

## THE ROLE OF NON-NATIONAL ACTORS IN A NATIONAL START-UP: CASE OF KOSOVO

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### ABSTRACT

The issue concerning Kosovar identity dates back to the dissolution of Yugoslavia and a struggle for sovereignty persisted for more than thirty years. This struggle pertains to a re-positioning of a national identity to re-affirm itself as a separate nation, formerly towards Serbia, and latterly towards many centers. It is the international community demonstrating support for the Kosovo State for different reasons. This study aims to understand the impact of non-national actors on the nationalization of Kosovo. Since the EU, UN, and NATO have and still play an important role in the development of Kosovo, it is important to understand how the nation-state or state-nation project is defined and constructed in Kosovo and how authentic it will be in its final form. Due to the internal and external influences and challenges in re-casting its form under the politics of the nation, Kosovo is becoming more like a pseudo-nation than an authentic one.

**Keywords:** Kosovo, Nationalism, Nation-state, National Identity, International Community.

### ULUSLAřMA SÜRECİNDE ULUS-DIŐI AKTÖRLERİN ROLÜ: KOSOVA ÖRNEĐİ

#### ÖZ

Kosova kimliĐi meselesi Yugoslavya'nın daĐılması süreci ile yeniden sorgulanmaya başlanmıřtır. Esasen bu durum otuz yılı ařkın süredir devam eden bir egemenlik mücadelesidir. Bu mücadele bir ulusal kimliĐin yeniden konumlandırılması ve ayrı bir ulus olarak önce Sırbistan'a, sonra birçoĐ merkeze

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(uluslararası toplum) kendini yeniden tasdik ettirmeye ilişkindir. Bu mücadelenin önemli bir bölümü, uluslararası toplumun Kosova'nın bağımsızlığına tam destek verirken, uluslaşma sürecine çok farklı yaklaşmasından kaynaklanmaktadır. Bu çalışma, Kosova'nın uluslaşma projesinde yer alan ulus dışı aktörlerin etkisini anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. AB, BM ve NATO'nun Kosova devletinin gelişmesinde önemli bir rolü olduğu ve hala oynadığı bir gerçektir. Ulus-devlet veya devlet-ulus projesinin Kosova'da nasıl tanımlanıp inşa edildiği ve ne kadar özgün olacağını anlamak açısından önemlidir. Kosova, iç ve dış müdahaleler yaşamakta ve bunun neticesinde kendini tanımlamakta zorlanmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı ise Kosova'nın devlet inşa sürecinin başarısına paralel ulus inşası projesinin otantik olmaktan çok uluslararası toplumun müdahalesi neticesinde sahte bir ulus haline getirilmesini ortaya koymaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kosova, Milliyetçilik, Ulus-devlet, Ulusal Kimlik, Uluslararası Toplum.

## Introduction

Nationalism studies often start with a binary classification of open vs. closed, western vs. eastern, inclusive vs. exclusive, we (*the nation*) vs. they (*the Other*), liberal vs. illiberal; however, the case of Kosovo overturns these very assumptions. As the abovementioned concepts are all significant in the politics of the nation, they are toppled in the Kosovo case. This study aims to make an inquiry that goes beyond these binaries to understand how non-nationalist actors take part in the nationalization process and how it will shape the future of Kosovo. By non-nationalism<sup>1</sup>, the study refers to the international actors: United Nations (UN), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Union (EU), hereinafter referred to as the *International Community*, and their missions e.g., UNMIK, KFOR, and EULEX in Kosovo. As the script of this very nationalization project has been written at the international level and is playing out at the national, the leading role of the international community is to promote norms in Kosovo that favor

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<sup>1</sup> I borrowed this term from Breuilly to stress the foreign presence and collaboration of the international actors with the purpose of supporting the national resistance movement in Kosovo, which is working towards creating a non-ethnic identity formation in Kosovo, which will eventually lead to the creation of a State-Nation. See John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, The University of Chicago Press, USA 1993, p. 209; Also see Jürgen Habermas critique of the modern political identity formation and the nation losing its importance to supranation and/or local belongings, introducing the concept post-nationalism, which signifies a degree of non-nationalism; Jürgen Habermas, *The Postnational Constellation, Political Essays*, MIT Press, Cambridge 2001.

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the establishment of a strong and stable institutional structure, namely a *State*. But what about the nation? Will a top-down artificial identity function in Kosovo confront an authentic one? With the dissolution of Yugoslavia bringing several new nation-states to the fore, the issue of Kosovo began as an interregional political dispute, a struggle between the center (Serbia/Belgrade) and its peripheries (six republics plus the two autonomous provinces). With the death of Tito, there was a resurface of many nationalisms competing with one another, and Kosovo was no exception. Whether this be called “peripheral nationalism”,<sup>2</sup> “state-building nationalism”<sup>3</sup> or “unification nationalism”<sup>4</sup> towards a single Albanian state, the ultimate goal is to “... come along as political activities that aim to make the boundaries of the nation-a culturally distinctive collectivity aspiring to self-governance-coterminous with those of the state”.<sup>5</sup> The question tackled in this present study aims to answer what if and why non-national actors take part in such a national path by assisting, addressing, and competing in the establishment of a nation-state or state-nation. Throughout its history, starting with the Balkan wars, outside forces have decided the future of Kosovo. The final war between Serbia and Kosovo was no exception, as supported by Vickers who states, “Everything started with Kosovo, and everything will finish with Kosovo”.<sup>6</sup> It is the Kosovars<sup>7</sup> who are now searching for their national identity; however, the involvement of non-national actors has made the situation more complex. The debates circling Kosovo mostly concern the structure of the *State*, with several references to a “parastate”,<sup>8</sup> a “post-conflict state”,<sup>9</sup> a “quasi-state”<sup>10</sup> and even

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<sup>2</sup> M. Balent, “Europe and the Challenge of Peripheral Nationalism”, *Schuman Report on Europe*, (eds.) T. Chopkin and M. Foucher, Springer, Paris 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Hechter, *Containing Nationalism*, Oxford University Press, NY 2000.

<sup>4</sup> Breuilly, *op.cit.*, p. 281.

<sup>5</sup> Hechter, *op.cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> M. Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian: A History of Kosovo*, University of Columbia Press, New York 1998, p. 289.

<sup>7</sup> Kosovar or Kosovan is a named used to refer to the inhabitants of Kosovo, freed from any ethnic and cultural background and solely referring to the people of Kosovo. To be specific, one has to use either Kosovar Albanian or Kosovar Serbian to express the ethnic and cultural background of a person.

<sup>8</sup> P. H. Liotta, “Balkan Fragmentation and the Rise of the Parastate”, *Dismembering the State: The Death of Yugoslavia and Why It Matters*, (ed.) P. H. Liotta, Lexington Books, NY 2001; Also see Jaime Castan Pinos, *Kosovo and the Collateral Effects of Humanitarian Intervention*, Routledge, London 2001.

<sup>9</sup> Marius Ionut Calu, *Kosovo Divided Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Struggle for a State*, I. B. Tauris Publication, London 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Pal Kolsto, “The Sustainability and Future of Unrecognized Quasi-States”, *Journal of Peace Studies*, Volume 43, Number 6, 2016, p. 723-740.

a “post-colonial state”<sup>11</sup> model. This study explores the identity of Kosovo, concerning the state-society relation and its path to becoming a (possible) nation. The study first dives into a theoretical discussion to understand the dynamics of the break-up of Yugoslavia. Then, the focus shifts toward the reasons behind the transformation of the poorest region of Yugoslavia into the Republic of Kosovo under the control of the international community.

Hechter’s theory of internal colonialism has an explanatory quality to explain the backwardness of some regions and the problems experienced in national integration in a state experiencing an industrialization process. Although Yugoslavia went through a rather controversial modernization, it did create its center and peripheries. The theory creates a link between the economic and occupational differences between the groups in the state concerning their cultural and ethnic differences, especially in underdeveloped regions. It was mostly the incompatibility of the local with that of the State which was always fragile in Yugoslavia, finally leading to dissolution. It can be argued that Hechter’s theory thus offers a useful analytical perspective in addressing firstly the dissolution of Yugoslavia, and more importantly, what this paper argues (i.e., the birth of today’s Republic of Kosovo), since the country suffered primarily from an internal, followed by an external form of colonialism shortly after. Thus, a nation fetching for its state ended up becoming a state-nation, rather than a nation-state. As this paper sets forth, the role of the international community is important to understand how the nationalization project of Kosovo proceeds under a “trustee occupant”<sup>12</sup> thus leads to a clash of ethnic vs. civic nationalism. The locality of ethnic nationalism is confronting universalist civic nationalism. The fragmentation has even confused on the terms *Kosovar*, *Kosovo Albanians*, and *Kosovo Serbs*. The term *Kosovar* refers to all the people in Kosovo isolated from any ethnic and cultural background, projecting the multi-ethnic character of the State, while *Kosovo Albanians* and *Kosovo Serbs* directly reference the ethnic origin of the communities. This, among other controversies, will eventually determine the type and degree of nationalism in the Republic of Kosovo, with non-nationalism as the most recent risk to the state of Kosovo.

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<sup>11</sup> B. S. Chimni, “Third World Approaches to International Law: A Manifesto”, *International Community Law Review*, Volume 8, Number 1, 2006, p. 3-27; Also see H. H. Perritt, *The Road to Independence for Kosovo*, Cambridge University Press, USA 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Perritt, *ibid.*, p. 55.

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**1. Internal vs. External Colonialism: Theorizing the Politics of Nation in Kosovo**

Understanding how Nationalism and the State matter in the case of Kosovo requires an investigation into the uneven development of Yugoslavia, a former State, that came to an end in the 1990s, sheltering nationalism for quite some time while not being able to form one of its own. As Hechter (2000) mentions, “one can only identify with a given group when such a group actually exists”.<sup>13</sup> This begs the question concerning the Yugoslavian identity. The point here is that the Yugoslavian State, what Hechter calls a “governance unit,” was not able to merge its differences into a single (successful) identity (e.g., *Yugoslavian*). The main factors involve the distinct cultures lying in the background of the communities making up Yugoslavia and the governance unit being a federal one, which thus hinders the decision-making at the state level. This is not to mention the “Balkan Peninsula being the most turbulent and nationalistic part in Europe”,<sup>14</sup> which leads to a continuous clash of identities. The last one of these conflicts has led to the break-up of Yugoslavia. An inquiry into Hechter’s theory is, therefore, important to understand the reason behind this dissolution.

Michael Hechter, in his well-known book *Internal Colonialism*, speaks about two competing models in national development. The former is the *diffusion model*, and the latter is the *internal colonial model*. These models put forth the positioning of the center and periphery in nation-building processes. The diffusion model is about acculturation, in which the periphery would eventually melt into the dominant culture, while the latter speaks of the assertion of the periphery as a reaction towards the dominant core. In the case of Kosovo, “civil wars, or conflicts defined, by at least some participants, as taking place between members of the same nation [in this case Yugoslavia], are tragic occasions which are quickly put out of mind, and rarely glorified”.<sup>15</sup> In the case of Kosovo, this differs slightly as the periphery resisted against the center with the help of other centers, namely the West.

In his theory, Hechter speaks about two types of development: the former is known as internal development, in which interior factors lead

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<sup>13</sup> Hechter, *op.cit.*, p. 99.

<sup>14</sup> S. K. Pavlowitch, “Europe and the Balkans in a Historical Perspective, 1804-1945”, *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, Volume 2, Number 2, 2000, p. 141-48.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism, The Celtic Fringe in British National Development 1536-1966*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1975, p. 3.

toward development, and the latter is external development, in which foreign powers are the main driving force behind development. The second type - external development- is mostly referenced to the 'third world.' Balandier emphasizes this as the "colonial situation".<sup>16</sup> The main point of this type is where an alien power enters a region and geography to pursue its superiority over the indigenous population. The aim is to establish hegemony on the population via ethnic, cultural, or even religious terms. Kosovo has been confronted with both of these developments from inside to outside. Formerly governed by the center of Yugoslavia as a semi-colony, and recently by different centers.

Internal colonialism speaks about different stages in this process. The first stage is the pre-industrial, in which many differences exist, and as a result, the core and the periphery are in isolation. The second stage is industrialization, where interaction between the core and periphery starts to develop, leading to commonality. Finally, the third stage is the distribution of wealth, which is equal throughout the State. For Hechter (1975), this would lead to "transformation into a society composed of a single, all pervasive, and in this sense 'national' economy, polity, and culture".<sup>17</sup> However, in the last stage, "the uneven wave of industrialization over territorial space creates relatively advanced and less advanced groups, and therefore, acute cleavages of interest arise between these groups".<sup>18</sup> For Hechter (1975), "... there is a crystallization of the unequal distribution of resources and power between the two groups. The superordinate group [center] seeks to stabilize and monopolize its advantages through policies aiming at the institutionalization of the existing stratification system".<sup>19</sup> This is in line with Mylonas, who argues that "nation-building policies toward all non-core groups living in states with ruling political elites of clearly defined core groups that were motivated by a homogenizing imperative".<sup>20</sup> In the Kosovo case, this resembles the main thought behind the Belgrade regime's Serbianization of the peripheries. Whether a rich or poor region, the aim was to merge all the regions into a single unit: namely the nation.

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<sup>16</sup> See Georges Balandier, *The Sociology of Black Africa*, Andre Deutsch Limited, London 1970.

<sup>17</sup> Hechter, *Internal Colonialism...*, p. 17.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> Harris Mylonas, *The Politics of Nation-Building, Making Co-Nationals, Refugees, and Minorities*, Cambridge University Press, USA 2012, p. 170.

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Hechter draws an analogy between the colonial situation and his theory of internal colonialism. He compares the backwardness of some regions, which have objective cultural differences, in countries that have achieved national development relative to the colonial situation compared to others. In this direction, in the theory of internal colonialism, the center is compared with the metropolis and the colony with the periphery. Hechter states that the concept of internal colonialism focuses on the political conflict between the core and peripheral groups. From this point of view, the main factor that increases the backwardness of peripheral groups is their systematic increase of economic activities with the center. The peripheral group is so exposed to the abusive relationship of the center that it is considered an internal colony.

In Hechter's theory, national development is more about taking control of the central government over the distribution of resources, and less about social, structural, and economic status. The increased interaction between the center and the periphery does not tend to narrow the economic gap between the groups; therefore, national development is best achieved by increasing its political power to the extent that it changes the distribution of resources to its advantage. The most important part here rests on the "cultural division of labor" which is about a "stratification, in which high-status occupation is reserved for the metropolitan culture, while those from the periphery are excluded and clustered at the bottom of the system".<sup>21</sup> As a result, when visible cultural characteristics are combined with economic inequalities, this eventually leads to cultural division of labor, and if there is a certain amount of intra-group communication, then there will be little chance of integration of these peripheral communities into the national society. Once mentioned by Tito as "One cannot talk about equal rights ... when Serbs are given preference in the factories and Albanians are rejected although they have the same or better qualifications".<sup>22</sup> Ultimately, this power has to be based on political organization. One of the foundations of this organization is either cultural difference in the surrounding group or based on a distinctive ethnic sense of belonging.

In the colonial model, the obstacle to national development is not the failure of the periphery to integrate with the center, but the fact that the conditions of integration with the center are seen as unfair and illegitimate by

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<sup>21</sup> Hechter, *Internal Colonialism...*, p. 38-39.

<sup>22</sup> Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History*, Pan Books, London 2002, p. 324.

the periphery. Since the center imposes what Hechter (1975) calls “their omnivorous bureaucracy and haughty culture”<sup>23</sup> on the periphery. The unequal distribution of resources among groups is an effective factor. Initially, members of the disadvantaged periphery are not allowed to be culturally assimilated into the center. The boundary between the center and the periphery is maintained by the discriminatory distribution of social roles. This stratification system is essentially a cultural division of labor.

Thus, if cultural interaction does not occur initially because the advantaged group does not allow cultural interaction, it may not occur at a later time because of the disadvantaged group’s desire for independence in response to increased pressure from the center towards the periphery. According to Hechter, these explanations reveal the causes of cultural rebirths in societies with ongoing nationalist unrest. This process allows these groups to seek more autonomy or even independence. This starts with expressing differences established on evidence from its ancient cultural past. Often these cultures (drawing on differences) are created simultaneously with the legitimate demands for a re-evaluation of self-definition leading to independence.<sup>24</sup> The prominent factor here becomes the use of language, and everything rising on it. The Kosovo national independence process discussed in this study exemplifies the situation described by Hechter. And, this study aims to understand this model, developed by Hechter, in one of the most controversial-both geographical and historical-regions, namely in post-Yugoslavia.

## 2. From De-nationalization to Re-nationalization in Kosovo

Throughout history, the Balkans has always been a ground for struggle, since the region’s population is diverse,<sup>25</sup> with ethnic, cultural, lingual, and above all, religious backgrounds. And, more importantly, the borders of this divergence are not determined by ethnic and religious backgrounds, which remains the main problem of today’s struggle.<sup>26</sup> As a

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<sup>23</sup> Hechter, *Internal Colonialism...*, p. 16.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37-8.

<sup>25</sup> Serbians and Montenegrins are Orthodox, Croatian, and Slovenian Catholic while Bosnians, Albanians and a portion of Macedonians are predominantly Muslim.

<sup>26</sup> Throughout history, relations between Serbians and Kosovar Albanians have always been problematic, at times leading to serious conflicts. What matters here is the size of the ethnic group, territorial claims and past experiences, all of which are important aspects in determining group challenges to the host-state. See Rogers Brubaker “National Minorities, Nationalizing States and External Homelands in the New Europe: Notes toward a Relational Analysis”, *Reihe*

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matter of fact, ethnic tensions have always been visible in the Balkan region, making nationalism an important tool to use against one other. What makes Kosovo and Kosovars an interesting case is its confrontation of imposition coming along with a burden, one after another, both inside and outside of the State. The process of silencing the Kosovar identity, firstly in Yugoslavia in exchange for economic development, and recently from the international community, has caused challenging internal and external challenges to arise. This includes internally confronting the Serbian identity (with territorial claims) attempting to establish a nation-state, and secondly, dealing with outside interventions, namely the imposition of standards (multi-ethnic society) by the international community.

It is no secret that a silent or unspoken “imagined community”<sup>27</sup> was always in the collective mind of the Kosovo Albanians, just like the other autonomous regions and republics in Yugoslavia. However, it was not until 1969 that the rapprochement between Yugoslavia and Albania started. As an outcome of this détente, a couple of steps were taken in making this a reality.<sup>28</sup> Kosovo Albanians were able to use the Albanian flag as a symbol to express their unity for demonstration, and this was followed by the usage of the Albanian language in the University of Prishtina (which later became an important site for political protests in the early 1990s), alongside an Albanian staff and education materials printed and imported directly from Albania. These steps certainly increased the mass literary skills among young Albanians, which resulted in taking more posts in state-led institutions (mostly as civil servants among police forces). The main steps were reached in the 1974 Constitution when Kosovo was granted additional rights for self-governance. Despite not becoming a fully-fledged republic, the Kosovo Albanians interpreted this as a move towards self-determination. As the 1974 Constitution states, “The working people, and the nations and nationalities,<sup>29</sup> shall exercise their sovereign rights in the Socialist Republics, and in the

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*Politikwissenschaft*, Number 11, Institut für Höhere Studien, 1993; Also see Monica Duffy Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence*, Princeton University Press, NJ 2003.

<sup>27</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Verso, London 1983.

<sup>28</sup> E. Çeku, “The Kosovo Issue and Albano-Yugoslav Relations 1961-1981”, *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Volume 26, Number 2, 2015, p. 229.

<sup>29</sup> The nations and nationalities were borrowed from the Soviet Union and incorporated into the Yugoslav Federal System. A nation stands for a “Narod” -a state-forming unit-however, a nationality stands for “Narodnost” meaning a national minority-a displaced community- not having the right to have a federal unit of its own. In this case, Kosovo and Vojvodina are both associated with separate nation-states. Malcolm, *op.cit.*, p. 327-8.

Socialist Autonomous provinces”.<sup>30</sup> Hence, these moves were evaluated as predictions for the future, to become a sovereign and independent state.

The Milošević regime led to unwanted incidents in Kosovo and throughout Yugoslavia. The ultra-nationalism displayed by the Serbian regime led to two mass killings: the first in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1995, and the second in Kosovo in 1998. As a result, the latter opened up a fully fledged resistance and war against the Serbian regime. With the motivation of asserting an ethnic Albanian identity against the Serbian (at least in the beginning), the main goal was to de-nationalize; that is, to detach itself from Yugoslavia through a wide-ranging independence movement motivated by ethnic Albanian nationalism. However, right after the intervention of the international community, the situation began to change. With the involvement of international organizations, the ethnic-oriented de-nationalization was transformed into a re-nationalization project as a transformation of ethnic Albanian nationalism into liberal (civic) Kosovar nationalism.<sup>31</sup> For Kosovo, this became an intertwined process: on the one hand, the State’s attempt to rebuild itself from the remnants of Yugoslavia, and on the other, the search for its distinct character in a post -Yugoslavian era. This is why, for Kosovo, the process of de -nationalization-abandoning Yugoslavia- runs hand-in-hand with re-nationalization-replacing Kosovar-to establish and become a multi-ethnic state. However, the emphasis on multi-ethnicity is undesirable and not welcomed by the Kosovo Albanians. For the sake of gaining independence, Kosovo had to accept certain standards (e.g. form of state bureaucracy, identity formation, peaceful settlement) imposed by the international community.

In the post-war era, the lack of economic equality and successive economic crises were the main catalysts for the rise of nationalism within the Yugoslavian state, with the main target of Serbian nationalism all across Yugoslavia given the Serbs’ main goal was to transform Yugoslavia into “Greater Serbia”. In the Kosovar case, the harshness of the Serbs’ nationalist actions was due to the rights granted to Kosovo by the 1974 Constitution. Kosovo, receiving rights for more self-government, did strengthen its position in the federal state. This created pressure among the Serbs. After the death of Tito in 1980, the problems buried for quite some time re-emerged, leading to

<sup>30</sup> *The Constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia*, Basic Principles, 1974, p. 54. <https://www.worldstatesmen.org/Yugoslavia-Constitution1974.pdf>, (10.02.2023).

<sup>31</sup> See D. Sallova, “The Denationalization Policy of the International Community in Kosovo”, *International Research Journal*, Volume 8, Number 1, 2019, p. 143.

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a serious crisis. Kosovo, being the most underdeveloped region, was more affected as compared to the other republics. Economic problems, on top of the increasing Serbian nationalism under the leadership of Slobodan Milošević, paved the way for the Serbian-Albanian conflict and soon became a reason for resentment toward the Serbianization of the region. Throughout history, the region has witnessed either an Albanization or Serbianization under the rule of different powers. For Serbians, the Kosovo region is the “cradle of the Serbian nation”,<sup>32</sup> a land feeding the myths<sup>33</sup> comprising the Serbian identity which, as a result, is intrinsic to the history of the nation. However, for Albanians, Kosovo is their homeland, and the inhabitants of the region are predominantly Albanian; as a result, the Albanians must defend Kosovo, and that is why they are mostly associated with the territory.

With the rapid spread of student protests across Kosovo, Macedonia, and Montenegro, and transforming into mass riots in March 1981, the incidents were suppressed by force. After the protests, which were blended in nationalism, a state of emergency was declared by the Serbian regime, and a policy of repression was applied, especially against Albanians. Tito’s policy of brotherhood and unity of the nations and nationalities was collapsing as the students chanted “We are Albanians, not Yugoslav”.<sup>34</sup> This became the first stage of the Kosovars’ shifting away from the “brotherhood thesis”, as well as from the Serbian state, and a renewed focus on their Albanian identity, thus marking the start of the de-nationalization process and a reassertion of the Albanian identity. In 1989, Slobodan Milosevic abolished the autonomy of Kosovo. Serbian nationalism was already on the rise aiming to regain power from the Republics and autonomous regions; this led to the rise of Albanian nationalism, thus breaking up all the relations, which were already deteriorating. Once again, as happened in 1981, street protests and demonstrations gathered pace, fuelling nationalism on both fronts. At the time, Association of Writers of Kosovo played an important role in rallying

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<sup>32</sup> Pinos, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>33</sup> The myths used by Serbian leaders (mostly by Milosevic during his time in power) were to create a narrative of an existential and morally superior Serbdom, seriously threatened by the barbars; namely, the Ottomans in the battle of Kosovo Polje back in 1389. This is a strategy for making the past as present. See Lene Kühle and Carsten Bagge Lausten, “The Kosovo Myth: Nationalism and Revenge”, *Kosovo between War and Peace, Nationalism, Peacebuilding and International Trusteeship*, (eds.) Tonny Brems Knudsen and Carsten Bagge Lausten, Routledge, USA 2006, p. 20-25.

<sup>34</sup> Malcolm, *op.cit.*, p. 334.

against the Serbian regime. Led by Ibrahim Rugova,<sup>35</sup> a pacifist and writer, who aimed to prevent violence and bring the Kosovo issue to the attention of international community, achieved some success and the association evolved into a party in 1989 named the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK).

In turn, the Serbian administration declared that it had dissolved the Assembly and the government of Kosovo and officially took the administration of Kosovo into its own hands. In what was called the *emergency administration*, the Serbian regime began to suppress the printing press in Kosovo, closed the Kosovo Academy of Arts and Sciences, dismissed thousands of state employees, and discharged Albanian workers in 1989.<sup>36</sup> This rapidly turned into labor unrest in 1990. Further, all these trials accelerated the tension, and Kosovo was not alone in this disorder; other parts of Yugoslavia were in the same boat. All these developments led to the people of Kosovo making an important political move in declaring their right to self-determination in 1990. Since the assembly and other organs were disbanded by the Serbian regime, a secret meeting between Albanian political parties was held in Kaçanik to coordinate their political moves. A consultative council of the Albanian Political Parties, led by Ibrahim Rugova, prepared a constitution for Kosovo. It was the Kaçanik Constitution accepted on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September 1990, which declared the Republic of Kosovo, establishing a new assembly and an elected Presidency. This political move was the declaration that Kosovo had an equal status with the other republics in Yugoslavia. On the other side, the Serbian view was clear as devolution was unacceptable and any act of secession would be eliminated. For Serbians, Kosovo is not just a territory or an area where a Serbian minority lives. Moreover, Kosovo is the heart of the first Serbian state and reflects the historical and spiritual past, known among Serbs as *Kosovo-Metohija* (meaning monastic lands).<sup>37</sup> That is why; Kosovo in the construction of the Serbian consciousness feeds both the national and religious identity of the Serbian nation.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibrahim Rugova was a prominent figure throughout Kosovo's independence; He was the leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo Party and became the President of defacto Kosovo State between the years 1992-1999 and later became the first president of independent Kosovo.

<sup>36</sup> Vickers, *op.cit.*, p. 234-35; Malcolm, *op.cit.*, p. 347. For a broad explanation also see Tim Judah, *Kosovo: What Everyone Needs to Know*, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 67-68.

<sup>37</sup> Carole Rogel, "Kosovo: Where it All Began", *International Journal of Politics*, Volume 17, Number 1, 2003, p. 169.

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In 1991, Slovenia, Croatia, and Macedonia seceded from Yugoslavia, followed by Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence in October 1991, resulting in widespread civil disobedience and an armed resistance movement (Kosovo Liberation Army [KLA]). On the other hand, in 1991, Albania recognized Kosovo as a sovereign and independent state. This is the first ever recognition of Kosovo at the international level. These can be seen as the first national anti-regime moves, where the Kosovar identity gained the attention of the international community. It was Serbia rejected the peace talks and hardening its stance towards the Kosovars, for example, by closing Albanian schools, preventing access to public institutions, and abusing and forcing the population to relocate. It was these tough moves that gave birth to the formation of KLA in the first place. The momentum behind the KLA grew rapidly, making it the backbone of a movement systematized around de-nationalism. The KLA started an all-out war against the Serbian forces. The international community immediately called for peace between the groups. However, the Serbian side refused to sign and negotiate any peace treaty, which resulted in a NATO mission to force the Serbian army out of Kosovo. It was in 1999 when the Serbian forces had to withdraw from Kosovo. The Serbian regime was not a colonizer but rather the one retaining the colonial rule against the Kosovars. Although Kosovo did gain its national liberation, the substance of its nationalism differs since the nationalist upsurge is also non-nationalist in nature, thanks to the support of the international community, which this study aims to investigate further. Hence, it is worth looking at how genuine Kosovar nationalism is, and whether it will become a liberal, ethnic or a political identification.

**3. Non-Nationalism Confronts Nationalism: Kosovo to become a Nation-State or a State-Nation?**

It was in 1996 when the US decided to open a US Information Office in Pristina to monitor the ongoing situation in the region. This move became one of the early signs of the ever-increasing priority given to the region in the upcoming years, not only by the US but also by international organizations. This is because the situation-specifically in Kosovo and in the Balkans in general -became multifaceted (e.g., armed conflict, migration, clash of identities, change of borders, etc.), affecting not only Kosovo itself but also the entire Balkan region as a whole.

As a result of the EU pressure, in 1998, Serbia agreed to gradually withdraw its troops from Kosovo and permitted international observers to

monitor the situation in Kosovo. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of February 1999, the Rambouillet Conference was held in France. At the conference, the EU member states called for an immediate halt to Serbia's ethnic cleansing and supported the deployment of an international force under the command of NATO in Kosovo. However, after Milošević rejected all these proposals, the EU countries agreed to support a NATO operation under the leadership of the USA. In June 1999, an agreement named Kumanovo,<sup>38</sup> was reached between the International Security Forces, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and the Republic of Serbia stipulating the withdrawal of Yugoslav forces from Kosovo, thus partially ending the military intervention of NATO on the 10<sup>th</sup> of June 1999, known shortly as KFOR and becoming a peacekeeping force from then on. With the ending of the Kosovo war in 1999, the issue became a patronage of several international organizations, the forerunner becoming the UN.<sup>39</sup> This was an international imposition for the Serbian regime, while it meant liberation (at first) for Kosovo.

Following the NATO intervention, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1244 on the 10<sup>th</sup> of June 1999, which placed Kosovo under the administration of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo<sup>40</sup> (UNMIK) and under the authority of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG). UNMIK was fixed with considerable powers, as stated in the following UN regulation: "all legislative and executive authority with respect to Kosovo, including the administration of the judiciary, is vested

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<sup>38</sup> Known also as the *Military Technical Agreement* is a ceasefire agreement declaring the withdrawal of all Yugoslav military, police and paramilitary forces from Kosovo, and for the deployment of UN civilian and security presences in Kosovo. *UN Security Council, S/1999/682 Document*,

[https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/990615\\_MilitaryTechnicalAgreementKFORYugoslaviaSerbia.pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/990615_MilitaryTechnicalAgreementKFORYugoslaviaSerbia.pdf), (05.02.2023).

<sup>39</sup> Johanna Deimel, "The International Presence in Kosovo 1999-2008", *Civic and Uncivic Values in Kosovo*, (eds.) Sabrina P. Ramet, Albert Simkus and Ola Listhaug, Central European University Press, Budapest 2015, p. 121.

<sup>40</sup> The backbone of the administration in Kosovo established by the UN Security Council resolution 1244 on June 10, 1999, right after the NATO intervention on March 24, 1999, which continued after 2008, when the country declared its independence. The goal of this resolution was to "establish an international civil presence in Kosovo under which the people of Kosovo can enjoy substantial autonomy within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and which will provide transitional administration while establishing provisional democratic self-governing institutions to ensure conditions for a peaceful and normal life for all inhabitants of Kosovo". See *UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (June 10, 1999)*, [https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/990610\\_SCR1244%281999%29.pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/990610_SCR1244%281999%29.pdf), (10.02.2023).

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in UNMIK and is exercised by the SRGS”.<sup>41</sup> Resolution 1244 requires UNMIK to perform basic civil administrative functions to ensure the establishment of self-governance and autonomy in Kosovo, to facilitate the political process that will determine the status of Kosovo’s future, to provide humanitarian assistance from all international institutions. The core of its mission was to coordinate, support, and rebuild the basic infrastructure, maintain civil law and civil order, and to promote human rights and ensure the safety of all refugees and displaced persons to their homes in Kosovo. In this transitional phase, the fate of Kosovo was handed from one power to another, since the political atmosphere in Kosovo in the beginning of 2002 was shifting between the *conditional independence* imposed by the UN and an expectation that the Serbian regime would *cantonize* Kosovo. For Kosovo, the international community constrained the universal and unconditional right of self-determination, since this right was sacrificed for Serbia’s consent in a peace-building process. This policy drew the attention of the international community as the Kosovo Albanians’ anti-Serbian protest was beginning to turn into an anti-UNMIK one. For instance, in 2004, multiple riots have happened across the country starting with a rumor of three Kosovo Albanian children drowned by Serbs, for the Kosovo Albanians the events were named *March Unrest*, for the Serbians it was *March Pogrom* leading to serious violent attacks from both ends. The incidents started changing the perception towards the international community, since UNMIK failed to protect the civilians as well as provide safety. As a result, it became a target of harsh criticism and questioning of its presence in Kosovo.<sup>42</sup> The criticism and lack of trust were not only directed by Kosovo Albanians, but also and mostly by the Kosovo Serbians.

UNMIK was composed of four bodies representing the international community that constituted the civil administration developed in Kosovo. The four bodies with shared responsibilities were the UN; the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which carries out the institutional building process; the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, which deals with the return of refugees; and the EU, which is responsible for restructuring activities. The basic philosophy of UNMIK was to re-build the state apparatus in what became the Republic of Kosovo and ensure peace and

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Human Rights Watch Report*, “Failure to Protect: Anti-Minority Violence in Kosovo”, Volume 16, Number 6, 2004, p. 1-2, <https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/kosovo0704.pdf>, (05.02.2023).

stability in the country.<sup>43</sup> UNMIK would also endeavor to re-establish human rights that had been violated before and after the war and ensure equal rights within the country to people of all languages, cultures, and religions. Besides these, UNMIK also laid down the “standards before status”<sup>44</sup> agenda, in which eight standards are determined for fulfillment by Kosovo. This led to a confrontation between the non-national centers imposing their demands.

The administration under UNMIK, Kosovo was transformed from a one-party system to a multi-party one marking an important step towards democratizing the State, with numerous liberal norms pouring into the country. The most important steps were the introduction of liberal norms and standards in the forms of multi-ethnicity and protection for minority rights, the rule of law, equality of citizens, respect for human rights and freedoms, functioning constitutionality, and the unresolved issue of ethno-territorial separation between the Serbs and Albanians.<sup>45</sup> In the light of these norms, from the perspective of the international community, the aim was to restart a state-building process and to reintegrate the Serbs, now a minority in the newborn State. Since the region had suffered from ethnic violence, the international community insisted on heterogeneity in Kosovo to promote various identities loyal to the state. As a result, of these steps consolidation of democracy is recently in progress.

The UN Mission’s role in Kosovo was at first welcomed by Kosovo; however, the outcome did not satisfy the Kosovars. A growth of mistrust between by the people of Kosovo and the UN was to be eliminated with Martti Ahtisaari’s *supervised independence* proposal and the EU’s positive approach to it. The aim was to lead Kosovo to independence under the supervision of the international community. The declaration of independence stated: “We invite and welcome an international civilian presence to supervise our

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<sup>43</sup> UNMIK Fact Sheet: *Promoting security, stability, and respect for human rights in Kosovo*, 1999, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/unmik>, (15.02.2023).

<sup>44</sup> These standards are functioning democratic institutions, the rule of law, freedom of movement, the right of return for all refugees and their integration into society, market economic development, respect for property rights, normalized dialogue with Belgrade, reduction and transformation of the Kosovo Protection Corp and increased minority participation in the Corp. *United Nations Security Council Report “Standards for Kosovo”*, Pristina 2003, <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Kos%20Standards.pdf>, (15.02.2023).

<sup>45</sup> Jürgen Friedrich, “UNMIK in Kosovo: Struggling with Uncertainty”, *Max Planck Yearbook of United Nations Law*, Volume 9, Number 1, 2005, p. 237-238.

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implementation of the Ahtisaari Plan, and an EU-led rule of law mission”.<sup>46</sup> Kosovo did gain independence, albeit with the high price of handing over control to UNMIK and EULEX. The road to independence heated another debate- the national question. Since going through a difficult process of suffering and the struggle for independence, nearly all parties in Kosovo remain focused on full independence and state-building. It must be specified here that political parties in Kosovo lack a clear ideology and programme.<sup>47</sup> Two of the oldest parties include KLA cadres, namely the Democratic League of Kosovo and the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK). Perritt defines the former as “represent the old communist elite, while the latter one representing the new wartime elite”.<sup>48</sup> The LDK, following the legacy of its founding father Ibrahim Rugova, is a center- right party having a moderate and pacifist position, while for the PDK similarly a center-right party with a patriotic stance. However, none of these parties directly engage in identity politics. In addition to these political parties, there is the Serb List (SL: Srpska Lista) representing the Serb community in Kosovo and working closely with the Republic of Serbia, and the Lëvizja Vetëvendosje Party<sup>49</sup> (Self Determination Movement - the predecessor of Kosovo Action Network<sup>50</sup>). It is these two parties that mostly dominate the politics of identity in Kosovo. Since the Serbian List’s main focus is group identity and interests, it is mediating between Belgrade and Pristine with a focus on the mistreatment and security of the Serbian community, the situation of the displaced people, and the Serbs not to be treated as a minority group within Kosovo politics,<sup>51</sup> while for LVV

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<sup>46</sup> *Kosovo Declaration of Independence*, (17 February 2008) Pristina, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/47d685632.html>, (20.03.2023).

<sup>47</sup> Albert Krasniqi and Krenar Shala, “Strengthening the statehood of Kosovo through the democratization of political parties”, *KIPRED Policy Paper Series*, Number 4, 2012, p. 5.

<sup>48</sup> Henry H. Perritt Jr, *The Road to Independence for Kosovo, A Chronicle of the Ahtisaari Plan*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2010, p. 77.

<sup>49</sup> The Lëvizja Vetëvendosje (LVV) party is nationalist, anti-Serbian and anti-colonialist with the aim of unification with Albania. The party is also highly critical of the presence of the international community in Kosovo.

<sup>50</sup> Kosovo Action Network (KAN) was established in 1997 to band people together for an effective protest against the Serbian regime in Kosovo. The success of this national movement transformed itself into a political party in 2005. The leader of the movement is Albin Kurti. The party has become successful, reaching a majority of 50.28% in the 2021 parliamentary elections and recently ran office in Kosovo.

<sup>51</sup> Jovana Radosavljević and Budimir Ničić, “Political Parties of Kosovo Serbs in the Political System of Kosovo: From Pluralism to Monism”, *Kosovo Foundation for Open Society*, April 2021, p. 16, <https://kfos.org/storage/app/uploads/public/609/3e0/08e/6093e008eac26273165717.pdf>, (25.03.2023).

it is to secure the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country while problematizing the foreign presence.

The Vetëvendosje Party questions the role of the international community. The first ever criticisms to the role of UNMIK within Kosovo came from the Vetëvendosje Party which is known as a nationalist party in Kosovo politics. The Vetëvendosje Movement, which managed to get the most votes as a party in the last two general elections (2019 and 2021) held in Kosovo, emerged on the political scene as a street movement established to force the people of Kosovo to oppose international agreements on the future of the country, arguing that Kosovo should determine its own destiny. The statement made in 2012 summarizes the dissatisfaction as; “The Ahtisaari Plan established territorial autonomy for the 5% Serb minority in Kosovo, over approximately 20% of our territory. [...] This Plan has sought to transform Kosovo’s identity by imposing its definition of us as a ‘multi-ethnic society’ without our consent, and by denying the reality that over the 90 per cent of our population is Albanian”.<sup>52</sup>

As the abovementioned citation summarizes, Vetëvendosje Party demands the traditional form of political attachment sitting on an ethnic belonging. Given that Kosovo is the homeland of a distinct ethnic group, namely Kosovar Albanians, throughout history, the Kosovar Albanians were ignored by the Serbian regime under Yugoslavia -another sign of history repeating itself. This time, it was the denial by Kosovo Albanians of the Serbian minority. At this point, the question is, in terms of all these initiatives by the international community, is Kosovo becoming a nation-state or a state-nation? The state-nation concept, introduced by Stepan et al., is that “state-nation policies stand for a political-institutional approach that respects and protects multiple but complementary sociocultural identities ... they include mechanisms to accommodate competing or conflicting claims made on behalf of those divisions without imposing or privileging”.<sup>53</sup> The aim of this collaborator system was to speed up all necessary reforms to moderate nationalism in Kosovo with an inclusive and liberal feature, eventually to become a loyalty to the state, rather than the nation. However, the Vetëvendosje Party blames the international community, which it believes has

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<sup>52</sup> Albin Kurti, “Letter to Quint Ambassadors”, *Vetevendosje 2012*, cited in Bilge Yılmaz, “Populism and Anti-Establishment Politics in Kosovo: A Case Study of Levizja Vetëvendosje”, *Contemporary Southeastern Europe*, Volume 3, Number 2, 2015, p. 29.

<sup>53</sup> A. Stephan, J. J. Linz and Y. Yadav, *Crafting State-Nations: India and Other Multinational Democracies*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 2011, p. 4.

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promoted ethnic dichotomy between the Albanians and Serbs. According to the party leader Kurti “ethnicity has turned into a stigma for people and instead of rights of the people they [the international community] talk about needs of the communities”.<sup>54</sup>

The international community has and is still assisting the reconstruction process in Kosovo, but not in the construction of a nation-state, with special reference to the *nation* here. It will be more suitable to define this process as one of a state-nation. Since, the state-nation process is mostly concentrating on power-sharing and decentralization to establish mutually acceptable institutions. But falls short in touching inter-ethnic conflict. The conflict seems to have been resolved through politics, however lacks inadequacy from a sociological perspective. Given that the entire international community was helping to liberate Kosovo from an oppressive regime, it must not become the new center of domination itself. Otherwise, this will become somewhat of a *déjà vu* for Kosovars, or as this paper argues, recently confronting colonialism once again, so to speak, only this time from outside. With the state-nation process, the intention of the international community is the consolidation of democracy, along with the belief that Kosovo will become more inclusive. However, the perceptions of Kosovo Albanians remain the opposite. The main criticism of Vetëvendosje, most recently the governing party, was that UNMIK represented neither the Kosovars, nor their interests, and continued to remain an occupier of Kosovo. For Kosovars, Kosovo was like a host-state, rather than a home-state, of their limited role in the decision-making. UNMIK was perceived as an obstacle in front of their journey towards full sovereignty, and most recently, the EU. The party’s main stance towards oppression is as follows: “Our nationalism is a reaction to oppression by Milošević and war with the Serbs, Milošević said there were no good Albanians, so our Albanian identity became our identity, it was a sign of defiance”.<sup>55</sup> Recently, it is the foreign presence in Kosovo that is seen as an oppressor, and as a result, heavily criticized and causing a backlash. The question that comes to mind is whether these steps evolve into an inclusive assertion of a Kosovar identity or be limited to Kosovo Albanians only.

A clash of two forms of nationalism is stirring in Kosovo. On the one hand, the international community attempts to fix a non-ethnic, inclusive, and

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<sup>54</sup> Albin Kurti, JISB Interview 92, cited in Yılmaz, *op.cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>55</sup> Albin Kurti, “A Difficult Question for Kosovars: Who Are We?”, *New York Times*, 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/09/world/europe/09iht-kosovo.4.8660025.html>, (03.04.2023).

citizen-based attachment to the state, and on the other, Kosovar Albanians assert their right to own their state and territory without any foreign rule. In order to ease the growing tension, as a matter of fact, the EU activated the *Stability-Partnership Follow-up Mechanism* in 2002 to create an EU vision for the region. This did not meet the expectations as the party argued, “After the declaration of independence, in practice, the UN was replaced by the EU and UNMIK by EULEX. However, this replacement was not a change of approach and purpose, and there was no paradigm shift [...]”.<sup>56</sup> At the Summit in Thessaloniki in June 2003, an EU perspective was presented to Kosovo and it was stated that the future place of the people of Kosovo is Europe. In 2005, a document named “European Future for Kosovo” was published. As discussed in the theoretical chapter above, which reminds us once again how Hechter defines the state as “a set of specialized institutions that is responsible for producing order, justice, social welfare, and defense in a territorially bounded society”<sup>57</sup> why is Kosovo pursuing a national strategy when all the above responsibilities are directed by the international community (most recently by EULEX). Once cheering under the Albanian national flag, Kosovo has recently created one of its own, which somewhat resembles the EU flag with six white stars in an arc above the Kosovo map referring to the six ethnic groups comprising Kosovo, a national anthem with no lyrics (due to bilingualism) but named Europe, and even its own national currency, the *Euro*. All these national symbols are non-national and the result of domination, owing no resemblance to the nation. The aim is not to evoke an ethnicity, which is why any practice, ritual, or symbol must be universal. In addition, Kosovo has two official languages: *Albanian* and *Serbian*.<sup>58</sup> The goal of the international community is to depoliticize the ethnicity in Kosovo in a “melting pot” state model, whereas for Kosovars, it must be revived. This revision is seen mostly in war remembrance, with special reference to heroism; that is, the KLA fighters who have sacrificed their lives for independence and are rewarded as national martyrs. Political symbols of states are extremely important in terms of reflecting common values and

<sup>56</sup> Vukasin Zivkovic, “Unsuccessful Mentor: EULEX Eleven Years Later”, (April 26, 2019), <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2019/04/26/unsuccessful-mentor-eulex-eleven-years-later/>, (27.03.2023).

<sup>57</sup> Hechter, *Containing Nationalism*, p. 7.

<sup>58</sup> Besides Albanian and Serbian languages, the Constitution (Article 5), mentions that the “Turkish, Bosnian and Roma languages have the status of official languages at the municipal level or will be in official use at all levels as provided by law”. *Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo*, Article 5, 2008, p. 1, [https://mapl.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/1.CONSTITUTION\\_OF\\_THE\\_REPUBLIC\\_OF\\_KOSOVO.pdf](https://mapl.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/1.CONSTITUTION_OF_THE_REPUBLIC_OF_KOSOVO.pdf), (01.11.2023).

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showing the common heritage shared by the people living in that country. For Kosovo, these symbols and their value in projecting a future are questionable.

It was in 2008 when Kosovo declared its independence, which has now been recognized by 101 UN member states. With all the artificial formations, it is becoming difficult for Kosovo to produce and reproduce the nation, which is exactly what the international community claimed. For Kosovo, the situation is positioned in what Curthoys describes in a different context, but well suited to the Kosovo case: “Our only shared past as Kosovars is an international past, a myriad of individual, regional and national histories that have been brought altogether in this place”<sup>59</sup> since it was the West enforcing their will on Kosovo, and in return, endowing independence. The Constitution of Kosovo (Article 3) declares that “The Republic of Kosovo is a multi-ethnic society consisting of Albanian and other Communities, governed democratically with full respect for the rule of law through its legislative, executive and judicial institutions”.<sup>60</sup> As stated by the Constitution, instead of a sole ethnic reference, with regards to defining the nation, the country is built on multiple ethnicities and, all these attachments are to be centered on a citizenship, namely *Kosovar*.

Then, how could nationalism be understood in this context? As the abovementioned statement marks, the levels have been blurred in Kosovo, and as a result, the “internal-external”, “home-state-host-state” concepts require a re-reading. In the memory of Kosovars, the “UNMIK years” discourse expresses their near past. However, there are not many belongings of Kosovars in this past neither before the war, nor after. This past signifies the rule of neocolonial power transgressing the national level for the sake of imposing the international. Kosovo has become a laboratory where the international community is experimenting with its own goals. The case in Kosovo remains tacit; however it will eventually fall into the political vs. national integration debate. As discussed above, either evolving into a liberal national model or a political collective identification resting on norms, values and procedures, what Habermas introduced as *constitutional patriotism*.<sup>61</sup> Since the national politics has become externally sponsored, formally by the

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<sup>59</sup> Ann Curthoys, “Single White Male”, *Arena Magazine*, Number 8, 1994, p. 27-28.

<sup>60</sup> *Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo*, (Article 3), 2008, p. 1, [https://mapl.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/1.CONSTITUTION\\_OF\\_THE\\_REPUBLIC\\_OF\\_KOSOVO.pdf](https://mapl.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/1.CONSTITUTION_OF_THE_REPUBLIC_OF_KOSOVO.pdf), (30.10.2023).

<sup>61</sup> See Jürgen Habermas, *The Postnational Constellation, Political Essays*, (transl., ed. and with an introduction) Max Pensky, The MIT Press, Cambridge 2001.

UN, and more recently by the EU, the international community, which was once seen as an ally, has begun to be questioned. A general dissatisfaction is seen among the Kosovars with the questioning of “will Kosovo be independent, and more importantly, will it be sovereign and, if so, over what territory”.<sup>62</sup> These views are becoming much more salient in Kosovo since the Vetëvendosje Party got into power. The rise in nationalist sentiments has caused the issue to be further debated in both social and political life.

### Conclusion

It must be stated that Kosovo has not been able to complete its statehood, let alone its nationhood. Kosovo is politically willing to act more independently; however, it still requires economic support from the international community. After all the turbulence, Kosovo is confronting a subordination in the formation of its nation, a contestation with Serbia with regards to territory, and a confrontation of hegemony with the international community, which is forcing Kosovo to become a heterogeneous and a multi-ethnic state. In this process, the ignorance of certain elements making Kosovo a nation has led to an increasing mistrust between the Kosovars and the international community. This is causing dissatisfaction among the people with a rising tide of nationalism on both sides. However, despite the presence and support of the UN and the EU, hostilities between the parties persist. The issue is complex and involves fragmentation, making accommodation difficult to achieve. A tailor-made state-nation proceeds under an externally designed internationalism rather than nationalism, discerning questions of who is Kosovar, where is Kosovo, etc. This has led to a clash between nationalism vs. non-nationalism in Kosovo and a rift between the power holders at both the local and international levels. The endeavors of the political elite in the name of asserting an increased national identity for the sake of homogenizing society are progressing very slowly. Although efforts to create a national identity have been modest at both ends, there are two paths to follow: either internalizing the non-ethnic civic model under the custody of the international community or the ethnic one under a nationalization project.

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<sup>62</sup> D. Serwer and Y. Bajraktari, “Kosovo: Ethnic Nationalism at its Territorial West”, *Special Report*, 2011, p. 7, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2006/08/kosovo-ethnic-nationalism-its-territorial-worst>, (02.02.2023).

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