put a stop to the crisis, and our lives as citizens of Kosovo would be restored.

We knew that the two-year war was coming to an end, as we waited in the Refugee camp. While many refugees in the camp has signed up with the international organization responsible for resettlement of refugees, most Kosovars hoped that they would be able to return home in Kosovo. This was only possible once international ground troops were deployed into the country, and assisted in defusing landmines, policing and protecting ethnic groups.

Missing Persons Reports and Other War Atrocities

NATO’s air campaign in Serbia and Kosovo lasted 78-days, and was suspended after it was confirmed the Serbian forces were in the process of withdrawing from
Kosovo, and refugees would be allowed to return home. Kosovo remained part of Serbia but under UNMIK (UN Interim Administration for Kosovo) administration, which provided ground support and human right monitoring. NATO peacekeeping force purpose in Kosovo (KFOR) also assisted in securing peace and cooperation between the ethnic groups.\textsuperscript{129} While OSCE monitored and reported violations, and supported international human rights standards, such as right to a fair trial and access to counsel.\textsuperscript{130}

KFOR ground support entered Kosovo sometimes in June of 1999. International organizations reported in 1999 that out of Kosovo’s 1.7 million population, 800,000 people, mainly Kosovars had taken refuge in the neighboring countries and another 500,000 were internally displaced. The Serb minority population in Kosovo were forced to flee as Kosovars, upon their return, targeted Serbs resulting in killings, beating, lootings and or crimes.\textsuperscript{131} During the transition period when Serbian military moved out of Kosovo, while UN peacekeepers moved in, there was no rule of law in Kosovo.

Another transition was also taking place between the civilian population; by June 18\textsuperscript{th} (approximately two weeks after an agreement was reached), UNHCR reported that approximately 50,000 Kosovar refugees returned home, while 50-60,000 Serbs had left

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Kosovo during that time as well. This was also a time when the KLA moved in and took control temporarily. KFOR discovered 15 detainees in a police station in the city of Prizren being held by KLA members who had occupied the station after Serbian police abandoned it. One of the detainees, a 73-year-old man still handcuffed to the chair was found unresponsive, and later pronounced dead. The KLA members denied wrongdoing and stated that he had a heart attack while in detention.\textsuperscript{132}

The KLA continued to maintain limited control, that usually went undetected by the international organization. In September of 1999, a Kosovar was found dead the day after he had been called in for questioning by the local KLA. He was suspected of providing information to Serbian police during the war. It was noted that he also had few Serbian friends.\textsuperscript{133} A possible motive for the KLA to view him as suspicious or a traitor. Kosovar who wanted to assist their Serb neighbors or friends were reluctant to do so from fear of retaliation by KLA members or other Kosovars.

For the same reasons, my aunt could not guarantee her Serbian neighbor’s protection, and given that she lived in an ethnically mixed neighborhood, her family was visited by KLA members on multiple occasions and questioned about her Serbian neighbors who had lived there. These visits were not only aimed at learning about or intimidating Serbs, they also accused Kosovars for occupying homes that KLA believed were not theirs. Given that there were no government institutions or authority in place

\textsuperscript{132} Human Rights in Kosovo: As Seen, As Told, 133-135.

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., 249.
still, it was difficult to obtain documentations and prove otherwise. This was also a way for some KLA members to gain financially by illegally obtaining homes.

Tim Judah explains that the Kosovars’ distrust of KLA leaders and PDK party (a Kosovar political party that emerged post-war) became apparent during the end-of-year election in 2000, when Ibrahim Rugova and his LDK party prevailed, once again becoming the chosen party. This was due to the belief that KLA leaders were taking advantage of their fame and position to size properties and businesses, as well as their links to organized crimes, which brought discomfort to many Kosovars and translated into Hashim Thaci (former KLA commander) and his PDK party’s loss at the polls.  

End of War and the Return of Refugees

Occupation of random homes by Kosovars was due to few reasons. Many of the returning Kosovars found their homes looted or burned down, therefore taking shelter in empty Serbian homes. Other believed that lack of property records would make it easy to claim properties as their own. Therefore, KLA’s attempted to keep records of true property ownership, but also for personal financial gain. Other difficulties facing the society now was the fact that it was difficult to differentiate KLA members from those Kosovars posing as KLA members. One such documented case by OSCE lists nine Serbs who were kidnapped near the city of Gjilan in June of 1999. A Human Rights personnel met with regional KLA commander in attempt to secure their release, to which the

commander replied that his troops were not responsible for the incidents, and claimed it was “the sick mind of the Serbian people, inventing all kind of stories, which never turn out to be true.” Based on several eyewitness accounts however, the Serbs were taken away by Kosovars dressed in KLA uniforms.135

The transition period during the first few months made it difficult for international organizations to dismantle KLA’s assumed control upon Serbian forces departure, and their authority status had been partially by force, but also out of admiration from Kosovars, allowing the KLA to operate undetected at times. Another problem the international organization faced was determining those who was committing crimes. Some Kosovars posing as members of KLA, intimidated citizens who perceived them to be an authority. These crimes were committed in form of robbery by attacking and intimidating Serbs and Roma, and sometimes Kosovars, for money.

Criminal Behavior Complicates the Post-war Period

Other crimes of KLA, which circulated for many years following the war, included accusations of weapon smuggling, drug and organ trafficking. Hashim Thaci, the current President of Kosovo and former KLA Commander, was identified by the Council of Europe reports as the leader of a criminal operation of heroin trade and transportation of captives to Albania. Most of the captives were Serbs, Kosovars, and Roma. These individuals are believed to have been victims or organ trafficking.136

135 Human Rights in Kosovo: As Seen, As Told, 151.
Serbs believe that these accusations are true, given the reported number of Serbs missing cases. Many Kosovars however, dispute these claims, and believe that the KLA members were freedom fighters of Kosovo, therefore having difficulties at times coming to terms with gruesome allegation, reasons and circumstances related to the crimes, or refuse to believe allegations altogether.\textsuperscript{137}

Given that the attacks on Serbs, financially and ethnically motivated, many Serbs who remained in Kosovo no longer lived in mixed communities, rather Serb enclaves were created and guarded by KFOR. The segregation left more Kosovars and Serbs homeless, as well as disputed areas around Kosovo. One such troubled and disputed city since the war is Mitrovica, which was divided in two following the war. The north side remains occupied by Serbs, while the south of the city is occupied by Kosovars. During this consolidation process of creating these two ethnically pure areas, two 35-year-old Kosovars disappeared from the north-side of Mitrovica, one of them was found dead in the Ibar river while the other was never seen again.\textsuperscript{138} Both groups cross their designated territory to commit robbery or crimes against the other ethnic group.

Other crimes since the end of war involved attacks on historical and religious monuments which were usually Serbian Orthodox churches. These were in retaliation of


\textsuperscript{138} Human Rights in Kosovo: As Seen, As Told, 244.
Serbian Orthodox Church political involvement and relations to Milosevic’s regime, but also because that they were perceived as being part of the Serbian identity and history. In attempt to prevent attacks by the Kosovars believed to be religiously motivate, a representative of Protojerej Church in Prizren informed the KFOR that those Serbs who had committed crimes had left Kosovo, and those who remained were not involved in crimes during the war. However, given that the Kosovar-Albanian Catholic Church, which had good relations with both the Orthodox Church and the Kosovars, the Catholic Church did not perceive Kosovar Muslims as a threat, nor did they sustain damages to their property.\(^\text{139}\) Attacks on Serb Christians were not unique, the Muslim Slav community also faced same dangers targeted by Kosovars. Others who remained neutral before and after the war still faced discrimination and many were dismissed from jobs at the local hospital and textile hospitals where they had been employed for many years. These workers were replaced by Kosovar workers following the conflict.\(^\text{140}\)

Reconciliation Efforts and Obstacles: Persistent Fear and Strong Boundaries

What instigated crime following the conflict was usually based on the common belief that the other side is the enemy. Hate from both sides was normalized and if Kosovars were empathetic of Serbs, it was seen as unnatural, suspicious and impartial to the horrors that Kosovars experienced. Respect for the KLA by Kosovars was paramount

\(^{139}\) Human Rights in Kosovo: As Seen, As Told, 137.

\(^{140}\) Ibid., 144.
and some Kosovars felt pressured not to assist Serbs in front of other Kosovars, and even attack them. Thus, pride and fear of being labeled as empathizers of Serbs (equivalent to a traitor) within the Kosovar ethnic group persisted after the war. Labeling the Serbs as killers encouraged mistreatment of Serbs by Kosovars in post war times, especially the first few years. This perception in the communities, which favored segregation and discrimination rather than reconciliation, contributed negatively towards the mending of ethnic relations.

Medical Treatment and Ethnic Division

The normalized mistreatment and discrimination against Serbs also had negative impact during medical treatments. Nikola a Serb patient explains his experience with an Albanian doctor in the waiting room vs inside examining room:

> Inside the doctor’s room everything is fine, the doctors behave normally, but when you’re outside in the waiting room, I have noticed that they try to pay us less attention just because other people could say something; they could call those doctors traitors. Kosovo-Albanian doctors don’t like to receive Kosovo-Serb patients in the presence of Kosovo Albanian patients.\(^{141}\)

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Nikola’s experience depicts the pressure Kosovars feel from their ethnic community group to exclude and discriminate towards Serbs, they are expected to maintain their distance with uninviting and unhelpful demeanor.

Other causes are based on miscommunication due to language barriers between patients and doctors, that prevent proper treatments or building trust between doctors and patients. Few remaining older Kosovar doctors were educated in Serbian speaking institutions and universities provide better care to the Serbian communities. However, the generation of doctors from early 1990s and after, who received their education in Albanian language and were discouraged from learning Serbian, provided difficulties in doctor-patient relations and medical treatment. While Serbs usually did not have a need to learn Albanian language, since education the only in Serbian, the official language in Milosevic years. The old social norms of discouraging young people from learning and speaking ‘the language of the enemy’ led to a lack of rapport between Serb patients and Kosovar doctors. To overcome this, some Serb patients seek Serbian-speaking Kosovar doctors, while others bring a translator such as a long-time family friends.142

Medical treatment and healthcare inequality among the the ethnic groups, particularly Serbs, are also related to healthcare system and access. Under the new constitution, equal medical care to all ethnic groups is provided. However, distrust between Serbs and Kosovars lingers and makes it difficult for doctor-patient relations to provide a positive and trustworthy treatments. New health system and regulations established since 2008. First few years after the intervention, foreign organizations

142 Luta and Dræbel, “Kosovo-Serbs’ Experiences of Seeking Healthcare,” 379-381
provided medical assistance at military bases in Camp Bondsteel. Medical services from Medical Civilian Assistance Program (MEDCAP) assisted by Kosovar doctors, exclusively served the civilian population throughout Kosovo – including Serb enclaves which had very limited medical assistance. This also reflects the fact that 90% of the population in Kosovo is ethnic Kosovar-Albanians, the institutions are generally made-up of Kosovar work force, therefore, Serbian doctors or clinics serving the Serb population are nearly nonexistent.

Distrust between the Kosovar doctors and Serb patients contributes to unequal healthcare access of Serbs for two reasons as stated in a study published in the International Journal of Public Health. First, fear, anxiety and language barriers for Serb population in Kosovo create barriers, while for Kosovar doctors, barriers included trust, knowledge, and lack of Serbian language proficiency. These difficulties were usually overcome by building patient-doctor trust. This study was conducted in 2012, fourteen years after the war, and since the early days of post-conflict, the interviews of Serbian patients show improvements in healthcare as well as overall ethnic relations. One interviewer states that Serbs are no longer in fear of leaving their protective enclaves in the region of Gjilan where the study was conducted (four Serbian villages or enclaves

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144 Luta and Dræbel, “Kosovo-Serbs’ Experiences of Seeking Healthcare,” 377.
exists near this city) to seek medical treatments with Kosovar doctors. Three Serbs recalled improvements in the communities and inter-ethnic relations.

Well, at the beginning it was a problem being Serb! People, who knew we were Serbs, looked down at us. It wasn’t comfortable at all. Now we go out to town, we go for a drink and eat and we do things we always used to do. (Zoran) Some years ago it was different: people were more scared that they would be attacked on their way to town or harmed by Albanian doctors. (Marko)¹⁴⁵

Trust in the communities where Serb and Kosovars grew up side-by-side contribute positively, and pre-war friendships in some cases remain strong, as one patient explains that

I was born and raised in Klina. Before the war started, Dr. Agim was my neighbor. We went to school together. He was my close friend and I know him very well. This gives me a sense of safety, like in the pre-war times. You know, when Serbian and Albanian people used to live in harmony together. (Nikola)¹⁴⁶

The healthcare system provides a good matrix through which to view some of the ethnic relations over the years post-conflict. In comparison to second half of 1999. The study shows conducted in 2012 shows that there have been improvements in relations between Kosovars and Serbs. This is also due to the monitoring of the Kosovar force by international organization for years after the war.

The Value of International Peacekeepers

International organizations provided monitoring and support to all ethnic groups, as well as protect the Serbian enclaves from attacks, NATO and other related

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 377.

¹⁴⁶ Luta and Dræbel, “Kosovo-Serbs’ Experiences of Seeking Healthcare,” 379.
organizations involved in the intervention process were still perceived to be enemies by many Serbs. United Nations’ administration of Kosovo territory, while still part of Serbia, also caused a freeze on peace-building process. Kosovars believed that there is no going back to the old way and independence from Serbia is the only solution.

Serbs in Kosovo, by contrast, remained loyal and hopeful that Serbia would be able to regain the territory. Serbian government further restored this perception by refusing to recognize Kosovo’s 2008 independence. It did not help that Serbian government insisted on its authority and claim over Kosovo, and continued to undermine its status and development processes.147 At other times, it has encouraged Serbs to participate in Kosovo. For example, in November 2001 election in Kosovo, Belgrade urged Kosovo Serbs to participate in the election, although Serb communities in Kosovo were strongly divided in this matter, especially in the North Mitrovica where anti-election protestors held signs “We don’t want an Albanian government.”148 The strong opposition by Serbs in the north, in comparison to the Serbs in enclaves throughout Kosovo, were based on hopes that if Kosovo were to secede from Serbia, the geographical position of


North Mitrovica, which borders Serbia, would make it possible for northern Serbs to join Serbia.\textsuperscript{149}

Serb participation in the election proved to be successful since it resulted in obtaining more than 10 percent of the votes, making the coalition of Serb parties third largest in the parliament.\textsuperscript{150} Most of the time, however, the Serbian government takes steps to intervene in the democratic process of Kosovo and its inclusion in the international community as an independent state. The Serbian government intervened in Kosovo’s UNESCO membership in 2015 by running an online campaign explaining the Serbian historical and religious heritage in Kosovo, and depicting poor conditions many Kosovo Serbs live in. Serbia’s director of the government Office for Kosovo, Marko Djuric, stated that Kosovo government cannot protect Serbian cultural heritage when monasteries are destroyed and Serbs are discriminated against and therefore, Belgrade will prevent Kosovo membership in UNESCO. Serb Orthodox churches and medieval monasteries located in different parts of Kosovo are already protected UNESCO heritage sites.\textsuperscript{151}

Serbian government’s protest of Kosovo’s status extended in the field of sports as well. Serbian tried to block Kosovo’s admission to the International Olympic Committee


\textsuperscript{150} CNN, “Rugova Claims Victory in Kosovo,”

(IOC) claiming that it is a territory of Serbia, rather than an independent state.\textsuperscript{152} Serbian officials instructed Serb athletes taking part in the Olympics of 2016, not to share podiums alongside Kosovo’s Albanian athletes.\textsuperscript{153}

Many in the international community believed that Serbian government action’s post-Tito and during Milosevic years, give impressions that handing over Kosovo’s authority back to Serbia – it would undue all efforts that international community has achieved since intervention, and most likely it would lead to yet another bloody war. Thus, leading them to believe that moving on with Kosovo’s independence was the only option. In April 2007, former President of Finland, Martti Ahtisaari, arbitrated Kosovo’s status as an independent state. The proposal submitted to UN Security Council, included twelve-key points of the settlement proposal aimed at building a new constitution that promotes and protects all persons in Kosovo.

Other necessary steps that the new state would have to undergo are the reconciliation process, accept the presence and supervision of international community, include two mandatory official languages (Albanian and Serbian), and select a new flag and national anthem that represent multi-ethnic principles.\textsuperscript{154} The proposal, as Ahtisaari


stated in to UNSC in 2007, that Kosovo’s status and political ambiguity was detrimental to the reconciliation process and democratic development. It also threatened stability by continued political and social unrest in effort to maintain (or gain) territorial authority. Therefore, delaying status resolution would only risk prior efforts of peace-building as seen by growing state of dissatisfaction from both sides. Ahtisaari considered the history of animosity and distrust between the groups, intervention, and years of negotiations and exhausting all other possible avenues of peaceful resolutions – recommendation of independence would move the dissolution of Yugoslavia towards a new chapter of stability and peace in the region.155

Ahtisaari’s plan followed similar principles to the 1991 Carrington Peace Plan156 (Yugoslav republics were given the opportunity to unilaterally declare independence even in the possibility of Serbia’s veto) and the unilateral declaration of Kosovo was accepted as the only option to a peaceful resolution, but only after more than eight years of stagnant negotiations between Belgrade and Prishtina. The proposal emphasized the importance of community participation in building a state that is multi-ethnic with equal rights and representation. Just as ethnic communities under 1995 Dayton Agreement could not join another state or proclaim territorial unity (Serbs in Krajina, Slovenia, and


Bosnia and Herzegovina)\textsuperscript{157} under Ahtisaari’s plan prohibits attempts of joining Kosovo’s territory with other states such as Serbia or Albania.\textsuperscript{158}

Since 2008, majority of Kosovo’s policing and justice system were handed over from the UNMIK to newly created Republic of Kosovo. This status is not recognized by most Serbs living in Kosovo, particularly in the city of Mitrovica, where flags of Serbian Republic are flown and Kosovo flags are not welcomed. Apart from Mitrovica, there are the other municipalities where 40,000 Kosovo Serbs that remained in Kosovo after the war now reside. The municipalities that are heavily populated by Serbs (and their resistance of Kosovo government and law) have developed a parallel system with that of Belgrade, which has provided support for the Serbs in Kosovo, including judicial and educational.

The resistance toward seeing Kosovo as an independent state is linked to the old sentiment of Serbian dominance, Serbian churches and historical sites in Kosovo. But also, cultural differences are stated as reasons for not recognizing Kosovo’s independence and authority, as a Serbian teacher in Mitrovica mentions.\textsuperscript{159} This is quite differently

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from 1980s when Serbs and Kosovars were able to work and live peacefully in the same country and communities.

Kosovo’s independence was rejected harshly by Serbia and Russia, both denouncing the declaration and stated that it will only fuel new conflict in the Balkans, as well as from Serbs in Kosovo and Serbia. In Belgrade, protestors smashed store windows of a McDonald’s restaurant and Slovenian embassy, and later rallied in front of U.S. Embassy. The demonstrations left more than 30 people injured, of which half were police officers. In the northern part of Mitrovica a Serb expressed dissatisfaction over Kosovo stating, "the Albanians can celebrate all they want, but this stillborn baby of theirs will never be an independent country as long as we Serbs are here and alive."160

On the other hand, Kosovars were celebrating in the streets of Kosovo, most dressed in traditional costumes playing drums and chanting “KLA” and flying the double-headed eagle flag of Albania. An elderly person, Mehdi Shehu, expressed “This is the happiest day in my life. Now we’re free and we can celebrate without fear”, while a young couple named their newborn daughter ‘Pavarsie” meaning independence. Kosovo’s then-President Fatmir Sejdiu reassured Serbs in Kosovo that their fears and concerns are understandable but, reassured that their properties and rights would be protected.161


161 “Kosovo Celebrates Declaration of Independence as Russia Protests.”
When one group celebrates while the other protests, both give clear indications that deteriorated ethnic relations have a long road ahead towards a peaceful resolution. Some options to this process included protecting and respecting human rights, economic stability, business relations between the two countries, as well as prosecuting war acts and providing incentives, such as membership in the European Union, which would push both countries to the negotiating table.

Negotiations of Kosovo’s Status Settlement

Participation and inclusion of Serbs in government and state institutions is paramount to building of the new state. This was addressed once the transition period began following independence delegating tasks from UNMIK to the new government, rules were carefully analyzed in effort to avoid exclusion and discrimination of Serbs and other minority groups.

Following the unilateral declaration of independence, European Union Rule of Law (EULEX) assists by advising, and monitoring the judicial and law enforcement in Kosovo.

Approximately 33,000 UN/NATO troops assisted during and after the intervention, the number of troops decreased as the recruitment and training of the Kosovo Police Force. The former KLA were excluded from this recruitment in effort to minimizing causing harm and discrimination to other ethnic groups. Serbs and female officers were also recruited for gender and minority representations purposes. By 2008, 710 Serbs were part of 7000 police officers in Kosovo. However, tensions increased once
Kosovo declared independence, and Serb officers refused to serve under Kosovo Force. These acts provided difficulties in Serbian-occupied northern Mitrovica especially due to lack of continuous police force and authority in general, which led Belgrade and Prishtina to work together in effort to negotiate recruitment and training of Serbs to serve in purely ethnic Serb territories. As a result, 285 Serb police were trained in 2013 in Prishtina to serve Serbian minority group in four municipalities, these brought the number to 170 Serbian police officer in North Mitrovica.

Serbian police training in 2013 was one of the first times that Belgrade and Prishtina negotiated directly an integration process of Serbs, which assisted in easing of tensions between the two ethnic groups, and greater participation of Serbs in the Kosovo Police Force. Although Serbia has not recognized Kosovo’s independence, ongoing negotiations in terms of judicial systems and greater participation of Serbs in Kosovo’s institutions, has provided a step toward normalizing relations between Serbia and Kosovo, as well as relations among citizens of both ethnic groups.

Reconstruction, Foreign Investment and Development

European Agency for Reconstruction and other organizations assisted in rebuilding homes of the Kosovars and Serbs, as well the overall economic development.

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EU Agency for Reconstruction opened a Business Center to provide microloans, business training etc., with its initial fund of 1.2 million euros then predicted the following years contribution of 830 million euros that would assist with energy, housing, clean water, health, and transportation.\footnote{163}

Rebuilding of damaged homes and historical sites incurred during war time has remained one of the top priorities. As reported in 2005, 843 non-Kosovar homes and 30 churches were partially or destroyed – leaving approximately 4000 Serbs, Roma and other non-Kosovars homeless. Since Kosovo’s independence, the new government raised 12 million euros towards renovation and rebuilding Serb homes and churches.\footnote{164} These efforts by foreign organizations and Kosovar government reinforce the idea that the new government is dedicated to rebuilding the country, while also providing aid, security and rebuilding trust for remaining Serbs in Kosovo. One difficult area facing Kosovars and Serbs alike is the high unemployment rates at 30-40\% of the population, which has proved somewhat difficult to fix. However, the government hopes that through incentives of low corporate tax rates, high labor market and low cost labor rates in Kosovo would help attract foreign investors.\footnote{165}


These trends and opportunities seem to be on track assisting Kosovo’s job markets by attracting foreign companies, particularly from European countries. Between 2007 and 2012, Germany was the leading country at approximately 350 million Euros, followed by Great Britain, Slovenia and Switzerland. Sectors included milk products, rural development and tourism, construction, financial sectors etc.\textsuperscript{166}

Serb businesses are also encouraged to invest in Kosovo. Safet Gerxhaliu, the head of Kosovo Chamber of Commerce, encouraged Serbs to come and invest in Kosovo, where it will also attract and open jobs for minorities. Serbian economist Milan Kovacevic agreed that the invitation would benefit both countries’ economies and improve relations, even though this will be achieved in moderation – considering persisting tense ethnic relations. In the meantime, the government of Kosovo is targeting and discouraging boycotting Serbian product, arguing that they are politically motivated and linked to the Self Determination group, which encourages ethnic Kosovars to boycott products that are made in Serbia. This concern may also be relating to unbalanced import/export features where Serbia tends to export disproportionally higher amounts than it imports from Kosovo. These recent figures list Serbian imported product from Kosovo at 4 million euros, while Kosovo bought 86 million euros worth of goods from Serbia as reported in 2015.\textsuperscript{167}

\textsuperscript{166} Ibid.
International organizations, as well as some Serbs and Kosovars, believe that an important step to reconciliation process is the economic development and mutually beneficial economic ties between Serbian and Kosovo will assist in easing ethnic tensions, starting at the government levels. Perhaps this will help to undue damages done by the Serbian government during the Milosevic-era, and soften the concrete ethnic boundaries from top-down.

European Union membership

Membership in the European Union also provides a financial incentive for both Kosovo and Serbia. The membership has been used as leverage by the EU in attempts to normalize relations between the two countries. Although Kosovo has proven to move forward easier regarding issues related to declaring independence from Serbia, the Serbian government remains divided on the Kosovo issue. Its leaders attempt to keep EU membership and Kosovo policies separately\(^{168}\) in effort not to “sell” Kosovo for a European Union membership, as Serbian President, Tomislav Nikolic, protested. Less nationalistic and more progressive attitude by Vladimir Kostic, the head of Serbian

Academy of Sciences and Arts (SANU), stated that Kosovo is lost and Serbia should let go gracefully.\(^{169}\)

The Brussels Agreement (2013) was introduced specifically to push Prishtina and Belgrade to negotiate and works towards normalization and membership into the EU. The terms of the agreement call for the inclusion of northern part of Kosovo and other Serb municipalities into Kosovo, to be subject to Kosovar laws, with a police force deployed in these regions which would reflect the ethnic make-up of municipalities.\(^ {170}\) Given that both countries’ economies depend highly on the European Union membership and markets, this has been a useful tool to push Serbia and Kosovo towards the negotiating table.

Prosecution of War Criminals

Besides integration of minority groups, economic development and business relations prosecution of crimes committed during war is one of the most import factor to peace-building. United Nations’ International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) was set up in 1990’s for prosecutions of persons responsible for war crimes.


crimes in the former Yugoslav republics and provinces. Some of the most famous cases were of former Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic and General Ratko Mladic.\footnote{About the ICTY,” United Nations - International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, accessed February 20, 2017, http://www.icty.org/en/about.}

Other efforts were made by the EU, Serbian and Kosovar governments to set up special courts to prosecute individuals involved in crimes during the Kosovo war. Former President of Kosovo, Atifete Jahjaga, stated that the move demonstrates Kosovo’s commitment and willingness to pursue justice for all. Kosovo approved a special court in 2015, and will address sensitive issues reported by the Council of Europe involving allegations of KLA fighters and leaders responsible for killing civilians, human organ harvesting and trafficking.\footnote{Ekrem Krasniqi, “Kosovo Approves War Crimes Court Following EU, US Pressure,” \textit{EU Observer}, August 4, 2015: accessed October 20, 2016, https://euobserver.com/beyond-brussels/129831.} These allegations have been strongly contested by many Kosovars, in contrast, Serbia welcomed the news which will provide Serb victims with answers. It also will clarify that Serbs were not the only ones guilty of all crimes, stated Serb politician Aleksandar Vulin.\footnote{Marija Ristic, “Serbia Welcomes New Kosovo War Crimes Court,” \textit{BalkanInsight}, April 28, 2014: accessed December 10, 2016, http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article-serbia-welcomes-new-kosovo-war-crimes-court.}

The Serbian government has also stepped up efforts to address crimes committed by former Yugoslav generals, army soldiers. Serbian prosecutors in 2014 pursued charges against General Dragan Zivanovic for war crimes committed in 1999, arguing that he
failed to “prevent the murders of at least 118 Kosovar-Albanian civilians, the injuring of 13 civilians, the destruction of 40 houses, robberies and expulsion.”

Prosecution of war criminals by the Serbian and Kosovar government provides answers and a sense of justice for victims and survivors from both ethnic groups. More importantly, both governments are acknowledging and taking responsibility for crimes committed during the war. This is a very important and positive step to normalizing relations between the two countries, as well as healing and mending ethnic tensions between the Serbs and Kosovars, that were created over the years.

Rise of Islam and Religious Identity in Post-war Kosovo

To add to the complexity of boundaries and ethnic identities, a new and quite strong Kosovar religious identity seems to have emerged from the increased attention by Muslim nations. Attention has come in form of financial assistance and rebuilding process in the post-conflict era. Kosovars during the war regarded themselves first and foremost Kosovars nationals. Religious identity was not relevant as seen in the formation of the KLA, which consisted of members from different religious background.

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Post-war religious presence came at a vulnerable time and has opened the gap in the “one Albanian identity” more, steering Kosovar identity towards a more of a religiously concentrated one.\textsuperscript{175}

This new influence in the conflict, one that is more religiously motivated rather than ethnically as in the years surrounding the war, has contributed to a new wave of violence against Serbian churches. Previously, and before the emergence of Saudi-inspired Wahhabism and Salafi movement, Serbian churches were attacked by Kosovars for two main reasons. First, they were related to the Serbian ethnic group, eliminating of such sites meant eliminating Serbian history and population from Kosovo. Second, Serbian priests were often perceived more as fanatic nationalists who worked closely with Serbian government, army, and paramilitary groups. One such example was Serbian Orthodox priest, Vojislav Carkic, who fought in the Serbian army during the last Balkan wars, and openly aligned with and was a commander Serbian nationalist paramilitary group known as Chetniks (involved in multiple massacres and crimes against civilian population). His services included providing blessing for his soldiers before battle.\textsuperscript{176}

After the war, many Kosovar fanatics and nationalists attacked not just the Serbian population, but Serbian churches and historical buildings. The reason for this attack, as a Kosovar Pastor Krasniqi of Protestant Church in Prishtina explains, appear to


be have been politically motivated rather than religious, since Kosovar churches and mosques were not attacked. He further explains that this provides reasons to believe the earlier political involvements by the Serbian Orthodox church makes them target from many Kosovar extremists.\textsuperscript{177} Retaliation for the 218 mosques that were destroyed during the two-year war, is also another explanation for the destruction of Serbian Orthodox churches.\textsuperscript{178}

One example of this is in the town of Prizren where all Serbian Orthodox churches were set on fire, during the 2004 riots.\textsuperscript{179} Additionally, some churches in Kosovo remain in dispute between Kosovars and Serbs. Kosovars claim that some of the Catholic churches were annexed by Serbs and converted into Serbian Orthodox, while Serbs maintain that the churches are Serbian and part of their history.\textsuperscript{180}

Whether the motivation of the attacks were political or religious, they remain disputed and contradicted by many. What is clear is that this new religious identity is not


only slowing down the reconciliation process between Serbs and Kosovars, it is also increasing division within the Kosovar society, hardening boundaries in a new way. The traditional and moderate way of European Islam that has been practiced in Kosovo for centuries up until the post-conflict period, appears to challenge incoming Wahhabism. An ideology that has increased the presence of radical Islam in Kosovo, challenging the somewhat secular nature of the society, as well as the separation of “church and state.”

This is a long way from Kosovo’s history of Sunni Islam and Spiritual Sufism that was practices peacefully and privately. The believers’ relationship to God was seen as a private matter. The new radicalized recruitment has a heavy presence in society and stands to gain more followers. Saudi Arabia and other Arab states are using radicalized and Saudi-trained clerics, Wahhabi literature, sponsored youth organizations and others, in order to shape a new and different image of Islam in Kosovo.

Many young women practicing this form of radical Islam refuse to shake hand with male relative, while young men (314 within between 2013 and 2015) have gone off to join extremist organizations such as the Islamic State. This is a very different picture from pre-war period when men and women mixed, attended the same schools and it was uncommon for young women to wear headscarves. However, the incoming missionaries and Islamic charitable assistance that came after the war to rebuild damaged mosques, 

provided religious educations and seminars, and offered monthly payouts for families to attend sermons at the mosques, at for girls and women to wear veils.  

This sounds accurate based on my observations during trips to Kosovo in 2009 and 2012. It was the first time I had witnessed Kosovar women wearing burka (full body and face coverage, with a slit or mesh over the eyes) and niqab, which is similar to burka but it leaves room to show the eyes. Hijabs were also now worn in the same manner as some Saudi women, and no longer in the traditional Kosovar way that was common among older women. Seeing these different practices, I asked my cousin about the women, especially those wearing burka or niqab (although still a rare sight). She explained to that these women are usually paid between 200-400 euros per month by “Arabs” to dress in modest clothing, and that usually this is the only income for the whole family. To my surprise, she continued “don’t worry, we will probably encounter the same girls later in the evening at a restaurant or a bar in their ‘regular’ clothes.”

Not all situations are harmless and efforts to provide financially for their families. In some cases, threats were made against politicians, traditionally liberal clerics and others who spoke against radicalization. In the case Imam Enver Rexhepi, a split between the traditional Muslims in Kosovo, such as himself, and Arab charities who " came with different intentions and agenda” occurred when he insisted on practicing Islam the way it has been done in Kosovo all along. One dispute was over the inclusion of an Albanian flag inside the mosque, which a young Muslim following the new wave of Islam found it

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unholy and “idolatrous.” The conflict led to Rexhepi’s abduction and beating by masked men. One of the perpetrators was Zekirja Qazimi, was arrested and sentenced to 10 years in prison for hate crimes he committed and his involvement with terrorist organizations.183

To what extent the new religious self-identification is present in Kosovo, it is documented in a research conducted by Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development (KIPRED). Cited on German newspaper Deutsche Welle, KIPRED found that 57% of Kosovar Muslims feel Albanian (or Kosovar) first, while 32% identity as Muslim first and Kosovar second. Additionally, the same article states that 50,000 Kosovars are now members of conservative Islamic groups, and increase in wearing of headscarf or fully covered are now common in rural and urban areas.184

Given the past religious and ethnic mix and associations across border boundaries, the new religious developments in Kosovo threatens to harden boundaries between Serb Orthodox and Kosovar Muslims. As well Kosovars from different religious backgrounds, between the traditional liberal Muslims and a new generation influenced by Wahhabism.


184 Adelheid Feilcke, “Is Kosovo a Breeding Ground for Islamists.”
Chapter VIII

Conclusion

Kosovo’s two-year war is often understood to have been caused by ancient ethnic division and hatred between Serbs and Kosovars. This is a common understanding among Kosovo’s citizens as well as outsiders, one which led to the troubles in 1990s, tied to ethnic, religious and cultural differences.

The purpose of this thesis has been to demonstrate a different understanding of the conflict. One that does not define the ethnic war as a conflict rooted in historical differences and primordial ethnic divisions. Rather, it has presented a multi-level social construction accompanied by economic and political uncertainties of the 1980s and 1990s, and encouraged by Slobodan Milosevic and his Serb nationalist government.

The common understanding that ethnic markers (such as culture, traditions and language) were the troubled differences that divided the Serbs and Kosovars, is therefore, an incorrect, or at least only partial diagnosis of the conflict. Although ethnic boundaries existed, Serbs and Kosovars shared a common Yugoslav identity, and history of fighting alongside one-another against Ottoman Turks. These and other commonalities were shared across group boundaries and permitted an easy flow of social and political life. Similarly, while ethno-religious identities existed, they were not problematic prior to 1990s.

The hardening of ethnic boundaries that became apparent in 1990s, was a social construction, which this thesis has tried to unpack. In Kosovo’s case, it was initiated at
the institutional level of the Serbian government, and officials with a nationalist and expansionist agenda. Starting in 1980s, and following Yugoslav leader Josip Tito’s death, these boundaries were ushered into significance by economic decline that left many Serbs and Kosovars feeling uncertain for the future of Yugoslavia.

Slobodan Milosevic exploited these uncertainties and fears. He mobilized propaganda, and media on his side and in support of his nationalist movement. At the same time, he revoked many rights of the Kosovar ethnic group. Still the ethnic boundaries were somewhat porous, Serbs and Kosovars lived in the same communities without much tension. The discriminations that the Kosovars later faced came about because of reforms, lack of education and political rights. This initially inspired a non-violent campaign among Kosovar elites, only to be met with further restrictions and persecution by the Serbian government. Eventually, some Kosovars believed that non-violent resistance was not working, nor did they see it as a feasible option that should be pursued any longer.

This was a period in 1990s when ethnic boundaries began to shift within communities where Kosovars joined the LDK’s nonviolent movement, in order to maintain some representation, and obtain limited education in Albanian language. The downside was that it created division within Serb and Kosovar communities, and hardened ethnic boundaries.

From mid-1990s and with the emergence of the Kosovar armed resistance group (KLA), the ethnic boundaries between Kosovars and Serbs became nearly concrete. Serb and Kosovar neighbors and friends no longer trusted one-another, cafes and bars were
segregated establishments as well. These divisions were maintained throughout and after the war.

The post-conflict period resulted in another form of boundaries that heightened religious differences, rather than ethnic-nationalistic. The new and heightened religious ideas were the introduction of Wahhabi and Salafi radical form of Islam, particularly encouraged by the Saudi Arabia. Some rich Muslims-majority countries provided significant economic and development assistance for the war-torn country. Mosques that were destroyed during war time were rebuilt, and new modern mosques, with Saudi-influenced architecture were added. The Kosovar Muslims were thus being encouraged to embrace this new form of Islam, rather than the traditional liberal Islam that has been practiced in Kosovo throughout its history with Islam. Another way of penetrating the Kosovar Muslims society came via monetary incentives or stipends paid on monthly basis, to those who attended religious teachings and for women who wear veils.

This new radicalized influence has pushed some within the historically secular society towards intolerance of other religious groups as well liberal Islamic denominations. Therefore, while some try to reduce ethnic tensions, the post-war period has also seen the rise of a religious identity that continues to divide and differentiate not only Serbs and Kosovars, but Kosovars traditional Muslim and other religions against the new radical form of Islam.

On the positive side, both Serbian and Kosovar governments, encouraged by the EU, continue negotiations and efforts to normalize inter-ethnic relations. These efforts encourage taking responsibility and acknowledging war crimes committed by both sides, entering into business and inter-state trade, as well as a common vision towards their
memberships in the European Union. Perhaps membership will contribute a mutual European identity for Serbs and Kosovars. In any event, this thesis has worked to show that sharp division and simple explanations do not explain the ethnic conflict of 1990s in Kosovo. Rather, changing ethnic boundaries were a result of circumstances, including economic decline, a Serbian opportunist political leader, and ethno-nationalist movements aided in social construction and changing ethnic boundaries.
Chapter IX

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