

Serbs as Threat The Extreme Negative Portrayal of the Serb “Minority” in Albanian-language Newspapers in Kosovo

Abstract: Through perpetuating negative stereotypes and rigid dichotomous identities, the media play a significant part in sustaining conflict dynamics in Kosovo. Examining their discourse in terms of ideological production and representations is crucial in order to understand the power relations between the majority and the minority, the identity politics involved in sustaining them, and the intractability of the conflict. In an effort to provide a deeper understanding of the intractable conflict in Kosovo, and the role of the media in protracting it, this study uses critical discourse analysis to examine articles related to issues affecting the Serb community, published in Albanian-language print media. The master narrative that comes out of the analysis is that of “threat” — the threat that Kosovo Albanians continue to face from Serbs and Serbia; a threat that is portrayed as historical and constant. The discourse further strengthens the conflict dynamics of opposition, polarization and even hatred. This master narrative implies that Serbs are enemies, to be feared, contested, fought against; conflict is thus the normal state of affairs. The study also looks at the implications of media discourse for reconciliation efforts and the prospects of the Serb minority in Kosovo society, arguing that when the Other is presented as dangerous and threatening, fear of the Other and a desire to eliminate the threat, physically and symbolically, become perceived as a “natural” response, and thus constitute a significant conflict-sustaining dynamic.

Keywords: Serbs, Serbia, Kosovo, Albanian media, critical discourse analysis, power relations, discrimination, master narrative, intractable conflict

Following the power shift in Kosovo in June 1999, the Albanian population, which had been the demographic majority in the province up until then but without political and governing power throughout the 1990s, gained control and political power and became the ruling majority, while the Serb population lost power and was physically and symbolically excluded from Kosovo society, forced into displacement, and became the subjugated and marginalized minority.

As the struggle for power between two dominant groups formed the crux of the conflict, this profound change in power relations, between majority and minority, remains one of the most essential dynamics sustaining this conflict. The situation, which is sometimes termed “post-conflict”, because of a formal lack of organized, overt and violent expressions of conflict, still exemplifies characteristics of protracted and intractable conflict.

Through perpetuating negative stereotypes and rigid dichotomous identities, the media play a significant part in sustaining conflict dynamics

in Kosovo. Thus, examining their discourse in terms of ideological production and representations is crucial in order to understand the power relations between the majority and the minority, the identity politics involved in sustaining them, and the intractability of the conflict.

Kosovo Albanian politicians are often heard proclaiming that Kosovo is not a second Albanian state in the Balkans, but a multi-ethnic society, where minority rights are respected, and where the Serb minority is free, even encouraged to integrate. However, they either ignore the mass-scale segregation of the Serb community, the general societal antagonism toward the minority, the poor human rights record and appalling living conditions, or attribute it to self-isolation, the negative influence of the Serbian central government in Belgrade, and the refusal of the Kosovo Serbs to accept what is often labelled “the new reality,” which implies the unilateral declaration of independence in February 2008 that changed power relations in deeply divided Kosovo society. Hence, Kosovo society remains segregated, polarized, and the same dynamics that fuelled the 1998–99 conflict and post-conflict expulsions of Serbs and other non-Albanians are present.

In an effort to provide a deeper understanding of the intractable interethnic conflict in Kosovo, and the role of the media in protracting it, this study uses critical discourse analysis to examine articles related to issues affecting the Serb community, published in Albanian-language print media.

THE KOSOVO CONFLICT AND ISSUES OF IDENTITY

The conflict between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo has been portrayed, and understood locally, as traditional, inevitable, natural and irreconcilable. Yet, even though the conflict between these two groups has a lengthy tradition, some would say dating back several centuries, it is imperative to stress that primordial hatred and “genetic” predispositions toward aggression are not the causes of the conflict.¹ Folger, Stutman and Poole (2002, 3) remind us that intolerance and aggression surface, become accentuated and perpetuated once the conflict starts, contributing to its persistence, intensity and violence, while the underlying causes are more complex, involving economic, political and symbolic interests and issues.

Nevertheless, the interethnic conflict in Kosovo can indeed be considered deep-rooted (Burton 1987), protracted (Azar 1983; Azar 1990) and

¹ See e.g. D. T. Bataković 1992, 1998, 2006 and 2008; I. Berisha 1993; D. Bogdanović 1985; A. N. Dragnich & S. Todorovich 1984; T. Judah 2000; H. Kaleshi 1973; R. Kaplan 1993; O. Karabeg 2000; M. Krasniqi 1996; B. Krstić 1994, 2004; A. Logoreci 1984; N. Malcolm 1998; S. Maliqi 1998; J. Pettifer 2001; P. Shoup 1984; S. Skendi 1967; M. Vickers 1998.

intractable (Bar-Tal 1998; Coleman 2003; Ellis 2006) because it involves highly polarized groups who view themselves as oppressed and victimized, while seeing the Other as the exclusive and absolute cause of their oppression and victimization, and because it has persisted over generations as particularly resistant to resolution. The relationship between the Serbs and Albanians has five typical features of intractable conflict, namely power shifts and imbalances, identity processes (Coleman 2003) wherein the *Other* is constructed as the villain and the enemy — the historical enemy (Zdravković 2005), forced interdependence, extreme emotional processes, and everyday trauma and victimization.

Ethnic conflicts are not only about material resources, but involve profound identity issues, wherein each group constitutes its own identity in relation, difference and opposition to the Other. The process of crafting ethnic identities that would appear constant and immutable necessitates the internalization, naturalization and stabilization of difference from the Other as an oppositional anchor (Ellis 1999). Kelman (1999) terms this “negative identity”, wherein the conflictual relationship with the “Other” is incorporated into the groups’ respective identities. He explains (p. 558.) that

The exclusiveness of each group’s national identity is embedded in a pattern of *negative interdependence* of the two identities [...]. This negative interdependence of the two identities is further exacerbated by the fact that each side perceives the other as a *source of its own negative identity elements*.

Constituting one’s identity as a Serb or Albanian thus implies not only asserting difference from the Other, but also complete and absolute opposition. These identity dynamics are a crucial part of intractable conflict; they are least amenable to negotiation, resolution and transformation, as they are continuously reinforced and strengthened, through public and vernacular discursive practices. In such a way ethnic conflicts become perceived as revolving around incompatible identity issues, and feelings of being endangered — both symbolically and physically.

The dialectics of opposition are accompanied by other forms of interdependence, such as geographical, cultural, and economic. Even though they profoundly dislike each other, the Serbs and the Albanians have no opportunity to extract themselves from the mutual relationship. Due to the fact of living on the same land and claiming the same territory, their lives are inextricably intertwined.

In spite of this forceful inter-reliance, the relationship in question is characterized by lack of contact between the groups; the resultant stereotypes and misinformation not only lead to a negative view of the Other, but also to intense negative emotions — self-righteousness, rage, indignation, and most notably victimization. Both Serbs and Albanians carry a myriad of negative and extreme emotions linked to the Other, which are a powerful

impediment to resolution — the Other is often viewed as less than human, and thus groups continue a pattern of aggression and defensiveness.

Violence and aggression perpetrated by members of one's own group are justified as a legitimate response to injustice, discrimination and humiliation by the Other and thus the cycle of revenge and counter-revenge perpetuates itself, leading not only to severe and enduring psychological trauma, but inevitably to inter-generational trauma, chronic health problems and a reduced living capacity (Bar-Tal 1998). The conflict and the hostile relationship with the Other become embedded in the ordinary discourse and lifestyle of the people. The everyday trauma is translated into a victim identity, which is subsequently given historical proportions (Zdravković-Zonta 2009); this in turn serves as a justification for all misdeeds, and also serves to posit the conflict in fixed binary oppositions of absolute victim versus absolute villain (Hawes 2004). The conceptualization of the conflict as a continuous struggle against oppression by the Other sustains and perpetuates it, making it indeed intractable and impervious to resolution (Bataković 1998; Mertus 1999).

THE SITUATION IN KOSOVO: A SHORT OVERVIEW

Because of its lengthy and protracted nature it is difficult to pinpoint the start of the Serb-Albanian conflict in Kosovo. Furthermore, because of the vastly divergent versions of history that each group holds to be the Truth, it is difficult to present a unified overview of the situation. Nevertheless, the most recent episode in the conflict can be said to have started in 1990 when, after years filled with tension and mutual accusations of discrimination between the Serbs and Albanians, the then-president of Serbia, Slobodan Milošević, altered the constitutional status of the two provinces within Serbia — Vojvodina and Kosovo, curtailing their autonomy. This was the turning point, when the statistical minority, the Serbs, became the ruling majority in Kosovo.² Many new laws were passed, which provided the basis

² Census statistics are not very reliable, and both Serbs and Albanian politicians and scholars have used vastly different numbers to support their divergent claims and accuse the other of manipulation. In 1981 the Kosovo Albanians participated in the last census; the total population of the province was given as 1.58 million, of whom 1.22 million or 77.4 % were Albanians and 236,526 or 14.9 % were Serbs and Montenegrins. In 1991 the Albanians boycotted the census, and their numbers were thus estimated as being 1.6 million or 82.2 % of a total population of 1.97 million, of whom 215,346 or 10.9 % were Serbs and Montenegrins. Albanians disagree and claim that the number was higher, while some competent Serbian experts (e.g. M. Radovanović) claim it was significantly lower, 1.35 million due to high emigration in the 1980s. Statistics from tables of Census Data, 1948–1991 from Mertus 1999; and also in Judah 2002. Original source: *Jugo-*

for discrimination³ against Albanians, who were excluded from the public sector, civil service and managerial jobs.

In July 1990, Kosovo Albanians declared Kosovo a republic, independent from Serbia but still part of Yugoslavia; they created a whole simulated government structure, holding elections for parliament and president.⁴ In September 1991 Kosovo Albanians, disregarding Serbs and non-Albanian population of the southern province of Serbia, declared the completely independent 'Republic of Kosova' with Ibrahim Rugova as president, rejected by EU and recognized only by Albania (Vickers 1998). New Albanian parallel institutions were set up in Kosovo to make up for the effective loss of health care and educational facilities.⁵

After several years of following the 'passive resistance' policy without any success in terms of international recognition, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), comprising solely ethnic Albanians, started armed resistance. Supported by funds from the Kosovo Albanian Diaspora (Judah 2000), with training camps in neighbouring Albania, the Albanian guerrilla (KLA) was operational by 1996; yet, they intensified significantly their operations in 1997, and open armed conflict with the Serb police forces, accompanied by numerous crimes against both Albanian and Serbian civilian population, started.

As tens of thousands of Albanian civilians became displaced due to the confrontation between Serb and Kosovo Albanian forces, Western

slavija 1918–1988, statistički godišnjak Jugoslavije za 1992. godinu (1992), 62–63, cited in Vučković and Nikolić 1996, 108–109. According to the 2008 estimate of the Statistical Office of Kosovo the number of habitual residents in Kosovo is 2.1 million, of which 92% are Albanians, while other ethnic groups make up 8%. See http://www.ks-gov.net/ESK/eng/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=36&Itemid=26 (last accessed on January 20, 2010).

³ In response to Albanian separatism, the police force was rapidly purged, making it in essence a Serb-controlled force with other ethnic groups, including some local Albanians, represented. Public companies which had operated under the aegis of the provincial government were taken over by their Serbian counterparts. Doctors and medical staff of Albanian descent, still boycotting the new Serbian constitution, were dismissed. Cultural institutions were closed or merged with their Serbian counterparts, while the most dramatic application of the new measures came in the field of education – the Serbian curriculum was imposed on Albanian students, and Albanian teachers rejected this measure, which led to dismissals, as well as the restrictions of the number of children who could be taught in Albanian language. See Judah 2000.

⁴ The Serbian authorities did not try to arrest the organizers, so that Albanians were left to hold their election. For more detail see Judah 2000.

⁵ Albanians organized a parallel education system, and set up schools in private homes. The students were taught in Albanian language, and their diplomas had the seal of the 'Independent Republic of Kosovo'. See Kostovicova 1997 and 2002.

opinion began to change from viewing the situation in Kosovo as an internal issue, to perceiving it as a case where intervention was necessary.⁶ The use of force against Serbia emerged as a possible solution to the problem.⁷ The international community set up status talks in Rambouillet, France in February 1999; after intense and prolonged negotiations the Kosovo Albanian delegation signed the draft agreement, as their demand for a referendum for independence was worded in, while the Serbian delegation did not sign, because the agreement authorized a *de facto* occupation by NATO troops of the whole of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (consisting of Serbia and Montenegro).⁸

Subsequently, NATO started severe bombing of Serbia, without a legal endorsement of UN Security Council, on March 24, 1999; the NATO bombing lasted 78 days.⁹ Serbia capitulated on June 3, and NATO suspended the bombing on June 10.¹⁰ The UN Security Council passed Resolution 1244, which sanctioned the entry of NATO-led troops into Kosovo (KFOR), and set up the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) as the governing body,¹¹ promising “substantial autonomy” for the UN-administered province, while guaranteeing sovereignty of the FR Yugoslavia.¹²

⁶ After intense military threats by NATO, in October of 1998, Milošević agreed to a ceasefire. The Serbian military and police began to withdraw, while two thousand monitors came to Kosovo under the auspices of the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission. The displaced began coming down from the hills and moved into shelter for the winter. However, as the Serb forces pulled back, the KLA followed in their wake, reoccupying positions. The confrontations between the Albanian KLA and the Serbian forces thus continued, as well as the effect on civilians. See Judah 2000.

⁷ For examination of the discourse of the Clinton Administration and US Congress over US policy toward the crisis in Kosovo, see Paris 2002.

⁸ Interim Agreement for Peace and Self-Government in Kosovo, 23 February 1999. Appendix B: Status of Multi-National Military Implementation Force; see also Chomsky 2000; Cohen 2000; Gowan 1999; Johnstone 2002.

⁹ The bombing of Serbia was intense, as more than 60% of its targets were what is called dual use, that is to say they had both military and civilian uses, including factories, oil refineries and depots, roads, bridges, railways, electricity and communication facilities.

¹⁰ For an account of the NATO bombings, see also Ignatieff 2002; Daalder & O’Hanlon 2001; Chesterman 2002. Parenti 2002.

¹¹ Its role was to provide an interim administration for Kosovo under which the people of Kosovo can enjoy substantial autonomy within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and which will provide transitional administration while establishing and overseeing the development of provisional democratic self-governing institutions to ensure conditions for a peaceful and normal life for all inhabitants of Kosovo (UNMIK press release, 21 September 1999).

¹² However, one of the tasks of UNMIK was to organize, before ‘a final settlement’, elections to ‘provisional institutions for democratic and autonomous self-government,

During the bombing, as claimed by the NATO sources almost 850,000 Kosovo Albanians became refugees in Montenegro, Macedonia and Albania¹³ or were internally displaced in Kosovo.¹⁴ Within days of the cessation of the bombing, after the entry of NATO troops into Kosovo (KFOR) and the withdrawal of the Serbian forces, the refugees came streaming back.¹⁵ KLA leaders took control of the province and formed a government, which was later integrated with UNMIK into a Joint Interim Administrative Structure.¹⁶ Simultaneously, a campaign of systematic prosecution and violence, as well as massive usurpation of properties (Tawil 2009), forced nearly 250,000 of Kosovo Serbs and non-Albanians to become internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Serbia and Montenegro,¹⁷ or to move into ethnically homogeneous enclaves within Kosovo and become internal IDPs (IIDPs).¹⁸ According to UNHCR data from December 1999, since June

pending a political settlement'. Despite the fact that the 1244 UNSC Resolution guaranteed that Kosovo was part of Yugoslavia, Kosovo was given almost all attributes of statehood under UNMIK administration (such as borders, customs, new currency, travel documents and id cards); for all intents and purposes Kosovo was run as an entity almost completely independent of Serbia, with *de facto*, but not *de jure*, independence.

¹³ For a critical perspective on the NATO bombing, see Chomsky 2000.

¹⁴ See UNHCR, Refugees, vol. 3, no. 116 (1999), 11.

¹⁵ According to UNHCR, 808,913 out of a total of 848,100 were back.

¹⁶ The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) had legislative and executive authority in Kosovo. Over the years, UNMIK gradually transferred its competencies and authorities to local Kosovo institutions, called Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG), until the February 2008 declaration of independence and the promulgation of the Kosovo Constitution in June of 2008. UNMIK is still present, but is no longer the administering civil authority, its scope limited to monitoring. Following the promulgation of the constitution, other internationally-sponsored mechanisms were set up in Kosovo, such as the International Civilian Office (ICO) and its representative, and the EU Rule of Law Mission (EULEX). KFOR is still present, in order to maintain security, but is gradually decreasing its numbers.

¹⁷ By November 1999, the Yugoslav Red Cross had registered some 247,391 people, mostly Serbs and Roma, but not only, as displaced. See UNHCR/OSCE, "Overview of the situation of ethnic minorities in Kosovo", 3 November 1999. During the March 2004 riots another 4,100 persons, mostly Serbs, Roma and Ashkali, were forcibly displaced. See Human Rights Watch (2004), July 2004, vol. 16, no. 6, Failure to Protect: Anti-Minority Violence in Kosovo, March 2004. Available at <http://hrw.org/reports/2004/kosovo0704/index.htm>, last accessed November 20, 2009; see also Amnesty International 2000.

¹⁸ Only a handful of Serbs remained in big urban and previously thriving multiethnic centres with dozens of thousands of Serb inhabitants such as Prizren, Peć, and Priština; they had to be guarded by KFOR troops and on rare occasions when they ventured out, had to be escorted. IDPs from the Prizren area joined Serbs who remained in Štrpce. In

1999 246,000 persons (at least 205,000 Serbs, as well as additional 45,000 Roma, Montenegrins and Gorani) were expelled by the Albanian extremists into central Serbia and Montenegro. Today, out of the pre-1999 war non-Albanian population in Kosovo, roughly 60% of Kosovo Serbs, 66% of Kosovo Roma and 70 % of Gorani are living as displaced persons in central Serbia, with a symbolic return rate below 2% in twelve post-1999 war years.¹⁹

KFOR troops, deployed to ensure peace and security, understood their mission as being solely to protect Kosovo Albanians, and thus in the beginning did little or nothing to prevent the violence against the Serbs,²⁰ which was tolerated as justifiable revenge. More than 150 Serb Orthodox churches, including medieval ones were burned and destroyed.²¹ Several hundred Serbs were killed in the months immediately following the entry of NATO troops in Kosovo,²² and more than 1,300 were kidnapped.²³ In the enclaves and in the receding urban ghettos, the Serbs soon had to be guarded by KFOR troops, had limited freedom of movement and no access to public services.²⁴ In December 1999, the

Gnjilane and Orahovac small Serb-inhabited ghettos were formed, while Velika Hoča became an enclave. Gračanica and the surrounding villages also became enclaves. The Ibar River became a dividing line between the Serbs in the northern part of Mitrovica, and the Albanians in the southern part previously cleansed of Serbs. See Amnesty International, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Kosovo): Update from the field, January 2000, at <https://amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR70/002/2000/en/07344afe-dfcd-11dd-8e17-69926d493233/eur700022000en.pdf> (last accessed November 20, 2009).

¹⁹ For more detail, see Bataković 2006, 2007a, 2007b, and 2008.

²⁰ Amnesty International, Kosovo: KFOR must act now to curb violence against ethnic minorities, 13 January 2000.

²¹ More on destruction of Serbian churches in Kosovo in *Crucified Kosovo* 1999.

²² Albanians were being killed too during this time; some were branded “Serb collaborators,” but many were victimized because crime flourished extravagantly in the lawless environment, where weapons were ubiquitous, the KLA was still armed, and there was no rule of law. See Amnesty International, 2000.

²³ Amnesty International, Kosovo: Six months on, climate of violence and fear flies in the face of UN mission, 23 December 1999, at <https://amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR70/136/1999/en/1e3cf8ca-8675-48a5-a026-d581e2c233e2/eur701361999en.pdf>; see also Fisk 1999.

²⁴ According to the November 1999 joint report by UNHCR and OSCE, non-Albanians faced: A climate of violence and impunity, as well as widespread discrimination, harassment and intimidation directed at non-Albanians. The combination of security concerns, restricted movement, lack of access to public services (especially education, medical/health care and pensions) are the determining factors in the departure of Serbs, primarily, and other non-Albanian groups from Kosovo to date. See UNHCR/OSCE, “Overview of the situation of ethnic minorities in Kosovo”, 3 November 1999.

Secretary-General of the United Nations stated in a report that despite the efforts of UNMIK and KFOR “the level and nature of the violence in Kosovo, especially against vulnerable minorities, remains unacceptable”.²⁵

After June 1999, there are no Serbs left in public, administrative and governmental institutions; Serbs are systematically excluded from the political, social, and economic power centres, being fired on ethnic basis from hospitals to mines.²⁶ The situation of the Serb community in Kosovo has remained the same for the past ten years — plagued by continuous human rights violations, isolation from the Albanian-dominated Kosovo society, and problems with basic living conditions. The Serb community has been denied civil and political rights, such as the right to life, freedom of movement, freedom of expression, freedom of thought, conscience and religion and the right to use one’s own language. In the field of social, economic and cultural rights they are denied, among others, the right to education, to health care and the right to participate in cultural life.²⁷

In response, in order to secure the very survival of the Kosovo Serbs, the Serbian government set up a so-called “parallel” system, operating in Serb-majority areas and enclaves, providing public services otherwise inaccessible for the Serb community — in health, education, and administration. As human rights reports have continued to show over the years, Kosovo “remains one of the most segregated places in Europe, with thousands of displaced persons still in camps, and many ‘ethnically pure’ towns

²⁵ Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, UN Doc. no. S/1999/1250, 23 December 1999, p. 24.

²⁶ In order to satisfy conditions for attaining status (the so-called “standards for status” package), there have been some half-hearted attempts on the part of Kosovo Albanians to include token Serbs into Kosovo institutions, including two ministers (of Social Welfare and Labour, and of Communities and Returns). However, since the majority of Serbs do not participate in the Kosovo-wide elections, the Kosovo Serb community does not consider these politicians their true representatives. These efforts are a far cry from genuine political power and participation in state institutions and government.

²⁷ U.S. Department of State, 2008 Human Rights report: Kosovo, February 2009, at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/eur/119462.htm> (last accessed January 20, 2010); Ombudsperson, Eighth Annual Report 2007–2008, July 2008, at <http://www.ombudspersonkosovo.org/?cid=2,74> (last accessed November 20, 2009); Minority Rights Group International, *Minority Rights in Kosovo under International Rule*, July 2006, at <http://www.minorityrights.org/1072/reports/minority-rights-in-kosovo-under-international-rule.html> (last accessed November 20, 2009).

and villages.”²⁸ It faces major problems related to minority communities,²⁹ such as “cases of politically and ethnically motivated violence; societal antipathy against the Kosovo Serbs and the Serbian Orthodox Church; lack of progress in returning internally displaced persons to their homes;³⁰ societal violence, abuse, and discrimination against minority communities.”³¹ The predicament of the Serb minority in Kosovo stems from systematic discrimination, which has been institutionalized on different levels in favour of Kosovo Albanians.

MEDIA DISCOURSE AND CONFLICT

Discrimination and conflict are governed by ideologies³² and the inherent polarization between Us and Them,³³ which are expressed through discourse (Van Dijk 2000) — both public and vernacular. In order to understand conflict-sustaining dynamics and the power relations underlying them, it is necessary to look at patterns of representing the Other in discourse.³⁴ As

²⁸ Minority Rights Group International, *Minority Rights in Kosovo under International Rule*, July 2006, at <http://www.minorityrights.org/1072/reports/minority-rights-in-kosovo-under-international-rule.html> (last accessed November 20, 2009).

²⁹ See reports of the Kosovo Ombudsperson office at <http://www.ombudspersonkosovo.org/> (last accessed November 20, 2009).

³⁰ According to UNHCR, by June 2007, out of a total of around 250,000 IDPs only 7,000 returned. It is important to note, however, that this figure includes all non-Albanian IDPs, that most of the returnees are in fact Roma, and that UNHCR does not record returnees who have subsequently left Kosovo. The general trend is for Serbs to leave Kosovo. See Bataković, ed. 2007; Human Rights Watch, 2006; Minority Rights Group International 2009.

³¹ U.S. Department of State, February 2009.

³² Ideologies are general, abstract, shared social beliefs that underlie social representations, function as identity self-schemas, and form the basis for knowledge and cognition; they are essential in the management of thinking and interaction, particularly for social group relations, such as those of domination and conflict. See Van Dijk 2000.

³³ Polarization is a structural characteristic of ideologies, and is embodied in the opposition between Us and Them. In ethnic conflicts, such as the one in Kosovo, the process of identity formation is even more polarized, because it has to sustain the conflict dynamics, and is based on ideologies that identify the in-group positively, while ascribing extreme negative characteristics to the out-group and anchoring self-identification in radical opposition (Kelman 1999).

³⁴ Following Van Dijk (1989), I understand discourse “both as a specific form of language use, and as a specific form of social interaction, interpreted as a complete communicative event in a social situation.” I also use the notion of text in the sense of written discourse. As Foucault (1980) argues, discourse is a mode of political and ideological

Fiske (1993) reminds, the power to represent is real power — employing representation to produce “otherness” and the Other as different, and at times inferior, means exercising the “power of representation” over those being produced as others.

The media, as one of the main ideological institutions or Ideological Apparatus (Althusser 1984), is necessary for the effective reproduction and implementation of ideologies. Through public discourse, the media play a vital role in shaping identity, supplying information and images through which we understand ourselves and others, forming public consciousness, and influencing public policy (Fowler 1991; Kellner 1995; Neuman, Just & Crigler 1992; Parenti 1986; Robinson 2000; Weimann 2000). Adhering to the basic dynamics of how ideologies function in order to be useful for maintaining power relations, the media produce and reproduce positive in-group and negative out-group images (Hall 1982 and 1985) which contribute to the process of group identity formation (social, ethnic and national) (Anderson 1991; Bhabha 1990; Bruner 2002; Clay 1996).

A) Media and identities in war and peace

a) Media and minorities

One of the more enduring findings in communication research concerns the propensity of the news media to reflect dominant social attitudes and to reinforce the distribution of social and political power in society (Croteau & Hoynes 1997; Davis 1990; Gamson et al. 1992). This finding has been especially prominent in studies that look at the portrayal of minorities (Campbell 1995; Entman 1990; Van Dijk 1988), which show that the media usually have two ways of dealing with minority groups — they ignore them, unless they are perceived as a threat, in which case they discredit them (Avraham, Wolfsfeld & Aburaiya 2000). As media give priority to powerful people and groups, because of their social, political, economic and cultural power and influence (Van Dijk 1996), low status groups, such as minorities, usually are considered newsworthy only when they are associated with some form of deviance (Wolfsfeld 1997). The consequence is that the existing social and political gaps between the majority and minority are reinforced and amplified.

According to Wolfsfeld (1997), media coverage of minorities in conditions of political and identity conflicts, is composed of four major characteristics:

practice, which establishes, sustains and changes power relations, as well as the groups between which these power relations operate.

- (1) a negative context and focus on disorder events, such as disasters, perversions, crime, violence, riots, extremism, subversion, or threats to the public order;
- (2) attributing to members of the minority group set motifs and similar traits — exotic, strange, different, and irrational — through extensive use of prejudices, generalizations, and stereotypes;
- (3) holding members of the minority group responsible for their own fate and presenting them as being incapable of changing their present reality and;
- (4) the social, economic, and political developments regarding the minority group are covered superficially, without mention of the background, reasons, or context that lead up to them.

All of these characteristics are essential in facilitating and perpetuating conflict.

b) Media as facilitators of conflict

In conflict, as Galtung (1968) argues, media are responsible for what he calls “cultural violence” — an invisible form of violence, maintained by cultural institutions. The media can serve to justify, and even incite direct violence,³⁵ while disseminating discrimination and sustaining “structural violence”, which involves social inequality, repression and power imbalance, and is manifested in different kinds of social injustices, repressive institutions and institutionalized prejudice. As such, media have the power to influence conflict, but also peace. As Bratić (2008) says, “media become a venue that can give life to the artefacts of conflict and the ideas for peace”.

In intractable and prolonged conflict, the role of the media is essential also because in such situations there is most often no direct communication between rival groups. Rather, such communication is restricted to and passes mostly through mass media (Anastasious 2002) — as an impersonal exchange of destructive messages and stereotypes, through what, in time, become standardized, mutual accusations, characterizations, self-victimization, and a rhetoric based on one-sided, skewed, and nationalist assumptions. In such situations, the media discourse of each side seems to mirror that of the other, because the frameworks reproduced are identical. Also, because the frameworks emphasize negative characteristics of the Other, as

³⁵ In terms of ethnic conflict, many studies focusing on the media involvement in the conflicts in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia show the dangerous impact of the media in disseminating hate messages and their role in mass scale violence. See Des Forges 1999; Kirschke 1996; Metzl 1997; Buric 2000; Sadkovich 1998; Thompson 1999; Taylor and Kent 2000; Kurspahić 2003.

the 'enemy' of the nation, they additionally hinder the establishing of direct communicative contact.

The rhetoric disseminated through the mass media not only thrives under conditions of protracted and intractable conflict, but it also generates an effective, general uniformity of thought within the group, precipitated around the major axis of the dispute (Ellul 1973; Orwell 1949). Indeed, many media theorists have argued that the very structure of the mass media tends to facilitate the establishment of generalized stereotypes (McLuhan 1964; Meyrowitz 1985), and thus the stereotypical patterns of nationalism are congruous with the way the media function (Anastasious 2002). As Wolfsfeld (2001) emphasizes, "the media tend to have an obsessive interest in threats and violence." In times of conflict, the media disseminate images that help to clearly distinguish between Us and Them, strengthen in-group cohesiveness, and maintain constant opposition to the out-group, through extreme negative portrayals and characterizations (Auerbach & Bloch-Elkon 2005; Bloch & Lehman-Wilzig 2002; Van Dijk 1989; Hammond & Herman 2000; Herring 2000; Iyengar 1988; Taylor 2000; Vincent 2000).

c) Media for peace and reconciliation

Apart from their prominent role in war-building, the media also have the potential to positively influence conflict contexts, by transforming negative stereotypes and reducing prejudice (Crocker, Hampson & Aall 2004; Darby & MacGinty 2003; Lynch 2005; Wolfsfeld 2004). Just as they can disseminate messages that incite hatred and fuel conflict, so they have the ability to deliver messages of peace and contribute to conflict resolution (Howard, Rolt & Verhoeven 2003; Price & Thompson 2002; Wolfsfeld 2004). If the symbolic environment is impacted by the messages of peace-oriented media, it can be conducive to the cultural transformation of violence. This requires though not only peace-oriented media production, but also a thorough change in attitudes and perceptions, as well as the integration of such efforts into other social institutions and processes (Bratich 2008). Just as pro-war propaganda cannot single-handedly cause conflicts, the peace-oriented media cannot single-handedly end them.

Despite this positive potential, in Kosovo both Albanian and Serbian media³⁶ have for years played a fundamental role in producing and

³⁶ While there are Serb media in Kosovo, they are mostly commercial, entertainment-oriented radio broadcasters, and the Serb community relies overwhelmingly on media from Serbia for its news and information. See <http://www.ks.undp.org/?cid=2,26,813> (last accessed November 20, 2009). The most-watched television station by the Serb population is RTS, Serbia's state broadcaster, while the most popular dailies are Bel-

reproducing conflict ideologies through discourse that is characterized by extreme stereotypes of the Other, prejudiced language, justifications of violence against the Other, and validations of power imbalances and discriminatory practices.³⁷

B) Media landscape in Kosovo: Institutions, discourse and practice

a) Albanian-language media in Kosovo

From 1990 until 1999, there was only one television station in Kosovo, broadcasting mostly in Serbian, except a daily half-hour news show in Albanian.³⁸ After the Serbian authorities withdrew in June 1999 and UNMIK arrived, the local Kosovo Albanian media proliferated.³⁹ Between 1999 and 2006, the international community invested an estimated 36 million euro into media assistance.⁴⁰

grade-based *Vječernje novosti*, *Blic*, *Kurir*, *Press* and *Glas javnosti*. See Balkan Insight, Belgrade media keep Kosovo Serbs in the dark, September 2006, at http://www.b92.net/eng/insight/opinions.php?yyyy=2006&mm=09&nav_id=37019 (last accessed November 20, 2009). Few local media outlets produce their own news and information programs, but instead transmit reports from Belgrade-based media, and thus neglect news from the whole of Kosovo. Kosovo Public TV provides little genuine program in Serbian. The reliance on Belgrade dailies for information increases and strengthens the sense of insecurity and isolation of Kosovo Serbs, as the Serbian media in general emphasize negative stereotypes about the Kosovo Albanians, strengthening conflict dynamics. See Youth Initiative for Human Rights 2006, 2005.

³⁷ Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Report on Written Media in Kosovo, August-October 2006, at <http://www.yihr.org/uploads/reports/eng/18.pdf> (last accessed November 20, 2009); Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Journalists Can Do It, 2005, at <http://www.yihr.org/uploads/publications/eng/8.pdf> (last accessed November 20, 2009); OSCE, The State of Media Freedom in Kosovo: Observations and Recommendations, July 2006, at http://www.osce.org/documents/rfm/2006/07/19767_en.pdf (last accessed November 20, 2009); OSCE (2004), Human Rights Challenges following the March Riots, at http://www.osce.org/documents/mik/2004/05/2939_en.pdf (last accessed January 20, 2010).

³⁸ For early development of Kosovo Albanian media, see Judah 2000.

³⁹ There are over 100 electronic media outlets; around 90 are radio stations, while more than 22 are television broadcasters. There are 3 Kosovo-wide TV broadcasters – the government-funded *RTK* and two commercial TV stations. *RTK* has approximately 10% of its programming time in 4 minority languages. The media reflect the mainly-Albanian ethnic composition, as almost two-thirds operate in the Albanian language, while the rest use Serbian or are multi-lingual.

⁴⁰ OSCE, July 2006.

There are eight daily Albanian-language newspapers, with an estimated total circulation of 30,000 copies, as well as five weeklies and a number of other periodicals.⁴¹ In terms of journalism quality, the low budget, very limited profit, and lack of professional education and training, spells low quality and little or no editorial independence. According to media monitoring reports,⁴² there are basic errors in journalistic practices,⁴³ and professional standards are not high; in general, the media in Kosovo strive towards sensationalist and shallow information.

In addition, journalism mainly serves a specific party or group.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, Albanian-language media in Kosovo can be considered “national” media, in that they help create the Kosovo Albanian nation, sustaining the “imagined community” (Anderson 2001). Following Gellner (1983), it could be said that the media present the Kosovo Albanian nation as absolute, sacred and mono-ethnic, militant in its concept of defense and its means of freedom, and in conflictual juxtaposition with the Other, the “enemy” — the Serbs.

According to agencies and organizations that monitor media coverage related to minorities,⁴⁵ the Albanian-language print media in general tend to “create a dichotomy between OUR [Albanian] side, which is better and constructive, and THEIR [Serbian] side, which is bad and destructive” and “take part in the radicalization of inter-ethnic relations in Kosovo.”⁴⁶

⁴¹ There is only one bilingual Albanian-Serbian language newspaper, the weekly *M Magazine*. The bi-weekly *Gradjanski glasnik* is published in Serbian but has a mixed office, the publisher being Albanian and the editor Serbian.

⁴² OSCE, July 2006.

⁴³ Such as citing only one source of information, not separating news from commentary, and relying mostly on the statements of public officials to create stories.

⁴⁴ Government and party advertising is the life-blood of Kosovo newspapers, which struggle to make money given poor copy sales and a relatively underdeveloped advertising sector. See Balkan Insight, BIRN Show Triggers Row on Freedom of Speech in Kosovo, June 2009, at <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/main/analysis/20169/?tpl=297> (last accessed January 20, 2010); see also KIPRED, Monitoring of media during the election campaign in Kosovo, February 2008 http://www.kipred.net/site/documents/eng_media.pdf (last accessed January 20, 2010).

⁴⁵ Youth Initiative for Human Rights 2006, 2005; OSCE, July 2006.

⁴⁶ Youth Initiative for Human Rights 2006.

b) Critical discourse analysis of conflict-sustaining ideologies

In order to examine closely the representations of the Serb minority⁴⁷ in Albanian-language newspapers, I have chosen critical discourse analysis (CDA), because as Van Dijk suggests, it provides a thorough systematic account of the levels, structures, units and strategies of text, as well as a detailed analysis of the many properties of context, which is necessary in order to analyze the discursive expression and reproduction of ideologies (Van Dijk 1997; Duranti & Goodwin 1992; Ellis 1998; Huckin 1992; Potter, Edwards & Wetherell 1993; Tannen 1981). As media production reflects, and is linked to, the dominant ideological and economic forces in society, I consider CDA a particularly suitable form of analysis, because it provides the theoretical and methodological context that can articulate explicitly the relationship between ideologies, language practices and the socio-political world (Fairclough 1992). It allows not only to distinguish discourse practices that contribute to the production and reproduction of dominant ideologies, but also to the perpetuation of stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, even violence, and thus intractable-conflict dynamics (Van Dijk 1998).

This study looks at articles dealing with Serb-related issues from Albanian-language newspapers in Kosovo: *Koha Ditore*, *Kosova Sot*, *Express*, *Zëri*, *Epoka e Re*, *Lajm*, *Bota Sot* and *InfoPress*, from March 1st to May 31st, 2009.⁴⁸ Using the daily UNMIK media monitoring service,⁴⁹ I selected all

⁴⁷ The choice of focusing only on the Serbian community is guided by several reasons. First, even though the conflict in Kosovo affected, and still affects all non-Albanian ethnic groups, the conflict itself was not, and is not between Albanians and all other non-Albanian groups, but between Albanians and Serbs. Thus, in terms of intractable conflict dynamics the main issue is the relationship between the Albanian majority and the Serb minority. It is important to note that while the Serb community is discussed in this article, this minority, as every community, is not homogeneous in terms of political inclinations, identity and responses to policies or developments; there are regional, local, political and identity differences, often profound, within the community. Yet they share the same predicament, of being the minority in an ethnic state, and at the same time, they are “homogenized” by the Albanian-language media. Moreover, in the months analyzed here, there were only 5 articles related to other minorities.

⁴⁸ I chose to include all Albanian-language daily newspapers in order to analyze a broad range of media outlets and look for possible differences and divergences. However, the analysis shows that even though there are significant differences between newspapers in reporting about local politics, there is consensus and coherence on reporting about Serb-related issues in the three months analyzed, and a lack of divergent perspectives and voices. In other words, nationalism cuts across party lines.

⁴⁹ UNMIK media monitoring service provides daily reviews and translations of Albanian-language media in Kosovo and Serbian-language media in Serbia; the reports provide full lists of headlines and articles and translations of selected articles, focusing on main events, political developments and issues pertaining to Albanian-Serb relations.

articles that dealt with or mentioned Serbs and issues pertinent to the Serb minority, including articles that are related to Serbia and the government in Belgrade. I chose to include the latter category of articles for two main reasons. First, the Serbian population, treated as minority in Kosovo is perceived as being inextricably linked with Belgrade and Serbia,⁵⁰ and very often Albanian language media do not make a distinction.⁵¹ Second, the Serbian government in Belgrade is most often cited as speaking for the Serb community in Kosovo, and thus the community is for the most part identified with the Serbian government and Serbia in general.

The following analysis examines the discourse of Albanian-language newspapers concerning Serbs, looking at master narratives (Hackett & Zhao 1994), framing (Goffman 1974), discursive strategies (Donati 1992), such as rhetorical devices (compare and contrast, hyperbole and euphemism), and lexicalization (Van Dijk 1997; 2000). Following van Dijk, I assert that epistemically it is not the truth value of ideologies, but their cognitive and social role, i.e. their effectiveness and usefulness, that is important in power relations of domination and discrimination. Therefore, my intention in the analysis is not to ascertain or discuss the truth value of the media discourse, but rather to investigate what kinds of representations are dominant and how the ideologies produced and reproduced function in terms of conflict dynamics and socio-political implications.

c) Threat as master narrative

Master narratives are analytic reference frameworks that are used to categorize and analyze events and processes related to various issue or areas, such as “world order”, “security”, “humanitarian”, etc. When repeated frequently and/or authenticated and acknowledged by multiple public authorities like state institutions, community leaders, government officials or intellectual authority these dominant scripts become the “Truth”. Since they privilege certain interpretations, while marginalizing others (Foucault 1978), they

⁵⁰ According to media monitoring reports Albanian-language media focus on the strong and persistent attachment of the Kosovo Serb community to the government in Belgrade. Politicians from Serbia regularly receive a lot of negative coverage; they are usually featured using nicknames and reminders of what the Serbian regime did in Kosovo in the 1990s. See Youth Initiative for Human Rights 2006, 2005; OSCE, July 2006.

⁵¹ An illustrative example is the coverage of an incident on March 24, where Kosovo Police stopped Serbian government officials coming from Belgrade, at the border crossing, denying them entry. Albanian language media reported the incident with headlines such as “Kosovo: Forbidden land for Serbs” (*InfoPress*); *Bota Sot* ran an article entitled “You don’t step anymore in Kosovo,” and argued that “Serbs will not be allowed entry into Kosovo anymore.”

serve as legitimization strategies in maintaining hegemonic power relations (Bamberg 2005), affecting, like ideologies, thinking and behaviour (Jameson 1984).

The master narrative that comes out of the analysis of the articles in the three months selected is that of “threat” — the threat that Kosovo Albanians continue to face from Kosovo Serbs and the rest of Serbia; a threat that is portrayed as historical and constant. This master narrative implies that Serbs are enemies, to be feared, contested, fought against; conflict is thus the normal state of affairs.

The master narrative of the Other as threat is common in intractable conflict, and it serves to motivate group members to strengthen their negative beliefs about the Other, making thus the master narrative itself even more resistant to change and transformation (Hackett & Zhao 1994). The conflict is hence perceived not only as an individual physical threat, but as metaphysically threatening the entire imagined community. The fight against the Other surpasses personal struggle, and takes on historical, traditional and heroic proportions. The master narrative of threat is revealed through two main interpretative news frames — “threat to state” and “threat to security”.

d) Frames

Frames are ideological shapings of discourse, “drawing on well-established social orientations, attitudes, values and other group beliefs” (Donati 1992). They relate to specific themes that are linked to a given issue, or master narrative. Public issues are framed by mentioning certain relevant topics and subtopics, while ignoring others. Huckin (2002) calls the latter “significant silences” and underscores the power of silence to affect communication and perceptions; such silences are a common feature of news discourse (Reese & Buckalew 1995) and other forms of public discourse.⁵²

The two main frames that come out of this analysis — the Threat to State and the Threat to Security — are characterized further by topics and sub-topics, which conform to Van Dijk’s “ideological square” of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. Van Dijk demonstrates that topics are selected according to how favourable they are for the in-group, and therefore negative for the out-group; they are derived from an event model, which in this case is “conflict”. In the articles analyzed, the Al-

⁵² As Van Dijk notes (1986, 178), “the ideological nature of discourse in general, and of news discourse in particular, is often defined by the unsaid. Information that could (or should) have been given is selectively left out.”

banian-language media select topics that embody the four moves that Van Dijk (2000) suggests are basic in ideological discourse about the Other:

- 1) Express/emphasize information that is ‘positive’ about us.
- 2) Express/emphasize information that is ‘negative’ about them.
- 3) Suppress/de-emphasize information that is ‘positive’ about them.
- 4) Suppress/de-emphasize information that is ‘negative’ about us.

According to the results of this analysis, the Threat to State frame has two main topics — denying statehood, and disrupting institutional order and hindering economic progress, while the Threat to Security frame has three key topics — extremism, criminal activities, and war crimes and human rights violations.

The Threat to State Frame(s)

The Threat to State Frame 1: Denying statehood

Articles that fall under this topic concern the dispute over the status of Kosovo, its declaration of independence and its territorial integrity,⁵³ and use language that presents the dispute as a “fierce” conflict, even “war”:

“Kosovo and Serbia to have fierce clash at the Hague” (*Epoka e Re*, April 15)

“Kosovo and Serbia start confrontation of arguments in Hague” (*Zëri*, April 16)

“The war at the Hague starts” (*Epoka e Re*, April 17)

And the Kosovo Albanians as being on the defensive against Serbia’s attacks:⁵⁴

“Kosovo ready to defend independence in Hague” (*Epoka e Re*, April 16)

“Declaration for the protection of independence handed over” (*Bota Sot*, April 16)

“History and legality of independence are defended” (*Koha Ditore*, April 20)

⁵³ As Serb government officials continue to claim that the February 2008 declaration of independence is illegal, and that Kosovo is still a part of Serbia, the case is being debated at the International Court of Justice in the Hague. Both sides presented their arguments in April 2009.

⁵⁴ The same kind of language, presenting the dispute as a “harsh battle”, was used to describe the events at the Islamic Conference in May 2009: “A harsh battle for Kosovo in Damask” (*Koha Ditore*, May 25); “In Damask, Kosovo and Serbia fight for resolution” (*Zëri*, May 25).

Articles also frame the dispute as a competition, keeping “score” of wins and losses:⁵⁵

“Editorial: Albanian diplomacy beats Serbia” (*Kosova Sot*, May 26)

... Kosovo should thank Albania for the success achieved at the summit of the Organisation of Islamic Conference. Even though Serbia “wholeheartedly” lobbied against the approved resolution, the Conference came out with a very favorable position on Kosovo.

This topic also comprises numerous Albanian articles that report the frequent statements of Belgrade officials regarding the territorial belonging of Kosovo to Serbia:

“Tadić in Kosovo: “This is Serbia” (*Koha Ditore*, April 18)

Prime Minister Taçi has set some conditions to allow Serbia’s President to visit Kosovo, and among them he insisted that Tadić should not make any political statement in contradiction to Kosovo’s Constitution. However, Tadić has not refrained from political announcements and in his statement he said that he considered Kosovo as a part of Serbia. “My message today is a message of peace, peace for Serbs and Albanians who live in Kosovo, in our Serbia. Without peace we cannot secure decent living. Without faith in peace we cannot live normal lives,” said Tadić.

The statement of the Serbian President, on the occasion of the Orthodox Easter, caused great indignation, and the newspapers reported it not only as a violation of Kosovo’s sovereignty,⁵⁶ but also as a typical characteristic of the Serbian Orthodox Church, as in the following example from *Epoka e Re* (April 18):

At the church, Tadić “privately” attacks Kosovo and this reminds us of the role of the Serbian Church against Kosovo.

Significantly, the Serbian Orthodox Church, which is one of the main Serb institutions in Kosovo, and one of the most prominent representatives of the interests of the Serb community, is presented here (and elsewhere) as being against the independence of Kosovo; the implication is that it is not part of Kosovo, and its population. Further, the statements of Belgrade officials⁵⁷ regarding the unsettled status of Kosovo appear frequently, such as:

“Ivanović: Kosovo status is a “transitional status” (*Zëri*, May 18)

The State Secretary in the so-called Ministry for Kosovo in Serbia’s government, Oliver Ivanović, considers Kosovo’s status as a transitional status.

⁵⁵ “We believe in the triumph of Kosovo over Serbia” (*Bota Sot*, April 17).

⁵⁶ “Tadic violates Kosovo sovereignty” (*Bota Sot*, April 18).

⁵⁷ It is common practice in Albanian-language newspapers to use “so-called” when referring to officials of the Serbian Ministry for Kosovo and Metohija, thus underlining the position of the media toward the institutions representing the Serbs in Kosovo.

“While some Kosovo Albanians and some countries with influence in the world are calling the status finally solved, we consider it transitional status. And it can only be final when the appropriate solution can be found in an agreement that the authorities in Serbia and its people accept,” said Ivanović.

Particularly the Serb-controlled north of Kosovo is presented as a threat to the Albanian-dominated Kosovo:

“AAK: State of Kosovo at risk from divided Mitrovica” (*Koha Ditore*, March 15)

The party’s deputy leader Blerim Shala said at the convention that the divided town of Mitrovica is threatening the state of Kosovo. “Mitrovica has remained stuck in its fate as a divided town, without whose unification there can be no territorial integrity for Kosovo. The freedom of Kosovo is only partial as long as Mitrovica remains divided. With such a Mitrovica, the state of Kosovo is at risk,” Shala was quoted as saying.

and its sovereignty:⁵⁸

“Rexhepi: Sovereignty is threatened in the north” (*Koha Ditore*, March 23)

The north of Kosovo is considered one of the main problems for Kosovo, and for the Kosovo Albanians (and also many international representatives) is associated with “radical”, “extremist”, “criminal” and even “terrorist” activities.

The Threat to State Frame 2: Disrupting institutional order

The Serbs in Kosovo are seen as contesting the Kosovo state and disrupting its institutional order through the presence of Serbian institutions, called “parallel structures”:

“Salihaj: Acceptance of the Serb parallel structures destroys the sovereignty” (*Bota Sot*, March 23)

These “structures” are described as violating Kosovo’s laws and “sabotaging the statehood of Kosovo”, as in the following excerpt:

“EULEX and UNMIK have contacts with parallel structures” (*Koha Ditore*, March 20)

⁵⁸ In the years since 1999 there have been many suggestions regarding the division of Kosovo, coming both from some Serb officials and analysts and international actors, according to which the Ibar river, a *de facto* border now, should be instituted as a *de jure* division line, and the north of Kosovo remaining within Serbia. However, Serbs living south of the river Ibar have always been strongly against that plan, and this is one of the few points where they agree with Kosovo Albanians, who decisively contest such a division.

Representatives of EULEX and UNMIK have admitted openly that they have regular contacts with Serb parallel structures in Kosovo, adding that they don't legitimize their presence. The dialogue international officials have with Serb leaders, who refuse and are sabotaging the statehood of Kosovo, EULEX and UNMIK evaluate as having contact with leaders of the community, which have the aim to find pragmatically solutions for different issues.

The illegitimacy of these institutions (although legal since 1999 in terms of being democratically elected), is emphasized repeatedly, while their purpose and reason, namely to provide services that are otherwise unavailable to the Serb community, are neither mentioned nor explained. Through the frequent use of words such as “illegitimate,” and “parallel”, the institutions operating in the Serb-inhabited enclaves, which deal primarily with health care, education, welfare, and municipal government, are presented in a negative light and associated with illegality and illegal activities. They are also presented as purely political, and with the sole purpose of opposing the Kosovo state, and even associated with terrorism:

“Parallel structures, elements of terrorism” (*Bota Sot*, March 31)

Also, by referring to institutions such as medical centres, schools, cultural houses, community centres and municipal services as “structures”, they are mystified and their function — taking care of the basic needs of the Serb community — is obscured and distorted. The close link that is presented between the “parallel structures” and Belgrade adds to this obfuscation, through the use of language that connotes a sort of deviance:

“Serbia ‘feeds’ parallel structures in Kosovo” (*Lajm*, March 6)

In certain articles, the “parallel structures” are blamed for damaging the interests of the Serb community⁵⁹ in Kosovo, through promoting segregation:

“Parallel structures prevent integration of Serbs” (*Lajm*, May 15)

and significantly, because of Belgrade's influence:

“ICO and Government meet with Serbs to discuss various problems” (*Zëri*, April 4)

Here, the Kosovo government official is quoted as saying that a part of the Serbs is “an obstacle for integration” while another part of the Serbs are under “Belgrade's direct influence”, which is “impeding the integration [of Serbs] in political and institutional life”. The negative influence of “Belgrade” is a common theme in the articles analyzed, voiced both by Kosovo Albanian politicians and international representatives and organizations.

⁵⁹ “Serbs looking for jobs threatened by parallel structures” (*Koha Ditore*, May 26).

In the articles analyzed, neither the role of the Kosovo Albanian institutions in preventing and hindering such integration, nor the difficulties that Serbs face in living in Kosovo is mentioned; divergent viewpoints are not presented, and thus the complex problems of this minority community are simplified and attributed to self-segregation and Belgrade's intentional policy of "undermining the independence of Kosovo".

The Serbian community is presented as continuously and stubbornly opposing all institutions of the Kosovo state:

"Serbs ignore constitutional court" (*InfoPress*, April 7)

"Kosovo Serbs ignore Constitution Day" (*Zëri*, April 10)

The "refusal" to participate in and accept Kosovo institutions is not placed in a context that would shed light on the various and multifaceted reasons behind such policies, but rather the implication is that it is sheer obstinacy:

The Threat to State Frame 3: Draining the state of its resources

Another theme that comes under the topic of Threat to the State portrays the Serbs as draining the self-proclaimed Kosovo state, because of their non-compliance and opposition to its institutions. Three particular cases are prominent in this theme during the months analyzed: suspended Serb police officers, non-payment of electricity bills, and decentralization of Serb-majority areas. In all three cases, the newspapers focus on the detrimental consequences for the Kosovo, particularly economic:

"Three million for 300 Serb police officers" (*Infopress*, May 15)

"Serbs owe 120 million to KEK" (*Kosova Sot*, May 12)

"Decentralisation costs us € 30 million" (*Kosova Sot*, May 4)

The Serb community is presented as draining the Kosovo budget and hindering economic progress:

"Maliqi: The lesson from Sillovo" (*Express*, March 9)

The Sillovo incident is perhaps an introduction into a series of incidents involving the Serb minority on the eve of the United Nations Security Council session. The Government of Kosovo should wage a clear and efficient campaign proving that the incident had nothing to do with minority rights, but that it is an issue of unpaid electricity debts and an unprecedented usurpation of the limited energy resource in Kosovo.

This opinion piece not only refutes that the issue is a violation of minority rights, but undercuts the importance of the protests, by implying their falsity and a sort of conspiracy against the Kosovo state. This mirrors the official stance of the Kosovo government on the issue of disconnections of

Serb villages, and the protests that inevitably follow. The “debt” of the Serb community in Kosovo to KEK is a recurrent theme in the months analyzed, and thus the word is used frequently.

“Thaçi: There is no discrimination in Silovo, the energy has to be paid” (*Lajm*, March 11)

“21 police officers injured in a Serb protest” (*Koha Ditore*, May 12)

21 members of Kosovo Police were injured in a protest of local Serbs along the Gjilane-Bujanovac road. Serbs, still deprived of basic human rights, jobless and discriminated on ethnic basis were protesting their disconnection from the power supply for failure to settle their debts to KEK. KEK said that the villages inhabited mainly by the Serb community owe over €150 million in unpaid bills and insisted that the disconnection was not done on an ethnic basis.

This complex and long-standing problem, which has been plaguing the Serb community living in the enclaves for many years,⁶⁰ as well as the Kosovo Albanian population and everyone living in Kosovo, is simplified, and placed in the context of “conflict”; significantly, the fact that a sizable part of the Kosovo Albanian population does not pay electricity bills, including some official institutions,⁶¹ is not mentioned either.

It is important to note that in the articles analyzed, only Kosovo Albanian officials are cited, while the Serbs who are affected by the lack of electricity are not quoted; thus, their voice is not heard and their problems are viewed only through the perspective of the Kosovo Albanian officials.

⁶⁰ All of Kosovo is affected by the problem of electricity supply, and that power cuts do not affect only Serb-inhabited areas, but the entire territory and population. Second, it is also important to remember that many Kosovo Albanians do not pay for electricity either (see for example, UNDP 2006). In fact, the non-payment of electricity bills to KEK is a Kosovo-wide problem, and there are also public institutions which do not pay for their electricity; see U.S. Department of State, February 2009. Another factor affecting the issue with electricity cuts is that Serb enclaves are in rural areas, which throughout Kosovo receive less electricity than urban areas. The difference in electricity supply between rural and urban areas can be hours, but sometimes also days; to give an example, while in Priština there are 2 hour electricity cuts each 4 hours, in the Serb enclave of Gračanica there are 8 hour electricity cuts per 12 hours, and often even more. The general Kosovo problem of power cuts and non-payment of electricity bills is further exacerbated because the Serb population openly refuses to pay electricity bills to KEK, the Kosovo Energy Corporation; for years, the Serb community has been demanding that another provider, the Serbian electricity company, as the rightful owner of all Kosovo electricity sources, be allowed to operate in Serb areas, but that has never been allowed by the Albanians. Every so often, Albanian-controlled KEK disconnects completely the power supply to a certain Serb-inhabited village, and protests inevitably arise after a few days of no electricity whatsoever.

⁶¹ U.S. Department of State, February 2009.

The Threat to Security Frame(s)

The articles that correspond to the Threat to Security frame suggest that Serbs, and the Serbian government, threaten the security of the Kosovo “state”, through extremist behaviour and attitudes, criminal activities, and war crimes and human rights violations.

In the following example, the Threat to Security frame is directly stated:

“Krasniqi: Belgrade is guilty” (*Epoka e Re*, March 11)

... Kosovo Assembly Chairman Jakup Krasniqi said ... “Belgrade is being led by a policy of boycott and non-recognition, a policy that wants to produce destabilization and insecurity in Kosovo, and not a policy that wants to build new relations.”

The Threat to Security Frame 1: Extremism

This topic presents Kosovo Serbs, and Serbs in general, as being extremist in attitude and behaviour; the emphasis is on violence, such as protests, riots and similar, as “typical” of Serbs, particularly those in the north of Kosovo. Frequently, words such as “extremists” and “violent” are used to characterize Serbs and their actions:⁶²

“EULEX as UNMIK, embraces the Serb extremists” (*Bota Sot*, March 3)

“Serb extremists fire weapons” (*Bota Sot*, March 24)

“Thaçi says Government does not surrender to extremists in Mitrovica” (*Zëri*, April 30)

“Serbs want violence, continue with explosions” (*Bota Sot*, April 30)

“We will not surrender before extremists” (*Bota Sot*, April 30)

One of the cases that illustrate this topic, and that received prominent status and much media attention in the articles analyzed, is the conflict over the reconstruction of several Albanian houses in the north of Kosovo:

“Shots against the reconstruction of Albanian houses” (*Koha Ditore*, April 26)

Serb protesters fired shots during their attempts to impede the reconstruction of Albanian houses in Kroi i Vitakut in northern Mitrovica on Saturday.

The juxtaposition here, as in the following article, is between Albanians who are “carrying out the humanitarian project of rebuilding homes” and Serbs who respond with violence.

⁶² One of the articles analyzed even compares Serbs to the Taliban: “Buzhala: Moderate Serb Taliban” (*Express*, March 11).

“Work to resume today at ‘Kroi i Vitakut’, Police and KFOR on standby” (*Zëri*, April 27)

While carrying out the humanitarian project of rebuilding homes of Albanians in Kroi i Vitakut in the northern part of Mitrovica, Serbs have responded with firing guns on Friday and Saturday. ... President Fatmir Sejdiu evaluated these incidents in Kroi i Vitakut as orchestrated by Serb leaders. He also said that no one can prevent the work in the north of the country or in other territories of Kosovo.

The articles analyzed, as in the following example, emphasize “intolerance” and extremely violent behaviour:

“Attack with hand grenades on EULEX and KFOR” (*Koha Ditore*, April 28)

The confrontation between Serb citizens and security forces in the tense north erupted again on Monday, with at least two hand grenades being thrown at EULEX and KFOR peacekeepers. These incidents, which are caused by the intolerance of Serbs toward the rebuilding of five Albanian houses in Kroi i Vitakut, included shots from guns, but did not claim any victims.

Some articles invoke the threat frame explicitly, using strong wording, lacking verifiable data to create powerful images of Serb violence and aggression:

“Life under Serb snipers” (*Lajm*, April 28)

“With bullets against return” (*Lajm*, April 28)

“War status in Mitrovica, Serbs under arms!” (*Bota Sot*, April 28)

“Belgrade”, i.e. the Serbian government, is represented as being responsible, and as endorsing, or “silently blessing,” allegedly Serb-organized violence in Kosovo:

“Belgrade, the major causer of disorder in the north” (*Lajm*, May 7)

“International presence hesitates to mention Belgrade’s role” (*Koha Ditore*, May 14)

Representatives of the international community that work in the region have stated that the violence by Kosovo Serbs in the northern part of the country and in the Anamorava region transpired with the silent blessing of Belgrade. While senior U.S. diplomats directly point the finger at Serbian authorities and local extremist leaders for the recent events, the international presence in Kosovo is showing more restraint. “Belgrade’s influence on Kosovo Serbs is evident. We all know this and this is not a secret,” an international official told the paper, under the condition of anonymity.

The government in Belgrade is further accused of “inducing” violence:⁶³

⁶³ Both Kosovo Albanian politicians and international actors are cited, linking the violent behaviour and attitudes of Kosovo Serbs with the Serbian government in Belgrade:

“Pristina accuses Belgrade for incidents in the north” (*Zëri*, April 29)

After Monday’s incident in Mitrovica north when 100 local Serbs tried to stop rebuilding five houses in Kroi i Vitakut by using violence and shooting, the situation yesterday was calmer. However, in the surrounding area unidentified individuals have stoned two EULEX vehicles, but except for material damages, there were no injuries. Kosovo President Fatmir Sejdiu accused on Tuesday official Belgrade for inducing Kosovo Serbs to cause incidents in Mitrovica north, therefore he requested from the international community to make pressure on Serbia in order to stop the conflicts. “Last incidents in the north are caused by people dictated directly by Belgrade,” he said.

The Threat to Security Frame 2: Criminal activities

In this second topic in the Threat to Security frame the articles emphasize the connection between Kosovo Serbs, particularly those living in the north, but not only, and criminal activities, such as smuggling and trafficking.

“Border with Serbia, an open ‘door’ to smuggling” (*Bota Sot*, May 12)

Belgrade is also blamed for the criminal activities of Kosovo Serbs. The Serbian government is accused of “smuggling crime into Kosovo”:

“Assembly Speaker Krasniqi accuses the UN” (*Express*, March 8)

Kosovo Assembly Speaker Jakup Krasniqi has (...) said there could be no technical dialogue with Serbia as long as the latter does not recognize Kosovo as an independent state and as long as it keeps smuggling crime into Kosovo.

Frequently, the articles state, lacking verifiable data, that encouraging criminal activities is in the interest of the Serbs and the Serbian government in order to destabilize the Kosovo state.

“Serbia continues trafficking of arms in Kosovo” (*Bota Sot*, March 10)

This article repeats old stereotypes about the “Serbian terrorist system in Kosovo” and Serbian nationalism, linked with Serbian police crimes spanning more than a century, into the present day. Apart from being labelled as uncooperative in encouraging Kosovo Serbs to integrate, the Republic of Serbia is also portrayed as “[encouraging] and [supporting] illegal and criminal structures”:

“U.S. calls on Belgrade to stop northern leaders” (*Koha Ditore*, May 11)

The U.S. Ambassador in Belgrade Cameron Munther said that in the northern part of Kosovo irresponsible Serb leaders are producing violence and constitute a danger for their safety and the safety of others. Munther called on Belgrade to stop these irresponsible leaders.

“I am talking about people living in Mitrovica and your government knows who they are. These are people that incite violence; they are a threat to their safety and the safety of others. This is not the way to solve problems,” Munther was quoted as saying.

“Disagreements at the UN, UNMIK stays in the game” (*Koha Ditore*, March 24)

Kosovo Foreign Minister Skënder Hyseni ... enumerated the actions of the Kosovo government to improve the living conditions in the regions with minority communities, especially the Serb Community. “I will have to say that, after all, the Republic of Serbia was not at all helpful in this regard, because it continued the encouragement and support of illegal and criminal structures in the north,” Hyseni said, emphasizing that illegality in this part of the country is openly encouraged by Belgrade.

Consistently, it is the Serbs in north Kosovo who are most often linked with lawlessness and criminal activities; in fact, the north is often referred to as a “haven for smugglers” and a lawless territory:

“Thaçi: The law will be extended to the whole territory of the country” (*Koha Ditore*, March 12)

Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi told Voice of America radio that the north will not be a haven for smugglers and the rule of law will be extended throughout the country. “Integration is the only road, the future of Mitrovica is the future of Kosovo, there will not be a place for the smugglers that are still operating in Mitrovica,” he was quoted as saying.

In the following example, *Koha Ditore* reports the words of President Sejdiu, who uses extreme verbs, such as “inseminate” and “induce” and nouns such as “violence”, “anarchy”, “chaotic state” and “political and economic crime” to paint an extremely negative image of northern Kosovo Serbs:

“Sejdiu: Mitrovica and the northern part are facing structures that inseminate crime” (*Koha Ditore*, March 25)

Sejdiu expressed his concern that even ten years after those events, Mitrovica and northern Kosovo, are facing structures that inseminate political and economic crime in order to keep this part of the country in a chaotic state. “Those who induce violence and anarchy will not stop us from this journey, as they did not manage to eliminate us ten years ago,” he said.

The statement of President Sejdiu, as reported here, directly accuses the Serbs of trying to “eliminate” the Kosovo Albanians ten years ago, which is part of the following topic, concerning war crimes and human rights violations.

The Threat to Security Frame 3: War crimes and human rights violations

While the articles in this topic are mostly related to crimes committed before or during 1999, although not exclusively, they are important for the present image of the Serb minority, because they serve to reiterate and confirm the link between the Serbs and extreme aggression; such articles are a constant reminder of Serbs as enemies. Media-monitoring reports also

note that the war is still present in the print media, with an emphasis on commemorations, witness testimonies and missing persons, but focusing exclusively on Albanians, while ignoring facts about the sufferings of people from other ethnic groups.⁶⁴ The articles tend to bring back war-like reaction, using inflammatory wartime rhetoric in describing alleged “Serbian crimes”, “Serbian terrorism” and similar issues. The Albanian media constantly remind the public about Serb war crimes and atrocities, focusing on the Serbs as exclusive culprits for the war, particularly during periods of remembrance and anniversaries of massacres and the NATO bombings.⁶⁵ In many of the articles analyzed there is an emphasis on the responsibility of the Serbs in committing “genocide” in Kosovo, wherein the claim is treated as a well-established and indisputable fact.

“Sejdiu: Mitrovica and the northern part are facing structures that inseminate crime” (*Koha Ditore*, March 25)

Speaking in memory of the two martyrs killed that day by Serb forces, Sejdiu said that unfortunately no political leader in Serbia, not even those that assess themselves as democrats and pro-westerners, have had the courage to apologize to Kosovo’s population about the open genocide.

The words “genocide” and “Holocaust” appear frequently in the Albanian articles analyzed:

“The air strikes stopped the Serb genocide” (*Bota Sot*, March 25)

“Thaçi: Years 1998–99 resembled a new Holocaust” (*Koha Ditore*, March 25)

This is a common and rhetorically effective strategy for creating authoritative victim narratives⁶⁶ and clearly delineating between victims, i.e. Albanians, and villains, i.e. Serbs;⁶⁷ it is very functional, because, as Doerr explains, the “genocide provides metaphorical language and a framework to express absolute domination, victimization, and unbearable suffering” (Doerr 2000).

In the articles analyzed there is often an emphasis on the “planned”, “organized”, and “systematic” character of Serb war crimes:

“Sejdiu: Albanians were systematic victims of the Serb state” (*Lajm*, March 31)

⁶⁴ Youth Initiative for Human Rights 2006, 2005; OSCE, July 2006.

⁶⁵ Youth Initiative for Human Rights 2006, 2005.

⁶⁶ See e.g. Schiffrin 2002.

⁶⁷ It is by no means unique, since, as Moeller (2001) suggests, various groups use the Jewish experience to construct their own victim identities.

Further, the responsibility for war crimes is placed not only on the Serbian political elite of the 1990s, but also Serbian state representatives preceding and succeeding Milošević:

“Two decades of Serb crimes in Kosovo” (*Bota Sot*, March 10)

“Sejdiu: Serb massacres of Albanians were planned” (*Koha Ditore*, March 31)

President Fatmir Sejdiu met with survivors of Bogujevc, Duriq and Llugali massacres at his residence yesterday. Sejdiu said that Slobodan Milosevic is not the only one responsible for the crimes committed against Albanians. “Tragedies faced by these families, as well as many other families in Kosovo, prove that Serb violence toward Albanian civilians was not only done by Milosevic’s regime, but was planned for a long time and was committed in an organized systematic manner by the Serbian state,” he said.

The significance of articles such as this one is that they remind the public of the war crimes committed during the conflict, reaffirming the victim identity of the Kosovo Albanians and continually strengthening the image of Serbs as “the enemy,” thus making reconciliation efforts quite difficult. Further, such statements and articles make claims about the long-term, systematic, and organized policy of crimes against Kosovo Albanians, presenting the conflict as historical and perpetual, but ignoring the whole historical context regarding shifting power realities and choosing facts selectively. The implication is that the conflict is fuelled by the hatred that Serbs and the Serbian state have for Kosovo Albanians and the consequent destructive policies. Here, the master narrative of Threat implies a threat to the very existence of the Kosovo Albanian population, and the Threat to Security frame is amplified into a threat to survival. Several articles report statements by Kosovo Albanian politicians who emphasize precisely this point, and portray the conflict as a struggle for survival and “existence”:

“The President and the Government deny media reports on KLA abuse camps” (*Koha Ditore*, April 11)

... President Fatmir Sejdiu said the KLA’s fight was righteous and was a fight for the existence of Albanians...

The implication is that the goal of the Serbs is to eliminate the Albanians. This adds another dimension to the conflict – of perpetual and inherent hatred and opposition.

In such and similar articles, which present only the Kosovo Albanian view, the Kosovo Serb minority is either not included, or their viewpoint is ridiculed and portrayed as “propaganda”. Similarly, accusations against Kosovo Albanians of committing war crimes are labelled as “propaganda”:

“The President and the Government deny media reports on KLA abuse camps” (*Koha Ditore*, April 11)

While commemorations of significant nation-building events and their coverage in the media are an important aspect of national identity and cohesion, the articles that report on commemorations and quote Kosovo government officials do not serve to further reconciliation efforts or create cohesion between all of Kosovo's communities, but rather to deepen the victim-villain dichotomy, strengthen the negative image of the Serbs as perpetrators, and reaffirm the Kosovo Albanian understanding of the conflict as the Truth. They are instrumental in strengthening negative stereotypes, polarized identities and perpetuating the conflict.

Rhetorical devices — compare and contrast, hyperboles and euphemisms

Another instrumental polarization strategy includes rhetorical devices, such as contrasts and comparisons, and hyperboles and euphemisms; according to Van Dijk (2000) these rhetorical devices are especially powerful and effective, because they provide intense connotations, and accentuate positive information while mitigating negative information about the in-group.

Compare and contrast

Comparison and contrast as rhetorical, as well as mental, features are primary and indispensable in constructing one's ethnic identity, particularly in situations of conflict; hence, this rhetorical device is present throughout discourse. Further, as Savarese (2000) notes, press coverage tends to be based on dichotomous frameworks, which emphasize opposites and construct contrasting categories, such hero/anti-hero, friend/enemy, etc.:

“Albanians work, Serbs protest” (*Lajm*, May 6)

“Serbs of Mitrovica protest” (*Express*, May 22)

Over 100 Serbs in the northern part of Mitrovica did the opposite of what the Albanians in Pristina did for the US Vice President, Joseph Biden. The Serbs in Mitrovica gathered to protest against his visit in Kosovo, while evaluating his state, America, as “the biggest enemy of Serbs and Serbia.”

Because of identity dynamics in intractable conflict, it is not necessary for the Albanian-language newspapers to directly state the contrast, because the contrast is already, and always, implied. As Hall (1985) notes, “positively marked terms ‘signify’ because of their position in relation to what is absent, unmarked, the unspoken, the unsayable. Meaning is relational within an ideological system of presences and absences.” The contrast is between aggressive and peaceful behaviour, and between attack and defence:

“Ready for peace, but also for defence” (*Kosova Sot*, March 27)

The blame for the conflict is directly attributed to the Serbs, who are portrayed as having “induced” the “war”, and as being ready and willing to do so again.

The profound contrast between the Serbs and the Albanians is also mirrored in representations of leaders and institutions. As we have seen, the Serb institutions operating in enclaves are called “parallel structures” and are associated with “illegitimacy”, “illegality” and even “terrorism”, while the leaders of the Serb government are portrayed as “manipulating”, and “threatening”.

For example, in the following excerpt, Serbia and its institutions, both past and present, are negatively evaluated as “not [having] a feeling of compassion to solve [missing persons] issues” and as thus limiting the Kosovo institutions.⁶⁸ On the other hand, Kosovo Albanian leaders are presented as cooperative, extending a hand of peace toward the Serbs, encouraging integration and coexistence.

Hyperboles and euphemisms

Hyperboles are used to emphasize information that is positive for the Kosovo Albanians, and negative for the Serbs, while euphemisms are used for information that is negative for the Kosovo Albanians and positive for the Serbs. The master narrative of Serbs as Threat is based on hyperbolizing the negative stereotypes and the perceived difference between the two groups involved; the use of hyperboles is a consequence of the perceived immense distance and difference, as well as the very polarized, black-and-white view that predominates, precluding any middle ground or ambiguity (Dujzings 2000). As Savarese (2000) points out, the press frequently uses these rhetorical devices to “dramatize” events.

Thus, in the analyzed articles of the Kosovo Albanian press, and as seen in the above-cited examples, the Serbs are always linked with extremely negative characterizations, such as “uncooperative”, “manipulative”, “aggressive”, “extremist”, and even “terrorist”, while the crimes committed by the Serbs are termed “genocide” and even “Holocaust”.

Hyperboles that accentuate positive characteristics of the Kosovo Albanians are particularly frequent in articles concerning the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and its leaders, against the Serbs. In the following example, the battle of Adem Jashari, the “Legendary Commander” of the Albanian KLA guerrilla and the first and most celebrated “martyr for the nation” (Di Lellio & Schwandner-Sievers 2006), against the Serbs, is termed “heroic” and a “sublime sacrifice for the Albanian nation”:

⁶⁸ “Lack of humanity in Serbia” (*Express*, April 28).

“Traditional “KLA epopee” manifestation has started” (*Koha Ditore*, March 6)

“The legendary commander and the Jasharis, as well as others, have been a unique example of sacrifice and strong resistance of Albanians for freedom and independence,” said Kosovo President Fatmir Sejdiu. Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi said that their sacrifice was sublime for the Albanian nation. “Today is the great day, a day of remembrance of pride for all of us. The sacrifice of Commander Adem Jashari and all other Jasharis was a message for unification, sacrifice, freedom, democratic order and for the independent, sovereign state of Kosovo,” said Thaçi.

The events in the village of Prekaze in March 1998 are glorified and hyperbolized as being a “message for unification, sacrifice, freedom, democratic order and for the independent, sovereign state of Kosovo.”⁶⁹ Through implicit and explicit contrast the armed struggle against the enemy, i.e. the Serbs, is cast as the ultimate patriotic deed. In a society, already extremely polarized, segregated, and always ripe with inter-ethnic tensions, this kind of rhetoric serves to solidify opposition, even hatred toward the Other, and legitimize violence.

On the other hand, euphemisms are used for violence against Kosovo Serbs. A case in point is the reporting about the anniversary of the March 2004 anti-Serb pogrom:⁷⁰

⁶⁹ In March 1998 the Serbian police forces surrounded the Jashari family compound in the village of Prekaze, in the Drenica valley, and after Adem Jashari, one of the leaders of the Albanian guerrilla (KLA), responsible for frequent killings of Serbian officials and civilians, refused to surrender and let the civilians leave the compound, Jashari was killed and most of his family, including women and children, were killed. See Judah 2000. Adem Jashari became the most prominent “martyr for the nation” or “martyr for freedom”; subsequently, each victim from the ranks of the KLA became a martyr, and is commemorated as such. In Kosovo Adem Jashari, considered by the Kosovo Serbs as a brutal anti-Serb terrorist leader, became the most commemorated Albanian commander, as there are many streets, buildings, schools, public institutions, and monuments dedicated to him in Albanian-dominated Kosovo.

⁷⁰ During the Albanian-organized anti-Serb riots, which erupted on March 17, and lasted until March 18, 2004 in at least 33 places around Kosovo and involved around 51,000 people, 19 persons were killed, while 954 were wounded, including more than 120 UNMIK police officers and KFOR soldiers that confronted Albanian extremists, as well as 58 KPS officers. The violence left 4,100 persons in Serb-inhabited areas displaced, mostly Serbs, Roma and Ashkali, but also dozens of Albanians from Northern Mitrovica. The Albanian rioters burned and destroyed 550 homes, along with 27 Serb Orthodox churches and monasteries, including UNESCO protected the medieval Serb cathedral church of the Mother of God of Ljeviška in Prizren, dating from 1307. An additional 182 homes and two other Serb Orthodox churches or monasteries were seriously damaged. The March pogrom in 2004 is considered the most serious setback since 1999 in creating a multiethnic Kosovo with democratic institutions, where hu-

“The March 2004 events will not be repeated, says Government”
(*Koha Ditore*, March 18)

On the fifth anniversary of the March 2004 events the Government of Kosovo committed itself to ensuring that such acts are never repeated. In a press release issued yesterday, the government repeated its solidarity with all of those who were affected during those unfortunate events.

The March anti-Serb riots, turned into pogrom, are termed “events”⁷¹ and “unfortunate events,” while the severe violence that was perpetrated is called “such acts,” without explicit mention of what exactly happened or any qualification of it; the victims, and the perpetrators, are also not named. Further, in the articles analyzed, the Serb views and interpretations of the March 2004 riots, often characterized in the Serbian press with strong words, such as “pogrom”,⁷² is labelled as “propaganda”:

“Serbs captives of their propaganda” (*Lajm*, March 18)

Here both hyperbole and euphemism are present as rhetorical devices, since the riots are referred to euphemistically as “events” while the Serbs are presented as “captives” of the memory. Thus, the rhetorical devices work to mitigate the severity of the violence committed against the Serbian minority during that time, and to avoid invoking responsibility and accountability.

Lexicalization

Lexicalization, or the language used to emphasize positive information about the in-group and negative information about the out-group, is essential in perceiving the Other, and thus the conflict, in negative and deterministic ways (Van Dijk 2000). The language used to describe Serbs reinforces the master narrative of Serbs as Threat, within the two frames, the Threat to State and Threat to Security. As we have seen in the previous sections, the

man and minority rights are respected. See Human Rights Watch 2004; International Crisis Group 2004; Amnesty International 2004; *Kosovo and Metohija* 2004; Bataković 2007b.

⁷¹ *Zëri* (March 18): “Government commits that events of 2004 never be repeated;” *Kosova Sot* (March 18): “The events of March 2004, one dark episode.” In this article, it is interesting to note that the March 2004 riots and anti-Serb pogrom are considered the only “dark episode” in the post-1999 history of Kosovo.

⁷² See e.g., *Beta* (March 17): “Bogdanović: March Pogrom the biggest failure of the international community”; RTS (March 17): “Serbian Orthodox Church: March pogrom was continuation of bombing”; Tanjug (March 17): “[Russian] Patriarch Kiril: Wounds of March pogrom in Kosovo have not healed”, and “OSCE presents documentary film on pogrom of Serbs”; Tanjug (March 18): “Jeremić: March violence was pogrom of civilians”, and “Fifth anniversary of violence of Albanians against Serbs in Kosovo”.

Serb population is negatively associated with extreme and disturbing words such as “genocide,” “Holocaust,” “war,” “murder,” and “massacre”:

“Serb genocide” (*Infopress*, April 28)

“PD: Tadić’s statement – an undeclared war with Kosovo” (*Koha Ditore*, April 20)

The Party of Justice said on Sunday that Serbian President Boris Tadić’s statement in Decan [the Serbian monastery of Visoki Dečani] on Sunday triggered bitter feelings among the population of Kosovo. The statement comes on the 10th anniversary of the murder and massacre of thousands of Albanians, crimes for which the Serbian state has never apologized. PD leader Ferid Agani told a press conference that Tadić’s visit implies that the war between Kosovo and Serbia has not ended, but now continues in a different form.

“violence”:

“Violence against blackout” (*Express*, May 12)

“insecurity”:

“Krasniqi: Serbia is exporting insecurity to Kosovo” (*Kosova Sot*, March 20)

deceitfulness:

“Matoshi: Don’t trust them dear [US vice-president Joseph] Biden” (*Koha Ditore*, May 20)

“danger”:

“Danger from Mitrovica” (*Express*, April 22)

“force”:

“Serbs try to prevent by force construction process in ‘Kroi i Vitakut’” (*Infopress*, April 28)

“radical” attitudes:

“The ultimatum of the radical Mihajlovic” (*Koha Ditore*, May 4)

“extremist” behaviour:

“EULEX as UNMIK, embraces the Serb extremists” (*Bota Sot*, March 3)

“Serb extremists fire weapons” (*Bota Sot*, March 24)

and “terrorism”:

“10 years for unrestrained non-human from a terrorist state” (*Bota Sot*, April 25)

Belgrade is accused of “manipulating” Serbs in Kosovo:

“Belgrade continues to manipulate Serbs” (*InfoPress*, May 11)

having “destructive policies”:

“Thaçi against destructive policies of Serbia” (*Lajm*, May 15)

and being “guilty” and “responsible” for various problems:

“Krasniqi: Belgrade is guilty” (*Epoka e Re*, March 11)

“animosity”:

“Kosovo-Serbia: animosity continues” (*Kosova Sot*, May 15)

“battle”:

“Kosovo wins the battle of IMF” (*Koha Ditore*, May 5)

After a long battle, Kosovo triumphed against Serbia’s lobbying campaign against a blockage of the voting process of Kosovo membership in IMF.

The word “against” appears frequently in the articles analyzed — Serbs against Kosovo Albanians (as in the case of war crimes), the Kosovo (against its independence and progress), democratic institutions (not paying electricity bills and not participating in institutions and elections), order (protesting), as well as humanitarian values (reconstruction of Albanian houses):

“Sejdiu: Serbs are against human rights” (*Bota Sot*, April 25)

The Serbs are associated with opposition:

“Albanians announce rebuilding, Serbs blockade” (*Lajm*, April 23)

and “refusal”:

“Teki Dervishi: Serb refusal, Albanian loyalty” (*Bota Sot*, April 2)

Yet another aspect of lexicalization are labels that denote ethnicity, which are “of primary potency” (Singh 1999) and are thus salient and powerful, preventing alternative classification. The labels applied to the Serbs are not only stereotypes, reflecting strong prejudices, but have come to be seen as integral characteristics of the population itself – they have become cultural models (Gee 1996). The very word “Serb” carries extremely negative associations and evaluations, and is distinguished clearly, in the articles analyzed, from “Kosovo”, “Kosovar” and “Albanian”. Also in the examples above, we have seen that the label “Serb” is applied in general to the entire Serb population, in Kosovo and Serbia, and is used also to refer to Serbian government officials; thus, policies of the Serbian government are interpreted as “Serb” and negative characteristics attributed to the entire population.

CONFLICT DYNAMICS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR RECONCILIATION

The analysis in the previous section demonstrates several important findings and confirms Wolfsfeld's (1997) above-indicated four major characteristics of media coverage of minorities. Even though there are significant differences between newspapers in reporting about local politics, there is consensus and coherence on reporting about Serb-related issues in the three months analyzed, and a lack of divergent perspectives and voices. In other words, nationalism cuts across party lines.

Negative portrayals and extreme polarization

During the months analyzed a rather notable is an absence of positive information about the Serb community, and a lack of positive portrayals thereof; the image that is created, on various levels of text and through diverse discursive strategies, is entirely negative. The master narrative of Serbs as a Threat is reinforced through two main frames — the Threat to State and the Threat to Security frame. Within these frames, the topic selection, conforming to Van Dijk's "ideological square" of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation, is characterized by an emphasis on negative information on, and portrayals of, the Serbs.

Through rhetorical devices — compare and contrast, and hyperboles and euphemisms — the difference, opposition and extreme polarization between the Kosovo Albanians and Serbs is stressed and amplified, while through lexicalization the Serbs are presented in stereotypically negative ways, as dangerous, antagonistic, aggressive and inhumane. This is congruent with the findings of media monitoring reports, which stress that there is a disproportionate emphasis on "radical elements" within the Serb community,⁷³ which can "create panic within the majority of Kosovo's population and increase their mistrust towards the Serbian minority".⁷⁴

The emphasis is on ethnic belonging and ethnic identity as primary; all articles analyzed accentuate that as the defining feature. Even when problems affect all citizens, or are common Kosovo-wide issues, the context is "ethnicized", and presented as a "Serb issue", as in the case of electricity

⁷³ According to media monitoring reports the Albanian media often use inappropriate, derogatory and inflammatory language in relation to the incidents caused by the Serb community, or issues related to problems facing the Serb community; sometimes such language can be considered hate speech; several media outlets are known for the use language that incites ethnic hatred, particularly the dailies *Bota Sot* and *Epoka e Re*. See Youth Initiative for Human Rights 2006.

⁷⁴ OSCE, July 2006.

debts. Through labels of primary potency, the reporting stays confined by ethnic identity.

The term “Serb” itself carries extremely negative associations and evaluations, and is distinguished clearly, in the articles analyzed, from “Kosovo”, “Kosovar” and “Albanian”, which points to the symbolic exclusion of Serbs from Kosovo society, and reflects their physical separation and segregation.

Voice and privilege

The exclusion is reflected also in terms of voice, as the Kosovo Serb community, for the most part, is not given a voice in the articles analyzed. Mostly Serb government officials from Belgrade are quoted as speaking on behalf of the Kosovo Serbs, yet their statements are negatively evaluated or discredited as propaganda.⁷⁵ Furthermore, international representatives and organizations are cited as speaking for and about the Serbs.⁷⁶ Kosovo Albanian government officials are most frequently cited in articles concerning Serb issues, and their statements serve to reinforce the master narrative of Serbs as a major threat.

In rare instances when Kosovo Serbs are quoted, they either are labelled “radical” and “extremist”, and thus discredited, or they are several Serbs who participate in Kosovo institutions, or Serbs that criticize the government in Belgrade. In the latter two cases, the media do make a distinction between the Kosovo Serb community and the Serbian government, and give voice to such criticism; this conforms to Van Dijk’s “ideological square” in that it highlights negative information about the Other.⁷⁷ According to media monitoring reports,⁷⁸ Albanian media in general give more attention to those politicians and representatives of Kosovo Serbs who are working with the Kosovo institutions, and are perceived as being “moderate”; their

⁷⁵ The most cited officials of Serbia are President Boris Tadić, Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremić, Minister for Kosovo and Metohija Goran Bogdanović and State Secretary for Kosovo and Metohija Oliver Ivanović.

⁷⁶ “Local Serbs soften their position vis-à-vis Ahtisaari Package” (*Koha Ditore*, March 14).

⁷⁷ “Dejan Jankovic: I report only to the Kosovo police” (*Koha Ditore*, March 20).

While official Belgrade has stated that the Deputy Director of the Kosovo Police Dejan Jankovic will only receive orders and report to EULEX and UNMIK, Jankovic himself, via a phone conversation, said that he takes order and reports only to the Director of the Kosovo Police. Jankovic on Friday denied Belgrade statements. “I work for the Kosovo Police and take orders and report to the Director of the Kosovo Police,” said Jankovic for *Koha Ditore*.

⁷⁸ OSCE, July 2006; Youth Initiative for Human Rights 2006.

purpose is to strengthen the impression that progress is being made toward the integration of the Serb community.

However, articles citing Serbs who are not Kosovo or Serb government officials or political figures, but Kosovo Serb community representatives or citizens are rare during the three month period analyzed.⁷⁹ There is a profound absence of “everyday” voices of Serbs living in Kosovo, and it is the various “officials”, whether Serbian, Albanian or international, who speak on their behalf. There is also differential treatment of the different voices, as the perspectives of Kosovo Albanian officials tend to be privileged.

This points to a further problem revealed in the analysis of articles during the three month period, related to “significant silences”.

Significant silences

As Huckin (2002) demonstrates, “significant silences” or “manipulative silences” deliberately conceal relevant information. The defining characteristics of such silences are intentionality and advantage — certain subjects are intentionally omitted in a way that is advantageous to the writer/speaker through topic selection and framing. In Van Dijk’s “ideological square” silences refer to information that is negative for the in-group and positive for the out-group.

In the analysis above, there is silence about issues that portray the Serbs in a positive light; stories that would contribute to a better understanding of the living conditions of the Serb minority in Kosovo are absent. There is also no coverage of discriminatory practices against the Serb minority and the problems they face in trying to remain in Kosovo. A case in point is the portrayal of the “parallel structures” which are mystified and demonized, without explanations as to the reasons for their existence and functions.

Silences are also pronounced in relation to violence committed against Serbs, as in the case of the anniversary of the March 2004 riots. This conforms to OSCE’s finding that Kosovar Albanian media have shown tendencies to downplay stories when Serbs have been victims of possible ethnically-motivated crimes.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ This conforms to findings cited in media monitoring reports, which stress that there is silence when it comes to providing reports about the everyday life of minorities, reflecting their living conditions, opportunities and perspectives, and ordinary citizens and members of the community are rarely cited. See Youth Initiative for Human Rights 2006; Youth Initiative for Human Rights 2005; OSCE, July 2006.

⁸⁰ OSCE, July 2006.

Reproducing dominant ideologies

The issues of voice and representation reveal a general problem related to Albanian-language print (and other) media that organizations and analysts working in Kosovo have noted as concerning;⁸¹ namely, the media, for the most part, simply reproduce official discourse, citing government officials and politicians — Albanian, Serbian and international, reporting their statements as facts, without providing context, counterarguments, doing investigative work or debating issues.⁸² The discourse further strengthens the conflict dynamics of opposition, polarization and even hatred. As Wolfsfeld has shown, this is a common feature of media discourse in divided societies, particularly when there are no shared media outlets; in such instances further polarization is almost inevitable.

Consequences of media discourse and the master narrative of Serbs as Threat

There are several major implications of the media discourse that centres on the master narrative of Serbs as Threat. Not only does the master narrative preclude counter-narratives, or alternative voices, but represses circumstances and explanations that highlight the imbalance in power relations. By emphasizing that Serbs are a threat, the Albanians are presented as having to constantly defend their territory, state, institutions, their very identity and indeed their survival. When the Other is presented as dangerous and threatening, fear of the Other and a desire to eliminate the threat, physically and symbolically, become perceived as a “natural” response, and thus constitute a significant conflict-sustaining dynamic. When the Other is perceived as the enemy, then defence against that Other becomes not just acceptable, but necessary. Media content that creates fear, such as a focus on past atrocities and the history of ethnic hatred, as exemplified in the articles analyzed, creates the foundation for violent action, labelled as “self-defence” (Frohardt & Temin 2003).

Other means of eliminating the perceived threat can be hindering the return process through institutional blocks and red-tape, impeding integration and maintaining segregation through the perpetuation of negative stereotypes and images and a perpetually hostile environment. One of the most common arguments, as we have seen also in the above-cited articles, that Kosovo Albanians, and also many international actors, claim is that

⁸¹ USAID 2004.

⁸² It is interesting to note that while discourse concerning internal politics is vastly divergent in the newspapers examined, as all of them are owned and supported by different political parties, the analysis shows that the discourse regarding the Serbian minority converges and is strikingly uniform.

Serbs are not willing to integrate into Kosovo society, and that their isolation is self-imposed.⁸³ Thus, while the problem of the integration of the remaining Kosovo Serbs in Kosovo (roughly 200,000 Kosovo Serbs are still displaced in central Serbia) is much more complex, the issue is misrepresented and the Serbs are blamed entirely for their predicament; meanwhile the Kosovo Albanian leadership and the dominant Albanian community are relieved of all responsibility.

It can be argued that the negative Serb identity is a symbolic manifestation of the desire to eliminate the perceived Threat; such an identity serves to sustain an atmosphere of hostility toward the Serbs, and an environment where Serbs do not feel safe or even part of Kosovo society. As we have seen in the analysis above, the terms “Serbs” and “Kosovo” are juxtaposed, presented as dichotomous, and Serbs are portrayed purely as a problem for Kosovo society. Such representations reinforce societal, as well as symbolic, exclusion. As Said has shown, misconceptions of the Other extend beyond representations, serving to justify dominance of one group over another (Said 1978). When discourse that constructs a stigmatized Other, through representational practices demonstrated above, and that causes violence, either cultural, structural or direct, goes uncontested, and defamation and stigmatizing practices are reproduced, they contribute to maintaining the systems of domination and subordination. Various human rights reports consistently point to “societal antipathy against Serbs and the Serbian Orthodox Church”, “societal violence, abuse, and discrimination” against the Serb minority, “cases of politically and ethnically motivated violence” against Serbs and “lack of progress in returning internally displaced persons to their homes.”⁸⁴

The predicament of the Serb minority in Kosovo stems from systematic discrimination, which has been institutionalized on different levels in favour of Kosovo Albanians,⁸⁵ and the existence of profoundly different at-

⁸³ According to UNDP’s Early Warning Report, Kosovo Albanians see the influence of Belgrade and the lack of readiness of Kosovo Serbs to be integrated into Kosovo society as the two most significant factors that continue to affect interethnic relations. Meanwhile, for Kosovo Serbs the two major factors aggravating interethnic relations are the attitude of Kosovo Albanian leaders and insufficient efforts to integration the Serbs into Kosovo society. See UNDP 2009.

⁸⁴ U.S. Department of State, February 2009.

⁸⁵ It can be argued that the predicament of the Serb community is induced by the state structure itself. According to Gurr (1993), the majority of states are multi-ethnic. However, there are differences between liberal-democratic multi-ethnic states, where belonging is based on citizenship, and ethnic states, where it is based on ethnic affiliation and belonging to the dominant ethnic group. The ethnic state is the homeland of only one of the multiple ethnic groups and serves the national goals of only one ethnic

titudes between Serbs, rejectin Albanian Kosovo statehood and Albanians toward the symbols and values of the state, and the ethnic conflict itself.⁸⁶ A sweeping and significant gap exists between the Serb and Albanian publics, as well as leadership, in understanding the conflict, its causes, the course of its development, and significantly, the desirable status solution. Serbs and Albanians are fundamentally divided on issues of historical rights, narratives of conflict, assigning blame for the conflict, and its solutions.

The discriminatory policies against the Kosovo Serbs are grounded in the support of the Kosovo Albanian population, and are a lived, daily experience. The rationale for these discriminatory policies and for their support among the Kosovo Albanian public can be found in part in media representations.

The analysis of the newspaper articles in the Albanian media during the three month period points to the conclusion that the professed goals of multi-ethnicity and equality for all citizens is simply being paid lip service, while there is a lack of genuine commitment to reconciliation and the peace process.⁸⁷

As media are an integral part of society, and as they cannot single-handedly enact or influence change, serious and long-term change will only be possible if the Serbs living in Kosovo are considered truly equal citizens, with the right to life, freedom, and equality.

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group to the exclusion of the other ethno-national groups, regardless of their citizenship status. In such a state, the state itself sides with one ethnic group in determining tangible and intangible resources, such as political power, wealth and identity, and state symbols represent the dominant group. See Maynes 1993; Rouhana 1997.

⁸⁶ On the level of state character and symbols, the Kosovo identity is not available to the Serb community, because its meaning is intertwined with the Albanianess of the state, and because there is an emphasis on the profound difference, and irreconcilable contrast, between Kosovar [i.e. Albanian] and Serb. This leaves the Serbs in Kosovo in an ambiguous situation – while they claim Kosovo as their homeland, the current socio-political and cultural set up of the Albanian-dominated Kosovo impedes, indeed precludes, integration, and favours their exclusion.

⁸⁷ As Wolfsfeld (2004) shows, when government and elite groups reduce the obstacles blocking a minority's integration into the social mainstream, the change in the political environment will also be reflected in news coverage. Otherwise, when the ruling social forces inhibit minority integration by placing obstacles in its path, such as discrimination, denial of its culture, overemphasizing data on crime rates among group members, and similar, the negative treatment of minority groups is likely to remain, or even grow.

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