
Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Albanian Master Narratives

Writing the way to a
Historical Truth in the
formation of a
National Identity

Lindsey Bouzan

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Abstract

My study explores the mutually antagonistic relationship between Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Albanian metanarratives and how these conflicting stories support the process of forming their respective national identities. My research examines how each ethnically conceived its historical claim to Kosovo, and how each group functions to sustain the validity of its own master narrative. My study then uses this antagonistic relationship as a lens from which to view the UN intervention in Kosovo. Assuming Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Albanian narratives operate as the foundation of their national identities, my research examines the UN intervention in Kosovo as a mission that both ameliorated and exacerbated these binary oppositions in respect to their claims to Kosovo. I argue that when the UN intervention accepts the socially constructed Albanian narrative, it de-centers the Serbian narrative and conversely influences the process of forming a cohesive national identity in Kosovo. I utilize Peter Hall's systematic process analysis to frame the history of two cultural identities in Kosovo, and his definition of ontology to infer that the evolution of Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Albanian identity is a result of perception that draws heavily on their own ontological assumptions of their respective histories.

Introduction

This paper focuses on the evolution of the Kosovar national identity because there are two competing claims to its creation. Serbia recognizes Kosovo as the geographical space that bred its national identity. Similarly, Kosovar Albanians who currently make up 92 per cent of the population,¹ believe Kosovo is where their ethnic identity was fostered. Kosovo is the space where Kosovar Serbs and Kosovar Albanians essentialize their respective national identities.

For Kosovar Serbs, 1389 is the year in which the Ottoman Turks battled for Kosovo and won; the victory left Serbs politically oppressed, but spiritually victorious, because they maintained their cultural identity.² Six hundred years later the Serbs won Kosovo back in the

¹ Central Intelligence Agency. "Kosovo." *The World Factbook*. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kv.html> (accessed May 2, 2013).

² Florian Bieber, "Nationalist Mobilization and Stories of Serb Suffering," *Rethinking History* (2002): 96.

1912-1913 Balkan Wars.³ Kosovo represents Serb national ideology: to remain resilient despite aggressors who claim Kosovo as their own.

As the Kosovar Serbs felt they “liberated” Kosovo during the 1912-1913 Balkan Wars, Kosovar Albanians experienced this as a period of colonization by the Serbs. They petitioned for their own republic in 1968,⁴ but Yugoslavia refused to recognize a solely southern Slav republic.⁵

These differing ideas about Kosovo heightened during the Milošević era in the later 1980s. In response to the Kosovar Albanian growing population, a Serb politician Slobodan Milošević utilized the battle of 1389 to illustrate that Kosovar Albanians were acting as aggressors actively taking Kosovo from Serbia, and threatening the Serbian national identity. Kosovar Serbs organized themselves against Kosovar Albanians, creating an “us” vs. “them” mentality based around the belief of evolution of their national identity. As a result, violence from both sides ensued.

Though these expressions of history are contemporary, the idea of competing versions of history in post-Yugoslavia is not. Although the present events taking place in Yugoslavia were important, the actual perceptions of what was happening mattered more. Wachtel and Bennett state, “These perceptions depended on not on real events, but on the atmosphere created by political rhetoric and rival media because a climate for war existed months and possibly even years before anyone was killed.”⁶ The breakup of Yugoslavia in 1991 produced a strong linkage to separate national narratives that “directly competed with, and eventually overwhelmed, the

³ Karl Kaser and Joel M. Halpern. "Historical Myth and the Invention of Political Folklore in Contemporary Serbia." *The Anthropology of East Europe Review* 16, no. 1 (1998): 89-90.

⁴ James Ker-Lindsay, "From autonomy to independence: the evolution of international thinking on Kosovo, 1998-2005," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 11.2 (2009): 143.

⁵ A reason for this might include losing Kosovo again, as it was under the jurisdiction of Serbia at the time. Another reason may be racist sentiments, because Albanians and Turks were religiously aligned after exposure to Islam during the Ottoman occupation.

⁶ Andrew Wachtel and Christopher Bennett, "The Dissolution of Yugoslavia," In *Confronting the Yugoslav Controversies: A Scholars' Initiative*. Washington, D.C.: U nited States Institute of Peace Press, 2009. 40.

Yugoslav narrative.”⁷ Yugoslavia under Josip Broz Tito attempted to create one master narrative summarized in the slogan *bratstvo y jedinstvo*.⁸ This slogan represented the idea of communitarian values, yet it implied the presence of difference as each republic comprised varying majority ethnicities.⁹ The slogan was not successful by itself in legitimizing a stable state; when the man behind the slogan died in 1980, Yugoslavia slowly shifted away from collective unity.¹⁰

Yugoslavia’s civil war is a result of Serbia’s perceived threat to its national identity. As Slovenia called for independence, followed by Croatia in 1991,¹¹ and Bosnia in 1992,¹² Milošević utilized the Serb myth and applied it in attempting to gain power in the name of preserving the Yugoslav identity. As the myth mostly resonated with Serbs, it was ineffective.¹³ The battle against Slovenia lasted ten days, while the Croatian War and the Bosnian War lasted about two years each.

Though Milošević was not successful in applying the myth in relation to Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia, Kosovar Serbs resonated with his message. Milošević created an atmosphere that polarized the Kosovar Serbs and Kosovar Albanians, and alligned the minority to their external national homeland¹⁴ in the name of their historical myth, and their national identity as ethnic Serbs. A sense of hostility came to define the ethnic Serb and Albanian populations and violence broke up primarily due to these differing perceptions. Though Milošević eventually lost power vis-à-vis NATO and the UN, his legacy of adapting the Serb historical narrative to fit the contours of an “us” vs. “them” mentality continues today.

⁷ Wachtel and Bennett 14.

⁸ Brotherhood and Unity

⁹ Wachtel and Bennett 17.

¹⁰ Wachtel and Bennett 28.

¹¹ "BBC News - Slovenia timeline." BBC News - Home. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/1097340.stm (accessed April 9, 2013).

¹² Michigan State University. "Bosnia and Herzegovina: History." GlobalEdge. Bosnia and Herzegovina: History (accessed April 11, 2013).

¹³ Bieber 99.

¹⁴ A term coined by Rogers Brubaker in *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* to mean the territory from which a minority population looks to for protection when its rights are threatened by the majority.

The formation of the Kosovar Albanian national identity began in 1998 with the creation of the Kosovo Liberation Army, an organization blacklisted by Serbia, Kosovar Albanians organized under Adem Jashari in a movement combating Serb oppression.¹⁵ Adem Jashari and his family sacrificed himself for the future of the Kosovar Albanians. The Kosovar Albanian myth speaks to self-sacrifice and loyalty to the state.¹⁶

Through NATO the international community intervened in the conflict between Kosovar Serbs and Kosovar Albanians in 1999. Serbs viewed the 1999 NATO attack as an aggression against their national identity. Milošević refused to comply with the international community, until at last he surrendered. Some Kosovar Serbs viewed the 1999 NATO airstrike intervention as “choosing” the side of the Albanians. The 2008 unilateral declaration of independence backed by the international community only confirmed this thought for those Kosovar Serbs, while according to the Albanian population the declaration was an expression of freedom and liberation.

The formation of the Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Albanian national identity is important to observe because of the relationship presently at play between the international community, Kosovo and Serbia. The master narratives are a focal point in this study because the derivation of each respective identity remains the reason for ethnic unity and the discrimination against those who are perceived to threaten it. Each respective ethnicity aligns itself with the myth, myths that “explain, contextualize, and justify a multitude of developments since the emergence of the Serbian national movement in the early nineteenth century.”¹⁷ Myth, then, is an umbrella term used to describe the point at which historical *perceptions*, ethnic explanations that legitimize

¹⁵ Anna Di Lellio, Anna and Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers, "The Legendary Commander: the construction of an Albanian master-narrative in post-war Kosovo," *Nations and Nationalism* 12, no. 3 (2006): 515-516.

¹⁶ Ibid 524.

¹⁷ Bieber 97.

their claims to Kosovo, and political rhetoric, and national identity all intersect; it is the centerpiece for understanding Kosovar identity.

This research examines the evolution of Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Albanian national metanarratives. My study utilizes Brubaker's triadic nexus to explain conflicting versions of history. Several hypotheses articulate my research focus: This is done by thinking through several hypotheses. The hypotheses are as follows: (1.) Are Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Albanian historical myths collectively perceived by the respective ethnicities as "truths" that are the foundations for their national identities?; (2.) If (1) is accepted, then do these historical myths create a mutually antagonistic relationship when they are at play with one another? Meaning, do these versions of history depend on the other for their legitimacy, despite their conflicting storylines?; (3) If (2) is accepted, then does the UN intervention in Kosovo influence the process of forming a national identity in Kosovo by supporting the Albanian meta-narrative and conversely affect Kosovo's ability to form a cohesive national identity?¹⁸

Methodology

This section touches upon specific methods utilized for interpreting the data of this study. This research uses a comparative method to explain how different historical master narratives have shaped present day cultural identity of Kosovar Serbs and Kosovar Albanians. It compares the significantly different historical master narratives between Kosovar Serbs and Kosovar Albanians. Then it compares the UN interpretation of Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Albanian

¹⁸ The argument advanced in this essay recognizes the paradox in attempting to analyze the identity of another population through the lens of the researcher's own identity. This variable cannot be avoided; however, it can be made as transparent as possible when it comes to research methods employed, how data is accumulated, etc. In addition to identity, this research focuses on evaluating history. I recognize that as a produce of a culture, I am is also a product of history. In addition to the methodology and theoretic framework provided, this research peels back the layers of the historical master narrative of Kosovar Serbs and Kosovar Albanians through the lens of the researchers own identity. Thus, this research is also an interpretation, and notes that other perceptions about Kosovar Serbs and Kosovar Albanians may also be viable.

historical claims through evaluating Kosovo's progress toward statehood in regards to the UN Mission in Kosovo.

This research is not the first of its kind to contend that master narratives are both a focal point for national identities and a factor in determining their relationship to other ethnic communities. Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Albanian populations recognize these stories as their own explanations for their national identity. The Battle of 1389 is the Serbian national myth, while the Legendary Commander Adem Jashari is the Kosovar Albanian myth. They are found within the daily rhetoric of political leaders, located in the symbols of monuments, and memorials, shaded within the perceptions of ethno-cultural experiences, and are ingrained in the cultural identity of what it means to be either a Kosovar Serb or a Kosovar Albanian.

The Battle of 1389 is a holiday celebrated among Serbs. On 28 June 1914, the same day the Battle took place, a Bosnian Serb student shot and killed Archduke Franz Ferdinand, producing a cumulative effect in beginning the First World War. Vidovdan (St. Vitus' Day)¹⁹ is also the day that Stalin chose to free Yugoslavia from the eastern bloc, and it is also the day in which Serbia surrendered Milošević to the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague.²⁰

The Legendary Commander Adem Jashari builds on a recent death of a KLA commander in 1998. As a member of the Albanian armed resistance, he "became known as the *komandant legjendar* (Legendary Commander)"²¹ through his self-sacrifice which brought Albanians more closely bound to the nation. This fairly new narrative invokes a mythologized sentiment as the Albanian community builds itself around this figure. Since his death in Prekaz, Kosovo, many Albanians make pilgrimages annually to the Adem Jashari Memorial Complex.²² The Legendary

¹⁹ The title of the Serb Battle of 1389 commemoration

²⁰ Bieber 95.

²¹ Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers 514

²² Ibid.

Commander Adem Jashari speaks to a tradition of armed resistance “against foreign oppressors, most notably the Serbs after the 1912 annexation of the Ottoman province of Kosovo.”²³

While these master narratives are not congruent, their varying experiences have shaded each ethnicity’s respective worldview. This essay considers these competing master narratives within the context of an ontological lens. This analysis builds on Peter Hall’s discussion of ontology. Hall states, “‘Ontology’ refers to the character of the world as it actually is.”²⁴ Specifically within *Aligning Ontology and Methodology*, Hall uses ontology to “refer to fundamental assumptions scholars make about the nature of the social and political world and especially about the nature of causal relationships within the world.”²⁵ Without ontology, according to Hall, these theories about the political and social world would not make sense; ontology explains how we perceive the social and political world. Hall utilizes ontology to denote certain theories where causal relations of the social and political world are not mentioned explicitly, but assumed implicitly.²⁶

Ontology is particularly beneficial to the methodology of my research because my research attempts to explain the evolution of Kosovar Serbs and Kosovar Albanian national identity as a result of perception related to each subsequent historical myth. One purpose of my project relies on juxtaposing these two prevailing ontologies to evaluate their different worldviews in relation to national identity and conflict. The validity of Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Albanian historical myth draws heavily on their ontological assumptions of their own history, and is directly associated with how each ethnicity acts toward one another in regards to their respective historical claims.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Peter A. Hall, “Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Research,” In *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997. 373-374.

²⁵ Hall 374

²⁶ Ibid.

Hall refers to his methodology as “systematic process analysis.” This type of analysis defines social scientific inquiry as the “effort to identify the causal factors (or variables) that tend to produce a particular kind of outcome.”²⁷ This methodological framework calls for forming hypotheses when observing ontological factors within a society and analyzing how they operate within the context of a given society. Most importantly, systematic process analysis emphasizes how the given society might rationalize the operation of the hypothesis questioned within a given research project.²⁸ It calls for the presentation of alternatives that go against the original hypothesis and recommends that the researcher seek diverse observations when creating his hypothesis.²⁹ In this way there is a balanced notion of the culture being studied, and less opportunity to refute the hypothesis because it more aptly reflects the polymorphic reality of the society in question. Peter Hall explains, “In short, systematic process analysis examines the processes unfolding in the cases at hand as well as the outcomes in those cases.”³⁰ Hall’s systematic process analysis applies well to Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Albanian nationalism because in each case the claim to Kosovo digresses differently. Using Hall’s methodology constructs my hypotheses around the naturally diverse reality inherent to this study. By using a methodology that is inclusive of both perceptions, I can better understand each claim and more accurately evaluate my hypotheses.

Moreover, Hall emphasizes that the process that has formed the current condition of a given population observed by the researcher is just as important as the outcome of these conditions experienced by the given population. Hall asserts that historians have a tendency to observe outcomes of a particular event in time; his methodology evaluates the contents of history

²⁷ Hall 390-391

²⁸ Hall 391

²⁹ Hall 392

³⁰ Hall 393

through a theoretical lens. My research extrapolates from Hall's methodology by analyzing the history of two cultural identities in Kosovo in their given contexts.

Various methodological approaches have strengths and weaknesses. Statistical analyses, for example, tend to reveal the associating relationships present in a given comparative analysis. Ontological methodology contextualizes these same relationships. As my study observes the diachronic evolution of Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Albanian national identity, an ontological method is beneficial for evaluating the use of symbols in the development and perpetuation of myth.

Other scholars might employ a statistical analysis to evaluate similar phenomenon. Ragin identifies a problem with absencing the statistical. He believes that statistics can help link common independent variables to one common denominator. He uses "a Boolean algebra for reducing these comparisons to manageable summaries and, in a recent advance, increases the level of information that can be included in such analysis"³¹ My research does not have access to the Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Albanian population, and is limited by the kind of statistical data available. My research relies on some statistical studies, for example, the electoral results of Slobodan Milošević's campaign for President of Serbia, to explain the efficacious ability of utilizing the myth to organize the population.

Like most other research projects, my study tends to generalize complex aspects of the conflict. By employing an ontological method, I believe that Kosovar Serbs' and Kosovar Albanians' different world view will speak for themselves, and more accurately take into account the cultural nuances they embody. My project attempts to explain several observations about the formation of cultural identity specific to Kosovo. Hall states,

³¹ Hall 389

“...the effort is to identify recurrent microlevel processes that contribute to many such outcomes. Although the rationale for this move is multifaceted, many argue that major political events are generated by causal processes that are so complex or context dependent that they cannot be explicated in general terms.”³²

At no point does my study seek to make generalizations about other post-conflict societies that may have experienced similar interactions internally within their own boundaries, and externally within its relationship to the United Nations. For reasons primarily related to time and space restrictions, this project focuses on one territory.

According to Hall, “The point is to see if the multiple actions and statements of the actors at each stage of the causal process are consistent with the image of the world implied by each theory.”³³ My project relies on both primary sources and secondary sources in its analysis. Secondary sources are a means to theorize the formation of the cultural identity of Kosovo.

The scholars of these secondary sources come from many disciplines and schools of thought, ranging from Structuralism, Post-structuralism, Ontology and Political Science, Comparative Politics, etc. Whether it is Derrida’s claim of binary oppositions, or Brubaker’s tri-lens explanation for nationalism, these theorists agree that the component of perception is a guiding force that determines outcomes in the nature of decision-making. I choose to use disciplines related to Critical Theory because the national myths evaluated are socially constructed narratives that have evolved through storytelling. I will go into more detail about my decision to use linguistic scholars in the *Theoretical Framework*.

Primary sources used throughout this research generally include the myths themselves, newspapers, texts from various United Nations documents, text from websites of the representative political bodies of Kosovo, Serbia, and Albania, etc. and statements by political leaders. In the next major section titled *Theoretical Framework*, this paper explains the scholarly

³² Hall 388

³³ Hall 394

application used to evaluate the myths and their assistance in the evolution in Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Albanian national identity.

Theoretical Framework

For this study, the methodology structures a framework for how to interpret my data, while the theoretical framework provides a possible explanation for how certain causes can produce particular effects.

Rogers Brubaker identifies his triadic nexus as an explanation of ethnic nationalism in Southeastern Europe post-1989; however, Brubaker does not explore the origins of nationalism. The evolution of Kosovar Albanian and Kosovar Serb nationalism is based on a mythological story that ties each ethnicity to Kosovo. Due to the narrative structure of the Kosovar national identity, I rely on literary theory to articulate a possible explanation for Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Albanian genesis of nationalism. Then I apply Brubaker's triadic nexus as the cornerstone for explaining the dynamic of ethnic nationalism.

First my study demonstrates history is a narrative by applying Jean-Francois Lyotard's definition of metanarrative. Once explained, I build on this by using Roland Barthes' *Mythologies*, to create a semiotic analysis³⁴ of the historical narratives to support the claim that these historical narratives constitute myths. Barthes' definition of "Myth" refers to the idea that historical narratives are perceptions based on cultural constructs, a notion further explored below. Each of the subsequent master narratives result in differing perceptions of history, and are therefore competitive because they seek to explain the present history of Kosovo in different ways. Next, my research applies Derrida's concept of deconstruction found in *Différance* in

³⁴ Semiotic analysis is an idea founded by Jacques Lacan, and is further explained in the section titled *Roland Barthes and the Idea of History as a Master Narrative*

order to explain the binary opposition systems that function diachronically within the Serbian and Albanian culture are a result of these historical myths.³⁵ Brubaker's triadic nexus will organize the binary opposition systems supported by Derrida on a conscious level based on opposing nationalist sentiments through a mutually antagonist relationship between the minority population, the "nationalizing nationalisms" and the "external national homelands."³⁶

These theorists, despite their diverse schools of thought, acknowledge that any given population always acts on its own perception of history and have subsequently formed different theories around this observation. My study combines these theories of perception to explain the phenomena occurring within Kosovo.

Moreover, my study takes this framework one step further and applies it to the role of the United Nations. Under the conditions articulated by these scholars, my research evaluates an attempt by the UN to quell the binary opposition between Kosovar Serbs and Kosovar Albanians by forming one concrete national identity through establishing citizenry of independent Kosovo.

Brubaker's Triadic Nexus

Nationalism is a protean reality that changes according to several variables. Multiple political scientists have attempted in defining this phenomenon, but this word 'nationalism' is not 'black and white.' Nationalism is a chameleon, coloring itself in the environment it is fostered in. Attempts at defining nationalism are attempts to actively color in these 'black and white' *perceptions* in order to more closely understand the *reality* of nationalism. Rogers Brubaker is one political scientist who tries to shade in these perceptions. He believes nationalism is necessary to study in order to further understand the process of state-building. Brubaker explores

³⁵ Peggy Kamuf, ed., "Difference," In *A Derrida reader: between the blinds*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, 62.

³⁶ Brubaker, Rogers, "Introduction." In *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*, New York City: Cambridge University Press, 1996. 4-7.

the function of different forms of nationalism in relation to each other; he does not explain the evolution of these forms. I derive Brubaker's triadic nexus through a literary analysis due to the narrative structure of the Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Albanian master narratives. Brubaker's triadic nexus then explains the mutually antagonistic relationship that fosters from these narratives.

My research applies Brubaker's definitions of nationalism (which are framed by Derrida's binary opposition) to explain the contrasting master narratives. Brubaker claims nationalism is multifaceted because it has assisted in the creation of and is a direct result of the political state.³⁷ Brubaker breaks down nationalism into three relational definitions. His definitions of nationalism connect through their corresponding roles in the formation of the political nation, an interlocked "triadic nexus".³⁸ First, Brubaker describes "nationalizing nationalisms." This is a term he uses to describe the core, dominant ethnicity. This type of nationality resonates with members of the society who claim themselves as the dominant representatives of the nation. "Nationalizing nationalisms" are core nations strictly based on ethno-cultural legitimacy. This is separate than the notion of state citizenry, since multiple ethnicities make up the state; core nations are weak in myriad ways, including economically, and culturally within the larger state.³⁹

The second nationalism within the "triadic-nexus" Brubaker refers to as "external national homelands." Members of the state who oppose the "nationalizing nationalisms" look through this lens of nationalism. "Homeland nationalisms" feel they have an obligation to promote the welfare of *their* ethnic kin living as minorities within the core nation, and see this responsibility as one that transcends national borders. Typically, "homeland nationalisms" protect the interests of their ethnic kin when the nationalizing political culture and practice of the "nationalizing

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Brubaker 4-5

nations” threatens them.⁴⁰ Brubaker’s triadic nexus demonstrates a key feature of Derrida’s binary opposition; the perception of the historical master narrative, although present in the mind of all citizens, connects the ethnicity and its kin through both time and space.

National minorities complete the triadic-nexus. Brubaker defines national minorities as, “those of the nationalizing states in which they live and those of the external national homelands to which they belong.”⁴¹ The term “national minority” is not an ethnic entity of a greater state, but rather, refers to the political nature among a distinct, underrepresented ethno-cultural nationality. In other words, “national minorities” do not claim legitimacy based on ethnicity, but on their political predisposition and national self-understanding within the state.⁴² This is the “opposed” Derrida’s binary opposition framework.

Brubaker’s “triadic-nexus” is interlocking in that none of these concepts of nationalism can function without the other, for the “antagonistic relationship” is not created unless there exists the other forms of nationalism.⁴³ It is also interactive, since all three forms of nationalism are effecting and being affected by the others at all times. In this dynamic set-up, nationalism is a “category of practice,” since the relationship of the triadic-nexus is interdependent on these three aspects.⁴⁴

Brubaker deems nationalism as a process that is constantly fluctuating. It is a convoluted happening that involves many aspects of the nation such as culture, national nuances, time, politics, economy, etc. Nationalism’s polymorphous nature makes it difficult to measure.

⁴⁰ Brubaker 5

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Brubaker 5-6

⁴³ Brubaker 5

⁴⁴ Brubaker 7

Therefore, Brubaker urges for the reframing of nationalism, “not [in terms of] how much nationalism there is, but of what kind.”⁴⁵

Brubaker’s triadic nexus creates a nonlinear relationship between the three categories of the binary opposition relationship. Brubaker’s triadic nexus explains the binary opposition paradox because it is framed in a way where each branch of the triad reacts to the opposing master narrative due to a threat or contradiction to the historical discourse they accept as legitimate. For example, external national homelands perceive themselves to be members of the same nationality/community and minorities, and are willing to defend the other due to sharing a perceived common history, while the nationalizing nationalisms perceive an alternative master narrative which contradicts that of the external national homeland and the minorities.

By speculating the genesis of Brubaker’s triadic nexus, the following provides one possible explanation for how nationalist sentiments evolved. The following describes history as a mythological representation of an ethnicity’s “reality,” where reality is a perception that fosters nationalist sentiments when it is contradictory to another ethnicity’s reality.

Claiming History as a Narrative

Jean-Francois Lyotard defines a master narrative, also known as a metanarrative, as, “a theory that tries to give a totalizing, comprehensive account to various historical events, experiences, and social, cultural phenomena based upon universal truth or universal values.”⁴⁶ My study accepts this definition because it allows for different ethnicities to view historical accounts ontologically in accordance to their own ethnicities. This study examines the metanarratives of Kosovar Serbs (Battle of 1389) and Kosovar Albanians (Legendary

⁴⁵ Brubaker 10

⁴⁶ "Metanarrative." New World Encyclopedia. <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Metanarrative> (accessed March 21, 2013).

Commander Adem Jashari) because they are historical moments in the lives of each ethnicity and have framed the social and cultural experiences since their existence.

Roland Barthes and the Idea of History as a Mythical Narrative

Kosovar Albanians and Kosovar Serbs possess different historical claims to Kosovo. Each ethnicity perceives its view as a truth which authenticates its ownership over Kosovo. The idea that Kosovar Albanians and Kosovar Serbs believe their own history as legitimate despite their contradicting tendencies suggests history is not matter-of-fact. Lyotard's definition of history as a narrative provides a foundation for Roland Barthes' idea of history as myth because of its ontological conditions.

Barthes states, "ancient or not, mythology can only have a historical foundation, for myth is a type of speech chosen by history: it cannot possibly evolve from the 'nature' of things."⁴⁷ Barthes' argument is quite clear that myths are not chosen as if they were chosen from a hat. In other words, myth exists purely because of a series of historical events impacted its creation; it emerged as a result of reactions occurring within historical moments. Myth has not always been, but manifested itself through moments which had a large impact on the population to whom it belongs; an impact that creates in itself an idea or concept symbolized through mythological representation. The myth did not naturally evolve through time, but was culturally constructed.⁴⁸

The metanarrative speaks of universal truth and universal values inherent within the culture that accepts the metanarrative, while the mythical aspect claims these values and subsequent truths found within the metanarrative as constructs. This is important for Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Albanian ideas about their own histories because if each is explained as a myth then

⁴⁷ Barthes 110.

⁴⁸ The idea that the characteristics people attribute to such social categories as gender, illness, death, status of women, and status of men is culturally defined. <http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/anth370/gloss.html>

each is a perception that both ethnicities divulge as truth claims. For the remainder of this study metanarrative, a historical master narrative will be considered a myth.⁴⁹

This research accepts Barthes' claim to myths, and uses the proceeding argument to demonstrate that metanarratives as myths create collective perceptions that form the basis for cultural identity. First, let it remain clear that Barthes' theory of myth can account for the formation of a master narrative, because it, like myth, is constructed; it may symbolize a "natural" way of thinking within the given culture, but this mode of thinking is not natural. The citizens of a given culture are born into a set of beliefs about the master narrative as a universal truth possessing universal values. Barthes states, "Mythical speech is made of a material which has *already* been worked on so as to make it suitable for communication: it is because all the materials of myths (whether pictorial or written) presuppose a signifying consciousness, that one can reason about them while discounting their substance."⁵⁰ That is, according to Barthes, members of the given population are born into a way of thinking that has preexisted them. The structure of the culture frames the "signifying consciousness," which assembles the population's collective way of thinking. This collective cultural perception is the basis for cultural identity.

Metanarratives result from the generational layering of perception of events, and the population projects the meaning of the metanarrative upon their daily lives. In this cultural phenomenon, the cultural population may view this metanarrative just as described by Lyotard: as a totalizing force that gives meaning to the universal truths and universal values in which the

⁴⁹ Historical master narratives claim a mythical representation when they are observed through Barthes' use of semiotic analysis. Semiotic analysis is a structural form of linguistics coined by Ferdinand de Saussure. He explained that language was a "system of signs" and further broke down signs into the signified (the concept) and the signifier (the object being conceptualized through the "sound-image" or word).⁴⁹ This relationship among the signified, signifier and the sign is completely arbitrary, constructed upon the same institutional frameworks as the society that uses it is built from.

Roland Barthes uses a semiotic analysis to describe myth. Barthes labels Saussure's semiology as the language-object, while he labels myth as a metalanguage, a second-order semiology. In second-order semiology, the first sign made between the signifier and signified becomes a new signifier, which then coupled with the concept derived from a new signified creates a second sign. This secondary sign is represented within the context of the myth; it is the overarching symbolic meaning for what the myth explains. Barthes describes how one can reduce myths into this type of analysis to draw out the greater meaning for which it stands for. (See Ferdinand de Saussure "Course in General Linguistics" for citation).

⁵⁰ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1972, 110.

population lives. In other words, the metanarrative gives reason for their identity. Metanarratives also give meaning to the cultural identity of the given nation. Their universal truths and values, although myths, are their own perceptions; it is the historical explanation of the given culture's identity, imbedded within the social framework of the nation. Metanarratives taken as both myths and perceptions are subjective, though nations often perceive these myths as factual manifestation of their cultural history. For example, political leaders such as Slobodan Milošević adapted the Serb myth to mobilize the population in creating a cultural identity founded upon the Battle of Kosovo. In later sections, this study analyzes Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Albanians master narratives and political nationalist agendas.

Derrida, Différance and Deconstruction

Recall that Barthes' definition of metanarrative frames the historical myth as a perception, although nations with contradicting historical discourses believe these to be undisputable truths. Jacques Derrida and his notion of binary opposition can explain how Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Albanian master narratives compete, introducing each subsequent perception of history as a truth claim that strengthens each ethnicity's nationalist sentiments.

The Battle of 1389 and the identity of the Legendary Commander are two stories of Kosovo's history that contradict each other. Neither of these master narratives is mobile; they have become explanations for the territorial disputes between Serbs and Albanians living in Kosovo. The ethnic Albanian national identity story begins in 1996⁵¹ and Serbian national identity myth starts in 1389⁵². Note that the time difference between the stories advanced in my essay is approximately 600 years, and may appear that from this perspective alone, the Serbs

⁵¹ Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers 513

⁵² Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Raska and Prizren. "Saint Lazar the Great Martyr of Kosovo." History of Kosovo and Metohija. <http://www.kosovo.net/kosbitka.html> (accessed November 18, 2012).

have clearly demonstrated ownership of Kosovo longer than Albanians.⁵³ These narratives are paradoxical; both claim they have ethnic ownership of the land because the formation of their national identity has been manifested through the historical myth. However, as demonstrated by Barthes' analysis, this historical myth is nothing but a generational adaptation of perception as historical fact; they are cultural constructs.

And yet this realization is not the start to a solution, but an interesting conclusion. These constructs remain paradoxical to the Kosovar Albanian and Kosovar Serb populations because each subsequent historical myth becomes the framework of the lens from which a Serb, or an Albanian views the creation of their own identity, something within each society denoted as fact. These historical myths, these master narratives, are in direct competition with one another; they are binary oppositions, feuding with contention when juxtaposed together because of the perception from which they are viewed. When the relationship between the myths is presented through the lens of Derrida, the historical myths are binary oppositions. This section concludes with observing how these binary oppositional myths create nationalist sentiments.

Derrida claims that subjects exist through their differences. Time and space are only established through the differing and the deferring; things only exist by their distinctions because both space and time exist by this means. As Professor John Lye from Brock University writes "Any ultimate transhistorical truth is only a truth by virtue of difference; so that no ultimate 'truth' can be, and be itself, nor can it be outside of time and space, and hence beyond contingency."⁵⁴ Truth only exists relationally, through difference and deferral: *différance*.

⁵³ I specifically identify these two years for each ethnicity because the memory it stirs for each group has had consequential impacts, and in my opinion, the strongest forms of collective memory associated with them, which tells me they are significant to the group they represent. The 600-year difference is not an indication of "rightful ownership," but a noted observation about how the historical discourse is not substantiated by time; the story connects ethnicity across time and space, as Brubaker's form of nationalism supports.

⁵⁴ John Lye, "Différance," Department of English Languages and Literature – Courses, <http://www.jeeves.brocku.ca/english/courses/4F70/diffr.php> (accessed March 24, 2013).

Derrida challenges the typical notion of history. He explains that history is built through a network of relations. These relations are differences, displacements, and deferrals. History is a weave of differences that includes the movement of language, or system of referrals and are therefore subject to difference. Extrapolating from Derrida, metanarratives and their definition of historical truth also function through binary opposition.

As history is a mythologized perception, we are constantly deferring and differing within our own consciousness and so we are never absolute. Our center is dependent upon our oppositions, our self-presence, *our identity*, is a fiction, a perception defined by these oppositions, and displacements.

Lye explains that Derrida believes the Other, “is central to phenomenological, existential, Lacanian and deconstructive thought: we cannot exist without the Other, that existence which is not us but through which we are constituted.”⁵⁵ Derrida explains that we always use words and concepts as we use language. Yet we must be aware that these words, this arbitrary labeling within the nature of things, is also naturally subject to question; they can be deconstructed, and can be “under erasure.” All traces by nature are under erasure, as is identity.⁵⁶

Myths are binary oppositions because they are historical narratives based on cultural constructs. They are competitive when one metanarrative disputes another because contradicting a myth with the mere existence of another means to deny the foundation of that ethnic identity. These competing master narratives give way to nationalist sentiments.

Applying *différance* to the master narratives of Kosovar Serbs and Kosovar Albanians, the paradoxical relationship fostered between Kosovar Serbs and Kosovar Albanians is evident. Their perceptions of history appear to possess competitive tendencies, and also cannot exist

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

without the other. Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Albanian historical “truths” are contingent upon the relationship they have with each other, further supporting Brubaker’s mutually antagonistic triadic nexus when applying Derrida’s concept to nationalism.

Lye’s explanation of Derrida’s Other is the central phenomenon that dictates nationalist behavior between Serbs and Albanians. The mythologized perception of history is challenged by Serb and Albanian belief in its absolute nature. As Serbs and Albanians have accepted their myths as truths, they have adapted the myths to function and survive in settings where their national identities have been threatened. As a result, they function as binary oppositions, changing through a relation of differences, displacements and deferrals to maintain the claim to “truth” these myths are sought to represent. In the next section, my research expands of the history of how these myths have been realized.

Contextual History

In this section, I provide historical context of the Kosovar Serb and the Kosovar Albanian master narratives to further understand the formation of their subsequent national identities. I also present NATO airstrikes to contextualize its attempt to curtail the polarized national narratives. Admittedly, the conflict between Kosovar Albanians and Kosovar Serbs is scattered across history. As a whole this research focuses on the utilization of myth in the formation of Kosovar Serbs’ and Kosovar Albanians’ national identities. Naturally when examining an ontological subject such as this, the essay neither flows in a diachronic year-to-year historical summary, nor may emphasize the same events as typical historical accounts. As a result, this section gives information to contextualize mythical usage.

Kosovo under Serbia

While theoretically the starting point of the conflict between the Kosovar Serbs and Kosovar Albanians is subject for debate, I choose to begin analysis the year 1389, with the creation of the historical master narrative of the Kosovar Serbs. In 1389, the Ottoman Empire defeated Serbia at the Battle of Kosovo. As a result, the Kosovar Serbs remained oppressed for 600 years.⁵⁷ Though they existed under the Turks, the Serbs remained united as a people in the hope that one day their homeland would come back to them. In 1912, their wish came true as the Serbian forces defeated the Ottomans.⁵⁸ As the victors of the battle, the Kingdoms of Serbia and Montenegro divided up the region of Kosovo, a movement that went against the Albanian majority.⁵⁹ In 1918, Kosovo became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which formally became known as Yugoslavia in 1929.⁶⁰ In 1946, with the reemergence of the Yugoslavia under Josip Broz Tito, Kosovo and Metohija became an autonomous region within the greater Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia.⁶¹ Despite their autonomous status, Kosovo's geographical border did little to deter a nation-like union forming between the Serbians living in Serbia and in Kosovo. Recognizing the unique status of Kosovo as an autonomous region, the majority Albanians pushed for a seventh republic of Yugoslavia. The push was denied. The Yugoslav sentiment during the early latter 20th century only allowed South Slavs to create their own republic. Other groups such as Albanians could not create their own republic since they belonged to an external national homeland, or were part of transnational stateless groups.⁶²

⁵⁷ Seth Ward, "The "Battle of Kosovo" as National Narrative," *Kosovo Teach-in*. University of Wyoming, n.d. Web. 20 Mar. 2013. <<http://www.uwyo.edu/sward/mme/kosovo1>>.

⁵⁸ James Ker-Lindsay 142.

⁵⁹ "BBC News - Timeline: Kosovo." *BBC News - Home*. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Oct. 2012. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/3550401.stm>.

⁶⁰ Ker-Lindsay 142.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

Serb-Albanian Relations

The relationship between Kosovar Serbs and Kosovar Albanians shifted in the latter half of the 1960s when Kosovar Albanians underwent a culture revival, most visible with the establishment of the Pristina University.⁶³ In 1968, Albanians protested for a change in Kosovo's status from an autonomous region to a Yugoslav republic, a shift that was denied. In 1978, Yugoslavia "promoted" Kosovo's status to that of an autonomous province of Serbia, aligning the Kosovar Serbs and the territory more closely with Belgrade. Under this new title, Kosovo had the right to form its own constitution, and also earned a coveted seat within the federal council. Due to this new political status, a wave of Albanian protests emerged in 1981, tensing their relationship with Kosovar Serbs. Four years later, Serb intellectuals released a memorandum that declared Kosovar Serbs were facing genocide.⁶⁴

This 1985 memorandum was the climax for Kosovar Serb and Albanian relations. It allowed the new Serbian president Slobodan Milošević to take Kosovo back under control of Serbia Proper. Following the 1991 collapse of Socialist Yugoslavia, Kosovo looked to other former republics to exemplify the next move. An EU body called the Badinter Arbitration Commission was set up to oversee the legality of the dissemination of Yugoslavia. It claimed that each of the six former republics could legally attain statehood, in addition to international recognition. Kosovo was not mentioned. Croatia and Slovenia both moved toward independence, and Kosovo did the same; the ethnic Albanian population held a referendum for independence and elected a president in the spring of 1992. This president remained unrecognized by the international community.⁶⁵

While the conflict in Kosovo festered, the USA feared that the recent war outbreak in Bosnia would seep through its border to Kosovo. To this effect the US government warned

⁶³ Lectures were held in both Serbo-Croat and Albanian.

⁶⁴ Ker-Lindsay 143

⁶⁵ Ker-Lindsay 143-144

Milošević to hinder acts of force against the territory. Consequently, any actions against Kosovo would result in airstrikes. The Dayton Agreement, which ended the Bosnian War, and gave Bosnia its independence also neglected any mention of Kosovo. This, in addition to the Clinton Administration's insistence to keep Milošević in office contributed to the turmoil that unleashed itself in 1998.⁶⁶

With several peaceful demonstrations in their past, and no successful progress, Kosovar Albanians decided to form the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in 1996, and immediately started launching attacks on Serbian civilians. The USA formally declared the KLA as a terrorist organization, unintentionally signaling Serbs to launch counterattacks. In response to this, the Contact Group, made up of Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Russia and the USA, ordered that negotiations between Belgrade, and Kosovar Albanian political representatives take place.⁶⁷

1999 NATO Airstrikes

The 1999 NATO bombing was a U.S.-led NATO airstrike initiative used to stop Serbian president Slobodan Milošević from ethnically cleansing Kosovo of ethnic Albanians. The attacks came about when Milošević refused to sign the Rambouillet Agreement, an accord that sought to ameliorate relations between Kosovar Serbs and Kosovar Albanians, but whose steep provisions did not agree with Serbian interests. Because of Milošević's refusal to sign the agreement, NATO initiated attacks starting on March 24, 1999 and ending on June 10, 1999.⁶⁸ According to Noam Chomsky, and some Serbians, the bombing took place because Serbia was not carrying out socio-economic reforms the U.S. had in place in the rest of Europe. Serbia, in

⁶⁶ Ker-Lindsay 144

⁶⁷ Ker-Lindsay 145

⁶⁸ Tanjug. "Serbia marks 14th anniversary of NATO bombing." B92 - Internet, Radio i TV stanica; najnovije vesti iz Srbije. http://www.b92.net/eng/news/society-article.php?yyyy=2013&mm=03&dd=24&nav_id=85330 (accessed April 5, 2013).

essence, was the last country to ‘bend the knee’ to U.S. neo-liberal policy reforms.⁶⁹ NATO believed it acted in conjunction with international law as human rights abuses were taking place directly in the heart of Europe. In NATO’s perspective, the organization was acting preemptively to deter future humanitarian losses. NATO carried out its mission by launching a successful 78-day air campaign, targeting areas specific to Serbian military interest in order to deter future acts of aggression on the Kosovar Albanian population.⁷⁰ According to Serbs, the NATO attack was an assault on the citizens of Serbia. They attacked places like bridges and embassies in order to force Serbia to submit to neo-liberal policies, and to extend NATO power just because it could.⁷¹

To surmise, my research uses the aforementioned contextual history to further understand the formation of national identity in Kosovo. Recall that the master narratives are cultural stories based largely on perception of historical “truths” each ethnicity believes to be undisputable. The contextual history articulates how each ethnicity acts in accordance to their worldviews in regards to their own identities, and how they behave when these narratives conflict. In the next section, my research explains the master narratives of Serbians and Albanians who live in Kosovo.

The “Master narrative”

If you asked a Serbian nationalist when the story of Kosovo started, he/she would most likely tell you 1389. If you asked a member of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), he might say 1998. A Kosovar Albanian would tell you 2008, while a Kosovar Serb would tell you this is the year Kosovo’s story ended. It is hard to say when the story of Kosovo began, only that its many views of history overlap in some circumstances, and leave voids in others. The purpose of this

⁶⁹ Noam Chomsky, Interview by Danilo Mandic, *On the Bombing of Yugoslavia*, RTS., Belgrade: 26 Apr. 2006. Television.

⁷⁰ “Bill Clinton’s Statement on Kosovo Intervention.” [n.d.], video clip, accessed November 30, 2012, YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rusF4OJzGbo>.

⁷¹ Interview with the author, Belgrade, Serbia, November 25, 2011, citizen of Belgrade, Serbia.

research is not to determine the legitimacy of these claims; rather, it is to evaluate each subsequent “truth” as the perception that it is.

It is important to note these historical nuances, such as ancient ethnic claims in opposing ethnic regimes because when these disputes are legitimized among the members of the ethnicity who believe in their own historical myths, they can potentially cause tense conflict. When the story of Kosovo started, and when it ended are irrelevant facts that will forever be disputed between these different ethnicities. In my research, the fundamental concept to look at is the interpretation of these myths in present day.

Acknowledging the many different views of the Kosovo story, and the myriad ancient histories that protect ethnic claims to the territory, this research attempts to look at two dominant ethnicities’ historical myths and their subsequent explanations for their territorial claim to Kosovo. Then my research observes historical events in a case study that takes into account these myths as a means to analyze each ethnicity’s national identity.

The Serbian Master Narrative: The 1389 Battle of Kosovo

For Kosovo, nationalism is a result of the score-settling history between Kosovar Serbs and Kosovar Albanians. The conflict between the two ethnicities begins in the year 1389, when the Ottoman’s won the Battle of Kosovo and began their rule over Serbs south of the Sava River. Coincidentally, Christian Albanians and Serbs fought besides each other, hoping to thwart their Muslim enemies.

The Battle of Kosovo is Serbs’ view of the loss of the bedrock of their civilization. Historically, Serbs believe Kosovo to be the territory of the beginnings to their civilization today. This oral history begins in 1355, when King Dusan of Serbia died unexpectedly. His death led to the weakening of Serbia’s central governments. Many dukes took this opportunity to secede from Serbia, taking with them the land that had been entrusted to them from King Dusan. Many others

of aristocratic blood proclaimed themselves rulers of Serbia, none of which gained any sort of valuable recognition. At the same time in history, the Ottoman Empire was advancing towards Serbia. The church, a very powerful actor in Serbia's political life, recommended a man named Prince Lazar for the job.⁷²

Prince Lazar Hrebeljanovic was born in Prlipac to an aristocratic family. His father worked for King Dusan, and so Prince Lazar grew up in the royal palace. When he came of maturity, the King entrusted Prince Lazar with two parts of his earthly kingdom. The death of King Dusan did not motivate Prince Lazar to seize the kingdom by force. For this reason, the Church recognized him. According to the myths, Prince Lazar possessed a certain wisdom and experience which surpassed his competitors.⁷³

During his rule, Prince Lazar stitched the wounds of Serbia back together. He also reconciled the churches of Serbia and Constantinople, after a dispute from when King Dusan had single-handedly attempted to raise the Serbian archbishop to the level of a patriarch. Prince Lazar settled this dispute, and "gave the Serbian Church its first canonical Patriarch."⁷⁴

During this time, Ottoman raids increased into Serbian land. This warned Prince Lazar that the time for battle between the Ottoman Empire and Serbia was drawing near. The Turkish advanced under King Murad I and met Serbs in Kosovo Polje ("Field of the Blackbirds").⁷⁵ At the time, the Ottoman Empire was very powerful. Prince Lazar knew his chances of winning were slight. He gathered his leaders and told them they should fight for the Holy cross and Golden Freedom; otherwise, they would surrender and become slaves to an Islamic cause. In this

⁷² Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Raska and Prizren.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ "Battle of Kosovo (1389, Balkans)." Britannica Online Encyclopedia. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/322736/Battle-of-Kosovo> (accessed November 27, 2012).

spirit, the Serbs went to battle, for their land, for their religion, and for their freedom as a culture. On St. Vitus Day, June 15, 1389, Serbs went to battle with the Turks.⁷⁶

With their momentous spirit, the Serbs were able to advance. Milos Obilic, “the most famous hero of this Kosovo Battle, killed the Turkish King Murad I.”⁷⁷ However, the Turks regrouped and managed to capture Prince Lazar alive, “and beheaded shortly thereafter.”⁷⁸ In response to this, Byazid, Murad I’s heir and son, beheaded most of the Serbian princes and nobles.⁷⁹ The war came to a close with Byazid and Serbian Stephan Lazarovitch making peace which established the inferiority of the Serbs under their new Ottoman rule.

Although the Serbs lost the war, the 600 year rule over Kosovo did not drain the Serbian culture. Instead, the reverse happened. Serb poets wrote about the battle as an epic survival of the Serbian cultural identity. King Lazar became a revered hero who risked his life for the perpetuation of the Serbian identity. The Battle of Kosovo was no longer a battle in Serbia’s past, but a battle which helped Serbs remember their past and to never forget it. As Mark Gottfried states, “the Battle of Kosovo Polje is one of the focal points of their memories, and as such played a vital role in the Serbian culture.”⁸⁰ This collective memory is the beginning of Serbs as a collective people, as a nation. Despite the Serb defeat, the Battle of Kosovo signifies the cultural resilience of Serbia for 600 years.⁸¹ Overall, “the Battle of Kosovo stands in Serbian history and culture as a symbol of suffering, of the struggle against invaders, and of cultural survival against the odds.”⁸² It is both politically and culturally significant, but the politics of this

⁷⁶ Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Raska and Prizren

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Mark Gottfried,, "The Events Surrounding the Battle of Kosovo 1389 and its Cultural Effect on the Serbian People," The Kosovo Battle, <http://www.kosovo.net/kosbitka.html> (accessed November 12, 2012).

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ker-Lindsay 142.

nation has changed overtime; the essence of revenge and resilience has instead become imbedded into their culture.

When the Ottomans won, Turkish influence introduced the religion of Islam to Kosovo, a territory that was predominantly Orthodox. Much of the Albanian population gradually converted their religion, as was the case for Bosnians and Bulgarians.⁸³ By the 17th century, Albanians made up the majority population within Kosovo. With this growing awareness, 37,000 Serb families fled north to the Hapsburg Empire.⁸⁴

After 1389, the gradual ethnic Albanian conversion to Islam only polarized Kosovo. Kosovo remained part of the Ottoman Empire until 1912 when the Serbs defeated the Ottomans.⁸⁵ Avenging Kosovo became a major goal of the Serb and Montenegrin forces that battled the Ottomans again in 1912. Serbs and Montenegrins thought they would liberate their territory from Ottoman aggression.⁸⁶

As the victors of the battle, the Kingdoms of Serbia and Montenegro divided up the region of Kosovo, a movement that went against the Albanian majority.⁸⁷ Although the Kosovar Serbs were a minority in population, they dominated politically and culturally because the geographic territory of Kosovo at the time belonged to Yugoslavia.⁸⁸ The next section explains the Albanian master narrative.

The Albanian Master Narrative: Legendary Commander Adem Jashari

The following length of this section is not proportionate to that of the Serbian master narrative. This does not reflect an unbalanced perception of their history. Rather, the Kosovar Albanian master narrative is very recent compared to that of the Battle of 1389. However, as

⁸³ "History of Kosovo up to 1918." *The Balkans: Kosovo*. NASA, n.d. Web. 10 Nov. 2012.

<<http://www.cotf.edu/earthinfo/balkans/kosovo/KVtopic3.html>>.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ker-Lindsay 142.

⁸⁶ Dimitrije Djordjevic. "The Role of St. Vitus' Day in Modern Serbia." *The Kosovo Battle*. <http://www.kosovo.net/kosbitka.html>

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Helge Brunborg. 2002. "Report on the size and ethnic composition of the population of Kosovo." Augst 14, 2002, 10, Oslo.

Brubaker suggests, time plays no bearing on the validity of nationalist claims, as it is not a matter of how much nationalism, but of what kind.

During the 1990s, Albanians felt their national identity being oppressed politically through Kosovo's membership with Yugoslavia. They made several propriety claims, none of which were officially recognized. The Albanian society formed popular resistance movements namely through civil disobedience, and even planned guerrilla warfare. KLA leader, Adem Jashari, is the crux of which the Kosovar Albanian master-narrative is formed. The Kosovar Albanian population describes Adem Jashari as the *komandant legjendar* (legendary commander); the “mythical figure who binds past and future generations to the nation.”⁸⁹ His story captures the Albanian master narrative, as one filled with resistance to the Serb nationalist cause, and the refusal to fall under Serb oppression. His story is constructed on the events that give meaning to the collective memory of Albanians as a people. As Di Lellio states, “the master narrative [thus] constructed resonates across very different groups, because it recalls a shared self-understanding as an oppressed nation looking for political and psychological deliverance,” most notably against the Serbs after the 1912 annexation of the Ottoman province of Kosovo.⁹⁰

Prekaz and the Legendary Commander Adem Jashari

A small group of men including Adem Jashari are responsible for forming the *Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosevës* or *UÇK*⁹¹. The KLA was an armed insurgent group, which fought against Yugoslavia in the name of independence, in response to Milošević's tightened grasp of Kosovo. This armed group not only systematically attacked Serbian police, but broke the agreement between the Serb state and the Albanian revolutionaries.⁹² The Serb government identified Adem

⁸⁹ De Lellio and Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers, 514.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ For the purposes of this paper, I will now only use the English translation of KLA, Kosovo Liberation Army

⁹² Di Lellio and Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers, 514.

Jashari as a leader of the Kosovo Liberation Army, and attempted to quell the Albanian resistance movement to this end. In December 1991, the Serb police force assaulted Jashari's house, but was "unexpectedly met with fierce resistance."⁹³ The police launched a second attack in January of 1998, successfully wounding two of Jashari's relatives, but Jashari himself managed to escape.⁹⁴

Early February sprung a KLA offensive movement, which resulted in five Serb police officer deaths. The Serb government retaliated by launching a brutal initiative to find the perpetrators of this crime. The police force went house-to-house in neighboring villages of Likoshan and Qirez searching for the guilty.⁹⁵ They killed twenty-three Albanians, including a pregnant woman, and ten male family members who had no connection to the KLA. This was the first large-scale civilian killing, and was not easily forgotten among the Albanian populous.⁹⁶

On March 5, Serb forces surrounded the Jashari compound and attacked. They attacked with heavy artillery for three consecutive days. Serb Special Forces and police killed fifty-one of the extended Jashari family. Of his immediate family, only his eleven-year-old niece Besarta survived.⁹⁷ In the aftermath of Jashari's death, the KLA spread rumors that Adem Jashari had once again miraculously escaped the Serb police assaults. In doing so, they initiated an exaggerated reality of the 'legendary commander.' Di Lellio states, "The tale of the massacre fed material to local teachers and journalists, who became national historians overnight, and quickly articulated the themes of the myth – resistance unto death, sacrifice for love of country and

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ De Lellio and Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers, 516.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

immortality – through a rich production of oral accounts and written literature.”⁹⁸ March 1998 was the climax for the Kosovar Albanians and their master narrative.

The story of the Jashari family is believed by the Albanian population to be an inspirational moment in history. Although the heroes were killed, they did not yield. The protagonists are called *dëshmorët e kombit* (martyrs of the nation). The Jasharis did not give up their cause. When the Serbs struck the family, they struck back. The Albanians viewed themselves as a pacifist group in the 1990s, but that image changed with the Jasharis. Many Albanians followed Adem Jashari’s example and joined the *vullnetare* (volunteers), which ended up in the thousands. Di Lellio states, “The Adem Jashari legend thus provides a powerful counter-narrative to the one of victimization and accommodation with the enemy.”⁹⁹

Jashari embodies the “pure” Albanian patriot juxtaposed to the Yugoslav colonizing power that suppresses the Albanian identity. Jashari’s story is an event in history that entwines national sentiments with the greater collective memory; it fortifies the proof for the Albanians that oppression of their identity occurred, but was not finite. The story of Adem Jashari provides a narrative for the victimization the populous faced, and an example that self-sacrifice can indeed right a historical wrong.¹⁰⁰

The story of the legendary commander, then, transcends the historical narrative it was created in; it delves into the auspices of politics and culture. The “individual fate of the hero”¹⁰¹ also speaks for the fate of the greater nation. It is here the national ideology of the Kosovar Albanians is rooted. In the next section, my research transposes the idea of the historical narrative and examines how it plays out on the political and cultural stage.

⁹⁸ Di Lellio and Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers, 516.

⁹⁹ De Lellio and Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers, 518.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ De Lellio and Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers., 519.

Case Study

Application of Serbian Perception of Battle of 1389

My research evaluates how the Serbian myth transformed with the interpretation, perception, and purposeful adaptation by both political and religious leaders. The following discussion demonstrates the use of the Kosovo myth in modern times. Later, I will evaluate these claims.

First, it is important to mention that the Serbian myth was institutionalized in 1889. The Serbian government declared Vidovdan (St. Vitus Day) as the commemorative holiday for those who had sacrificed their lives for their faith and the fatherland. It is the day the Battle of Kosovo took place, and has become synonymous with the Serb collective historical memory and national self-awareness;¹⁰² In 1892, the Serbian Orthodox Church recognized 28 June as an official religious holiday.¹⁰³

Days celebrating fallen heroes usually grow from the top down in Europe, but the holiday of Vidovdan came from the bottom up.¹⁰⁴ The essence of Vidovdan was already present through oral histories, and later by adopted ballads in folk tradition, a myth legitimized as truth within the greater Serbian memory. During the Ottoman rule, when Serbs dispersed but carried with them the ancient stories of their culture, these stories spread throughout the greater region of Serbia. These traditions united Serbs as a people throughout the region, and later laid the groundwork for their nation.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Dimitrije Djordjevic. "The Role of St. Vitus' Day in Modern Serbia." The Kosovo Battle. <http://www.kosovo.net/kosbitka.html>

¹⁰³ Bieber 98

¹⁰⁴ "Romantic nationalism." Princeton University. http://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Romantic_nationalism.html (accessed April 26, 2013).

¹⁰⁵ Djordjevic, "The Role of St. Vitus' Day in Modern Serbia."

Every year, Serbs are reminded of their “struggle for personal and national liberation.”¹⁰⁶ The Serbian Orthodox Church presents Vidovdan as “Emperor Lazar’s Day,” only briefly mentioning St. Vitus on Ecclesiastical calendars. The day is one of mourning for the Serbian culture, emphasized by churches draped in black, “black flags put out on houses, and national standards at half-mast...”¹⁰⁷ Images of St. Vitus appear in Serb homes, and the holiday is commemorated artistically through literature, theatrics and paintings. Though the purpose of Vidovdan changes with needs of the contemporary society, Serbs are always reminded of their 600 year cultural retardation under Ottoman rule.

It is important to note that the Serbian myth celebrates the Serb defeat by the Ottoman Turks because the Serbian Orthodox Church “emerged as the ultimate spiritual victor.”¹⁰⁸ Although the role of the Church remained marginal until the late 1980s,¹⁰⁹ the aftermath of World War II coupled with the creation of Yugoslavia as a communist state left it up to the Church to cultivate the experience of the myth in contemporary times. In the late 20th century, the Serbian Orthodox Church adapted the Kosovo myth to unify Serbs against the Kosovar Albanians, an ethnicity they perceived to threaten the identity of Serb minorities residing in Kosovo. In 1981, Kosovar Albanians protested Kosovo’s “promoted” status as an autonomous province to Serbia, Kosovo’s ability to form a constitution, and Kosovo’s new seat within the federal council.¹¹⁰ A significant portion of the Albanian population demanded full status of Kosovo as a republic of Yugoslavia, a cause they had protested for since 1968.¹¹¹ The Serbian Orthodox Church took this as an opportunity to defend the Serbian national identity within

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Bieber 96.

¹⁰⁹ Bieber 99.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ker-Lindsay 143

Kosovo. Twenty-one priests signed an appeal to protect and improve the status of Serbs living in Kosovo. It states:

The Serbian nation has been struggling from the Kosovo Battle 1389 up to this day for remembrance and to protect its own identity, to protect the meaning of its existence from its enemies. It is ironically at the point in time at which one might have thought that the battle is won that Kosovo ceases to be ours and we stop being what we were. And all this without war, during a time of peace and freedom!
(quoted in Yelen 1989: 133-4; Buchenau 1999: 20-1)

In regards to Vidovdan, whether or not the battle of Kosovo happened as the Serbs believe it did is significant to note because it has spurred such deep cultural meaning where Kosovo has become intrinsic to their ethnic and national identity. As Djordjevic states, “the historical heritage has a double meaning: that of fiction and that of reality. It mirrors the past and projects the future. The Vidovdan message was and is for the Serbs everywhere; Kosovo is a token of their past and present destinies.”¹¹²

One historian, Dimitrije Bogdanović, calls the battle of 1389 a historical fact. He states that the Kosovo battle is not “a myth, but a historical idea which helps a nation to forge a link with its real historical past.” Furthermore, Bogdanović writes, “Kosovo is not some imaginary legend of the past, but a real historical destiny that continues today.”¹¹³ As a historian, Bogdanović’s assertion demonstrates the implications of the myth and its imbedded nature within the society of Serbia. The owners of the myth (the Serbs) often view it as a historical fact, leaving little to no room for those with different ideas.

Political leaders like Slobodan Milošević adapted the Kosovo myth to counteract what he viewed as Albanian aggression toward the Serb minority. In 1987, Milošević presented a speech addressing the implications of Kosovo’s status as a territory experiencing economic hardship.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Bieber 100.

Milošević's speech rendered a clear hierarchy between Kosovar Serbs and Kosovar Albanians.

Milošević states:

Albanian separatists and nationalists have calmed down somewhat. They're banking on time, and it's understood that conditions are working for them. But they need to know, on this plain tyranny will be no more. Progressive people won't give up Kosovo, neither will Serbia nor will Yugoslavia."¹¹⁴

Despite 90 per cent of Kosovo residents being Albanian, Milošević fears that by merely existing as a majority population in Kosovo, Albanians are threatening the ownership of Kosovo.¹¹⁵

Milošević adapts the Kosovo myth for political purposes again in 1989, the sixcentenary anniversary of the Battle of 1389. Approximately a million Serbs gathered in Gazimestan, where the Battle of 1389 took place, citizens and high ranking officials alike coming together to commemorate the battle. The goal of the celebration was supposedly to unify Yugoslavia in remembering its foundation and its motto of 'brotherhood and unity. However, the Serbian version of the Kosovo myth exemplifies the antithesis of this idea; the battle is not identifiably Slavic, but a history specific to Serbia. In his commemoration address for the Battle of 1389,

Milošević states:

Long live the eternal remembrance of the heroism in Kosovo!
Long live Serbia!
Long live Yugoslavia!
Long live peace and brotherhood between the people!¹¹⁶

Nenad Bućin, the Montenegrin representative at the time felt there was a predominance of Serbian rhetoric surrounding the event. When he advocated for the participation of other ethnicities such as the Albanians who fought on the side of the Serbs, the Serbian representative

¹¹⁴ Slobodan Milošević, "Speech of Slobodan Milošević at Kosovo Polje" (speech, Gazimestan, April 24-25, 1987), Michigan State University, <http://matrix.msu.edu>.

¹¹⁵ "Kosovo Facts," *National Geographic*, <http://travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/countries/kosovo-facts/>

¹¹⁶ Slobodan Milošević, "Slobodan Milošević's 1989 St. Vitus Day Speech" (speech, Gazimestan, June 28, 1989), <http://www.slobodan-milosевич.org/>

Borisav Jović answered, “In ‘1389 the Kosovo battle was fought by the Serbian and the Turkish (sic) army and we [Serbs] have no intention of falsifying history.”¹¹⁷

In his anniversary address, Milošević continues:

Today it is difficult to say what is the historical truth about the Battle of Kosovo and what is legend. Today this is no longer important.”¹¹⁸ Milošević acknowledges that the Kosovo myth is but one perception of history whose details are ambiguous and forgotten, but not relevant. His statement emphasizes that the Kosovo myth has transcended history not as a story, but as a symbol for the hardship which Serbia has endured for 600 years.¹¹⁹

As Milošević made his speech in Gračanica, over 1.5 million Serbs attended another Vidovdan service in the newly built St. Sava church.

Milošević sealed his political position through adapting the myth into his rhetoric. For this reason, other political leaders opposing Milošević could not form strong counterpositions without disowning the Serbian national identity that had formed around Milošević's propaganda. Instead, the opposition parties in the 1990s used the myth as a tool to propagate political ideas ingrained in the idea of the Serb identity as Milošević had done, but were not as successful.¹²⁰ In 1990, Milošević ran for president under the Socialist Party of Serbia and won with 65.34 per cent of the votes. His closest competitor Vuk Drašković only obtained 16.40 per cent of the votes.¹²¹

Though Slovenia, Croatia and Macedonia declared independence from Yugoslavia in spring of the next year (Bosnia subsequently following suit in 1992), Serbia and Montenegro renamed their remaining territory the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SRJ), and elected Dobrica Ćosić as its first president. Milošević remained the president of Serbia when he won 53.24 per

¹¹⁷ Bieber 101.

¹¹⁸ Milošević, “Slobodan Milošević’s 1989 St. Vitus Day Speech”

¹¹⁹ Djordjevic. “The Role of St. Vitus’ Day in Modern Serbia.”

¹²⁰ Bieber 103.

¹²¹ Gordana Andric, “Serbian Presidential Elections since 1990,” *Balkan Insight*, April 1, 2012, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/serbian-presidential-elections-since-1990>

cent of the election votes. Milan Panić, his closest competitor and then SRJ Prime Minister, gained 32.11 per cent.¹²²

Despite Yugoslavia's civil war Milošević did not use the Serbian myth as he had in his Gračanica address to purpose a sense of national identity. Regarding Gračanica, Milošević's emphasis of the metanarrative directly correlated with his propaganda initiative to reinforce his own political agenda to be a leader of Serbia. For this, the Church critiqued Milošević's attempts to protect the pan-Serbian identity, believing the regime had failed to “pursue Serb national interests.”¹²³ The Church evoked a strong connection with the Kosovo myth, and its ideological claim about the Serb condition as one of suffering and heroism.¹²⁴

While attempting to unite pan-Serbians, initiating violence in the name of preserving the Serbian identity, and conspiring to annex Bosnia with Croatian president Franjo Tuđman, Milošević maintained popularity and was voted in by the federal parliament as president of Yugoslavia in 1997.¹²⁵ Dragan Tomić filled in as acting president for Serbia. The acting president called for early elections and Zoran Lilić of the Socialist Party of Serbia won with 37.70 per cent.¹²⁶ However, elections were far from honest and the Democratic Party, Democratic Party of Serbia and Civic Alliance of Serbia boycotted elections.¹²⁷ A second round of elections held in October 1997 also invalidated because at the time it stated that 50 per cent of voters needed to cast ballots in order for the votes to be valid. As only 48 per cent casted their votes, elections failed.¹²⁸

Mention of the Kosovo myth surfaced in political discourse again in 1998. Milošević adapted and malleated the Kosovo myth to fit the needs of his agenda by calling on the Serbian

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Bieber 104.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ He was constitutionally prohibited from running as president of Serbia again.

¹²⁶ Andric, “Serbian Presidential Elections since 1990.”

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

identity to protect the minorities being threatened by the Albanians. When the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) emerged and violence once again erupted within the territory, Serbs maintained a popular opinion about Albanians that lined up with the propaganda created by Milošević.

The 1999 NATO airstrikes in response to Milošević's campaign of violence and repression justified the resurgence of the myth and the Serb self-perception as victims.¹²⁹ The involvement of the international community vis-à-vis NATO allowed Serb sentiments of oppression and "collective victimhood" that had ingrained themselves within the Serbian identity since the political usage of the Kosovo myth to come to the forefront of the society once again.¹³⁰ Florian Bieber suggests that victimhood lingered in post-war Yugoslavia and "'revenge' attacks and the persecution of Serbs by the victorious Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) heavily impacted public opinion in Serbia, confirming the fears that had motivated repressive policies against Albanians in the previous decade and reinforcing the nationalist self-perception of Serbian suffering."¹³¹

In February 2008, Kosovar Albanians backed by the United States and NATO unilaterally declared independence from Serbia. In the first round of the 2008 elections in January, Tomislav Nikolić of the Serbian Radical Party won with 39.99 per cent, followed by Boris Tadić of the Democratic Party with 35.39 per cent. A second round election was scheduled for early February because no candidate won by an absolute majority. On February 3, 2008, Tadić¹³² won against Nikolić¹³³ by 2.34 per cent.¹³⁴

Following the declaration of independence, Vojislav Koštunica, the Serbian Prime Minister, gave a speech at a rally in Belgrade. He declared:

¹²⁹ Bieber 105.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Democratic Party

¹³³ Serbian Radical Party

¹³⁴ Ibid.

Kosovo –that’s Serbia’s first name.
Kosovo belongs to Serbia.
Kosovo belongs to the Serbian people.
That’s how it has been forever. That’s how it’s going to be forever.¹³⁵

As Kosovo had once again been stripped from the Serbian people, Koštunica held fast to the mythologized representation of the Serbian national identity, and used it to rally Serbs together. His rhetoric essentializes much of the contextual history, and ignores Kosovar Albanian’s recent secession. In the next section, I touch on how Kosovar Albanians unite through their own historical discourse. Similar to Serbian political figures, Albanians have instituted commemorative holidays and broadcasted speeches that touch on a historical myth to justify their ownership of Kosovo.

The Application of Legendary Commander Adem Jashari

Recall that the national identity of Kosovar Albanians is a fairly recent development, starting with Adem Jashari and his family’s sacrifice to “correct a historical wrong”¹³⁶ orchestrated by the Serbs. The master narrative speaks to the Albanian national identity through the death of the KLA leader who has become a collective “symbol of Albanian national liberation.” The myth of Adem Jashari allows for the “nationalization of space [Kosovo],” and for the Kosovar Albanians to categorize and substantiate their claim to Kosovo under the historical self-sacrifice of the Legendary Commander Adem Jashari.

As I have mentioned, the length of the Kosovar Albanian section is not a reflection of the importance of their metanarrative. Rather, its length demonstrates how fairly recent the development of a collective Kosovar Albanian national identity formed. Given their recent declaration of independence in 2008, their national identity has evolved quickly. Moreover, the

¹³⁵ Vojislav Koštunica, “Serbia has and will annul every act of fictitious state on its territory,” (speech, Belgrade, February 21, 2008), Serbian Government, <http://www.srbija.gov.rs>.

¹³⁶ De Lellio and Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers, 518.

brevity of this section should not account for a conclusion that the Kosovar Albanian claim to Kosovo is illegitimate. This study observes both Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Albanian histories as perceptions and evaluates how they play out socially and politically. The brevity is due to the recent adaptation of Adem Jashari to political rhetoric in relation to Kosovo since its roots are as early as 1998.¹³⁷

The Jashari National Celebration

After the Serbian rule ended in 1999, Albanians have been allowed to celebrate Flag Day, a ritual that has only gained more political significance when Serb rule ended. The Albanian red and black flag with a two headed eagle was first “raised by the mythic national hero Skanderbeg as a symbol of resistance against the Ottoman Turks in the mid-fifteenth century, as well as to mark the anniversary of Albania’s declaration of independence in 1912.”¹³⁸ According to Ingumundarson, the KLA also notes Flag Day as Adem Jashari’s birthday, through many are uncertain of the validity to that claim. Here Jashari is commemorated alongside Skanderbeg, drawing a connection between the two “heros.”¹³⁹

The celebration of Adem Jashari’s movement is sponsored by the Prime Minister’s Office. The annual commemoration is a three-day affair that includes “a military-style parade by the KPC¹⁴⁰, invitation-only solemn gathering (since 2003), and an all-night pageant with traditional music and dances around bonfires.”¹⁴¹ Kosovo broadcasts this event on its entire public access media, and also provides live coverage.¹⁴²

¹³⁷ To my knowledge as I researched.

¹³⁸ Valur Ingimundarson, “The Politics of Memory and the Reconstruction of Albanian National Identity in Postwar Kosovo,” *History and Memory* 19 (2007): 112

¹³⁹ Ingumundarson 113

¹⁴⁰ Kosovo Protection Corps is a civilian emergency services organization that was active from 1999-2009. It was created through a regulation established by UNMIK.

¹⁴¹ Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers 518.

¹⁴² Ibid.

In 2004, the Albanian majority unveiled the statue of Adem Jashari in Skenderaj, a municipality of Prekaz, where Jashari and his family resided and were killed in the KLA compound. The KLA memorial strongly resembles the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial located in Washington DC, emulating the Albanian alliance with the western world, a world which they perceive they belong to, especially after the US backed the Albanian-led secession of Kosovo in 2008. The memorial received some criticism by Albanian women, claiming Jashari's statue a symbol of masculine ideals. Although the statue is a representation of the emerging metanarrative, its status, like the Serbian myth, is based largely on perception, so it is not surprising that the status was interpreted in many ways, even among different groups of the same ethnicity.¹⁴³

According to Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers, the predominance of the Prekaz master narrative is founded upon collective trauma during the oppression of the Albanians by the Kosovar Serbs. The Jashari massacre "provides a heightened and condensed symbolism for an intense suffering that resonates with many and unites them in a national community."¹⁴⁴ The Jashari story is socially perceived as the symbol of Albanian suffering, and the eventual deliverance from it through self-sacrifice.¹⁴⁵

The Prekaz myth reached political adaptation during the 2004 electoral campaign. Through his party *Ora*, Veton Surroi made a public visit to the Prekaz memorial, a visit in which he highly publicized. Before 1998, another political figure President Ibrahim Rugova (2002-2006)¹⁴⁶ had denied the KLA existed outside of the inventions of the Serb secret services, and incessantly dissociated from the organization, including never visiting Prekaz, despite many

¹⁴³ Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers 521.

¹⁴⁴ Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers 523.

¹⁴⁵ Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers 523-524.

¹⁴⁶ "Obituary: Ibrahim Rugova: The President of Kosovo, Ibrahim Rugova, died on 21 January 2006, after losing a battle with lung cancer," *BBC News*, January 21, 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4634616.stm>.

Albanians ritualizing the memorial once a year. However, Rugova, acknowledging the symbol of Adem Jashari and his story as the metanarrative of the Albanian people, began to couple himself with the legendary commander. For example, *Bota Sot*, a newspaper associated with Rugova's political party "published a photograph that shows Rugova at a meeting in Tirana in the early 1990s with Adem Jashari standing behind him."¹⁴⁷ Despite Rugova's earlier claims, the picture served as a representation for the existence of a political relationship between him and Jashari.

This is not the first time various political leaders published images of themselves with Adem Jashari. Political rival and KLA representative Hashim Thaçi published a picture of him and Jashari depicting an amicable relationship. According to Rugova, Thaçi falsified the image, though it has been reproduced in calendars, and in a newspaper associated with Thaçi's political party, emphasized by a caption 'Legends have a future.'¹⁴⁸

As the Kosovar Albanian population continues to embrace the legendary commander, Lieutenant General Kadri Kastrati made a speech directly addressing the legendary commander and his relationship to contemporary Kosovo. On March 5, 2012, Kastrati states:

"It is an undeniable fact that the heroic resistance of the legendary Commander Adem Jashari, his family members and co-fighters, is more than a historical chronicle, more than one date, more than a battle or even the bravery of men, women and children. More, because, in the face of the unequal, with an enemy many times greater Jashari's war, was created the moment of turning most historic among Albanians in the twentieth century. The idea of national liberation war had been united with a leading symbol, the name of Adem Jashari, who was and remains the greatest and most inspiring figures of the resistance of our people. Adem Jashari his ideals, with unmatched struggled and self-sacrifice, paved the irreversible path of our people to freedom, towards liberation."¹⁴⁹

Kastrati's address shows the legitimization of the master narrative because he acknowledges the existence of Jashari's struggle as an "undeniable fact."¹⁵⁰ To him, the history of Jashari is not a myth, but an uncontested idea in which Kosovar Albanian identity fosters.

¹⁴⁷ Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers 526.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Lt. Gen. Kadri Kastrati, "Manifestation," (speech, Priština, March 5, 2012), Ministry for the Kosovo Security Forces, <http://www.mkshf-ks.org/page=2,24,500>.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

Within this part of his address, Kastrati notes that Jashari aided in the national liberation of Kosovo from “an enemy many times greater [than] Jashari’s war.”¹⁵¹ As stated earlier, Kosovar Serbs may view Jashari and the KLA movement as a terrorist faction and I therefore imply that Kastrati is referencing the Serbs as the Albanian enemy, mainly because of their opposition to the Albanian narrative. Here Kastrati acknowledges the existence of different perceptions to Kosovo’s ownership, but the tone of his speech relegates that any opposition to the Jashari discourse would be in direct opposition to the ethnic Albanian path to liberation in Kosovo.

The Jashari narrative exists in Serbian news sources in a different context. *Balkan Insight*’s, Petrit Collaku writes that the ethnic Albanian’s, “decision to name Kosovo’s main airport after a Kosovo Liberation Army commander killed by Serbian forces has drawn criticism for undermining the multiethnic nature of Kosovo enshrined in its constitution.”¹⁵² Again, the language used to describe Jashari sharply contrasts with the Albanian perception. The Serb newspaper claims that Jashari attacks the “multiethnic nature of Kosovo,” a principle held dear to the former Yugoslavia through its motto *brotherhood and unity*, puts Jashari’s moment in history as a rivalry to the multiethnic ideals of Serbia. Two years after the publication of this article, *Top Channel* published an article titled, “New Statue for Adem Jashari in Tirana.”¹⁵³ In this article, Albanians celebrate Jashari as a hero, and symbol of the Albanian identity within Kosovo.¹⁵⁴

Clearly when juxtaposing the Serbian and Albanian metanarratives, there is a discrepancy in the two versions of history. When these beliefs manifest themselves through collective memory, both institutionally and politically, they render strong discourse that unites an ethnicity they represent, while disparaging the narrative that runs counter to it. Through the UN

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Petrit Collaku, “Kosovo Airport to Bear Name of KLA Fighter,” *Balkan Insight*, November 19, 2010, <http://www.balkaninsight.com>.

¹⁵³ “New Statue for Adem Jashari in Tirana,” *Top Channel*, November 27, 2012, <http://top-channel.tv/english/artikull.php?id=7687&ref=fp>.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

intervention in Kosovo, and the Ahtisaari Plan, my research touches on the international response to conflicting historical myths of Kosovar Serbs and Kosovar Albanians.

Application of the United Nations: UNMIK and the Ahtisaari Plan

This research now turns to the International Community's¹⁵⁵ choice to intervene in Kosovo. Recall the oppositional myths that function as the foundation for Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Albanian national identity, and Brubaker's explanation of these as a triadic relationship. Each myth functions as a competing version of history because each myth contradicts the other; this historical competition has fueled much of the tension between the two ethnicities. My study proposes that the United Nations intervened in an effort to quell this tension by attempting to solidify one concrete national identity in which both ethnicities could unite. The United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) physically organized the UN's endeavor on the ground, while the Ahtisaari Plan documented attempts to legally solidify a united identity. However, both these aspects of UN intervention occur because of the 1999 NATO airstrikes.

The campaign ended when Milošević accepted peace conditions stipulated by EU envoy Martii Ahtisaari and Russian envoy Victor Chernomyrdin.¹⁵⁶ These stipulations included allowing the deployment of NATO forces into Kosovo, a small part of the general undertaking that became known as UNMIK. I will expand on this importance later.

United Nations Mission in Kosovo

The United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is the result of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1244.¹⁵⁷ It was established to ensure "conditions for a

¹⁵⁵ My research defines international community specifically in regard to the United Nations, but this section will touch upon other international actors, such as NATO. Though NATO is not directly emphasized within this study as contributing to create one Kosovo identity, this international actor plays a part in setting the stage for UN intervention.

¹⁵⁶ GlobalSecurity. "Operation Allied Force." GlobalSecurity. http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/allied_force.htm (accessed April 26, 2013).

¹⁵⁷ United Nations. "UNMIK: mandate and Structure." UNMIK. <http://www.unmikonline.org/Pages/about.aspx> (accessed April 26, 2013).

peaceful normal life for all inhabitants of Kosovo and advance regional stability in the western Balkans”¹⁵⁸ after Milošević’s ethnic cleansing and NATO’s 1999 bombing. The mission, headed by the Special Representative of the Security-General, consisted of other institutions such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation of Europe (OSCE), and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX). OSCE oversaw the rebuilding of institutions, while UNMIK relied on EULEX for “operational responsibility in the area of rule of law.”¹⁵⁹

According to UNMIK, it promoted adherence to human rights, increased stability, and boosted security. In 2010, UNMIK partnered with Mercy Corps International and successfully closed a refugee camp called Cemin Lug Camp in Mitrovica. UNMIK funded the construction of new homes where these refugees were able to relocate. As of 2013, UNMIK states on its website it still sees areas of tension between Kosovar Serbs and the authorities in Priština. UNMIK states its “key task in northern Kosovo remains engaging with and mediating between the communities, as well as serving as a bridge between northern Kosovo and Priština authorities.”¹⁶⁰ UNMIK continues to function under UNSCR 1244.¹⁶¹

The Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement

Prior to UNMIK, Ahtisaari sought to resolve the Kosovo conflict with the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement introduced in 2007.¹⁶² This plan had two key documents: the first was a four page paper titled “Report of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Kosovo’s Future Status,”¹⁶³ and the second¹⁶⁴ was “The Comprehensive

¹⁵⁸ Petyo Valkov, “The Tensions between Serbia and Kosovo - A Major Generator of Instability in the Region,” Institute for Security and International Studies. (2011) Accessed at www.isis-bg.org/publications/research_reports/rr25.pdf

¹⁵⁹ United Nations. “UNMIK: mandate and structure.”

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² International Crisis Group, *Kosovo: No Good Alternatives to the Ahtisaari Plan*, 14 May 2007. http://www.eulex-kosovo.eu/training/material/docs/KR/KR_Material/ICG_Kosovo_no_good_alternatives_to_the_ahtisaari_plan.pdf

¹⁶³ Henceforth Ahtisaari Report

¹⁶⁴ Henceforth Ahtisaari Plan

Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement.”¹⁶⁵ Both are the Security Council’s attempt to resolve the status of Kosovo. In the Ahtisaari Report, Ahtisaari writes, “Uncertainty over its [Kosovo’s] future status has become a major obstacle to Kosovo’s democratic development, accountability, economic recovery and inter-ethnic reconciliation. Such uncertainty only leads to further stagnation, polarizing its communities and resulting in social and political unrest.”¹⁶⁶ This social and political unrest to which Ahtisaari states refers to the binary oppositions that helped foster Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Albanian unique cultural identities; these opposing identities the UN seeks to quell with one national identity. My research has evolved the concept of history to mean an interpretive myth from which one ethnicity derives their own self-understanding as a nation, and therefore their national identity. Ahtisaari’s mandate then is to begin to change history in an agreeable way, altering Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Albanian self-understandings as a nation to create one supra-metanarrative.¹⁶⁷

The Ahtisaari Plan outlines many of Kosovo’s future avenues, from its governance to its optimistically prosperous future. It recognizes Kosovo as a multi-ethnic society with a democratic government structure. The plan called for a new constitution, an ethnically integrated justice system, municipal powers on the local levels, and increased Kosovo’s international status. Under the proposal, the territory could apply for membership in international organizations, and also negotiate international agreements.¹⁶⁸

Despite Kosovo’s international status, the Plan called for Kosovo to remain under international supervision led by three core bodies: International Civilian Representative (ICR), European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), and a “NATO-led International Military

¹⁶⁵ International Crisis Group, *Kosovo: No Good Alternatives to the Ahtisaari Plan*.

¹⁶⁶ Ban Ki-moon, *COMPREHENSIVE PROPOSAL FOR THE KOSOVO STATUS SETTLEMENT*, 26 March 2007. http://ahtisaariplan.info/pdf/comprehensive_proposal_for_the_kosovo_status_settlement.pdf

¹⁶⁷ Valkov 110

¹⁶⁸ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs. "Summary of the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement." U.S. Department of State. <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/fs/101244.htm> (accessed April 26, 2013).

Presence.”¹⁶⁹ The ICR is a two-hatted supervisor, also in charge as the European Union Special Representative. The ICR oversees the implementation of the Settlement, although the Representative does not have any direct role in the administration of Kosovo. However, as implementation is key to the future success of Kosovo, the ICR possessed corrective powers through his/her “ability to annul decisions or laws and to sanction or remove public officials whose actions are determined by the ICR to be inconsistent with the letter or spirit of the Plan.”¹⁷⁰

ESDP worked as the hierarchal structure to Kosovo’s legal authority. ESDP “monitor[ed], mentor[ed] and advise[ed] on all areas related to the rule of law.”¹⁷¹ in Kosovo. Last, the NATO-led military mission supported the institutions of Kosovo by providing a secure environment from which they can function, until they could operate without it.

Originally the Settlement was due to be released in November of 2006, but was pushed back because of different political sentiments winding through Kosovo. Individuals ranging from “anti-European” to “pro-European” focusing on hopeful European Union integration made it hard to gauge how the Plan would be received.¹⁷² In response to the simultaneous growth of the nationalist Serbian Radical Party, other more moderate politicians in Serbia took a more nationalist approach. They wrote a new constitution for the country, declaring in its preamble that Kosovo would forever be a part of Serbia. In January of 2007, the Radicals won a plurality of votes: 26 per cent.¹⁷³

In the same year that Martti Ahtisaari announced his proposal (2007), the Serb President Dusko Tadic, and the Prime Minister, Vojislav Koštunica won a majority, enough to form a

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.
¹⁷⁰ Ibid.
¹⁷¹ Ibid.
¹⁷² Ibid.
¹⁷³ Ibid.

coalition. However, after the release of the Ahtisaari Plan, Europe-oriented Koštunica, “the more nationalist of the two leaders,” stated that he would not stand by any coalition that recognized Kosovo’s independence and proposed Belgrade to “sever diplomatic relations with any state that recognizes Kosovo”¹⁷⁴

The introduction of the Ahtisaari Plan sparked animosity between Kosovar Albanians and Kosovar Serbs. The Plan was approved by the Contact group besides Russia, who positioned itself alongside Serbia today. The Albanian side felt gravely dissatisfied with the concessions it would be obliged to make to the Serbs. Vetevendosje (“Self-determination”), an Albanian activist organization, in addition to local Serb leaders, believed that the decentralization contextualized in the Ahtisaari Plan would create an avenue for Serbian secession, though any such attempt would be interpreted by the Albanian majority as an act of war. Thousands of Serbs in Mitrovica led a demonstration against the implementation of the Ahtisaari Plan. Vetevendosje separately led thousands of Albanians in violent demonstration and were subsequently attacked by U.N police. Two Albanians were killed in this demonstration, as tear gas and rubber bullets filled the air. In retaliation for their brutality, unidentified Albanians planted bombs underneath U.N. envoy vehicles. President of Serbia Boris Tadić and Prime Minister Vojislav Koštunica ruled out any use of violence in regard to the Kosovo problem.¹⁷⁵

After a fourth draft at the request of Russia, the Settlement failed to be enacted, although pieces of it may have snuck their way into the UN policy toward Kosovo.¹⁷⁶ The plan motivated the Albanian representatives to unilaterally declare independence of Kosovo, a vote that went against Serbians. Independence was in line with the Ahtisaari recommendations and so even

¹⁷⁴ Peter Lippman, 2007, “Final Status Plan for Kosovo Stirs up Whirlwind of Reactions,” *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* 26(3) 44-45.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ SETimes: Southeast Europe. "Russia reportedly rejects fourth draft resolution on Kosovo status (SETimes.com)." SETimes. http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/newsbriefs/setimes/newsbriefs/2007/06/29/nb-07 (accessed April 26, 2013).

though independence was not a unanimous decision, it was supported by the European Union and the United States.¹⁷⁷

Serbia believed this unilateral declaration of independence was illegal and should not have been supported by the international community. In March 2008, Serb opponents gained control of a UN Courthouse in Mitrovica. More than 100 people were injured and in clashes involving UN and NATO forces; one UN police officer was killed.¹⁷⁸

Kosovo's Parliament adopted a new constitution in April 2008, and the majority ethnic Albanian government came to power, "after nine years of UN rule."¹⁷⁹ In response, Serbia created their own government and assembly in Mitrovica. The UN General Assembly voted to place the question of Kosovo's independence into the hands of the International Court of Justice. December of 2008 again brought Kosovo under the authority of a greater power through the commission of EULEX, or the European Union mission in Kosovo. Serbia agreed to this mission. In 2010, the International Court of Justice ruled that Kosovo did not violate international law by seceding from Serbia.¹⁸⁰

Through the Ahtisaari Plan, Ki-moon asserted that reintegration into Serbia was not a viable solution. The antagonistic relationship between the Kosovar Albanians and Kosovar Serbs exacerbated by the Milošević administration in the 1990s terminated any chances of Kosovo to reunite with Serbia. There was too much animosity and mistrust between the two ethnies through the "systematic discrimination against the vast Albanian majority in Kosovo, and their effective elimination from public life," and the Kosovar Albanian armed response, which prompted the creation of the UNSCR 1244.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ Kosovo Profile." *BBC News*. 31. October 2012. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-18331273>

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ki-moon 2.

Ki-moon concluded that continued international administration was not sustainable, and that the only answer was independence with continued international supervision. The United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) created and developed many of the institutions within Kosovo. These institutions have in turn granted Kosovo a legitimate future by granting its citizens “ownership in, and responsibility for, their own affairs.”¹⁸² Despite Kosovo’s built-up institutions, its economic progression stagnated. Kosovo’s inability to produce a viable economy stems from its uncertain political status. Its questionable political future detracts foreign capital and hope to integrate within its local economy. This results in socioeconomic problems such as poverty and unemployment. Ki-moon asserted that independence would alleviate the economic problem within Kosovo; international recognition gave Kosovo the ability to petition to join the European Union, an institution that, after Kosovo has met several key reforms, is a key resource for economic development. He concludes that while independence is the viable solution, Kosovo is still in a state of instability, and this instability may be longer than anticipated. Ki-moon suggested that the continued support with international supervision vis-a-vis international citizens and military presence would assist this transition.¹⁸³

Despite the United Nation’s hope to create unified history between Kosovar Serbs and Kosovar Albanians, the post-independent society remained divided. today. On January 7, 2013, nine Serbs were arrested in Gračanica on their way out of a monastery from a Christmas liturgy.¹⁸⁴ Serbian government’s Office for Kosovo-Metohija Aleksandar Vulin believed this to be an act of anarchy.¹⁸⁵ When Belgrade and Priština continued their talks on January 17, 2013 in

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ki-moon #

¹⁸⁴ Serbian Orthodox Christians celebrate Christmas according to the Julian calendar.

¹⁸⁵ “No Lasting, Just Solution for Kosovo without Consent of Serbia.” *Serbian Government*. 8 January 2013. <http://www.srbija.gov.rs/vesti/vest.php?id=91246>

Brussels, Vulin warned that continued behavior like this on the side of Priština could risk these discussions.

Dulin believed that the United Nations ardently backs Priština, but that Priština had taken this as a ‘green light’ to endorse violence against Serbs. The transfer of complete powers to the Albanian majority government was a mistake in the eyes of key Serbian politicians because it was done without the consent of the Serbian government. Dulin decried the actions of the United Nations, stating, “the international community and Priština must understand that there can be no lasting and just solution for Kosovo-Metohija without the consent of Serbia and the Serbs living there.”¹⁸⁶

Currently officials in Kosovo conduct what they call “reciprocity measures.” The Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić requested permission to visit Gračanica back in 2013 for the Serbian Orthodox Christmas. However, Kosovo denied this request, as its officials were banned from traveling to Serbia upon their own request. Last Christmas Serbian President Boris Tadić visited the monastery in Gračanica, and ethnic Albanians hurled stones at him. Despite the independence to resolve the political question of Kosovo, the socio-cultural status of Kosovo remains in turmoil. Nikolić, who is a former head of the Serbian Progressive Party, “accused European Union authorities in Kosovo of bias by letting Kosovo authorities to decide whether the Serb leader could visit Kosovo.”¹⁸⁷

Serbia itself faces many dilemmas, as the external national homeland to the minority Serbs living in Kosovo, and also as the hopeful candidate for joining the European Union. On January 11, 2013, the Serbian Parliamentary Committee on Kosovo and Metohija finished their debate on a draft resolution. The members of parliament concluded that the draft was

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ “Kosovo denies Serb president Orthodox Christmas visit.” *Yahoo News*. 5 January 2013. <http://news.yahoo.com/kosovo-denies-serb-president-orthodox-christmas-visit-150315931.html>

unconstitutional, and violated the Serbian Constitution because it mentions Serbs living in Kosovo as “Serb community in Kosovo,” as opposed to “Serbian citizens.”¹⁸⁸ Thus, Serbia still recognizes north Kosovar Serbs as their kin.

As of 2013, the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) MP Slobodan Samardžić believed that the West intended to hand Kosovo over to the Albanians. The MP within Serbian Government was indecisively opinionated on how to deal with the Kosovo problem. They made 11 different resolutions, but even within the government, the political players split. Other MP believed that the goal of the resolution was “to create a community of Serb municipalities in Kosovo that would have police and judicial authority and that the resolution would pave the government’s path in further negotiations with Priština.”¹⁸⁹ The disagreement among MP and the president demonstrated Serbia’s opinion of Kosovo does not run within party lines. Rather, it is a state issue.¹⁹⁰

Evaluation

Recall that this study explores the interrelation between the Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Albanian metanarrative and how it has come to form each national identity. Brubaker explains the national identity through a triadic nexus, a mutually antagonistic relationship made up of the external national homeland, nationalizing nationalisms and the minority group.

Brubaker’s triadic nexus operates because of its mutually antagonistic relationship. That is, each form of nationalism competes with the other. The external national homeland protects their ethnic kin residing in the nation where the nationalizing nationalisms politically and (oftentimes) culturally dominate. Each of the nationalisms is able to compete with one another

¹⁸⁸ “Committee on Kosovo wraps up debate on draft.” *B92*. 11 January 2013. http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics-article.php?vv=2013&mm=01&dd=11&nav_id=84105

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

because each perceives their own form of national identity to be conceived through historical claims to Kosovo. Derrida explains these claims as binary oppositions because they contradict one another, and Barthes explains metanarratives are historical myths because they are formed on the basis of perception. According to the ethnicity to whom the myth belongs, this claim of history is not a perception but an explanation of their very identity. In this regard, political leaders might exploit myths since they are malleable and can be bent to the will of their cause. In the functioning of this binary opposition, nationalism forms. Each group of the triadic nexus functions to sustain the validity of their own master narrative further perpetuating the polarization of the binary oppositions in the dynamic of the mutually antagonistic relationship. Because myths themselves are so malleable, political leaders who represent Kosovar Serbs and Kosovar Albanians adapted the myth into their own rhetoric in order to establish a firmer hand upon the population.

This research formed three hypotheses in exploring the evolution of Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Albanian national identities. The first two hypotheses revolve around the evolution of Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Albanian unique national identity. The final hypothesis examines the consequences of international intervention when the international community involves itself in Kosovo conflict.¹⁹¹ The hypotheses are as follows: (1.) Are Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Albanian historical myths collectively perceived by the respective ethnicities as “truths” that are the foundations for their national identities?; (2.) If (1) is accepted, then do these historical myths create a mutually antagonistic relationship when they are at play with one another? Meaning, do these versions of history depend on the other for their legitimacy, despite their conflicting storylines?; (3) If (2) is accepted, then does the UN intervention in Kosovo influence the process

¹⁹¹ Kosovo conflict, meaning, the mutually nationalist antagonistic relationship, and the dispute over whose formation of national identity is correct.

of forming a national identity in Kosovo by supporting the Albanian meta-narrative and conversely affect Kosovo's ability to form a cohesive national identity? This section analyzes the data to observe either the support or refutation of each hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1 Accepted: Kosovar Serb and Kosovar Albanian historical myths are collectively perceived by the respective ethnicity as "truths" that are the foundations for their national identity.

According to Florian Bieber, author of *Nationalist Mobilization and Stories of Serb Suffering*, three key dimensions of the myth should be noted before examining the Battle of 1389 and its modern usage. First, the myth joined the calendar of Serbia, as an annual commemoration called Vidovdan. In this respect, the nation institutionalized the myth, both reinforcing and reaffirming its national significance at least once a year. In addition, memorializing the myth annually demonstrates that "contrasts between the historical record of the battle and its mythical representation are not without interest."¹⁹²

Second, Bieber notes the myth's relation to Kosovo as a justification for its territorial claim to Kosovo. The commemorative calendar reinforces the sentiments of the battle, and the medieval Serbian kingdom. This dimension serves to justify the territorial claim because despite the demographic of Kosovo, or modern adaptations to history, the "fact remains" that Kosovo belonged to Serbia first. Third, Bieber emphasizes the myth holds a perennial nature in that the existence of the myth coupled with its commemoration demonstrates a "historical continuity between the contemporary Serbian nation and the 'Serbs' of the Middle Ages."¹⁹³

Bieber suggests that the myth situated itself within the role of politics only toward the end the nineteenth century. During this time, nationalism was in its early beginnings, touching pervasively upon the Serb population simultaneously while the state territorially expanded its

¹⁹² Bieber, 95.

¹⁹³ Bieber 96.

own national policy.¹⁹⁴ Stealing land that metaphorically represents ethnic identity demonstrates that myth and national identity are collectively imagined constructs. Serbs living in Serbia possess nationalist ties to Kosovo; the attachment to Kosovo as space denotes how integral the land is to the genesis of their ethnicity. For example, in 2007, the Serbian government attempted to organize its people in response to developments in Kosovo that at the time might have led to Kosovo's independence. The slogan read, "Kosovo is Serbia."¹⁹⁵ The myth encompasses the notion that Kosovo has been taken from the Serbs since Ottoman occupation of territory in 1389. This idea generates a sense of hyperprotection of the territory; any threat to the ownership of Kosovo is seen as a direct threat to the Serb identity itself.

As this research demonstrates, the Serbian government's 2007 attempt to mobilize its population around the sentiments of the Battle of 1389 has been done before. Various Serb political leaders used the Battle of Kosovo to create a nationalist atmosphere where their respective ethnicities are defined by the threat of another community. For instance, Milošević uses the symbol of the myth as a justification for political protection of the Serbian identity. Bieber states, "Milošević presented his 'successes' in extending Belgrade's control through his constitutional amendments as 'late justice' to the sacrifices made for Serbia by Miloš Obilić 600 years earlier."¹⁹⁶ Consistent with Brubaker's triadic nexus, Milošević potentially saw a motivation to protect the Serb minority whom he felt were threatened by the Albanian majority. As the representative of the external national homeland, Milošević possibly felt his duty was to reinforce the rights of the Serb minority.

As stated in earlier sections, the Kosovo myth evolved as a symbolic representation of the Serbian identity. Many of the heroes present within the Kosovo myth such as Prince Lazar

¹⁹⁴ Bieber 99.

¹⁹⁵ Vesna Peric Zimonjic, "Serbia: Too Late, Billboards Show aWay," Inter Press Service | Journalism and Communication for Global Change, <http://www.ipsnews.net/2007/12/serbia-too-late-billboards-show-a-way/> (accessed April 15, 2013).

¹⁹⁶ Bieber 102.

prepared to sacrifice their lives for greater Serbia. It is not surprising for a Serb nationalist to perceive himself as a sacrificial offering to the greater Serbia cause, as this idea has been repeated and institutionalized through the myth. In addition to his reverence to the myth, Milošević's growing popularity likened him to the successor of Knez Lazar through the use of many slogans by the population, such as 'Knez Lazar, you did not have the luck of having Sloba at your side.'¹⁹⁷

Milošević used the myth to reframe the story of his present political struggle. Milošević "can be viewed as the new Knez Lazar" coming to rescue and preserve the Serb identity, "while the Albanians were the Turks, threatening the Serb people in Kosovo."¹⁹⁸ As Knez Lazar, Milošević represents the external national homeland, the protectorate of Serb identity and the symbol of the Serbian struggle. The Kosovo myth literally played itself out in reality, the line of historical fact, myth, and opinion of the present day society all blurring at the intersection of perception.

Milošević's ability to organize the Serbian population into mass mobilization indicates Serbian leaders can "adjust the myth to [their] contemporary needs."¹⁹⁹ The malleability of the myth suggests that is not a "truth," but a perception that can change/be adapted according to need. The politicization of the myth renders the historical fact in the events that surround the myth as irrelevant.

Vojislav Koštunica, the Serbian Prime Minister, is another political leader who uses the Battle of 1389 in response to Kosovo's independence. In his 2008 speech states, "If we as Serbs renounce Serbianhood, our origin, our Kosovo, our ancestors and our history –then, who are we Serbs? What is our name then?"²⁰⁰ Here Koštunica suggests Kosovo embodies Serb identity. Despite Belgrade as the external national homeland for the minorities residing in Kosovo, the

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Bieber 102-103.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

land of Kosovo itself represents the diachronic evolution of Serbian history of which all Serbs play a part. Without Kosovo, Koštunica notes, Serb ethnic identity is lost. Those who “take” Kosovo from Serbia are denying Serbs their national identity. This notion is the beginning of the “us” vs. “them” mentality political leaders foster through their rhetoric about the myth.

Similarly to the Serbian narrative, the Albanian narrative of Adem Jashari is seen as the foundation for their national identity. Extrapolating Bieber’s dimensions of the Serb myth, I notice a similarity in the create of the Albanian story. Flag Day, a commemorative holiday for the Kosovar Albanians, has been an institutionalized day of remembrance as it takes place annually on November 28.²⁰¹ In contrast to the Battle of 1389, the Legendary Commander Adem Jashari is a fairly recent national myth. As Tim Judah, author of *Kosovo: What Everyone Needs to Know*, states, “For the vast majority of the people who live in Kosovo today, though, that is to say the Albanians, independence is the righting of a historical wrong, which is to say the Serbian conquest (Serbs say “liberation) of Kosovo in 1912.”²⁰² This is Beiber’s second dimension to the myth: the story provides a justification for why Kosovo belongs to the Albanians. In response to Judah’s quote it is important to note the disjuncture between the Serb and Albanian metanarrative of Kosovo. As Serbs view the Balkan Wars of 1912 as the liberation of Kosovo, Albanians feel that at this time Kosovo was stripped from them. This demonstrates the oppositional competition imbedded in the framework of both metanarratives.

The Battle has had several centuries to seep into the pores of the Serb ethnic identity, while the sentiment of Jashari has had only a few decades. Taking this into consideration, the emergence of Albanian counter-narratives was only expected. Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers state that Hashim Thaçi allegedly falsified a photograph with him and the Legendary

²⁰¹ Valkov 112.

²⁰² Tim Judah, “Preface, xix.

Commander, with a caption, ‘Legends have a future.’²⁰³ Another counter-narrative suggests that Jashari participated in the Rugova camp and sent him to Albania to train a fighter. However, a supporter of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK),²⁰⁴ believes that the KLA stole the memory of Adem Jashari and that he had always been on Rugova’s side.²⁰⁵

According to Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers, “President Ibrahim Rugova who before 1998 persistently claimed that the KLA was an invention of Serb secret services, and always refused to be associated in any way with the KLA, has an uneasy relationship with the Jasharis.”²⁰⁶ Despite their research, Rugova has published a photograph with Adem Jashari in a newspaper closely aligned with his party. This photograph demonstrates the varying political leaders desire to win over their constituents through associating with the universal icon Adem Jashari.

The contrasting perceptions of Adem Jashari demonstrate the social construct of the metanarrative. As the world watches the construction of a historical myth, my study contends the viability of the myth legitimizes itself by those who view the myth as truth. The symbolic representation of Adem Jashari is not in question; rather, the exploitation of the myth to pursue a particular political endeavor fosters contemporary details surrounding the myth. Thus far, it appears as though Rugova’s version of Adem Jashari remains accepted, as he became the first president of Kosovo.²⁰⁷ The competition of the Albanian political leaders and their usage of the legendary commander can be likened to Milošević’s attempt to use the Kosovo myth to mobilize the population; whoever possesses the power of the myth has the people. The myth provides “an icon of national solidarity, strengthens [Albanian] national political identity and makes the claim

²⁰³ Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers 526.

²⁰⁴ “Obituary: Ibrahim Rugova: The President of Kosovo, Ibrahim Rugova, died on 21 January 2006, after losing a battle with lung cancer”

²⁰⁵ Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers 526.

²⁰⁶ Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers 525-526.

²⁰⁷ AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, "Kosovo's President, Hailed as Its 'Father,' Dies at 61," The New York Times, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/22/international/europe/22kosovo.html?_r=0 (accessed April 17, 2013).

to independent non-negotiable,” in addition to “shift[ing] the focus from ‘shameful’ experiences of victimization/humiliation to imparting pride.”²⁰⁸ There is little wonder why, then, the emergence of counter-narratives exists in the first place.

The appearance of an Albanian counternarrative demonstrates Kosovar Albanians altering the myth to meet their contemporary needs, socially, politically, etc. As John Lye noted about Derrida’s Différance, “truth” claims are contingent upon the relationships they have. As an Albanian counternarrative emerged from the Jashari story, and the Serb myth contrasts both, I surmise that these histories have been built on a sense of difference, displacements and deferrals. Although each group accepts the narratives as “truth,” to accept this claim is to accept that identity is a fiction based on oppositions, of displacements. In the next section I will touch on the myths as binary oppositions.

[Hypothesis 2 Accepted: The historical myths create a mutually antagonistic relationship when they are at play with one another. These versions of history depend on the other for their legitimacy, despite conflicting storylines.](#)

Recall that Brubaker’s triadic nexus presents three forms of mutually antagonistic nationalism that cannot exist without the other forms. Nationalizing nationalisms are the core, dominant ethnicity residing in the place in question. Minorities are those living under the auspices of the nationalizing nationalisms, but feel connected to a greater ethnic nation to which they belong. Lastly, the external national homelands oppose the nationalizing nationalisms and feel obligated to protect the minority ethnic kin. In this relational dynamic of nationalism, my research frames the Kosovar Albanians as the nationalizing nationalisms, the Kosovar Serbs as the minority population, and Serbia as the external national homeland.

Brubaker’s triadic nexus explains the dynamic involved within the “us” vs. “them” mentality political leaders created in relation to Kosovo. One observes the interlocking nature of the

²⁰⁸ Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers 527.

metanarrative and the cultural identity exacerbated within the mutually antagonistic relationship among the triadic nexus. As the external national homeland protects minority rights, the minority must adjust its identity to fit into the box the external national homeland has drawn for it.²⁰⁹ In the case of Kosovo, the minority must remain consistent with their ideology of the Kosovo myth.

As the Albanians residing in Kosovo have “taken” this territory, they have established themselves as oppositional to the Kosovo master narrative because they claimed the territory for themselves. Thus, the Albanian perception of the land comes against the Serb metanarrative of their own history. Koštunica, like many other Serbs at the time possibly viewed the Albanian declaration as a slight to the Serbian identity. The symbiosis of Kosovo myth and Brubaker’s triadic nexus demonstrates that although nationalism submerged (as seen in the poles prior to 2008),²¹⁰ it did not completely disappear. Belgrade perceived the declaration of independence as the erasure of Serb identity, and sought to protect the minority rights of its ethnic kin. Yet as the Kosovar Serbs view Belgrade as its external national homeland, the Serbians residing in post-Yugoslavia viewed Kosovo as the bedrock of Serbian civilization. Kosovo is the external national homeland of the Serbian identity. The Serbs view the Albanian movement similar to their historical narrative. Six hundred years ago, Ottomans took Kosovo from Serbs and so in 2008 it is the same. The Kosovo myth instills a sense of nationalism that can never been wiped out. So long as the Kosovo myth exists, there will always be an opposition to the ideals of the Serbian identity.

Through the differing myths both ethnicities claim as truth, the minority group continues to feel subverted with the introduction of variation actions done by the nationalizing nationalism to express the validity of their history. Serbia as the external national homeland subsequently

²⁰⁹ Brubaker 5.

²¹⁰ Andric, “Serbian Presidential Elections since 1990.”

seeks to protect its ethnic kin, defending its own master narrative perceived as being threatened by the Albanian majority. Despite either ethnicity's best efforts, neither will accept the other's master narrative as it runs counter to its own. Their relationship remains mutually antagonistic in this regard.

As Bieber observes, the territorial claim of Kosovo is one dimension of the myth. The Serbian Orthodox Church defines the Serb national identity as one of victimization and highly dependent on Serbia's claim to Kosovo itself. Here Derrida's binary opposition comes to life. The Serbian Orthodox Church notes that the existence of the holiday of the Battle of 1389 is to "protect the meaning if its existence from its enemies."²¹¹ The opposition between the myth and its enemies is not defined through their polarization; rather, the enemy of the myth is everything that exists counter to what the myth stands for, e.g. the Serb identity. The Church's appeal requires Serbs to "protect" this Serb identity when it is threatened by anything non-Serbian. And yet this act of protection cannot function without the existence of the "non-Serbian." Thus, it turns into a nationalist claim that the Serbian way of life, the Serbian identity needs to be protected against the enemies who do not agree with it.

Again, this binary opposition can be seen through Milošević's time in power. As a representative of the Serbian external national homeland, Milošević speaks of protecting the minority group in Kosovo because he identifies them as being part of the greater Serbian state. Likewise, Milošević challenges the Albanian narrative as the nationalizing nationalism. He states, "Yugoslavia doesn't exist without Kosovo! Yugoslavia would disintegrate without Kosovo! Yugoslavia and Serbia will never give up Kosovo!"²¹² By Milošević using the Serb myth to carry out his political endeavors, he asserts Kosovo as the crux of Serbian national

²¹¹ Bieber 99-100.

²¹² Milošević, "Speech of Slobodan Milošević at Kosovo Polje."

identity. The idea that Serbia “will never give up Kosovo” speaks to the Albanian ethnicity “stealing” Kosovo away from the Serbs, an idea that stems from the Kosovo myth. Kosovo “changing hands” creates a binary opposition because if the territory is recognized as belonging to Albanians, then the Serbian narrative is not only displaced, but denied. This is a binary opposition because the Serb identity embodied within Kosovo itself is threatened if the territory is recognized as belonging to someone else. The myth cannot function to Milošević’s advantage if the threat does not exist so Milošević He uses Kosovar Albanian ethnicity as the “other” to create the opposition and keep his claim to power.

His speech follows his intention to guard the Serb identity from the threat of the nationalizing nationalism Albanian majority residing in Kosovo. Just as this research reduces Milošević’s claim to authority through the usage of the Kosovo myth, it is but another perception.

Judah notes about the Albanians view the declaration of independence as a “righting of a historical wrong,” suggests that Kosovo at some point was taken from the Kosovar Albanians, and that this land belongs to them. In other words, the Albanian declaration of independence solidifies and reinforces Albanian perception of history; they possess the land and have tangible proof of their created identity. The Kosovar Albanian master narrative centers around the idea of land ownership and self-sacrifice for the preservation of the Albanian identity in spite of Serbian truth claims that runs counter to the Albanian perception of Kosovo’s history.

A Serbian newspaper article written by Edona Peci titled “Kosovo Commemorates Wartime ‘Hero’ Jashari”²¹³ denotes a fanciful connotation to the word hero. When put in quotes, the idea of Jashari as a hero is an interpretation, something that may not be “undeniable fact.”

²¹³ Edona Peci, “Kosovo Commemorates Wartime ‘Hero’ Jashari, *Balkan Transitional Justice*, March 5, 2013 <http://www.Balkaninsight.com/en/article/Kosovo-reminds-legendary-hero>.

Peci uses words like “ex-guerrilla commander,” and “KLA shrine” when writing about Jashari and the ceremony.²¹⁴

While the Kosovar Albanians embrace the legendary commander, Kosovar Serbs claim Jashari as an “ex-guerrilla commander,” instead of a legendary commander. This suggests a disjuncture between their views; a binary relationship between the two perceptions. Although Albanians view Adem Jashari as the legendary commander, he cannot exist within their minds as an ex-guerrilla commander.

According to di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers, the Kosovar Albanians believe “any public criticism of the legendary commander amounts to blasphemy.”²¹⁵ To dismiss the notion of Jashari as legendary commander is to deny Kosovar Albanians their identity as a nation. When Kosovar Serbs think of Jashari as an ex-guerrilla commander, they repudiate the Kosovar Albanian national identity, because Jashari cannot exist as both a legendary commander, liberating his people from the grasp of Serbia, and as an ex-guerrilla commander to a terrorist organization, seeking to once again take Kosovo away from the Serbs.

Hypothesis 3 Accepted: The UN intervention in Kosovo influenced the process of forming a national identity in Kosovo by supporting the Albanian metanarrative and conversely affected Kosovo’s ability to form a cohesive national identity.

The UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) attempted to invoke a shared national identity through the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement. Ahtisaari’s proposal begins with the statement, “Kosovo shall be a multi-ethnic society,”²¹⁶ denoting the UN’s attempt to create a supra-metanarrative, through the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers 520.

²¹⁶ “Kosovo Countdown: A Blueprint for Transition.”

Status Settlement. Kosovar Albanians welcomed NATO forces, while Kosovar Serbs later revealed their sentiment of the international community by voting against the Ahtisaari Plan.²¹⁷

In the same time the Ahtisaari Plan was “in the works,” the Serbian Radical Party gained popularity. Moderate politicians in Serbia took a more nationalist approach in responding to the competition. They rewrote the Serbian constitution and put in its preamble that Kosovo would forever be a part of Serbia. In January of 2007, the Radicals won a plurality of votes, 26 per cent.²¹⁸ This response to the Ahtisaari Plan denotes two important concepts. First, the Serbs felt threatened by the prospect of once again “losing” Kosovo, and political leaders responded by organizing a way for the population to unite in the name of the 1389 myth. Second, the action by the UN exacerbated the sentiments that caused Serbians to once again essentialize their identity into an “us” versus “them” mentality.

This research contends that the Serbs and their alternative historical master narrative was *perceived* by them to be wrong by the international community. According to this essay, the 1389 myth as viewed by the Serbs cannot be wrong because it is a perception of history, that, when contextualized in its own framework is legitimate. It is only when the Adem Jashari myth is juxtaposed to the Battle of 1389 myth that one can see that they do not agree, and the binary oppositions compete.

On the other hand, Kosovar Albanians perceive that they lived on the land as long as Kosovar Serbs did, and that independence was a “righting a historical wrong.”²¹⁹ The cultural binary opposition demonstrated through Brubaker’s triadic nexus telescopes out to the international community. The international community has inevitably decided to back the

²¹⁷ Craig S. Smith, "Serbia Rejects Plan That Could Lead to Kosovo Independence," New York Times, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/03/world/europe/03kosovo.html?pagewanted=print> (accessed March 18, 2013).

²¹⁸ Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs. "Summary of the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement."

²¹⁹ Tim Judah, *Kosovo: What Everyone Needs to Know*.

Albanian majority living in Kosovo through the Ahtisaari initiative. Serbia perceived this same act as a threat to its minority. In response, Serbia rejected the Ahtisaari proposal, as the Kosovar Serbian external national homeland.

Serbia's motivation to remain involved in the affairs of Kosovo demonstrates Brubaker's vision of the triadic-nexus. As the complications of Kosovo's independence arise, Serbia's interest in the protection of its people remains vigilant. Moreover, Serbia's irate nature towards the international community, namely the UN, augments as the Serbians within Kosovo are neglected. The unavoidable, antagonistic relationship of the triadic nexus is pressured by the international community when it is observed through the eyes of a Serbian.

These cultural binary oppositions are perceptions; they are ideological constructs that can potentially grow less intense with time, but probably will not go away, as long as the emphasis on the importance of a "right" history remains perceived as integral to the future of Kosovo.

The UN Mission in Kosovo unintentionally supported the Albanian national identity through its inability to make hard decisions about the future status of Kosovo. UNMIK, with "standards before status" wanted Kosovo to reach certain democratic benchmarks before making hard choices about its status about statehood. In doing so, the Albanian community remained uncertain about the future status of Kosovo and believed in the possibility that the "international community" would succumb to Serbian request for partition. In response, Albanian politicians were slow to act on UNMIK's proposal for decentralization (increased Serbian local government representation), prior to final status talks.

UNMIK emphasized a multiethnic state by reintegrating the Serbs into Kosovo community as tens of thousands of Serbs migrated in response to the 1999 NATO bombing and to also advocating for their participation in the peace process. However, UNMIK's goal for

Kosovo to reach a multiethnic state only appeared to be a surface level approach, as the mission's agenda failed to mention by name the other ethnic minorities in Kosovo: Ashkali, Egyptians, Roma, Gorani, Turks and Bosniaks. Until 2006, UNMIK attempted to modulate Kosovar Albanian desire for self-determination, but could not provide an alternative narrative to the "practice of evoking Albanian memories of Serbian repression as a unifying theme."²²⁰ Although opposed to the Albanian nationalist discourse, UNMIK's lack of an alternative narrative strengthened Albanian nationalism and "kept past alive and reinforced Albanian determination to stay focused on independence."²²¹

Although in 2008 the Albanians got their wish to become an independent state, it came at the cost of the international institutions shaping the future of the political identity of the nation. And yet, "What the international community – symbolized by UNMIK – failed to grasp was that collective memory would continue to play a decisive role in the reconstruction of Kosovar Albanian national identities after the Serbian government lost control over Kosovo." In the future, Albanian discourse will continue to reconfigure and fluctuate based on the current times because the political figures will be pressured to mimic state policies like the US that will call for multiethnic representation. Cohabitation with other ethnicities would require at least a sense of civic nationalism, but while the practice remains largely characteristic of an Albanian state, a cohesive Kosovar identity would be far from tenable.²²²

Conclusion

From an emic perspective, Kosovar Serbs and Kosovar Albanians will never reach a consensus about the history of Kosovo; their perceptions are their reality. As we have seen, their binary oppositional framework has solidified each subsequent master narrative and wielded

²²⁰ Ingimundarson 112.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ingimundarson 119.

considerable power when initiating nationalist sentiments. Each myth unified members of the same ethnicity, while ostracizing members of opposing groups. An emic perspective asserts that Kosovo may always remain divided because a collectively perceived history does not yet exist.

Brubaker's triadic nexus describes opposing master narratives through the lens of nationalism. Each type of nationalism preserves its own myth, and in doing so creates a mutually antagonistic relationship. Though Brubaker's triadic nexus explains the relationship of the binary opposition, it does not generate a solution to the competing historical myths.

The international community attempted to produce a solution for the different myths by invoking a common history. By backing Kosovo's independence, the international community hoped to eradicate past errors done by Serbs and Albanians. Instead, the international community vis-à-vis the Ahtisaari plan exacerbated Kosovar Serb hostilities, while giving Kosovar Albanians the "justice" they have waited for.

This study demonstrates the importance of perception in case of Kosovo. War and national insecurity are two examples of times when Serbs and Albanians living in Kosovo essentialized their respective ethnicities. When faced with a threat, in this case, a varying alternative to their master narrative, each respective political leader relied on their respective myths to foster an environment where ethnicities defined themselves based on the other community in which they were in conflict. The "us" versus "them" mentality allowed for the unification of collective ethnic ideals.

The myth as a symbol of ethnic struggle demonstrates that the binary opposition need not necessarily be anything in particular; the binary exists as an opposition and defines Serb identity primarily *because* it is in opposition to it. The Kosovo myth shapes Serb perceptions of modern day actors. Whether it is NATO, or any member of the international community imposing on

Belgrade, the Albanians majority residing in Kosovo, Serbians see the others' interactions as threatening the existence of the Serb identity manifested by Kosovo itself.

In the present day, this has been played out in instances such as the Pride parade. Extreme right groups who view themselves as the main holders of Serb identities are oppositional to anyone or anything they view as antithesis to their cause. As Barbara N. Wiesinger, author of "The Continuing Presence of the Extreme Right in Post-Milošević Serbia," states "Since 2001, the Serbian extreme right, which emerged during the 1990s, has gained considerable public visibility. Arguably, its flourishing is connected to Serbia's perennial political and economic instability as well as to the accompanying crisis in value orientation and social norms."²²³ At first glance, organizations with nationalizing tendencies are results of the instable political and economic atmosphere of Serbia. Yet there is a disjuncture between this statement and the embodiment of the ideologies which these organizations stand. One may define extreme right organizations within Serbia as existing purely because other ways of living counteract with their perception of how a true Serbian is supposed to live. Thus, a "true" Serbian according to an extreme right thinker may not be defined through what he is, but by what he is not.

For example, members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community and their allies have held a Pride parade through the streets of Serbia since 2001 to celebrate their identity. In 2001, far right groups viciously attacked and assaulted participants during their peaceful demonstration. Though this parade has a history of resistance from extreme right groups within Serbia, the parade itself was cancelled in 2009 because of the threats from ultranationalist groups. Here it is important to note the time at which these attacks took place. The 2001 attack occurred slightly over the two-year mark from when NATO bombed Serbia

²²³ Barbara N. Wiesinger, "The Continuing Presence of the Extreme Right in Post-Milošević Serbia," *Balkanologie* (2008) 11:1-2, <http://balkanologie.revues.org/index1363.html>

(1999). Similarly, the 2009 far right attack took place only a year after Kosovo's declaration of independence. Though there is not enough data to draw any conclusions about this dynamic, there remains a relationship between the threat of Kosovo's loss, and the attack on members of the Serbian community who are perceived by nationalist groups as not upholding the Serbian identity.

The parade would have been an opportunity for Serbia to demonstrate its ability to function as a democracy ten years after the bloody civil war, but the mental hold Serb nationalist organizations still have on the Serbian government and citizens is a testament to the perception that Serbs still work within the framework of binary opposition.

Referring to Derrida, the extreme right groups perceive their cause as a tribute to the Serbian identity. They believe themselves to be the protectorates of true Serbs, labeling their organizations names such as 1389, and Obraz (Serbian for *face*). These organizations perceive their cause as congruent to the face of Serbia, physical embodiments of the Kosovo myth. Organizations such as 1389 and Obraz function as oppositions. They remain nationalist in their ideologies specifically because they subvert alternative voices of what it means to be Serbian. Far right groups look to their binary oppositions as threats to the preservation of the Serb identity, and therefore need to be punished because of this. As Mladin Obradović, founder of Obraz, stated, "Everyone knows what will happen if they go ahead with that parade of shame, and the responsibility for that will be of those who organized it. They cannot expect to poke their finger in the eye of our nation and go unpunished."²²⁴

Here it is important to note Obradović's parallel to those who identify as members of the LGBTQ community, and the insult he claims this has on his nation. Obradović defines his

²²⁴ Dejan Anastasijevic, "Right-Wing Threats Scrap Serbian Gay-Pride Parade," *Time Magazine*, September 23, 2009, <http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,1925715,00.html>.

perception of Serbs not by what they are, but by what they supposedly aren't. In this light, the right wing ideologies only function, only exist through oppositions. This sentiment can be expanded to include all Serbian nationalist causes.

A year later, Serbia decided to hold the Pride parade. This time rioters “fired shots and hurled petrol bombs at the headquarters of the ruling pro-western Democratic party, setting the garage of the building on fire.”²²⁵ Though many other places harnessed damage by these rioters, Serbia itself saw a reaction by police officers and other institutions to counteract the nationalist movements. Serbian political authorities recognize the disjointed nature of the nationalist opposition groups, and the progression away from the literal reading of the Kosovo myth. If the Serb identity as one of suffering, victimization and self-sacrifice emerges within the right wing extremists, political authorities such as Dragan Sutanović, the defense minister of and vice president of the Democratic Party hoped otherwise. He stated, “It is high time that we deal in a very democratic way, through the courts, with these who call themselves members of the patriotic organizations.”²²⁶ Sutanović’s statement is a testament of the pull away from the traditional view of the community as suffering by seeking to hold the ultranationalist members responsible for their actions. Though slight, Sutanović’s statement is a movement away from the traditional view of the Serbian identity as tied to the myth. This could signal a more peaceful time within Serbia’s future, as traditionally the Kosovo myth has only been utilized in times of aggression as a way to mobilize the population into action.

Nationalist groups such as 1389 and Obraz demonstrate how certain identities are more easily evoked and how easy it is for others to fade into the background. In the case of Kosovo, the Kosovar Albanians aligned with the KLA in the formation of the Legendary Commander

²²⁵ Associated Press, “Serbia police clash with far-right rioters at gay pride march: Dozens hurt, including 47 officers, after protestors attempt to disrupt march in Belgrade,” *The Guardian*, October 10, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/oct/10/serbia-police-rioters-gay-pride/print>.

²²⁶ Ibid.

Adem Jashari, while the 1389 myth resurfaced with the perceived rise of the Albanian threat to the Serb identity. Whatever the case may be, a national myth can unify an ethnicity and essentialize any differences among the group. Despite a tool that can be provoked by political leaders, national myths are here to stay.

The international community must take these varying explanations for land ownership into account when dealing with conflict over land disputes based around national identity. More importantly the international community must take note that these myths revolve around dealing with the past. Within the case of Kosovo, national identity is an excuse and justification for “righting historical wrongs.”²²⁷ Though Kosovar Serbs and Kosovar Albanians have differing views of historical events, they must make peace with their past in order to solve their present day disputes. This may take generations, but at least it will be a start in the right direction.

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²²⁷ Tim Judah, *Kosovo: What Everyone Needs to Know*.

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