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Kosovo's Independence and the Serbian Coalitions against the Kosovar Self-Determination

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Abstract: *Kosovo`s independence remains one of the most problematic aspects of the post-Yugoslav political order, dividing UN members, still in the phase of a frozen conflict and marked by the split between Serbia`s traditional allies and the supporters of Kosovar independence. As the last episode of Yugoslavia`s explosive disintegration, the Kosovo war showed how the radicalization inoculated by the nationalist leadership was responsible for the biggest humanitarian crisis after the Second World War. So profound was the impact of radicalization on society, that almost two decades after the last bullet was fired, the on-site reality is still determined by ethnic grudges. The prospect of EU integration, now the only common desideratum of the former enemies, could be considered an incentive for reconciliation. However, nationalistic outbreaks still reanimate the desire for retaliation, thereby slowing down the process of Europeanisation, especially for Kosovo, which still does not have any legally established EU ascension path.*

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Introduction

The study addresses the influence that the Kosovo-Serbia binomial has had on the regional security architecture in the Western Balkans and analyses in a comparative manner the two stages of relations between Belgrade and Pristina, namely autonomy and independence. The first section deals with the post-conflict reconstruction of the ex-Yugoslav space, focusing on Kosovo`s status, but above all on the redefinition of power relations between the central authority and the regional administration.

The paper also covers the period preceding the adoption of *Kosovo's Declaration of Independence*, presenting Montenegrin separatism as a precedent for the irredentism from southern Serbia and for the formation of the Republic of Kosovo. On this occasion, the article pursues the international debate on the self-determination of the province, focusing on the nuances between the Euro-Atlantic community and the traditional allies of Serbia. The legality of the argument is deduced from the strategies of the interested parties that exercised influence in the South-Eastern European space. As such, the friction points during the confrontation were transposed into the post-conflict phase and the act of independence was the catalyst for an East-West rupture in terms of the perspective on the principle of self-determination.

At macro-structural level, the study exposes the post-Cold War transformation of the former the Yugoslav space. Conceptually, the Kosovo war can be considered one of the first conflicts to be fought within the doctrine of humanitarian intervention, which has become part of customary

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international law in modern times. On the other hand, the violation of a UN state's sovereignty as a result of a military intervention unauthorized under a resolution issued by the Security Council would provide support for the hypothesis that the status of Kosovo is illegitimate. Practically, albeit the humanitarian intervention was tacitly accepted by the UN Security Council, no official statement was issued giving permission for NATO's intervention in Yugoslavia. Contrarily, the text of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1199 / 1998 stipulates that "further actions and additional measures" could be used in case negotiations with Belgrade fail, thus providing a *carte blanche* for the military operation.[1]

The *Little Yugoslavia* and the Last Episode of Balkan Federalism

Balkanization could be undeniably considered the *leitmotif* of the fragmentation movements in South-Eastern Europe and fueled by the same nationalist energies that had been reinforced during the breakup of the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires. The heritage of the interwar, this fight of the Balkan people for building state entities based on ethnic criteria, proved its applicability both to the Yugoslav Wars from the `90s but also to the post-Yugoslav order by impacting the collective mentality and the political discourses.

From a certain point of view, from a European perspective, the `90s could be called the Yugoslav decade, practically an entire period that was

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[1] United Nations Security Council, *Resolution 1199 (1998)*, September 23rd, 1998, available at https://undocs.org/S/RES/1199(1998), accessed on April 28th, 2018.

marked by the unprecedented violence on the continent, only comparable to the drama of the Second World War. The revival of *Balkanization* transformed the last decade of the 20th century in the 3rd interwar decade, at least in the Western Balkans: the entire political and social climate was marred by ideology, ethnic grudges and war without fronts. Once again, the Europeans saw the smoking guns in the south, together with the fear of conflict escalation at a regional or continental scale.

Only four years after the war in Kosovo, the post-conflict reconstruction would bring to light the first problems in terms of Yugoslavia`s domestic cohesion, especially because Vojislav Koštunica`s term was a continuation of Slobodan Milošević 's nationalism, even if it was more moderate in nature, as imposed by the era. The informal failure of Yugoslavism was already part of recent history, as the entire former Yugoslav territory was covered by successoral republics, widely recognized by the international community, together with an autonomous province with a quasi-protectorate status. The domestic evolutions within Yugoslavia were to take place in the opposite direction of the "supranationalisation of identity"[2] produced within the European Union, having Yugoslavia`s political fracture as an irrefutable evidence.

Rump Yugoslavia officially ceased to exist following the conservative amendment operated by the Serbian Parliament on February 4th, 2003, the new entity bearing the name *Srbija I Crna Gora* (Serbia and Montenegro). The ratio of forces between the two constituent republics would be that of

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[2] Sergiu Gherghina, Vasile Boari*,* "Multidisciplinary approaches of an old policy", in: Sergiu Gherghina, Vasile Boari (eds.), *Recovering the National Identity*, Iași, Polirom Publishing House, p. 17.

bicephalous entities, reunited at the level of the central bureaucratic apparatus and based on confederal principles. The Serbo-Montenegrin Union was scheduled to have Belgrade as a capital-city; otherwise, it was designed as a parliamentary union, only sharing the Presidency, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defence.

The component republics had equal rights, an autonomous internal administrative structure, with their own legislative and executive structures. This state of affairs was a consequence of the deterioration of relations between Belgrade and Podgorica during the Kosovo war when the attitude of the two *sister republics* was fundamentally divergent – the Montenegrin's benevolent neutrality towards NATO was one of the pressure points in the relations with the Serbian side. The Kosovo conflict paved the way for the first rivalries between the Serbian and the Montenegrin security forces.

A potential schism of the Southern Slavs was set out in the following statement regarding the foundations of the State Union between Serbia and Montenegro – "a political and state construction created during a certain geopolitical conjuncture, with the support and the pressure of the European Union, interested in creating this federation. [...] The pressure was mainly exerted over the decision-makers from Podgorica, the capital of Montenegro, forced to accept the creation of a mini-Yugoslavia".[3] The previous statement is meant to illustrate the systemic vulnerabilities of the Union, as the noticeable differences between Belgrade and Podgorica marked the emergence of serious disagreements, therefore the first signs of divergence

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[3] Traian Valentin Pocea, Aurel I. Rogojan, *History, Geopolitics and Espionage in the Western Balkans: the Origins, the Evolution and the Activity of the Intelligence Structures in the Ethno-Geographic Space of the Southern Slavs: Yugoslavia versus Romania in the Shadow War*, Baia Mare, Proema Publishing House, 2009, p. 194.

were only a matter of time. The quasi-artificial character of the Serbian-Montenegrin Union project was inherent in its provisional condition and the superficial character of its internal cohesion.

Divergent views manifested since laying the groundwork for the future state project led to the inclusion of an emergency clause in the treaty establishing the Union: a referendum threshold of 55% for validation, definable three years later when Balkanization would once again become the regional reality. Once relations between Belgrade and Podgorica showed signs even of a temporary stabilization, Serbia focused on managing the issue of national minorities, as the Albanian community was the most problematic component of an ethnic mix that encouraged both irredentism and secessionism.

The Union of Serbia and Montenegro – with the ruling legacy of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – largely implemented the policies of post-Titoist Yugoslav federalism, thus increasing the control of minorities by "putting ethnic leadership into dependence, removing the inconvenient elements of the official policy and countering identities".[4] What the *New York Times* described in its issue from December 3rd, 1990 as a repeat of the Pakistan-India 1947 divisions[5] as the background for Yugoslavia`s breakup was confirmed by the reciprocity of the persecution operated against the minorities by the majorities of the two republics.

'The smoke curtain' used by the leadership from Belgrade for this new offensive against national minorities was the resolution adopted by

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[4] *Ibidem*, p. 187.
[5] Robert M. Hayden, *From Yugoslavia to the Western Balkans: studies of a European disunion, 1991-2011*, Leidn & Boston, Koninklijke Brill NV, 2013, p. x.

Parliament on August 27th, 2004, recognizing Kosovo`s autonomy within Serbia. Largely fitted into the formalist trend of the era, the decision was temporized up to the moment when the effects only applied *de jure*; the *de facto* situation was extremely different compared to what the political actors declared, characterized by the gap between the four formal components of the Union of Serbia and Montenegro, the tensions leading to discontent both at domestic and union level – the traditional tensions between Belgrade and Pristina were duplicated by those between Belgrade and Podgorica.

The political elite from Belgrade, adopting the position of a "cultural decontamination center",[6] took over the only *Messianic* component from *Yugoslavism* – turning into a bridgehead for South Slavs, but completely circumventing the idea of "recognizing tolerance and diversity".[7] The status of Albanians – traditionally marked by an "ambiguous position in a state self-affirmed by Southern Slavs"[8] – had become increasingly difficult to define, being disputed by military means as a result. The problem had become more pressing as the respite sustained by allied military presence had not led to the desired effect of reconciliation, especially as the tensions during the conflict continued – and even degenerated – in a latent stage.

The 1999 war inoculated some systemic malfunctions to the reconstruction process, such as the blockade after the first guerrilla troops appeared in Kosovo. Both in conceptual and experiential terms, a liberation movement is the supreme argument that the population from a territory is not

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[6] Viorel Roman, *The Transition. From the Revolution in Romania, 1989 to the Yugoslav War*, 1999, Bucharest, Europa Nova Publishing House, 2000, p. 22.
[7] Andrew Baruch Wachtel, *The Balkans: A History of Diversity and Harmony*, Bucharest, Corinth Publishing House, 2017, p. 179.
[8] *Ibidem*, p. 179.

going to accept a return to *status quo ante bellum*. By invoking the right of self-determination,[9] the movement precisely exposed the irreconcilable character of the relations between the capital city and the region, but especially the failure of the negotiated solution, even rejecting the idea of extended autonomy or confederalism.

Peculiar to the post-1999 interactions between Belgrade and Pristina is the trinomial *phobos – kerdos – doxa,*[10] Greek language terms describing *fear*, *personal interest* and the *desire to grow*. Adapting the conceptual philosophy of Thucydides to the regional and strategic climate, the relationship between Serbia and Kosovo at the end of the conflict can be characterized by ambivalence, oscillating between fear and interest, since concessions involved mutually accepted vulnerabilities and the stimulation of separatism. For both actors, the desirability of the Euro-Atlantic integration was overcome by national interests, often inconsistent with the cosmopolitanism of the new century that debuted under the desideratum of "the moral unity of humanity".[11]

The *Balkanization* inherited from the post-imperial era was overlapped – this time – both by the bankruptcy of *Post-Leninism* and *Yugoslavi*a and replaced by personal authoritarianism[12] as a form of

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[9] Robert M. Hayden, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

[10] George Cristian Maior, *The New Ally. Rethinking the Foreign and Defense Policy of Romania*, Bucharest, RAO Publishing House, 2012, p. 51.

[11] Radu Sebastian Ungureanu, "Identities and Political Communities", in: Daniel Biró (ed.), *Contemporary international relations: central themes in world politics*, Iași, Polirom Publishing House, 2013, p. 51.

[12] National Archives and Records Administration, Kettering Foundation, *Advise the President: William J. Clinton. What Should the United States Do About the Kosovo Crisis?*, William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, 1999, available at https://s3.amazonaws.com/sitesusa/wp-content/uploads/sites/402/2016/11/clinton-kosovo.pdf, accessed on April 28th, 2018, p. 4.

accommodation after decades exercising the paternalist socialist state. The challenge was overwhelmingly complicated by the fact that the subordinate approach of the dispute turned into recourse to "unprecedented cruelty in Europe after 1945",[13] so that *zero-sum games* represented the rule, with the exception of episodic events, which were especially inconsistent in terms of the impact they had. The distorted image of alterity corroborated with this approach in the optics of each side and led to societal cleavages impossible to blur, as the martial experience became decisive: "war breaks your existence in two pieces."[14]

     A suitable characterization of the state of affairs could be that outlined by Hans J. Morgenthau, which traces the coordinates of the present era, describing a "world where states, acting on their own interests, are fighting for power and peace".[15] The struggle for safeguarding interests is manifested in the Kosovo-Serbia relationship by the predominance of security issues; the threat of war was a *leitmotif* of the relation between the two actors. As a consequence, in the medium and long term, the security issues – and the geostrategic combinations designed to achieve them – led to the peripheralization of the international organizations in the area, especially in the early post-conflict years, when the parties were less willing to engage in concession policies, equating concession with conciliation.

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[13] Colin S. Gray, *War, Peace and International Relations: An Introduction to Strategic History*, Polirom Publishing House, Iasi, 2010, p. 269.
[14] Slavenka Drakulić, *Balkan Express. The Unseen Face of the War*, Bucharest, Athena Publishing House, 1997, p. 16.
[15] Robert O. Keohane, Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, Iași, Polirom Publishing House, 2009, p. 78.

The doctrine of popular sovereignty, originating in the 18th century, is a central point for Kosovo's self-determination, especially in the case of an overwhelmingly ethnic Albanian majority: according to official statistics from 1993, the Albanians represented a majority of 85.6% in Kosovo. From the perspective of the absolute dimension of popular sovereignty emerged the legitimate right of the Albanians in Kosovo to revolt, at the cost of undermining the sovereignty of a state, as expressed by the most legalist views. The foundations of the Yugoslav representivity and sovereignty were questioned precisely at the time when political decision-makers were guilty of ethnic cleansing and genocide. Following the pattern of counter-revolution that further exacerbated the energies of the movement, Belgrade's ethnic discrimination made nothing but provide a richer pro-independence argument to its Pristina counterpart.

The problem of Serbia's reconfirmation of autonomy in 2004 was that it was accepted only when the confrontation had already been completed – 14 years after the first requests in this respect, when, for the Albanian Kosovars, the return under Belgrade's authority was the least desirable scenario. The considerable amount of support for the pro-independence agenda was ultimately determined by the organized violence only applied by the Yugoslav regime, as the scourge of war far outstripped a strictly martial component and even reached mass-executed sexual violence. The desire to build trust, ultimately the central element of reconciliation strategies, had been halted because of the difficulties in persuading the victims of violence about their former aggressor's intentions.

The recurrence of war was a major concern in the debates on the preservation of the ex-Yugoslav *status quo*. Belgrade's *realpolitik* paved

under Milošević and continued by Koštunica borrowed the logic of Nicholas J. Spykman: "a world without struggle would be a world in which life ceased to exist".[16] Basically, the situation between Kosovo and Serbia was edified on mutual suspicions, both camps circumspect about the *good intentions* of the other. The notion of state rationality, rarely borne out of amorality, has perpetually reintroduced the idea of hidden agendas, but above all the pursuit of objectives known only at the level of the *Camarillo*.

One should also consider the trust placed in the ability of the international community to perform crisis management, of course with contradictory amendments regarding the available or usable capabilities. From the Serbian point of view, the fact that they had lost control of a territory considered the cradle of their civilisation overlapped with an intervention that it has always deemed illegitimate because it violated its sovereignty, fuelling the hypothesis of a pro-Kosovarian attitude from the West, especially since Montenegro's benevolent neutrality towards NATO could not be denied. For the Albanians from Kosovo, the fact that the war ended with an international protectorate meant that either the West had no direct interests to defend in the region or that the reality was that of a pro-Yugoslav attitude.

As a major consequence, the inter-confessional opposition, corroborated with the traumas of the past, was decisive for Serbia in seeking a strategic path towards the Aegean and Adriatic seas with the revitalization of nationalism in support of the Greater Serbia project. The problem of Kosovo, the territory evoked in Belgrade's philosophical statements at the

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[16] Bruce Bueno de Mersquita, "Logic and Evidence of Neorealism: When It's a False Theory?", in: John A. Vasquez, Colin Elman, *Realism and Power Balance: A New Debate*, Iași, Polirom Publishing House, 2012, p. 42.

intersection of West-European and North-Atlantic economic interests, persisted in being one of the hottest points of any regional geopolitical equation. In spite of this, the focus of international opinion fell on the Montenegrin issue, whose resurgence seemed inevitable, as the clash between Belgrade and Podgorica threatened the integrity of one of the youngest states in the region.

The referendum from May 22nd, 2006, demonstrated the incompatible positions between Belgrade and Pristina, 55.4% of the Montenegrin citizens opting for separation from Serbia. The *peaceful secession*[17] was valid, exceeding the 55% threshold imposed by the constitutional treaty. The question determining Belgrade's eminently peaceful actions was answered only when the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia organized a similar referendum. Beyond the Serbian leadership`s desire for a new direction, one must bear in mind that two separatist movements of an amplitude such as Kosovo and Montenegro could not be managed simultaneously.

The Euro-Atlantic community`s circumspection related to the Montenegrin independence resulted precisely from the fear of offering a new precedent to similar movements in Southern Europe. The argument of the international community was that the developments from Montenegro could produce a domino effect in Kosovo, Macedonia and *Republika Srpska*, which added concerns about similar effects in Catalonia or Flanders. The ratification of the independence act of the youngest post-Yugoslav actors was characterized in the most vehement terms: "The European Union recognized the independence of the small Balkan state, although almost all of the

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[17] Traian Valentin Pocea, Aurel I. Rogojan, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

continental states did not see that, which can lead to a reaction in the Western Balkans, and even in the rest of Europe."[18]

The collapse that occurred just three years after the establishment of the Serbian-Montenegrin Union project, anticipated to some extent with the *Balkanisation,* revitalized in the early 1990s, was an implacable process, with the creation of smaller, but more coherent ethnic entities. Although the "states are relatively time-consuming homeostasis structures",[19] the disintegration of the Union precisely demonstrated the logic that Keohane exposed on the triple dimension of national interests – physical survival, autonomy and prosperity – materialized in the phrase "life, freedom, ownership".[20] The interval between 2006 and 2008, and thus between the Montenegrin and Kosovar independence statements, was marked by extensive conceptual and ideological debates under the imperative that "narrative consciousness determines the being of a nation".[21]

The Montenegrin separatism, which quickly achieved its goals of self-determination, provided the Kosovo movement with an example of mobilization, especially with the analogies drawn between the two movements: the Yugoslav federalism and, later, the confederal unionism only represented strategies to block the separatism promoted by Pristina and Podgorica. Since, in spite of the protests and the reactions of the international community against the redrawing of borders in South-Eastern Europe, the

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[18] *Ibidem*, p. 192.
[19] Alexander Wendt, *The Social Theory of International Politics*, Iași, Polirom Publishing House, 2011, p. 242.
[20] *Ibidem*, p. 240.
[21] Milica Bakić-Hayden, "National Memory as a Narrative Memory: The Case of Kosovo", in: Maria Todorova (ed.), *Balkan identities: nation and memory*, New York, New York University Press, 2004, p. 26.

Montenegrins had built up their own state, it became obvious that the example could only mobilize the energies of the movement in southern Serbia. The quasi-poetic approaches to the concept of alterity illustrated how the struggle for self-determination, as a nucleus of Balkanization, went beyond mental boundaries, together with the emotional burdens related to the identification with the homeland and the presentation of *the other.*

A Couple of Years for Preparing a Chain Reaction

The Kosovar separatism, a study case *per se* in the area, due to the symbiosis between irredentism and secession, brought to the forefront both the manifestations and the counter-reactions awakened in the Serbian side, the idea of struggle for national emancipation. This desideratum for the Romanticism of the 19th century, in conjunction with the *doctrine of the air forces,*[22] proved that statehood in South-Eastern Europe was the result of an equation between myth and conscience and was overly complicated by strategic interests or transnational conflicts. As a result, the theory of identity based on *jus sanguinis* was reaffirmed, including in the context of the fever for democracy and international integration.

A phrase expressed by a Serbian participant in the Second Balkan War remained characteristic for the evolution of relations between Belgrade and Pristina, following Podgorica`s decision to leave the Union: "My God, what has awaited us! Let's see Kosovo released! The spirits of Lazarus, Milos and

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[22] Wesley K. Clark, *Waging Modern War. Bosnia, Kosovo and the Future of Combat*, Public Affairs, New York, 2001, p. 454.

all the martyrs in Kosovo are watching us!"[23] The illustration of the strategic objectives and the complementary nationalist agendas had been achieved using some analogies to the cultural peripheralization imposed on the minority by the majority and the specific desires of *Enlightenment*, often capable of legitimizing – and even feeding – the liberation struggle, and respectively safeguarding territorial integrity.

The struggle *for* and *against* Kosovo`s independence had reanimated the convergence of literary, religious and political discourse, even historical events which seemed interchangeable, in the context of rendering reality in a mirrored optics. It can easily be concluded that the decade between the end of the conflict and the proclamation of Kosovo`s independence had been marked by the alternation between theories of the "true history of Kosovo" and the crystal-clear expressed strategic coordinates. The philosophical expositions embraced the *leitmotif* of the cradle of civilization, largely reflected in the writings of Serbian folklorist Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, known for his 19th-century epic poems about Kosovo.

The mythological paradigm evoked by Karadžić in presenting the Kosovo conflict as part of the Serbian emancipation struggle was an attempt to reiterate Serbia's strategic position as a point of utmost importance, the *gateway* to Central Europe. Thus, the energies of change that animated the Kosovar independence movement were presented in analogy with the destabilizing impact of the Ottoman presence in the region, but, above all, the Kosovo war was linked with the struggle for the emancipation of the Serbian people. By invoking a "considerable populist appeal",[24] Belgrade

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[23] Milica Bakić-Hayden, *op. cit.*, p. 28.
[24] *Ibidem*, p. 28.

called for preserving Kosovo beyond strategic and territorial reasons, as an ultimate test of Serb persistence in the region, a challenge to reconfirm the myth of resistance.

The region's climate at the time of 2007 was that of the tense interactions between Belgrade and Pristina, which put pressure on the commissions and missions mandated to manage the Kosovo issue, especially as there was no feasible compromise between the agendas of the two capital cities. Since the independence of the Montenegrin side had become a reality, Kosovo's return to Serbia's borders, even under a regime of autonomy, was a concession that meant abandoning the struggle for self-determination. The *domino* effect hypothesis that the critics of the Montenegrin self-determination discussed seemed to become more and more viable, which inherently implied an adaptation from the European Union as a guarantor of the reconstruction of the Western Balkans.

The immediate consequence of amending the European agenda for the Kosovo-Serbia binomial was the adoption of the Ahtisaari Plan on March 30th, 2007 by the European Parliament. Drafted by former Finnish President Marti Ahtisaari and sent to the United Nations, the plan provided for Kosovo's "controlled independence",[25] thus confirming the hypothesis of the domino effect produced by Montenegrin independence. Since the adoption of the *Plan*, eventually, in addition to the assumptions about the self-determination of Podgorica, the critics of this legal arrangement of Balkanization discussed the echoes that an official recognition of separatism

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[25] Traian Valentin Pocea, Aurel I. Rogojan, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

will have on similar movements in Spain, Cyprus, France, Transnistria, Crimea, Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia or Ossetia.

The first article of the document, entitled *General Principles*, exposed the general coordinates of the statehood of Kosovo, those of a "democratic society that will be democratically self-governed, respecting the rule of law through its legislative, executive and legislative institutions."[26] It stipulated that territorial claims were forbidden for the future republic – i.e. the actions against the integrity of another state – in addition to which we find a paragraph discussing the cooperation between Belgrade and Pristina for the implementation of this *Plan*. In order to ensure a peaceful transition from the international protectorate to the statehood of Kosovo, the document prepared by the former Finnish head of state provided for the establishment of an international guarantee, given the latent conflicts between the two actors.

However, the influences of the "double dimension conferred by Yugoslavism"[27] remained a constant, a constitutional lever to counteract the revanchist nationalism and the effect of the ethnic division of power. The decentralization proposed by the Yugoslav federalist project was capable of neutralizing any manifestation of the assimilationist policies, while the Ahtisaari Plan itself provided, *ex officio*, 20 seats for minority rights, out of which 10 were reserved for the Serb minority. The mechanism, beyond the logic of implementing the established model that brought peace to the region between 1918 and 1989, involved a representation that was independent of

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[26] Marti Ahtisaari, Comprehensive Proposal For the Kosovo Status Settlement, February 2nd, 2007, https://www.kuvendikosoves.org/common/docs/Comprehensive%20Proposal%20.pdf, accessed on April 29th, 2018, p. 3.
[27] Radu Sebastian Ungureanu, *op. cit*, p. 51.

the will of the ethnic majority, precisely to equip the new state with the minority autonomy assurances that Yugoslavia renounced after 1989.

The balance of power generated the same regional manifestation of the interpenetration between secessionism and irredentism, so the dilemma of the international community involved conferring autonomy to the Serb minority without dismantling Kosovo`s internal coherence. The strategy was largely reminiscent of the Middle East peace process – the challenge essentially the same: managing the situation to such an extent that the proposed measures would not lead to the antagonism of any of the actors.

The perception of the *serbophile* voices was that Kosovo separatists were favoured, basically confirming the thesis that post-conflict international tutelage was a pathway leading only to independence, Kosovo being lost to the Serbs after the international community's decision to manage the territory. Although in Belgrade's view, the Ahtisaari Plan meant nothing but the confirmation of the pro-Kosovar attitude of the Euro-Atlantic community, for Pristina, the idea of *supervised independence*[28] was not entirely satisfactory, especially as it alluded to the *doctrine of limited sovereignty* – a point of convergence between the Brezhnev and Rumsfeld doctrines. Although the *Plan* was the ultimate guarantee that the province would no longer return within the borders of Serbian sovereignty, the Kosovars' criticism went in the direction that the right to self-determination was conditioned by the international administration.

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[28] Michael Ross Fowler, Julie Marie Bunck, *Law, power and the sovereign state: the evolution and application of the concept of sovereignty*, Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania University Press, 1995, p. 130.

The rationale behind establishing a transitional phase between international trusteeship and Kosovo`s self-determination lies in the circumspection of the international community regarding the real capacity of the Pristina to govern, especially since punctual problems such as economic unsustainability represented a major syncope of the future state. Practically, the post-conflict reconstruction included setting up an entity capable of independently surviving by creating the necessary domestic conditions. In a state with its identity linked to warfare, but especially to a nationalist agenda with a revanchist potential, the lack of self-financing capacity could only raise even more criticism towards its very existence.

The international regime was conceptually foreseen to diminish the impact of the transition, but especially to support and finance the process of endowing the future country with the institutional infrastructure for releasing pressure: creating a state structure able to manage a multi-ethnic country but also an entity capable of legally overcoming the ethnic outbreaks. One can distinguish the principle of *hub-spoke,*[29] which, beyond the metaphorical component at the level of the public discourse, expounded the idea of a model of dependence, thus stimulating the interconnection to such a level that the conflict had become so unprofitable that it would have been abandoned.

The on-site reality also demonstrated the existence of strong opposition to changing the regional balance by introducing a new actor into the regional configuration, which would bring to light structural defects such as relying only on legal sovereignty, namely only on the recognition of a state's sovereignty over a territory. This new actor, while supposedly

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[29] Robert O. Keohane, o*p. cit.*, p. 320.

officially recognized, did not possess the capacity for self-managing its internal affairs, effectively lacking interdependence sovereignty, domestic sovereignty and Westphalian sovereignty.

The neorealist interpretation of international anarchy, superimposed on a regionalism synonymous with the Balkanization, brought the Kosovo-Serbia binomial into the behavioural paradigm of the prisoner's dilemma. On the basis of this principle, the post-Yugoslav reconstruction, so, inherently, Kosovo`s independence as well, was governed by the logic that the stimulus was not necessarily important, but the frequency of the game: the key of the game was not essentially the stimulus, but the idea of not giving up on the game. Regarding Belgrade, European integration could hardly have been a strong enough incentive since, in the case of Serbia, one could not discuss the Atlantic component of integration, given the major opposition to NATO after the Yugoslav experiences.

The regional adaptation, in this case the *shadow of the future,*[30] could not be included in the equation when cooperation was the missing element and it could not even be talk of desertion since there had been no dialogue on which to give up. In this case, the main issue was lacking any type of cooperation or common interests, which would have contributed towards diminishing the asperities or moderating the interactions between Belgrade and Pristina. Practically, there was no common *shadow* since there was no common future for the two actors.

In addition to the technical components such as reducing the transition costs or monitoring and implementing agreements, the idea of a supervised

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[30] Edward Harrison, *The Cold War International System. Strategies, Institutions and Reflexivity*, Iași, Polirom Publishing House, 2010, p. 61.

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independence – inherent in an international regime – was determined by a supposed "functional role in facilitating the cooperation between international egoists".[31] The concept behind the international regime was that of reducing the uncertainty, as well as the traditional notion of modelling the state's expectations of future behaviour. In contrast to the assumed tasks, it is worth mentioning the difficulty of creating the regimes, mainly the problem of assuming legal obligations, especially when its objectives were fully contested by one party.

Although dynamic rationalism is an integral part of the post-Yugoslav reality, the changing role of the state's preferences could not be so radical as to circumvent the idea of Kosovo as a *cradle of civilisation*. Whether or not to discuss the action of autonomous variables, giving up on one of the founding myths of the Serbian people could not be a viable solution in the context of a nation presented as an "imagined community"[32] and build on an ideological cumulation with a primary role in maintaining societal cohesion. In this way, the following quasi-axiom regarding identity is validated: "as soon as the identity aspects are crystallized at cultural level, the national identity is no longer perceived as a result of the material and symbolic processes, but as a cause of them."[33]

The Serbian historic right to Kosovo, which was virtually denied by the content of the plan developed by the former Finnish leader, was the main argument used by *serbophiles* to illustrate the thesis of a *state created by NATO*. The geopolitical component was to be fuelled by the fact that 90% of

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[31] *Ibidem*, pp. 61 - 62.
[32] Sergiu Gherghina, Vasile Boari, Radu Murea, *op. cit.*, p. 18.
[33] *Ibidem,* p. 19.

the bombing on the air bases and the Yugoslav military targets were performed by the USA.[34] Serbia's position on Kosovo was mainly a mixture between a hard-to-establish ratio between *Yugo-nostalgia,*[35] identity protection and purely strategic interests, thus noting the interpenetration of "living national pride"[36] and geopolitical equations. The opponents of these cumulative determinants – especially Richard Rorty's vision on this issue – were to describe the "counterproductive character of the identity policies perceived as a diversion from the real economic problems, a policy of *Balkanisation* and rejecting of the universal moral norms".[37]

The Creation of a Second Albanian State in Southern Serbia

Partially reiterating the episode of the Montenegrin independence, the Kosovars declared their independence on February 17th, 2008, following an extraordinary meeting of the General Assembly from Pristina. *Kosovo's Declaration of Independence* is a four-page response to the Ahtisaari Plan, the authors stating that it "fully accepts its obligations for Kosovo",[38] declaring itself a "democratic, secular and multi-ethnic republic." Kosovo's actual independence can be seen as a strategy almost in the mirror with the

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[34] Hillary Rodham Clinton, *Hard Choices*, Bucharest, RAO Publishing House, 2015, p. 245.
[35] Fedja Burić, "Dwelling on the Ruins of Socialist Yugoslavia. Being Bosnian by Remembering Tito*"*, in: Maria Todorova, Zsuzsa Gille, *Post-Communist Nostalgia*, New York & Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2010, p. 230.
[36] Vasile Boari, Sergiu Gherghina, Radu Murea, o*p. cit.*, p. 151.
[37] *Ibidem,* p. 78.
[38] Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, *Kosovo Declaration of Independence*, Pristina, February 17th, 2008, available at http://www.assembly-kosova.org/common/docs/Dek_Pav_e.pdf, accessed on April 29th, 2018, p. 4.

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Montenegrin one; the only difference is that the authorities from Podgorica legitimized their decision through public consultation.

The text of the *Declaration* stipulates even a commitment to the implementation of the Ahtisaari Plan, which constitutes an element of originality compared to the typology of such a document, especially because it accepts the provisions of the former Finnish President as a whole. Another element that does not fit into the common logic of a declaration of independence – but which was fully justifiable at the time it was proclaimed – is the reference to Euro-Atlantic values, underpinned by the peace and security commitments that have become the *leitmotifs* of the UN system.

The text also presents Kosovo as one of Yugoslavia`s successor states, stipulated in the passage addressing the obligations of the Republic of Kosovo. The authors of the *Declaration* had doubled UNMIK's commitments on behalf of Kosovo by mentioning the status of a successor republic, residing in the quality of "former constituent party"[39] of Yugoslavia. The message, beyond the international commitments that statehood implies, was largely related to the desideratum of placing of the most recent Balkan actors on equal footing with their neighbours in the region. Therefore, the call for equality between the Republic of Kosovo and its neighbours meant, beyond the strictly declarative component, an appeal to the international community to press in this direction, anticipating Serbia's vehement opposition to Kosovo`s independence.

A comprehensive response to the unilateral act of Kosovo`s independence came from the Holy See, with representatives of the Vatican

[39] *Ibidem*, p. 4.

State stressing – after recalling their involvement in crisis management and humanitarian assistance – the implications the process might have – in this case, a problematic relationship with Serbia. As a result, Federico Lombardi, General-Manager of *Radio Vaticana*, pleaded for direct negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina, with a view towards reaching a *consensual solution*[40] to Kosovo's legal status. The same *communiqué* issued by the Vatican also explained that the relationship between the ethnicities in Kosovo must be closely monitored, thus confirming the validity of the hypothesis describing the possibility of mirroring the 1999 events. In the alternative, we find the same message of the intrinsic link between safeguarding the identity right of the Serbian minority and the internal cohesion of the Republic of Kosovo.

One of the main challenges of a country founded on *jus sanguinis* was the "naturalization of ethnic consciousness",[41] with the direct result in a biological-genetic formation of historical materialism. The concerns of the international community, synthesized in the communiqué sent by *L'Osservatore Romano*, firstly targeted the unacceptable symbiosis between citizens, statehood, sectarianism and the objective of turning the *imagined community* into a country project. Also noticeable is the Holy See`s *exposé* analysing the "need for recognition and respect"[42] in terms of stimulating nationalism, thus validating the conceptual distinction between patriotism and nationalism made by Madeleine Albright: the first one expresses the

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[40] Federico Lombardi, "A proposito della dichiarazione unilaterale di indipendenza del Kosovo", *L'Osservartore Romano*, Vatican, 18th – 19th February 2008, available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/osservatore-romano/it/comments/2008/documents/042q01b1.html, accessed on April 29th, 2018.

[41] Ronnie D. Lipschutz, *After authority: war, peace, and global politics in the 21st century*, New York, State University of New York Press, 2000, p. 110.

[42] Fareed Zakaria, *Post-American World*, Iași, Polirom Publishing House, 2009, p. 49.

natural attachment to the country, while the latter is an acute form of revanchism.

Belgrade's major challenge was to align with the expectations; worth mentioning here is the popular characterization of Kosovo being a "state created by NATO", compounding upon its perceived *neo-merchantilism*.[43] According to Serbia, the Kosovar independence was not a strict regional attribute based on the right to self-determination, but corresponded to Euro-Atlantic interests that could be defended only by the self-determination of Kosovo. As a consequence, the *serbophile* discourse maintained that the Western attitude on Kosovo is the result of "the intersection of West-European and North-Atlantic economic interests".[44] The position also illustrates what is characterized as "the defeat of consciousness by nationalism",[45] the idea of the *shadow of the future* signalled by Harrison, questioned by the *burden of the past* and the *Balkan nightmare* evoked by Drakulić. The public Serbian discourse finally displayed the effects of the great crises of Balkan history, but also the circumspection regarding the fundaments of the new order.

The separation of the international community into two currents – *serbophile* and *kosovophile* – is the real consequence of "the ambivalence of public support",[46] as Clark stated during the war. Titus Livius`s assumptions about the Punic wars, that of conflicts structurally related to the stability of the great balance of power, is decisive for understanding the position of both camps. So it is, finally, a confrontation between the artisans of maintaining

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[43] Ronnie D. Lipschutz, *op. cit.*, p. 129.
[44] Traian Valentin Pocea. Aurel I. Rogojan, *op. cit.*, p. 396.
[45] Slavenka Drakulić, *op. cit.*, p. 60
[46] Wesley Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

the *status quo* and the forces of the movement that want to make changes, perceived by the first category as being able to modify the power relations.

In South-Eastern Europe, given the diminished size of the countries compared to the international scene, the entry of any actor means the alteration of a fragile traditional balance, especially when undergoing the recurrent *Balkanisation*. The breakdown of the former Yugoslavia has brought back the "revival of the power policy",[47] leading to situations such as the limited external protectorate, which is decisive for synthesizing the Belgrade-Moscow axis. Serbia and the Russian Federation, the traditional prominent actors in the region, have coalesced what we might call a binomial to safeguard the traditional relations in the Western Balkans, the main objective being the obstruction of Kosovo's independence.

The strategic affinity is decisive for the redefinition of relations between Belgrade and Moscow, reactivated after the Titoist non-alignment ideology became part of recent history, just like Yugoslav federalism. Serbia's direct experience with NATO, underpinned by the Kremlin`s profoundly anti-Alliance character, provided one of the strongest grounds for rejecting the validity of the ideas of *consensual* and *anti-sovereignty*[48] raised by Robert Kaplan when analysing the dichotomy between the *old* and the *new Europe*. From a certain point of view, the paradox of NATO's expansion to the East, doubled by the human rights doctrine highlighted by crisis management, has been a catalyst for Panslavism.

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[47] Ioan Mircea Pașcu, *The Battle for NATO. Personal Report*, Bucharest, Rao Publishing House, 2nd edition, 2014, p. 57.
[48] George Cristian Maior, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

Traditionally influential in South-Eastern Europe, Russia can also be seen as an integrated component of the regional phenomenon generically designated as *Balkanization*, an issue that overstated the interactions between the European liberal democracy and the *irrational Balkan nationalism.*[49] The paradox is the following one: safeguarding the values born during *Enlightenment* that built Western democracy as it is nowadays was achieved through the medieval concept of a *just war*. The immediate effect was quite controversial, especially among the Serbian and pro-Serbian public segments, the two accusing the West of *neo-imperialism* as a result of what they call "NATO`s expansion after the austerity of the Cold War".[50]

In contrast, the violence that led to the disintegration of Yugoslavia also determined Brussels`s active involvement in the Adriatic, via mechanisms such as the *Stability Pact* or the *Stabilization and Association Agreements*. Although promises for European integration were going to encourage the reconciliation, testing Serb reactions after the proclamation of Kosovo`s independence demonstrated Belgrade's portrayal of the 1999 war as the "shame in Kosovo".[51] Serbia`s tendency towards self-deprivation for the way the last of the Yugoslav conflicts ended was also noticeable. The idea of "shame" also puts into question hypotheses such as the international community`s misbehaviour in Serbia, thereby the idea of the West humiliating Belgrade.

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[49] Dušan I. Bjelić, "Introduction: Blowing Up the 'Bridge'", in: Dušan I. Bjelić, Obrad Savić (eds.), *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation*, Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 2002, p. 10.
[50] Fareed Zakaria, *op. cit.*, p. 197.
[51] Vesna Goldsworthy, "Invention and In(ter)vention: The Rhetoric of Balkanization", in: Dušan I. Bjelić, Obrad Savić (eds.), *Balkan as Metaphor: Between Globalization and Fragmentation*, Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 2002, p. 51.

There were also voices that extended the discussion beyond the strategic limit, resulting in the theory of an "orthodox Belgrade-Bucharest-Moscow axis",[52] whose validation is rather partial, as the foundations of such a trinomial were quite different. First and foremost, it was that both Romania and Russia had faced quasi-conflictual ethnic relations, with problems that persist even now at the level of the interactions between the minority and the majority. There existed, however, some sort of strategic affinity, built on the "Romanian-Yugoslav Brotherhood" and on Panslavism. For Romanians, Serbia was, after the Republic of Moldova, one of the neighbours with whom the relations were among the friendliest, with many sectoral co-operations and collaborations inherited since communist times. For the Russians, the position of the "higher Slavic brother" has always been a determining factor for Serbia's socio-political proximity, with the confessional component having a more or less predominant role, depending on the optics of analysis.

The inherent realism of anarchy[53] evoked by Jonathan Mercer overlapped the Serbian claims for blocking Kosovo`s independence, in an attempt to regain what geostrategic language calls the *heartland.*[54] At the same time, we could notice that the geopolitical extrapolation of *homo homini lupus* is the establishment of a causal link between globalization and the decline of nationalist sentiment: the more globalist a state, the less nationalistic it became. However, the opponents of this conceptualization also discuss specific issues such as the decline of authority and state

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[52] Viorel Roman, *The Transition from the Romanian Revolution of 1989 to the Yugoslav War of 1991*, Bucharest, Nova Publishing House, 2000, p. 22.
[53] Alexander Wendt, *op. cit.*, p. 242.
[54] Othon Anastasakis, David Madden, Elizabeth Roberts, "Introduction: The Past is Never Dead...", in: Othon Anastasakis, David Madden, Elizabeth Roberts (eds.), *Balkan Legacies of the Great War: The Past is Never Dead*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, p. 10.

autonomy. For Serbia, Kosovo's independence was the most eloquent example of this dynamic geared towards global governance, but mainly grounded as "interference" in domestic affairs based on the doctrine of human rights.

Serbia`s Allies within the European Union

Belgrade's coalitions of the wills against Kosovo`s independence were mainly pursued on two target groups: the traditional allies of Serbia or the states facing similar problems and which were, therefore, deeply interested in not having the Kosovo precedent as a winning cause. Greece was the actor that fully complied with the above-mentioned conditionalities, adding two more elements with the potential of deepening the rapprochement with Serbia: Greece was an overwhelmingly Orthodox state with an overwhelming majority of ethnic Greeks, facing Albanian separatism in Southern Epirus, with strong fears of reiterating the situation in Kosovo.

Athens` concerns were fuelled by the more or less well-grounded hypotheses that exposed Tirana's involvement in Kosovo, even before the conflict broke out. Given the traditionally problematic Albanian-Greek relations, the fear that the territorial integrity of the Greek state could be the subject of a joint action, the Pristina-Tirana rapprochement led to Greece`s alignment to the Serbian position, especially since the Turkish minority in Greek territory was not deprived of separatist voices, therefore the acceptance of Kosovo's independence could bring major domestic problems for Athens. The Greek interests went so far that the recognition of Kosovo`s separatism meant the *de facto* recognition of Turkish separatism from

Cyprus, one of the strongest tensions between Athens and Ankara after the status of the Turkish minority from the Hellenic Republic.

A theatre for a secessionist war without frontiers, Cyprus joined the pro-Serbian side, together with Greece, motivated both by the position of the mother state and by the direct experience with Turkish separatists in the northern territory. Since the international community – accused of "fictitious character"[55] – rallied to the cause of separatism and not to the state authority mandated to hold and use the monopoly of violence, the North-Cypriot separatism was inherently acknowledged. As this aspect was unacceptable to the Greeks from the Balkans and Levant, the traditional Athens-Nicosia binomial decided to adhere to the *serbophile* movement, advocating major suspicion on the international system`s real capacity for guaranteeing state integrity

For the Greeks and for the Cypriots, the situation was even more alarming as Turkey had given strong support to the Muslims from the Balkans, in particular to the communities from Albania and Bosnia, the first one being directly interested in the developments from Kosovo. In conjunction with the Turkish invasion of Cyprus (1974), Ankara`s support for Kosovo's self-determination was perceived as a stage of *Neo-Ottomanism,*[56] thus maximizing Turkish influence in South-Eastern Europe using the *soft-power* component. The thesis affirms, even if episodically, the idea of Belgrade as a "cultural decontamination centre",[57] supporting what

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[55] Colin S. Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 269.
[56] Rahdam Adeni, "Being Muslin in the Balkans: Tracing the Past in Modern Times", in: Ayşe Zişan Furat, Hamit Er (eds.), *Balkans and Islam: Encounter, Transformation, Discontinuity, Continuity*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2012, p. 117.
[57] Viorel Roman, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

the pro-Serbia side saw as an integrated stage of establishing a Muslim macro-state in the Western Balkans, an entity that would bring together Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, as well as the Muslim-inhabited territories from Greece, Serbia, Macedonia, or Montenegro.

Switching back to Serbia, Kosovo`s separatism could have been a starting point for a mirror solution in Vojvodina, with the Hungarian separatism known in the region. Belgrade was also worried about losing this last autonomous province, which was still in administration, especially in the context of strong concerns over Hungary's support for the lax central control of Bratislava in the region. The Hungarian minority component was to bring Serbia's new ally into the process of building up coalitions of will to oppose Kosovo's statehood: while Belgrade faced the Albanian separatist movement, Bratislava faced the Hungarian one, practically two mirror examples of the same desideratum of building ethnic states. Slovakia is a European actor formed by the secessionist or central-eastern style – depending on the school of thought the adherents of the ideology prefer – which has been confronted since the very beginning with the separatism of the Hungarian minority. In the case of Bratislava, the fact that the Slovak state is the result of a *velvet divorce*, thus of a mutually accepted separation, is regarded as bestowing legitimacy upon minorities with secessionist or irredentist claims.

At regional level, Bosnia-Herzegovina's opposition to the Kosovar independence was motivated by internal reasons: the recognition of *Kosovo's Declaration of Independence* would lead to the recognition of separatism in *Republika Srpska*. As the territorial integrity of the post-Dayton system was profoundly challenged internally and externally, the Parliament in Sarajevo had not ratified Kosovo`s independence act, invoking reasons of foreign

policy: Bosnia's relationship with Serbia was quite problematic in the sense that Serb separatism was supported by Belgrade, so a benevolent attitude towards Pristina could cause Serbia to react by encouraging the Serb minority from Bosnia to put its separatism into practice.

However, Spain remained the *speaking-tube* of the anti-Kosovo camp, the Iberian kingdom having the most aggravating problems in terms of the relations between the minority and the majority, with the most pronounced independence movements. Recognizing a precedent of statehood built by secessionism was undesirable in the context of transmitting the most inappropriate message to the Spanish regions aspiring to create their own state. The deepening fears of the Government from Madrid have led to supporting the Serbian *status quo*, but especially to the formation of the group of five EU Member States that did not recognize Kosovo. The level of relations between Brussels and Pristina was thus limited because there could not be a legal base, especially because "the EU never recognized Kosovo as a state".[58]

The opponents of Kosovo`s independence also evoked arguments such as "helping neoliberal policies with the new aggressive forms of [neo] imperialist intervention".[59] There were also accusations such as those of Peter Hallward, which describe a "lack of ideas to overcome the impasse [...]

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[58] Wolfgang Koeth, *Bosnia, Kosovo and the EU: Is Accession Possible without Full Sovereignty?*, Maastricht, EIPA Maastricht, 2012, available at http://www.eipa.eu/files/repository/eipascope/20120710143924_WKO_Eipascope2012.pdf , accessed on April 30th, 2018, p. 33.
[59] Slavoj Žižek, Agon Hamza, *From Myth to Symptom: the case of Kosovo*, Pristina, Kolektivi Materializmi Dialektik, 2013, p. 76.

chauvinism [...] monstrous political impotence [...]".[60] The attributes describe a *pre-modern*[61] state, as presented by Robert Cooper: incapable of controlling its own territory, lacking the mechanisms capable of securing order, sovereignty rather nominal than explicit. Kosovo is thus presented as *terra nullius*, with the interpretation that independence has been given to a territory that escapes the influence of the state's power.

Also outstanding is the metaphor describing the province as an "Achilles' heel"[62] for Serbia, exposing the strategic component of the whole issue: after Kosovo`s independence, Serbia had lost some of its South-Eastern border with Montenegro, more than half of the border with Macedonia and even Albania's neighbourhood. Besides Vojvodina, Serbia currently has problems with separatist minorities in Sandjak and Preševo Valley, both inhabited by Muslims, with the second one populated by Albanians. The Kosovo precedent sent, more from anything, a consistent message, to the separatists in the two provinces, but especially to those in the Preševo Valley, known for expressing the desideratum of joining Kosovo, insurgencies part of their regional reality.

Conclusions

Belgrade's fierce opposition to Kosovo's Declaration of Independence is explicable according to neorealist logic, that of safeguarding the *heartland*, and that of foreign policy as an extension of internal politics, as argued by

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[60] apud Peter Hallward, *The Politics of Prescription*, Durham, Duke University Press, volume 4, 2005, p. 769.
[61] George Cristian Maior, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
[62] Traian Valentin Pocea, Aurel I. Rogojan, *op. cit.,* p. 401.

Carl von Clausewitz. The Serbian position also reveals the opposition to the 1999 military intervention that led to the international tutelage, presented today by its critics as illegitimate, interference which eventually led to the formation of a state. From a certain point of view, the idea of the "recalcitrant nation"[63] can be discussed, but with exclusive reference to the rejection of the Ahtisaari Plan.

The independence, resulting from a conflict developed in the logic that the structuralists designated "the third interwar decade", has reinstalled *Balkanization* as a specific phenomenon in South-Eastern Europe, which, in the end, was carried over to the international community. The last of the Balkan conflicts that led to the explosive disintegration of Yugoslavia also transferred *Balkanization* into the UN system, divided by its attitude towards the young Republic of Kosovo.

In essence, the Kosovar issues could be considered a maturity test for the Serbian state, especially because the Yugoslav wars were reminiscent of the interwar decades when the Serbian state reappeared after centuries of belonging to Austria-Hungary. The beginning of the 21st century marked not only the reduction of the Serbian state to its ethnic nucleus, but also the chain reaction of self-determination, this time inside Serbia: from the Montenegrin independence to the Kosovar one, Serbia was once again in the situation of defending its territories and disputing its historical right.

Last but not least, in terms of soft power, Serbia lost its *cradle of civilization* and was thus reduced to the territories majorly inhabited by the Serbs, with the exception of Preševo Valley. Extrapolating, Kosovo had

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[63] Fareed Zakaria, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

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Montenegro as a precedent, thereby there are growing concerns that Preševo could have both of them as examples. The Kosovar independence is different from the Montenegrin one: if separatism originating from Podgorica only meant the failure of the Yugoslav federalism, the separatism led by Pristina meant a maturity test for the Serbian statehood. As a result of the right to self-determination born out of the interwar period, Serbia today faces the implication of the post-Cold War interpretation of the same right, also augmented by the doctrine of humanitarianism.

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