

Change the Hostile Other into Ingroup Partner: On the Albanian-Serb Relations

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Abstract

The national identities of the Southeast European peoples have been under continuous (re)construction since the 19th century, in the process of which Albanians and Serbs have experienced numerous conflicts between them. Using the key concepts of “outgroup” and “ingroup” in social identity theory, this paper examines the Albanian-Serb relations over the past two centuries, attempting to demonstrate that the construction of national identity is politically oriented and subject to constant change in order to meet the new political demands and to justify new political actions. It concludes by pointing out that the present international situation provides favorable conditions for the Albanians and Serbs to view each other as cooperation partners rather than hostile Others.

Introduction

More than a decade has passed since NATO liberated Kosovo Albanians from the Serbian control. With the help from international community, Kosovo has achieved remarkable progress in all aspects. However, on the other hand, there are still intractable problems, one of which is reconciliation between the Kosovo Albanians and Serbs. European Union has made clear that these two Balkan nations will ultimately join the big European family. How to turn the two nations from viewing each other as hostile enemy into regarding each other as beneficial partner now constitutes the greatest challenge, not only to the Albanian nation and the Serb nation, but also to the international community at large, particularly the US and the EU.

The contemporary Kosovo problem has its deep historical roots. It appeared over two centuries ago, when the Ottoman Empire set to collapse and the idea of nationalism got disseminated in the Balkan region. The attempt of the Serbs to establish their nation-state while occupying as much territory as possible

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encountered harsh resistance by the Albanians who wanted to defend their land, thus causing bloody conflicts and hatred between the two nations. To better elucidate the Kosovo problem and the Albanian-Serb relationship, I will first examine the key concepts involved, i.e. nation, national identity and the Other, as well as the major theories on national identity. Then I will discuss why the two nations view each other as hostile and what labels were attributed to each other to construct the hostile Other of the nation. Finally, after an analysis of the international factors in dealing with the Kosovo problem, the paper comes to the conclusion that it is time for Serbs and Albanians to reach their reconciliation and to cooperate for their mutual benefit.

I. Concepts and Theories

Theories on nation can be divided into two major schools: primordialism and constructionism. The former, represented by the 18th century German philosophers Herder and Fichte, contends that nations are ancient natural phenomena. Herder held that language is the key element of national identity, because “in it dwell its entire world of tradition, history, religion, principles of existence; its whole heart and soul.” (qtd. in Oakes, 2001: 22) Primordialism is otherwise called essentialism since it suggests that the community holds a fixed and unchangeable inherent nature. The essentialist view was further developed by German scholars like Durkheim, Weber, Tonnies etc., and maintained the dominant position in academia until the 1970s (Cerulo, 1997: 386-387). However, as early as after WWII, essentialism met severe challenges from scholars according to whom nation is a modern phenomenon constructed in the process of national identification, particularly as a result of the new printing technology. Negating the essentialist view of national identity as unchanging, constructionism put forward a more fluid approach. Anderson (1991: 6), for instance, is highly quoted for his theory that nation is “an imagined political community”, whereas Gellner is well known for his statement that “it is nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way round” (1983: 55).

Anthony Smith represents the neutral stand between the above two opposing strands. In *The Antiquity of Nations*, Smith (2004) offers interpretations of the origins of the nation, acknowledging both its modern derivation and pre-modern origins. Likewise, in order to reconcile the two opposite views and advocate a realist

approach, Satya Mohanty (2003: 398) suggests that identities can be both constructed and “real” at the same time.

Of all the contemporary forms of collective identity, national identity is perhaps the most powerful and pervasive. This is also affirmed by Anthony Smith (1991b: 70): “Today national identity is the main form of collective identification. Whatever the feelings of individuals, it provides the dominant criterion of culture and identity, the sole principle of government and the chief focus of social and economic activity.”

Then what are the essential elements for shaping national identity? Apart from the identifying with the ingroup with whom one shares the common language, history, culture, values, interests and ideals, national identity formation also involves differentiating from outgroups. The role of difference in constituting collective identities has long been emphasized ever since Emile Durkheim, who argued that the lineation of an ingroup necessarily entails delineation from an outgroup. In other words, the concept of outgroup plays an essential role of the “Other” in defining the collective identity. The existence of ‘us’ requires the existence of ‘them’, be it actual or imaginary, and only through the relation to an outgroup Other can the identity of Self be constructed. In Chantal Mouffe’s words (2000: 13), “collective identities can only be established on the mode of an us/them”.

However, in the process of Self’s identification, the Other, does not only serve passively as an opposing signifier. In elucidating the Self as a product of social interaction, George H. Mead (1934: 138) wrote: “The individual experiences himself as such, not directly, but only indirectly, from the particular standpoints of other individualized members of the same social group, or from the generalized standpoint of the social group as a whole to which he belongs”. Although Mead was concerned with the process of individual identity formation, his interactionist perspective can equally be applied to national identity formation. That is to say, the formation of the image of a certain nation requires other nations on the other side as “looking glass”. Positive identity, as Wendt (1992: 397-98) points out, cannot be conferred only by the ‘in-group’ but must also be given by a broader spectrum of ‘out-groups’ as well.

Hence how a nation views itself is greatly contingent on how it is seen and treated by Others.

While most scholars agree that there need to be Others in the process of Self identification, their views differ with regard to the relationship mode between Self and Other. Against the view that collective attachments are always affirmed in antagonistic opposition to Others, Wendt argues that the Other need not be contrasted in such a stark, contrasting fashion and it is quite susceptible to change (Wendt, 1999: 305). Scholars like Wendt see all the positive and negative factors such as love, admiration, competition, resentment, hostility, etc. as potentially effective in the formation of Self-Other relations. This is proven by the fact that there do exist 'positive Others', which a group would desire to identify with rather than differentiate from (Neumann & Welsh, 1991: 331). Therefore, Self interacts with multiple 'Others' and construct various Self-identities and Self-Other relations. Which particular Self identity and which Other should be salient largely depends on the political context of a particular moment. "One should not rule out the possibility of turning a traditionally opposite Other into a positive Other, with which one could have mutually fruitful interaction" (ibid).

The interactional relationship between the Self and the Other can be captured from the way how the Other is imagined. The images of the Other comprise a series of features that are related to each other in meaningful ways. According to Herrmann et al (1997: 408), how these features cluster and cohere is determined by three factors: the perceived relative capability of the actor, the perceived threat and/or opportunity represented by that actor, and the perceived culture of that actor. In other words, strength/weakness, friendliness/hostility and cultural commonality/cultural difference are the major blocks for building the image of the Other and the Self-Other relations.

Unlike other identities, national identity is inevitably linked to the political purpose of the nation. Political purpose encompasses values and principles. It involves the idea of what political and economic system should be for the nation and whether this system is universally appropriate. But more importantly, political purpose reflects the interests of a nation and determines its actions in line with its

pursuit of proper status and respect in the international community. This is made clear in Wendt's (2000: 231) statement: "identities by themselves do not explain action, since being is not the same thing as wanting, ... Without interests identities have no motivational force, without identities interests have no direction". Rather than using the word of political purpose, Wendt uses "wanting". What is emphasized here by constructivism is that the identity and interest of a nation are interdependent and these two factors together determines the nation's relationship with other nations, i.e. who is its positive Other, who the negative Other, and who the antagonistic Other.

The theories on nation and national identity have served as helpful guide in my research on the relationship between the Serbian nation and Albanian nation. The modern Serbian nation and Albanian nation appeared in the 19th century, but they are undoubtedly rooted in their ancient origins. The differences in language, ethnicity, history, culture, etc. make the Serbs and Albanians view each other as the Other, but not necessary the adversary Other. It is the clash of political purposes that led to the hostile outgroup relationship between Serbs and Albanians. How Albanians and Serbs imagine and label each other reflects the threat or opportunity perceived by one nation against the other. When the political context changes and cooperation remains the only choice for the good of the two nations, it is likely that the two traditionally hostile nations will gradually view each other as a partner Other.

II. The Shifter Other of the Serbian Nation

Shiftar, the way Serbs distinguish Kosovo Albanians from Albanians in Albania proper, which they call Albanac, does not only signify the geographical difference and social discrimination, as one can easily perceive the contempt when the word "shiftar" is pronounced, but more importantly, it represents different degrees of political Othering. For the Serbs, Albania which has been recognized internationally since 1913 is a neighboring Other with whom Serbia must cooperate for its own good, whereas Kosovo is their property and the Albanians in Kosovo pose a potential threat to Serbia's territory integrity. This perception of threat by the Serbs

was the major reason why punitive and preemptive measures were taken to diminish or even mute the voice of the shifтар Other.

Serbs migrated to the present Balkan region in the 6th-7th century. The first Serbian principality was founded in the 9th century. In the 14th century, under the rule of Stefan Dušan, the medieval Serbia reached its zenith, occupying Macedonia, Montenegro, parts of Bosnia and the Dalmatian coast, as well as Albania and half of Greece. However, after Dušan's death, Serbia suffered severe loss in fighting against the Ottomans, especially in the Battle of Kosovo in 1389. From mid 15th century onward, Serbia was under Ottoman rule for more than 4 centuries. It was not until the 19th century that Serbia gained autonomy and independence.

In the process of building the modern Serbian nation, Others were constructed as a must for forming the Serbian national identity and gaining the Serbian national interests. Among the constructed Others, the Albanians constitute a significant Other, because they became obstacles to Serbia in its pursuit of a strong Serbian nation. In 1848, Ilija Garašanin, the Serbian minister of Internal Affairs worked out a program where he judged the possibility of recreating the glory of Serbia's medieval Golden Age and listed the potential territories to be included in the Greater Serbia: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and northern Albania. In order to justify their annexation of Kosovo, Kosovo was portrayed as the center of Old Serbia, a sacred site where Serb civilization was formed, i.e.. "the cradle of Serb nation".² Vuk Karadzic, a key nationalist figure of the 19th century in forming the Serbian national identity, contributed greatly to the Kosovo myth. Between 1814 and 1864, he collected numerous epic songs, of which the songs about the Kosovo Battle comprised the major part. The traditional epic songs were compiled and given a new

² Noel Malcolm argues that the Serbian belief that Kosovo represents the cradle of Serbian civilization is based on sentiment rather than historical reality. "The seat of the Serbian Orthodox Church was not founded in Kosovo; it merely moved there after its original foundation (in central Serbia) was burnt down. Nor does the Patriarchate have any continuous history as an institution: it was re-created by the modern Yugoslav state in 1920 (having been defunct for 154 years), and since that date the Patriarch has tended to reside mainly in Belgrade" (Kosovo: A Short History xxxi).

meaning to serve as mythical cornerstone for the Serbian national ideology. As Ger Duijzings commented:

These songs focus on the principal characters of the Kosovo legend (such as Prince Lazar and Milos Obilic), their martyrdom and the downfall of the Serbian kingdom and feudal society rather than the destiny of the Serbs as a nation. This shift in meaning occurred only in the nineteenth century, when the Kosovo theme evolved into a national myth, providing a source of inspiration to avenge its loss, to resurrect the nation and to recover the national homeland (Duijzings, 2000: 184).

The Balkan War in 1912 was colored with the character of a holy crusade to avenge not only a defeat five centuries ago, but to rejuvenate Serbia by recovering her 'sacred' heartland. For Serbs, Kosovo is destined to be a part of the Greater Serbia. In Serbia's declaration of war, Kosovo was referred to "... the glorious and saddened mother of our Kingdom where lies the historical kernel of the Old Serbian State ... Here live our brothers by blood, customs, national consciousness, and aspirations" (quoted by Djordjevic, 1991: 320). So many young people went courageously to war for the sake of their national revival. The influence of the epic songs, accompanied by the traditional one-string instrument called gusle, was so deep and powerful that they were "chipped into the brain of every Serb" (Holton & Mihailovich, 1988: 85). In Malcolm's words, the Kosovo battle between the Turks and Balkan Christians in 1389 serves as the "totem and talisman of Serbian identity" (Malcolm, 1998: 58). Therefore anyone who stands in the way of Serbia's revival should be annihilated. In other words, the Kosovo Albanians became the biggest antagonistic Other of the Serbian nation and should be driven out of Serbia's 'sacred' place.

Albanians were categorized as the undesirable Other on the Kosovo land for mainly three factors, which have always served as justifications by the Serb nationalists for the oppression of the Kosovo Albanian population. First, from Serbs' perspective, Kosovo Albanians were late comers, who moved into Kosovo to fill the vacuum caused by Serbs' exoduses, especially after the 1690 exodus of over 30,000 people led by Patriarch Arsenije III, for fear of the Ottoman reprisal. Second, Kosovo Albanians are religiously different from the Orthodox Serbs, who feel proud of their adherence to Orthodox religion and their contribution to safeguarding Christianity.

Serb nationalists believe that the fact Albanians converted to Islam and enjoyed privileged status in the Ottoman Empire has automatically turned the Albanians into the same group with Turkish people. According to this logic based on religious identity, the Albanians were supposed to follow the Ottomans and withdraw from Kosovo when the Ottomans had to leave the Balkans.³ Third, the Albanians speak a non-Slav language which was employed as another important factor distinguishing them from Serbs and the South Slavs at large. The Greater Serbian idea has two visions: the first one envisaging a powerful state in which all Serbs would be included; the second one aspiring to a federation of South Slavic nations with Serbia as the core. Albanians do not fit into either of the dreams of the Serbian nationalists. Serbia treating the Albanians as the Other whose existence can be ignored is most evident in the names “Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes” (1919-1929); Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1929- 1941), Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1945-1991).

To defame the image of the Kosovo Albanians, another label was added to them: Fascist and Nazi collaborator. During the WWII, the Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany incorporated most of Kosovo and the western Macedonia into Albania, which was welcomed by most Albanians as liberation from Serbian occupation and realization of their national dream. Therefore, despite the fact that as early as during the WWII the Yugoslav Communist Party put forward the slogan of “brotherhood and unity”, which later served in the Socialist Federal Yugoslavia as the criterion for dealing with ethnic issues, the “brotherhood and unity” policy was not implemented in Kosovo until 1966 when the radical centralist, Interior Minister and Secret Service

³ Correspondently policies were adopted to drive the Muslim Albanians out of Kosovo. During 1930s, the Yugoslav government negotiated an agreement with Turkey concerning the deportation of Albanians to Turkey, which offered to receive 200,000 persons characterized as "Turks" in exchange for payment, but World War II prevented this deal from being carried out. The agreement, however, was confirmed following the conclusion of the war. According to a prominent demographer, Professor Hivzi Islami, approximately 250,000-300,000 ethnic Albanians were driven into Turkey during the period of time between the two world wars, and approximately 250,000 more immigrated to Turkey following World War II. Erik Siesby, “Kosova, part of the former Yugoslavia”, *Turkish Daily News*, Nov. 5, 2004. Accessed on June 16, 2011, http://www.witness-pioneer.org/vil/Articles/politics/kosova_former_yugoslavia.htm

Chief, Aleksandar Rankovic was removed from his position. In the years after WWII, those who participated in the resistant war against Serbia were accused and punished by the Serbian police. Kosovo Albanians were seen in general by the Yugoslav communists as Nazi and Fascist collaborators and were labeled as the politically unreliable Other. In other words, Kosovo Albanians were stigmatized as guilty for collaborating with the Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy for the purpose of establishing the Greater Albania, i.e. an Albanian state within ethnic boundaries, which was the ideal of the 1878 League of Prizren. In 1967, Tito visited Kosovo and endorsed some basic rights to Kosovo Albanians, which eased the hostile relations between Serbs and the Kosovo Albanians. However, After Tito's death in 1980, especially during Milosevic's time, the Serb nationalist sentiment soared and this 'fascist and nazi collaborator' stigma was reemphasized as an approach to the Othering of the Kosovo Albanians. As Maja Mikula (2002: 67) has pointed out, "the 'Other' associated with these two entities – the Kosovo Albanian and the Croat – became fixed as 'fascist' in the black-and-white nationalist discourse. ... omnipresent and uncritical labeling of these two ethnic groups as 'fascist' became part and parcel of Serbian nationalism of the external homeland in the 1990s".

With the growth of Albanian population and the decline of Serb population in Kosovo, Serbia perceived increasingly threatened by the loss of control of Kosovo. In this context, a new othering label was added to the Shiptar women: child-bearing machine. Instead of giving a comprehensive account of the social, economic and political factors which caused the demographic change, Serbia's former Minister for Family Affairs Rada Trajković, out of fear and anger, simply called the Kosovo Albanian women "child-bearing machines", who according to her claim did not always know the names of all their children (Kaufman, 1999). Using such a term, Trajković expressed her concern over the demographic change in Kosovo while accusing the Shiptar women for being a political instrument for Albanian nationalism.

Finally, when the conflict between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo escalated, a 'criminal Shiptar' Other was constructed, on the one hand, to justify Serbia's atrocities against the Kosovo Albanians, and on the other hand to arouse further

anti-Albanian sentiment among Serbs. The conflict-prone accusation termed as “genocide” first appeared in the Memorandum of Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts in 1986, as a result of Serbian intellectuals’ concern over the exacerbated situation in Kosovo and the massive emigration of Serbs from Kosovo. Terrorism was allegedly the cause of the forced departure of Serbs. The Memorandum warned that the Serbs were facing “genocide”, “genocidal terror” and “neo-Fascist aggression” in Kosovo (Mihajlović & Krestić, 1995: 127, 129). With the deterioration of the Albanian-Serb ethnic conflict, “genocide” became the most abused word in the Serbian nationalist propaganda. The Memorandum victimized the Serbian nation and expressed genuine concerns over the perceived threat to the Serbian nation. In addition to Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, the Serbian Orthodox Church also actively got involved in the construction of the ‘criminal shiptar’ Other. The Church newspaper *Pravoslavlje* (Orthodoxy) regularly published articles, describing alleged crimes committed by the Kosovo Albanians against the Serbs. For the 600th anniversary of the Kosovo battle celebrated on June 28, 1989, the Serbian Orthodox Church published a “Proposal for the Serbian Church and National Program”, which lamented about the tragedy of Serbs over the five decades of Yugoslav Communist regime (Anzulovic, 1999: 121-122).

As can be seen from above, Shiptar Other was identified by the Serb nationalists for political purposes. In order to justify the Serbian nationalist mentality, to safeguard their interests in Kosovo, and to raise the Serbian nationalist sentiment, different negative labels were attributed to this antagonistic Other, such as latecomers to Kosovo, Christianity traitor, Fascist collaborator, child-bearing machine, genocide committer, etc. This in turn strengthened the confrontation of the two nations and enhanced the Kosovo Albanians’ determination in fighting against the Serbian oppression and persecution.

III. The Serpent Other of the Albanian Nation

The word “serpent” was used by the Albanians back in the 1930s to refer to the Serb nation as the evil Other of the Albanian nation (Kadare, 1990: 268). The hostile and non-reconcilable relationship between the “Serpent” Serbs and “Eagle” Albanians is best revealed in Kadare’s work *The File on H*, when the consul of the Albanian Embassy to USA commented on the Balkan style polemical writing:

Once both sides had exhausted the available and imaginable stock of insults, the Serbian press declared that for the greater good of Europe Albania should be wiped off the map of the continent – and the Albanian papers, which presumably thought the same of Serbia, brought the argument to a conclusion by stating that no dialogue was possible between two peoples whose names derived, on the one hand, from the word for “snake”, and on the other, from the word meaning “eagle” (Kadare, 1998: 112).

Actually Serbia was depicted as a serpent much earlier, in a caricature published in an Albanian magazine named *Dielli* (Sun) in 1913, where Albania was presented in the form of a lady defending herself from the neighboring countries: her right hand fighting against Montenegro (represented as a monkey), her left hand fighting against Greece (represented as a leopard), while her legs were bound by Serbia (represented as a snake). The text in the caricature reads: "Clear off from me! Bloodsuckers!! (Çporruni prej meje! Egërsira gjakëpirese!!)" Serbia was perceived by the Albanians as the biggest potential threat to the Albanian nation when the Ottoman Empire was about to lose the Balkans and Serbia was coveting the lands inhabited mostly by Albanians. Albanians believe that they are descendants of Illyrians, i.e. the autochthons of the Balkans, in contrast to the fact that Serbs who came to the Balkans only in the sixth century. In arguing against the Serbian claim of “Kosovo is the Serbian civilization cradle”, Kadare (1997: 243) writes, “This is a blatant lie. No serious historian or reliable historical source has ever been able to provide evidence that the Serbs were the original inhabitants of Kosovo and that the Albanians were later immigrants. On the contrary, the Albanians were there from the very start. It is the Slavs who arrived later – indeed quite a bit later.” Therefore, when Serbia occupied Kosovo in 1913 and implemented anti-Albanian policy, it became a real enemy of the Albanian nation. 120,000-270,000 Albanians were killed and approximately 250,000 Albanians were expelled between 1912 and 1914. As pointed out by the Serbian socialist Dimitrije Tucovic (1974) after he returned from the Balkan war, “Unlimited enmity of the Albanian people against Serbia is the foremost real result of the Albanian policies of the Serbian government.”

No wonder Rexhep Qosja, another Albanian top intellectual, defines Serbia as the colonial Other. He argues that Kosovo Albanians should not have been considered as ethnic minority in the former Yugoslavia, but rather a part of the divided Albanian nation since 1913, when Kosovo and other lands inhabited by half of the Albanian population were excluded from the new Albanian state. Qosja underlines that all the sufferings of the Albanians in Kosovo originated from the fact that Albanians were unwanted people on their own land. Based on historical arguments, Qosja asserted that Kosovo was colonized by Serbia, thus the Kosovo Albanians' struggle to gain freedom and independence is a legitimate anti-colonial struggle. Concluding with the remarks that "there is one thing which has proven stronger than any weapon: the will of nations for freedom and independence", Qosja declared that Serbia as a hated colonial Other is destined to doom (Qosja, 1997: 207-232).

For Kosovo Albanians, the atrocities and ill-treatment they suffered during Rankovic time created a deep sense that Serbia is the evil Otherness of Albanians. Even after Rankovic's fall when Albanians were allowed to have their own provincial constitution and constitutional rights accordingly, they felt discriminated by the Serbs. The persecutions against the Kosovo Albanians during the 1980s and 1990s after the demonstrations for republic status were crashed down, especially the anti-Albanian policies during Miloshevic's time, further engraved the mind of the Kosovo Albanians that Serbia is definitely the evil Other they would never be able to live with.

Albania has played a crucial role in the construction of hostile Otherness between Kosovo and Serbia. In responding to Serbia's suppression of the 1981 demonstration in Kosovo, Albania issued a series of articles which not only supported the demonstrators' demand for Kosovo republic and denounced Yugoslavia's military quelling, but also challenged the validity of treaties which had confirmed Serbia/Jugoslavi's ownership of Kosovo (Zëri i Popullit, 1981). Kadare's visit to Kosovo in November 1980 and the works like "In Kosovo, among the brothers" (1981), *The Dark Year* (1980), *File on H* (1981), *The Wedding Procession Turned into Ice* (1983) contributed a lot to the enhancement of nationalist

sentiment.⁴ For example, in *The Dark Year*, towards the end of the novel, the ghost of one of the protagonists named Dorskë Mokrari appeared, calling out “Don’t you understand, Albania has been dismembered like me, don’t you understand?” while raising the crutches to show better his body lacking one arm and one leg (Kadare, 1986: 363). By ending the novel this way, the author is actually touching the Albanian nationalists’ pain and inciting them to act out against the Serbian colonial Other.

Another feature of the evil Serbian Other emphasized by the Albanians is the crimes committed against Kosovo Albanians. This is not only to denounce the atrocities committed by the Serb police, but more importantly to gain attention and support of the international community. Examining Kadare’s works for such evidence, we can find this kind of Othering mainly in two of his works, *The Wedding Procession Turned into Ice* which was written immediately after the 1981 demonstration and *The mort fell upon us and we saw each other*, the main part of which was written during January 1999 to October 1999. The terror which prevailed in Kosovo was the major theme of *The Wedding Procession Turned into Ice*. It tells the story of the woman director of the surgery department of a Prishtina hospital, whose life was threatened for her sympathetic and solidaric position with the demonstrators. This terrorist Other is intentionally constructed also through the minds of a Serb secret service employee:

The reopening of the dossiers had been one of his wild dreams, which was always associated with an unclear nostalgia. He had indeed seen the dossiers in his dream, even many times. They were white, placed in lines, thousands of them there, just like the cold graves with a name on each of them. The names were no more useful, because they are all dead (Kadare, 2009: 209).

The development in Kosovo in 1999 was drawing the attention of the whole world. In order to gain support from the international community, Kadare published

⁴ The Kosovo question is a forbidden theme to touch upon for writers in Albania before 1980. Like all the other Albanian writers, Kadare did not write any works on Kosovo before 1980, except a short poem in 1966. Kadare’s works in early 1980s were the best barometer of Albania’s change of stance toward Kosovo.

in the diary form another work named *Ra ky mort e u pamë* (The mort fell upon us and we saw each other) which is mainly about the atrocities committed by Serb army to Albanians and the international reactions to the tragedies. Arguing against the scholars who opposed the NATO bombing against Serbia, Kadare asked: “Mr. professors, the lands of Kosovo are full of bodies of babies who have been killed by the sovereign country, what can you say about this?” (Kadare, 2000: 159) The title of the book suggests that it was the brutal killings of the ethnic Albanians that eventually exposed the evil of the Serbian Other and got the international community involved in the liberation of Albanians from Serbia’s rule.

On the other hand, it is worthwhile to note that the Serbian Other has not always been presented or perceived as colonial and evil. As has been observed by Artisien (1984), “Up to 1948 the ideological bond uniting the two countries left Yugoslavia's 1945 re-annexation of Kosovo out of their respective agendas. Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Cominform that year provided Tirana with a platform from which to reactivate the 'unsettled annexation of Kosovo' issue; with Stalin's backing, the Albanian media gave extensive coverage to the 'persecution' of Albanians in Yugoslavia, and some high-ranking party members openly incited the Kosovo Albanians to rebel against Tito.” During the 'honeymoon' years (1945–1948) between Albania and Yugoslavia, Serbs, as part of the Yugoslavian people, were described by the Albanian official propaganda as brothers and friends who have assisted the Albanian people in their National Liberation War and the postwar socialist building, even though in Kosovo numerous ethnic Albanians were being persecuted for anti-Yugoslavian resistance. After the split between Albania and Yugoslavia in 1948, Albania boldly accused Tito’s regime for its revisionism and violation of human rights in Kosovo, but restrained itself from provoking Tito’s regime in terms of Yugoslavia’s territory sovereignty. It was only after Tito’s death in 1980 that Albania started to present Serbia as the colonial Other, as reflected in the Albanian media as well as Kadare’s works. As for the Kosovo Albanians, during the years after the fall of Rankovic and before Tito’s death in 1980, when the communist dogma of brotherhood and unity was advocated and Serb Chauvinism was curbed, the Serb-Albanian conflict was frozen and positive reporting of the relationship between Serbs and Kosovo ethnic Albanians was evident. Though political intimidation and mistrust was still perceivable, as reflected in R. Qosja’s work *Death*

Comes to Me from Such Eyes (1974), the mainstream media in Kosovo was presenting a rosy picture of ingroup relations between Serbs and Kosovo Albanians, i.e. both being members of the big harmonious Yugoslavian family and holding positive attitude toward each other.

As can be seen from above, Serbia was initially regarded by the Albanian nation as the evil Other because of its occupation of Kosovo and other Albanian inhabited lands. The atrocities committed in the conquering wars and the persecutions applied to Albanians to eliminate anti-Yugoslavian/Serbian forces strengthened the evil-doer image of Serbs in ethnic Albanians' mind. Albania, out of its own political considerations, has responded differently to the predicaments and demands of the Kosovo Albanians, from being mute to atrocities to denouncing the human rights violation to openly supporting the Kosovo Albanians' demand for independence. Albanian elite intellectuals have played an important role in the shaping of the Serbian Other as colonizer, political persecutor and war criminal. The years of 1966-1980, though, witnessed an improved relations between Albanians and Serbs, due to the regime's endeavors of establishing brotherhood and unity among Yugoslavian peoples.

IV. Toward Ingroup Partnership

The relationship between Serbs and Albanians shows clearly that who becomes the adversary outgroup Other and what policy should be adopted toward this Other are determined by the national interest and are subject to change or adjustment according to political background. For Serbia of the 19th century, in its fight for independence, Turks were its predominant Other. Albanians substituted the Turks as the Other which hindered the realization of its national dream when the Serbian nationalism was preoccupied with taking possession of Kosovo and Northern Albania. After Albania declared its independence and gained international recognition in 1913, Serbia had to adjust the target Other of subjugation, narrowing it down from Albanian nation as a whole to Shiptar. Different labels were attributed by Serbia to the Shiptar Other in order to justify its colonization and subjugation, as well as to incite nationalist sentiment. Endeavors were made during Tito's time to curb the Serbian nationalism and to incorporate the Shiptar Other into Yugoslavia but

failed due to the rekindled Serbian nationalism after Tito's death. During Miloshevic's time, Serbian nationalism was inflated and the Shiptar Other was zoomed up as posing threat to Serbia's loss of Kosovo. The NATO bombing in 1999 and Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008 supported by most of the Western countries has brought a new reality: Kosovo is no more under Serbia's control. Therefore, even though Serbia still insists that Kosovo is part of its territory, it has to face the reality and be pragmatic: Serbia needs to join EU but most of the EU members have recognized Kosovo's independence. It is good sign that important moves, such as the dialogues between Serbia and Kosovo under EU auspices, are being taken toward a better Serb-Albanian relationship. Taking into consideration the macro and micro political situations, we have reasons to believe that it is time for the Serbian nation and Albanian nation to stop viewing each other with enmity and live in peaceful coexistence.

First, the relationship between Serb and Albanian nations have always been affected by the games of the great powers, therefore it is extremely important gain support from the two decisive forces on the Kosovo issue, US and EU. Peace between Kosovo and Serbia meets the interests of the United States and European Union thus they will continue to exert pressure on both Serbia and Kosovo for compromise and cooperation. US and EU have played and are playing a crucial role in bringing the Albanians and Serbs to realize that they must cooperate for mutual benefit and regional stability. US believes that building a stable Kosovo and a stable Balkan region under its control is of vital importance to its national interest. It is believed that instability in the region could produce favorable conditions to terrorism and organized crime, thus undermine U.S. goals of Euro-Atlantic integration and cooperation. This belief is evident in the Presidential Determination issued by the former American President Bush to authorize the furnishing of defense articles and defense services to Kosovo "to strengthen the security of the United States and promote world peace".⁵ The importance attached to the Kosovo problem is also evident in the fact that U.S. has been providing considerable aid to Kosovo. For example, according to the FY 2011 Congressional Budget Presentation for Foreign

⁵ Presidential Determination No. 2008-15, March 19, 2008.

Operations, Kosovo received an estimated \$123 million in U.S. aid in FY2009 (Woehrel, 2011: 7-8). Likewise, the European Union, being seriously concerned about the devastating consequences that might be caused by the instability in the Balkans, has been engaged actively in addressing the Kosovo problem. As the major force to promote Kosovo's progress and the establishment of good relations between Serbs and Albanians, EU has offered conditional guarantee of accession of both Serbia and Kosovo to EU, which is a good stimulus for the two parties involved to reconcile. Though there are still five EU member states which have not recognized Kosovo's independence, these countries have supported the deployment of the European Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX). In July 2008, a few months after Kosovo declared its independence, the European Commission hosted an international aid donor's conference for Kosovo, where donors pledged a total of 1.2 billion Euros for the period 2009-2011 (Woehrel, 2011: 5). On the other hand, in 2000 EU started dialogue on the Serbia's integration and since 2007 has granted Serbia financial aid of over 190 Euros annually. All these show how much EU is interested in bringing order and peace to its backyard countries. In a word, the macro political environment is good for better relations between Serbs and Albanians.

Second, the priority of Kosovo, Albania and Serbia is eventually membership to the European Union. The aspirations for joining the EU have pushed the Serbian and Albanian nations to cooperate with EU and fulfill the requirements EU has made for them. Serbia, for example, has recently surrendered Ratko Mladic to the International Tribunal for War Crimes, and has started to negotiate with Kosovo on certain issues. Kosovo, on the other hand, has made tremendous efforts to integrate the Serb minority into the whole Kosovo society. One remarkable effort for example is granting Serbs, who constitute no more than 10 percent of Kosovo's total population, 22 seats out of the 120 seats of Kosovo Assembly (Sell, 2002: 16). Also, Kosovo and Albania are cautious not to stir up the ethnic Albanian minority's nationalistic sentiment in Southern Serbia to retaliate against Serbia's control of ethnic Serbian minority in Northern Kosovo. These efforts are made to prove their commitment to better regional cooperation. Apart from these, focus has been put on combating organized crime, corruption, justice, regional economic and cultural cooperation, and the building of multicultural and multiethnic society. With the

social progress and the gradual integration into EU, Albanian and Serbian nations will be more motivated to treat the other as a future ingroup member within the big European family.

Third, nationalism is no more popular and the call for Greater Serbia or Greater Albania has a much smaller market. As the book *Serpent in the Bosom: The Rise and Fall of Slobodan Milosevic* (Cohen, 2002) has shown, nationalism was utilized as the most powerful tool to mobilize Serbian people against their national Others. The author metaphorically called nationalism as “serpent in bosom” because it ultimately destroyed the one who embraced it. Hurt by the venom of frenzied nationalism, many people came to refuse nationalistic ideas. This change of political view is of course also a result of the international community’s basic principle of no border change in the Balkans, which has discouraged radical nationalistic attempts. Kosovo was the only exception because of the humanitarian disasters caused by Milosevic’s military operations. When Kosovo gained support from the Western countries for independence, one of the key conditions was no-uniting with Albania. It is important that in the new political context, most of the Serbian and Albanian intellectual elites are now advocating Europeanism rather than nationalism. Kadare, for instance, who contributed significantly to the construction of the serpent Serbian Other, is now orienting his people to accept the two Albanian states reality and make contribution to regional peace and stability.

Fourth, regional cooperation in various fields brings more chances for better understanding among the Balkan peoples, including Serbs and Albanians. Let’s just mention one piece of good news: supported by the Thessaloniki-based Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeastern Europe, the Southeast European Joint History Project will soon publish a unified textbook jointly written by a big number of Balkan historians and translated into ten languages, for the use in secondary schools and universities in the Balkans (Pond, 2007: 267). We all know the crucial role of history education at school. One of the main reasons why the Serbs feel so hard to give up Kosovo is that in the Serbian history textbooks, Kosovo has always been described as the cradle of Serbian civilization, without mentioning that it used to be the land of the ancient Albanian kingdom named Dardania. As Smith (1991a) points out, if narratives and imagery of the nation created by the

intelligentsia are to assume concrete shape and be turned into institutions, the state organs are required. Therefore regional cooperation like this supported by state educational organs to stop hostile othering of outgroup nations is a good initiative for better relations among the Balkan states.

Having in mind the traditional enmity between Serbs and Albanians and the fresh bloody conflicts, some analysts are pessimist about the harmonious future of Kosovo. However, as time passes, concreteness of stories will fade away from memory. German-French rapprochement reached through the building ECSC (European Coal and Steel Community) and the good will of transcending hostile memories, provides clear evidence that political orientation and economic consideration can change the negative Other of a nation into a partner Other. Therefore, as long as the Serbian and Albanian nations are politically and economically motivated to cooperate, there is hope that the two nations will reconcile and eventually become positive ingroup members within the EU framework.

Conclusion

To conclude it is proper to quote Benedict Anderson's definition on nation as "an imagined political community". The relationship between Serbs and Albanians in the course of their respective national identity formation and in their struggling for national interests has proved the political nature of national identity. As demonstrated in this paper, both the political purposes of the nations involved and the external political context play a vital role in the imagination of the Other as positive or negative. Despite the difficulties such as the status of the North Kosovo Serbs, it is obvious that oriented by US and EU to adopt the democratic ideology and system, the Albanians and Serbs are moving away from the vicious circle of ethnic conflict into normal relationship which is based on respect of individual human rights. However, we should be aware that in West Europe, facing up to the past and the healing of emotions took several decades, even if stable peace was established immediately at the political level. For Albanians and Serbs, the road toward real reconciliation and toward viewing each other as the ingroup Other within EU takes time.

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