

# *National Identity of Kosovo*

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## **Abstract**

*The aim of paper is to explore the identity formation process of Kosovo and Albania. Kosovo and Albania have a long shared national identity because of a common ethnicity and history. The independence of Kosovo in 2008 has generated a debate about whether there is a new-born national identity of Kosovo — Kosovar. This thesis explores the implications that the process of state-building in Kosovo has on the Albanian identity of its population. In order to do so, the paper takes into analysis the impact that the invasions, international mechanisms, and independence had on the national identity. The analysis is done from the constructivist perspective. The methodology is qualitative and uses in-depth interviews with experts and discourse analysis. The thesis of this dissertation is that if the state of Kosovo becomes a successful state, this can further strengthen the state identity. This empowered identity can later bring new layers to the existing Albanian identity.*

**Keywords:** *state-building, international mechanisms, national identity, EU integration.*

## **I. Introduction**

Kosovo and Albania have a long shared national identity. Both Kosovo and Albania share a language, and before Kosovo's independence, they used the same national symbols such as flag, national anthem, football team, etc. Kosovo was declared as

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an independent state in 2008, which resulted in the creation of its own national symbols. These developments have generated a debate about whether there is a new-born national identity of Kosovo — the Kosovar. Yet, most of the people from Kosovo represent themselves as Albanians from Kosovo, not as Kosovars. There is a gap in the existing research on the Kosovo national identity. Therefore, this research aims to fulfil this gap and explore how the building of the new nation-state influence on the national identity of its people. The existing research stipulates that Kosovo's state-building has brought changes in its national identity, without erasing the previous one. This is understandable if we take in consideration that Kosovo is a new state, almost a decade old.

Constructivist theory is used to explore the national identity of Kosova. Constructivists use discourse analyses to argue that our consciousness is a construct of thoughts and beliefs, ideas, languages, symbols, and understandings between people, especially social groups, such as states and nations (Jackson et a., 2006, p.165). Constructivism shows that national identity is socially constructed and is not static.

## **II. Literature Review and Analytical Model**

### *II.1 National Identity and Identity Construction*

Identity is an umbrella term that is used in different disciplines like political science, sociology, philosophy, history, etc. and it is coined for the first time by German psychologist Erik Erikson in 1950 (Erikson, 1950, p. 223). Bloom (1990) pointed out that national identity is a condition where “a mass of people that has made the same identification with national symbols – have internalised the symbols of the nation ...” (p. 52). Similarly, Hogg and Abrams (1998) argued that identity is “people's concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others” (p. 2). It refers to either personal identity as an internal process and of social structures as an external process.

Personal identity deals with individuals as a unique person with its distinguishing characteristics, which are more or less immutable. Personal identity is self-category, which refers to ‘I’ and ‘me.’ Gorge Hebert Mead (1913) argued that self is a product of social interaction which let us know that there is a strong relationship with symbolic interactionist which means society affects social behaviour via its influence on self (p.149-172). According to Stryker and Burke (2000) there are a lot of roles that build a hierarchy within a person, which he called the hierarchy of salience (p. 286). They contended that a more salient identity/role is more likely to dominate in a different situation (p. 280-286).



On the other hand, social identity does not refer to 'I' and 'me' but 'us' vs. 'them.' Social identity deals with how people categorize themselves as part of a social group where they share similarities like a student, artists, women, men, ethnic groups, democrats, religious or nationalist, in-group and out-group (Turner et al., 1994, p.24). Social identity has three core components: social categorization, social identification, and social comparison (Tajfel, 1982, p.17-436). Social categorization is the process of categorizing people's similarities (in-group) and differences with other people (out-group). Since a nation is not composed of one person but a group of people, this means that a type of social identity is national identity.

In line with the reasoning of Turner and Tajfel, national identity can be explained based on three core components of social identity:

- National identity is a social-categorization where people identify their common characteristics by comparing with other nations and start feeling that they belong to a particular nation (Tajfel, 1982, p.17-436; Turner et al., 1999,6-36).
- Social identification: being part of a nation follows with behaviours of duty towards that nation (Tajfel, 1982; p.17-436 & Turner, 1970).
- The third component is competing with out-groups in terms of power to achieve a higher position in society, which means people fighting for dominance or prestige in comparison to other nations as called out-group nations (Tajfel,1982, p.17-436; Turner et al., 1999,6-36).

National identity is about the feeling of belonging to a nation or nation-state (Leoussi, 2001, p.248). This sense of belonging is directly related to the essential elements that make up a nation, such as a language, ethnicity, history, territory, religion, and culture (Leoussi, 2001, p.63). According to the theory of social identity, a nation could be called 'a nation' only when the people experience and feel it (Tajfel, 1974, p.69). The nation is not merely about the territory, language, flag, or history. It does not exist only there, but it is in peoples' minds and emotions (p. 68-69). Since nation is linked with emotions, it is not bounded to territory, therefore it can extend beyond state borders (Fichte, 1869, p.78-125). The nation can survive without territory such as Japan and Germany. A state can be multinational, like the USA, China, or Switzerland. There are cases of multinational states like Albania and Kosovo or East and West Germany, where the nation lies at the same time in two states or more. Nations can be multilingual like South Africa, Canada, or multireligious such as Russia, Albania, India. So, the nation is the spiritual unity of the people, and thus is "safeguarded" by the social cohesion of the people that share that identity.

There are two nation-state models: the French Model (Civic Nation) and the German Nation (Ethnic Nation). According to the French model, the state constructs the nation, because the state is created before the nation. Representatives of this approach are Ernest Renan and Fustel de Coulanges (Broomans, 2008, p.7). According to the French model, the nation is constructed on the bases of shared common institutional, territorial, and economic principles of the state (Renan 1996, p. 52-53.). For Renan, the nation is the result of an act of self-determination (p.233). In contrast, the German or Ethnic model represented by Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1869) asserts that the nation was born before the state like the case of Germany, Italy, the Balkan States, and the USSR. Fichte (1869) introduced the concept in the nineteenth century and advocates the idea that the boundaries of a nation are not defined by those of the territory of the state but are determined by several criteria that are independent of political affiliation such as language, history, culture, religious tradition (Fichte, 1869, p.78-125; as cited in James, 2015, p. 1-3).

National identity as a term is relatively new. It emerged in Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. However, even though it is new, it is complex and a vast literature is built around it. Anderson (1983), contend that nations are products of modernity and have come to life as the result of print-capitalism that enabled the distribution of books in the 'national' language (p.36-140) and then made possible the creation of the 'imagined communities' (2006, p.36-140). Nations are 'imagined' because "people imagine themselves belonging to a community ... even though they have never met or even hear about each other, but only imagine their existence and shared identity" (Anderson, 2006, p.6). In the same vein, Gellner (1983) stated that the influence of industrialization and the education system had a significant impact on the creation of the national identity (Gellner, 1983, p.10-48). According to Gellner and Anderson and others that belong to the modernist approach, the national identity is socially constructed, and it is changeable.

Ethnosymbolists, such as Anthony D. Smith (1998) have a different approach. They fall between primordialist and modernist approaches. They agree that nations are products of modernity, however they don't appear out of nothing, but make use of pre-modern ethnic ties to come to life (Smith, 1998, p 18-109).

After this short introduction of theories on nations and national identity it is important to pose the question of Hastings (1997): "why do some ethnicities become nations while others do not?" (Hastings, 1997, p.10). In this process, written language is one of the most important elements considering that without this element, ethnicities cannot transform into nations. Wodak et al. (2011), argues that national identity is a product of language discourse (Wodak p.7-10). This means that language keeps alive memories and narratives. Without the spoken language nor the ability to transmit information, our memory of the past, of what already have happened, would have been impossible.



## *II.2 Kosovo and Albanian National Identity*

The birth of the Albanian nationalism has taken place in two phases. The first phase began in the middle of the 19th century and ended at the beginning of the 20th century with the fall of the Ottoman Empire (Hoxhaj, 2007, p.81). The second phase took place in the late 20th century with the break-up of Yugoslavia (Hoxhaj, 2007, p.81). Albanians consider themselves to be very ancient and autochthonous in the Balkans. Nonetheless, the awareness of the Albanians and their efforts to build the nation-state emerged later than that of the other Balkan countries a nation is considered delayed (KIPRED, 2016 p.4). The Albanian nation has three different religions Muslim, Catholic, and Orthodox. The Muslim religion was spread during the period the country was part of the Ottoman Empire, where about 2/3 of the Albanian people were converted to Islam (Kraja, 2019, p.220).

The second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century is marked by the Albanian National Renaissance movement, which overcome religious divisions and sought to achieve peoples' unification by appealing to commonalities such as language and culture (Jacques,1995, p.276; KIPRED, 2016, p. 4). As Wodak argues, language is one of the main foundations of a nation and language and its discourse essential elements of the nation (Wodak et al. 2011). Language is also the determinant element to build social constructions because language survives and links the past, the present and the future of a given nations' history (Wodak et al., 2010, p.115). One of the main slogans of the Albanian Renaissance Movement is the statement of Pashko Vasa, "The religion of Albanians is Albanianism" (in Sulstarova, 2006, p.123). In the same vein, Sami Frasheri, one of the main representatives of the Renaissance, proclaimed that "An Albanian is Albanian before he is a Muslim or a Christian" (in Gashaj, 2014).

Albania declared its independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1912 and got its recognition by the Great Powers during the Conference of the Ambassadors in London in 1913. In this conference, Great Powers recognized only some parts of Albanian territories and left out outside the borders a great part of its territories (Ersoy et al., 2010, p.236). The Great Powers gave many Albanian territories to Montenegro, Macedonia, and Serbia (p.236). One of the territories that was left out was Kosovo. This process was followed by a long struggle of Kosovo's resistance to Yugoslav and then Serbian rulers, and the unending war for the reunion with Albania (Kraja, 2019, p. 127). With the end of the II World War, Kosovo was left within the borders of Yugoslavia. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the domino effect it instigated throughout the Socialist Camp, came the break-up of Yugoslavia. Similarly with the other former ex- Yugoslavia States, Kosova also attempted to gain its independence. The long process for achieving it is not part

of this paper. It finally got its independence in 2008, after a bloody war, NATO intervention and international organizations oversight of the country.

Kosovo is a multi-ethnic country where with 90% of its population are Albanians. After it got its independence, emerged questions such as: Did a new nation emerge? Is it different from Albanian? Does it impact only the political identity or the national one as well? The majority of Kosovo peoples feel Albanians rather than Kosovar (Murati, 2004, p.7). However, Nexhmedin Spahiu and Halil Matoshi argue that Kosovo people have a distinct national identity from Albanians. In an article at daily newspaper MAPO, Spahiu commented “as long as we have a Kosovo state, we have a Kosovar nation” (Spahiu, 2014, p.6). His argument is mainly based on the Ahtisaari plan that mentions the Kosovar nation which, according to Spahiu, is a “constitutional type” of the “Kosovar nation” and Blair and Clinton’s speeches that wished “long life to the young Kosovar nation” (Hyseni, 2015, p.1). Gashi shares the same view. He argues that due to the different paths the Albanians and Kosovars have taken, due to the long period they haven’t communicated together (during the communist regime), the two people have developed different national identities (2016, p.3). On the other hand, Qosja (2006) argues that “Kosova identity is part of the Albanian identity” (p.15). Mehmet Kraja shares the same opinion. For him, Kosovar Identity is a local identity, part of the Albanian identity in general (2019, p.518).

### *II.3 Analytical Framework – Social Constructivism*

The theoretical framework used for this paper is social constructivism because it best explains that through interactions, nations, nationalism, and national identity are born and shaped (Green, 2002, p.31). Constructivism is a theory that has received attention after the shortcomings of realism and liberalism theory to predict and analyse the cold war (Jung, 2019, p.1-2). Constructivism is about how people acquire knowledge (Peck & Mummery, 2018, p.389–407). It is a theory that attempts to explain how humans gain knowledge and meaning from the interaction with others (Hurd, 2009, p.5-7). Constructivists analyse “discourse” to argue that our consciousness is built by our thoughts and beliefs, ideas, languages, symbols, and understandings among people, especially social groups, such as states and nations (Jackson et al., 2006, p.165). They consider that national self-understanding is produced and reproduced in interaction processes and discourses (Fearon & Laitin, 2000, p.54). As Calhoun stated (2007) nations do not exist “objectively” before they exist discursively” (p.27.).

Nations and national identities have been constructed and shaped due to three important events 1) the emergence of industrialism, 2) the creation of states, and 3) the spread of mass education and mass literacy (Anderson, 2006, p.20-46;



Gellner, 1983, p.20-83). Ernest Gellner claimed that “born industrialism helped social mobility and competition,” which required the need for national identities (O’Leary, 1997, p.191–222). Additionally, Benedict Anderson highlighted that nationalism is built through the means of a common language, mass education, and media and that a nation as a community can only imagine that other people, who they never met, share the same cultural code (Anderson, 2006, p.20-140).

According to Martha Finnemore, a constructivist scholar of international relations, international organizations shape the basic principles of states and their functioning (Finnemore,1996 p.9). She argues that international organizations play an important role in the process of creating interest and national identity. She acknowledged that international organizations are facilitators between states to reach cooperation in the international system Based on her point of view, international organizations produce interests that affect national identity (Finnemore, 1996, p.15). In the case of Kosovo, the European Union, the Ahtisaari Plan, and other organizations involved in the process of state-building and independence of Kosovo have influenced the identity of actors who have produced social constructions in the state of Kosovo. Finnemore argues that the interests and identities of the nations are dependent upon the bureaucracy of the international organizations and institutions (Finnemore,1996 p.36).

The interdependence and benefits that the states gain from international institutions, incentivizes them to join different international institutions. Dependin on the form of the organization, privileges and benefits could be free trade, multilateral diplomacy, collective security, decolonization, protection of human rights, international law, cooperation, peaceful settlements of disputes, democratic governance and infrastructure aid. To get these benefits, states should fulfil some criteria (Barnett & Finnemore 1999, p.702). The European Union and the United Nations are mediators between Kosovo and Serbia to reach peace through cooperation. From this follows the following reason, why Kosovo is interdependent to the international organization:

- 1) the separation “de facto” of Kosovo from Serbia under UN;
- 2) to get accepted “de jure” by them as a sovereign state and
- 3) integration to European Union.

To get all the benefits from International Organizations, Kosovo had to follow their rules. Also, Kosovo has to make changes in its constitution and many national symbols such as the flag and national anthem (Thaci, 2018, p.10; Shehu, 2007, p.1). Additionally, the international organizations have prohibited Kosovo to use the same colours of Albania flag and any sign that represent Albania. Even November 28 – the Albanian Flag Day, for which many people from Kosovo have



given their lives, was not included in the national holiday of Kosovo. Moreover, the international organizations that oversighted its independence, stipulated that Kosovo is a multinational state even though 90% of the population are Albanians and they have prohibited its unification with Albania (Sallova, 2015,p.105-107; Mushkolaj, 2018; Kalemaj, 2014, p.31). All these changes have influence the Kosovo National Identity.

To do this research, I have used a qualitative approach by conducting in-depth interviews. MAXQDA software is used for analysing the interviews with the eleven experts.

### **III. Analysis – Kosovo National Identity**

#### *III.1 Kosovo's National Movement during Yugoslavia*

Following the London Conference (1912-1913), Kosovo and many Albanian territories remained outside Albania and under the Serbian and Montenegrin regimes. During WWI, Kosovo was divided into two administrative zones, ruled by Austria and the Bulgaria (Kostovicova, 2005, p.36). The parts that were under the Bulgarian administration were banned to use the Albanian language, the flag, and their national symbols, where this was followed by other ill-treatments (Kostovicova, 2005, p.36-37). On the other hand, the Austrians, allowed for the employment and the self-administration of Albanians, education in the Albanian language and the use of the flag (Kostovicova,2005, p.36-37).

However, in 1918, Kosovo was again occupied by Serbia. Under its reign, Albanian rights were denied, such as the use of the flag, education in the Albanian language, print media in Albanian and publications in the Albanian language. Population was also disarmed (Gashi, 2012, p.18). Albanians continued their fight to gain their rights. With the creation of the Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom in 1918, Kosovo remained under this kingdom. After the end of the World War II, it changed its name to Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1963). It consisted of 6 Republics: Slovenia, Croatia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and two provinces: Kosovo and Vojvodina. The republics enjoyed the right to secede and preserve their national identity. Kosovo was 90% inhabited by Albanians and was the third-largest population in Yugoslavia. Despite this fact, Albanians did not enjoy the national rights as other republics because they were only considered a minority (Çeku, 2014, p.2).

Many nationalist movements were formed on the principle of resistance to the Yugoslavian forces, including the National Defence Committee, which aimed to unite Kosovo with Albania. During 1919, Serbia, adopted the law of





“agrarian reform” which largely expropriated Albanian lands and settled about 70,000 Slavic settlers (Noli, 1976, p.247). A total of 240,000 Albanians from Kosovo fled to Albania and Turkey (Kraja, 2019, p.77). In 1941, it was estimated that the number of the Albanian population in Kosovo had dropped to 70% (Kraja, 2019, p.77).

In 1937, the Yugoslavia-Turkey agreement was drafted to relocate around 4,000 Albanians to Turkey on the pretext that the remaining Muslim Turks from the Ottoman Empire would be displaced. Still, the agreement could not be implemented due to World War II (Kraja, 2019, p.77-78). During the Second World War, the territory of Kosovo was divided into three areas Italian-German-Bulgarian (Kodra, 1996, p.106). To gain the support of the Albanians, the Italians announced the unification of Kosovo with Albania and allowed the use of the flag, the use of print media in Albanian, and the administration of the area by the Albanians (Bejko et al., 2015 p.1).

After the withdrawal of Italian and then German forces, Kosovo was annexed again by Serbia. The revolts of the Albanians against such situation were crushed and around 4,000 Albanians lost their lives. Thousands of other bodies were thrown into the sea during this time (Butka, 1994, p.116).

Religion was dealt differently on the different sides of the border. In Albania, with the separation from the Ottoman Empire, all efforts were made to Europeanise the country. In Yugoslavia, the authorities stimulated the application of Islam in Kosovo, allowing thus Albanian politics to take place only on religious grounds. The same continued even after the Second World War. Even though, the Albanian population were lacking human rights, in terms of religion they were allowed to exercise it. The Albanian population of Kosovo used the religious scripts to learn to write and read in Albanian. In their attempts to prevent the rise of Albanian nationalism, Serbian authorities have brought imams from Bosnia to Kosovo to lecture on Islam in languages other than Albanian (KIPRED,2016, p.21). It was also not uncommon for Serbs to try to identify Albanians as “Turks”, attempting thus to identify the conflict as one between Muslims and Christian Orthodox.

For a very short period of time, Albanians in Kosovo were allowed to open several educational and publishing institutions, but in 1947 Serbia took this right again, banning the symbols of the nation, the language, and Kosovo’s institutions. Furthermore, Albanians were disarmed and forced to surrender their weapons. The situation was that if they did not have one, they were forced to buy it and hand it over in order to avoid violence (Prifti, 2002, p.487). During this time, 2,500 Albanians migrated to Turkey. The non-assimilation of Albanians from the great loss of “human resources” was the large increase in birth rates (Kraja, 2019, p.287). Due to the uninterrupted demand and demonstrations of Albanians

during the late 60's and early 70's, a new Constitution (The Constitution of the Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosovo) was adopted on February 28, 1974 by the Assembly of Kosovo and the Assembly of Yugoslavia. Kosovo gained the status of an autonomous province of Serbia. It replaced the Kosovo Constitutional Law of 1963. The new Constitution provided Kosovo with a higher degree of constitutional, legislative and judicial autonomy and the Albanians were allowed to use their flag. Following this the University of Pristina, the Academy of Sciences and Arts were established and exchange visits and organization of educational and cultural activities between the University of Tirana and Prishtina were allowed as well (Syla, 2015, p1-4; Kadriu, 2019, p-1-2).

Even though the new constitution gave Albanians of Kosovo a higher degree of rights, the oppression, exploitation and injustice persisted. The students' protests in 1981 gave rise to a series of protests from all the population; they became a popular movement. The main leitmotif of the protests was that of giving to Kosovo the status of the Republic. Slogans of the protesters were: "We want a Republic," "A republic, a constitution, without hatred or war," "Kosovo of Kosovars" "We love our national flag," "We want the unification of Albanian lands". These protests fuelled Albanian nationalism (Hysa, 2020, p.1).

With the death of Yugoslav leader of that time, Josip Broz Tito and the arrival of Slobodan Milosevic in 1987, the situation for Albanians became even more difficult. Their demands were not only ignored, but they were also threatened by a 1974 constitutional amendment, which foresaw the abolition of Kosovo's autonomy. As a sign of resistance to the abolition of autonomy, Trepça miners went on a hunger strike for two weeks to restore autonomy, by becoming thus the engine of resistance movements (Klan, 1999, p.106-114). Yugoslav authorities then declared a state of emergency and sent about 15,000 federal police troops under Serbian leadership to Kosovo, where they began a campaign to re-establishing a civil order (Haxhiaj & Stojanovic, 2020, p.3). Under the state of emergency, the Yugoslav government gathered the MPs of Kosovo Assembly, who surrounded by tanks and police forces, were forced to vote for the change. The new constitution was adopted in 1989. It abolished Kosovo's autonomy and declared Kosovo part of Serbia (KIPRED, 2007, p.8).

The situation after this deteriorated significantly: many Kosovars were massively fired and national media, hospitals, factories, and the University were closed. Many young Kosovars serving in the Yugoslav army (Akademia e Shkencave, 2002, p.389). The massive firing of Albanian workers led thousands of Kosovo Albanian to emigrate to other countries. By the end of 1989 the first political party (Democratic League of Kosovo) headed by Ibrahim Rugova was founded (Historiku i Lidhjes Demokratike të Kosovës, 2020, p. 1). The party organized the political and civic resistance and organized social life. The Assembly of Kosovo proclaimed the



Republic of Kosovo and announced: “constitutional declaration of Kosovo as an independent and equal unit within the federation (confederation) of Yugoslavia and as an equal subject with other units in the federation (confederation)” (KTV, 2015, p. 1), which didn’t receive international recognition (Jashari, 2015, p. 1). A year later, a referendum was held on the declaration of independence and with a massive turnout of 99.87 % of citizens, about 90 % of them voted for Kosovo as an independent state. From this moment, parallel structures are at place (Nguyen, 2018, p.45; Rugova, 2005, p.335). Kosovo Albanians rejected all institutions occupied by Serbs and set up parallel institutions such as political, health, cultural, educational, where even private homes were turned into schools and universities. The first parliamentary elections were held in Kosovo in 1992, and Ibrahim Rugova was elected President. This year also marks the break-up of Yugoslavia. This period is considered as the peaceful resistance of Kosovo. However, when at Dayton Conference the problem of Kosovo was left aside (Borger, 2015, p.1-9), Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) was established in 1997.

The death of Adam Jashari with other 57 people including his family members (Flamuri & Flamuri, 1999, p.284) after an attack from Yugoslav army, escalated the situation. This was followed by the the massacre in Reçak, where 45 Kosovo Albanian civilians were massacred by Slobodan Milosevic’s policies (Wilesmith, 2019, pp. 1-9). This event was considered a turning point for the war and the liberation of Kosovo. It received the attention of international institutions. NATO organized the Interim Agreement for Peace and Self-Government in Kosovo otherwise known as Rambouillet Agreement (February 6 – March 22, 1999) to draft a peace agreement between Serbia and Kosovo. The conference aimed to end the violence by Slobodan Milosevic’s political regime and provide stability for the two countries. Yugoslavs refused to sign the accords and this was used latter by NATO as a justification to bomb Yugoslavia. The bombing lasted 78 days and on June 12, 1999 it ended with the capitulation of the Serbian army. This was followed by the deployment of NATO troops and the withdrawal of Serbian forces. This marked the end of the war in Kosovo.

Following this, UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1244, which set Kosovo under UN international administration, and therefore “around 37, 200 KFOR soldiers from 36 countries were sent to Kosovo” (Koha, 2019, p.1; Resolution 1244 in 1999). During the war, “13,500 people lost their lives, most of them civilians, 10,812 were Albanians, 2,197 Serbs and 526 members of other ethnic communities. Also, 6,044 people were reported as missing and 1,000 of them were non-Albanian communities” (Haxhiaj, 2018, p.1-10). Around 12,000 houses were burned, and about 1 million Albanians were displaced and found shelter in Albania, Macedonia, Europe, and beyond (Haxhiaj, 2018, p-1-10).

### III. 2 The Role of International Organizations in Kosovo

Following the intervention in Kosovo, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1244, which placed Kosovo under international protection and administration (Mustafa et al., 2016, p.16). The resolution set Kosovo *de facto* separated from Serbia, but *de jure* it kept Kosovo an autonomous part of the Yugoslavia Republic. Hence, under NATO command, called by the United Nations, the deployment of KFOR armed forces was authorized. The resolution consisted to four pillars for determining the future status (KIPRED, 2005, p.83):

- Pillar I: Humanitarian Issues, led by UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees);
- Pillar II: Civil Administration, headed by UNMIK (United Nations Mission Interim for Kosovo);
- Pillar III: Democratization and building of institutions, led by OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; and,
- Pillar IV: Economic Development, under the supervision of the European Union.

The situation was complex and there was a lack of understanding of what it meant and what impact international administration would have in Kosovo (Kraja, 2019, p.303-345). With all the benefits these organization brought, they had also the side effect of weakening the local practices. Furthermore, the role that these institutions in the country affected the national identity of the country. Following the war, the demands for peace and normalization in the Balkans were growing. Maintaining regional stability has become a key element for internationals. Any statement or action expressing nationalist elements was seen as a threat to destabilization. There were many cases when KFOR forced the removal of posters of KLA members with reference to the war (Kraja, 2019, p.118). The option of Kosovo unification with Albania was rejected by the international community. A Greater Albania was not seen well from the neighbouring countries and this could lead to the destabilization of the region (Veseli, 2017, p.1). Also, those who came from the side of the war with the idea of unification with Albania were threatened that they would be sent to the Hague for war trial (Kraja, 2019, p.225). This action proved once again that Albanians in general and in this case, Kosovo was never a determinant of its actions but was dependent on external forces (Hoxhaj, 2013, p.2).

Various organizations, including UNMIK, allocated most of their funds for multi-ethnic programs (Egleder, 2013, p.94-274; Kraja, 2019, p.158). Many Kosovo-



Serbs were placed in decision-making positions in order to have institutions with multi-ethnic representation. Textbooks were required to have less content of historical memory so that the younger generations would be as open as possible to the Serbs. During this time, Kosovo also faced bilingualism under UNMIK administration, where English was also declared as an official language (Bojaxhi et al., 2016, p. 2-3). In general, projects related to the promotion and cultivation of the Albanian language were considered as nationalistic.

The process for determining the final status of Kosovo officially began in 2005 and in 2007, the so-called “Ahtisaari Plan or Ahtisaari Package” was submitted.

### *III.2.1 The Ahtisaari Plan*

In order to define the status of Kosovo, the UN Secretary-General asked the former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari to submit a Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement (CSP), non-formally known as the Ahtisaari Plan. (Bajrami, 2010, p. 21-39). The proposal was submitted in February 2007 by Martti Ahtisaari himself as the special envoy for

Kosovo’s status. This proposal was supported by the European Parliament but was opposed by Serbia (Gjon et al., 2010, p. 291-312). This plan guided the formation of a multi-ethnic country and the preservation of the national identity of minorities, especially Serbs. This document consists of twelve annexes covering constitutional provisions, rights of communities and their members, decentralization of the local government, justice system, religious and cultural heritage, international debt, property and archives, national security, International Civilian Representative, European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) Rule of Law mission, International Military Presences (KFOR) and Legislative agenda (U.S. Department of State, February 22, 2008).<sup>2</sup>

Throughout this document the Albanian language was mentioned only once, and the word ‘Albanian’ was not mentioned at all (Ahtisaari, 2007, p. 1-52). Ahtisaari Plan made Serbian the second official language (Ahtisaari, 2007, p. 3) and it stipulated the condition for specific seats for Serbs in the Assembly of Kosovo. The plan provided for the representation of Kosovo’s non-Albanians in key public institutions to safeguard their rights and to encourage their active participation in public life (Ahtisaari, 2007, p. 18-19). The Kosovo Serb community were provided with a high degree of responsibility over its own affairs, extensive financial autonomy and allowed to receive funding from Serbia and take part in inter-municipal partnerships and cross-boundary cooperation with Serbian institutions. Six Serb-majority municipalities were established or greatly expanded: Gracanica, Novo Brdo, Klokott, Ranilug, Partes and Mitrovica-North (Ahtisaari, 2007, p. 20-21). Also, the document provided to safeguard the Serbian Orthodox Church in

<sup>2</sup> <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/eur/rls/fs/101244.htm>: Summary of the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement

Kosovo (more than 40 key religious and cultural sites). The Serbian Orthodox Church was granted property rights, exemption from taxes and customs duties and was free to maintain links with the Serbian Orthodox Church in Belgrade.

(Ahtisaari, 2007, p.30-37).

The document also assessed that the conflict between Kosovo and Serbia was an ethnic conflict. Additionally, the Ahtisaari Package cemented the international protectorate in Kosovo through the establishment of the International Civilian Representation which would supervise the implementation of the Plan and have ultimate authority over its interpretation (Ahtisaari, 2007, p.43-48). This document called for the demobilization of the KPC-Kosovo Protection Corps, a continuation of the KLA (Ahtisaari, 2007, p.56). The document requested the creation of a flag of a multi-ethnic character and forbade the use of red, black, or eagle as important elements of the Albanian flag (Ahtisaari, 2007, p.3-4). The same was required with the anthem. The country had to create a new anthem with as few Albanian characters as possible. Also, the Ahtisaari package banned Kosovo from unifying with any other state (Ahtisaari, 2007, p.3).

In a way, this document aimed to promote a new national identity that would distinguish Kosovo from Albania. The package also stipulated that the constitution was not subject to referendum approval by the people, but it had to be approved by the International Civilian Representative and formally approved by the Kosovo Assembly (Ahtisaari, 2007, p.11).

### *III.2.2 Kosovo as an Independent State*

With the acceptance of the Ahtisaari Plan by the political elite, Kosovo was declared an independent and sovereign State with international supervision, on February 17, 2008. It was recognized by 23 countries out of 28 of the European Union, and in total by 116 countries out of 195 countries (MFA, 2020, p.1). The path of state-building and international recognition of Kosovo limited the relations between Albania and Kosovo. Kosovo's long resistance and the war with Serbia were an attempt for freedom and unification with Albania and an attempt to create a new nation-state. With the independence of Kosovo and the impossibility of unification with Albania, the Ahtisaari Plan declared the Republic of Kosovo a multi-ethnic state, thus recognizing Kosovo no longer as a state with only one national identity, that is Albanian identity and therefore making even more impossible the unification with Albania since the idea of the unification was based on the unification of two states with the same national identity (Gallucci, 2011, p. 4). Consequently, this led the path for creating a new state identity (Kraja, 2019, p.145).

The flag of Kosovo is yellow, white, and blue, with the map of Kosovo in the middle and six stars above, representing the main ethnic and cultural communities living in Kosovo. The anthem only melody without lyrics, and it doesn't represent



neither its history nor it has any relation with the Albanian language. According to Benedict Anderson – it's exactly the national anthems, or national poems and songs, the singing of which makes, among other things, the experience or imagination of the common community, i.e., the nation (2013, p.193), the anthem and flag of Kosovo doesn't help to imagine the common community between Kosovo and Albania. The importance given to the Serbian language, the high degree of competences and autonomy given to municipalities with Serbian population majority (Kraja, 2019, p.301), the special protection provided to the cultural and religious monuments of the Orthodox Church are all factors that hinders the old national identity of Kosova and lead to the creation of a new identity. A series of cultural and political rights belong only to Serbs when they are recognized as a nation. In contrast, the Kosovo Albanians are presented only as residents of the state of Kosovo and not as people having an existing identity, that is the Albanian national identity.

With the adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo on April 9, 2008, by the Assembly of Kosovo, the preamble reads: “We, the people of Kosovo, determined to build a future for Kosovo as a free, democratic and peace-loving country, that will be a homeland to all of its citizens. Committed to the creation of a state of free citizens that will guarantee the rights of every citizen, civil freedoms and equality of all citizens before the law”. However, in comparison with other countries in the Western Balkans such as North Macedonia and Serbia, one may easily observe that the emphasis in their preambles is on history, on the people. This is lacking in the case of the constitution of Kosovo as if the country doesn't have its own history and its own people (Sulejman, 2016, p.2). According to Kraja, the future was given to the state of Kosovo, but the history was erased.

Kosovo started as an international project and ended up as such. Kosovo's new status did not come as a will of the Kosovo Albanian people because they it was not given the opportunity to express itself in a referendum. Kosovo status was the result of a compromise imposed by international decision-makers (Kraja,2019,15).

The genocidal memory was still fresh, but for Kosovo, the separation from Serbia was important, and the only option was relying on the international organizations. The emotional connection that Kosovo Albanians had with Albanian symbols was evident from the day of the declaration of independence, where citizens covered the squares with the red and black Albanian national flag to celebrate the independence, a tradition that continues to be present at many gatherings, feast, burial or at home. Kosovo's anthem and the state flag are used more by those who have a legal or constitutional obligation to present the state. Additionally, Albania's Independence Day (November 28) was not included in the state official holidays, but people give priority to the historical tradition and emotional connection with this date by celebrating it every year (Kraja, 2019, p. 479).



In a way, Kosovo Albanians were confronted with both state and national identities. According to Ahtisaari package, Albanian national practices were allowed at private gatherings, however Kosovo state symbols had to represent the country at official meetings and events. According to Ernest Gellner, “nationalist sentiment is deeply offended by violations of the nationalist principle of congruence of state and nation” (Gellner, 2009, p. 128). Most of the interviewees agrees that Kosovo has become a modern state, but a long journey is ahead. There are two different approaches in terms of the influence that Ahtisaari package had and have on the national identity of Kosovo: One perspective is that the Ahtisaari package helped to create a new state but not a new identity (Dehari, May 20, 2020), and the second perspective is that it did create a new Kosovar identity different from the Albanian identity. Dehari contends that the Albanian identity is not specifically linked with the Albanian state creation, thus it is older than the state itself. Therefore, for Kosovo people Albanian national identity is not linked only with the state itself but rather with the history of the people, and thus it cannot be easily erased. In the same line, Krasniqi holds the idea that due to the harsh and bitter experience that Kosovo people and Serbs had for a very long time, it is difficult to create a nation-state (21 May, 2020). Lluka and Sejdiu hold a similar idea. The Kosovo state symbols have to be respected by the all, but people feel that they belong to the Albanian national identity (Lluka, May 18, 2020; Sejdiu, May 20, 2020).

Demaj (May 29, 2020) contend that Ahtisaari plan had no impact on the national feelings and that in Kosovo there is no dilemma about national identity belonging, because the majority of Kosovo Albanians feel “Albanian with Kosovar citizenship”. Asked about the tension between state and nation in the case of Kosovo, Nezej (May 29, 2020) argues that Kosovo did not have the chance to select between the state or the identity. While Albanian national identity remains permanent, the state symbolizes the efforts of the Albanian ethnic majority to govern itself.

Matoshi and Spahiu follow a different logic. Matoshi (20 May, 2020) argues that the Ahtisaari plan has enabled the creation of a new Kosovar national identity, based on the premise that the Albanian ethnic identity is static, in a time when national identity is a changing variable. According to him, after the independence in 2008 the ethnic nationalism turned into a statist (or civic) nationalism. He believes that in the context of globalization, national identities are “fused” into state identities and thus the state of Kosovo automatically represent the nation of Kosovo. Spahiu (May 19, 2020), argues that the state is an apparatus which consists of institutions, i.e., the presidency, the ministry, the parliament, the courts, the prosecution, the army, the policy, etc., while the nation is the community that wones that state. *De facto* or *de jure* the owners of the state of Kosovo, are all citizens of Kosovo. According to him, the nation should be complemented by the principles of the French revolution “*Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*”.

### *III.2. 3 Integration into the European Union*

According to Ahtisaari's plan, one of the first steps Kosovo should take was to accept the EU Mission through EULEX, which is responsible for ensuring the rule of law, and the International Civilian Representative responsible for implementing the Ahtisaari package (Ppio, n.d, pp. 1-2). Taking into consideration Kosovo's location in Europe as well as Kosovo's commitment to join the European Union, the idea of Kosovo's EU integration was present even before independence. An acceptance and definition of a state identity different from that of Albania were considered an easier way to achieve Kosovo's EU integration (Kraja, 2019, p. 507). Europe is not interested in attracting unresolved conflicts with the accession of Kosovo and Serbia to the European Union. Thus, the EU has conditioned Kosovo to accept Ahtisaari plan's conditions, especially the one with Serbia, in order to allow the advancement of the process of Kosovo's integration. Kosovo has been part of the Western Balkans integration process since 2002 through the Tracking Mechanism of Stabilization and Association Process and Stabilization and Association Process Dialogue. EU did not offer Kosovo the same process of membership it had offered to the other Western Balkan countries. Kosovo made efforts to meet EU requirements and the European Union began the dialogue process at the end of 2010 between the two governments, that of Kosovo and Serbia. The discussions aimed to normalize the difficult situation from the Declaration of Independence of Kosovo in February 2008.

The Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) was signed on 27 October 2015, by Federica Mogherini, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and by Johannes Hahn, the Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations and by Isa Mustafa, the Prime Minister of Kosovo, and Bekim Çollaku, the Minister of European Integration and Chief Negotiator (Council of the EU, 2015, p. 1). This agreement was a big step towards EU integration. Kosovo is a potential candidate for the future enlargement of the European Union and is making efforts towards it integration (Koeth, 2012, p. 31-36).

Citizens of the Republic of Kosovo are the only ones in the region who are subject to the visa regime. Çollaku (May 22, 2020), argues that conditions for visa liberalization and EU integration could be a factor that may push Kosovo to strengthen its Kosovar national identity.

## **IV. Conclusions: Kosovo National Identity**

The Albanian identity is a dynamic issue influenced by a variety of ideological, social, political, geopolitical and geo-cultural factors. The study confirmed the assumption that the Albanian identity has several layers which are not necessarily

coherent with each other. Due to fractures and disconnections, there is an amnesia for different periods of history and therefore there are discussion on what an Albanian identity really is.

Nonetheless, the interviews and the other data confirmed that despite five hundred years of Ottoman invasion, one century of living within Yugoslavia and later under Serbian invasion, the Albanian identity remained strong. It is important to mention that the during the Ottoman invasion, Kosova and Albanian were together and thus they had the same national identity, which is not specifically linked with the formation of the Albanian state in 1912. Kosovo has actively contributed to the creation of the Albanian state, and this has strengthened the common national identity and consciousness.

The separation of Kosovo from Albania after the Conference of London created two different paths for the Kosovo and Albania in terms of political, social and economic development. The two parts of once the same nation, followed different trajectories. The Albanian population of Kosovo pursued their efforts to unite with Albania and to preserve their national identity. The oppression they have faced, an oppression made on ethnicity grounds, helped to strengthen their Albanian national identity. However, the inability join Albania, has led Kosovo to create a new reality for the construction of an independent state. In its efforts to resist the oppression from Yugoslavia and later Serbia, Kosovo had to establish its own institutions, movements and leaders. This was further enforced by the lack of communication with Albania during communism. Furthermore, the establishment of Kosovo state was necessary help Kosovars from the ethnic cleansing from the Serbian state. In such conditions, the support of the international community was inevitable and only through its help Kosovo achieved its independence. For achieving this, it had to 'sacrifice' some important element of its national identity such as flag, anthem, and the use of the 'Albanian' national identity as a term *per se*.

As an independent state, Kosovo has its national representation in sports, art, and culture and this has contributed to deepening the divide between Albania and Kosovo and somehow has helped to strengthen the new Kosovo national identity.

There are two different perspectives in terms of Kosovo national identity. One perspective contends that despite having the state of Kosovo, the Kosovars feel Albanians and thus that their national identity has not changed. The second perspective contends that a new national identity has emerged. It is still on the making, but it will be an identity with its own characteristics and elements which will not refer to the past and the Albanian identity. The first perspective places a lot of emphasis on the customs, norms and culture as important elements of a nation identity and as such Kosovo national identity cannot be perceived as detached from the Albanian national identity. Even when new customs emerge, they take into account the existing ones and thus integrate the new tradition in the existing

identity. According to Siljadzic, “If the whole spiritual, intellectual, and cultural experience of a particular people is imagined as a single tree with many branches, then tradition is at its root: like the tree to survive and grow, it must have strong roots that nourish it and make it sprout new shoots year after year” (2006, p.55). Therefore, it is difficult to imagine the birth of a new Kosovar nation, without having any relation with the Albanian national identity.

The second perspective holds that the national identity is not static or something natural, but it is a social construct that constantly experiences changes in form and content. Interviews have shown that if the state of Kosovo becomes a successful state, this could lead to strengthening of the state identity of Kosovo. This empowered identity can later bring new layers to the existing identity and effectuate changes. The construction of a new Kosovo national identity seems difficult but not impossible.

The EU integration of Albania and Kosovo might have its influence on the national identity of Kosovo. In this scenario, the need of unification for the two countries will decrease, the border will become insignificant and cooperation in all aspects will be greater.

In the end, we may conclude that the national identity of Kosovo will depend on the political, social and economic developments of the country and international developments in the region which will continue to influence the country’s path towards EU integration and stabilization and cooperation in the region.

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