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SPECIAL ISSUE ARTICLE

From Pararepublic to Parastate: International Leverage in Shaping Kosovo's Secession

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Abstract
The Kosovo Albanian political movement in the 1990s contained three fluctuating factions with distinct strategies: boycotting Serbian institutions, participating in elections, and resorting to an armed insurgency. This article shows how expectations of external assistance, primarily from the Clinton administration, influenced which strategy was to dominate the movement at certain periods. It also shows how the movement successfully conflated the issues of human rights and the ethnonationalist secessionist agenda, even though the secessionist agenda predated the claims of human rights violations following the rise of Slobodan Milošević to power in Serbia. In the end, the article discusses how the Clinton administration's failure in the Rambouillet peace talks, the diplomatic result of the NATO attack on Serbia, and the fall of Slobodan Milošević set the foundations for freezing the conflict and turning Kosovo into a parastate.

Keywords: Kosovo; parastates; Serbia; frozen conflict; secession

Introduction

More than ten years after its unilateral secession from Serbia, Kosovo has been recognized by more than 100 countries and has gained membership in several important international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Olympic Committee. It has even signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the European Union (EU); the first step in becoming a EU member. However, despite its noteworthy accomplishments, Kosovo remains a parastate; defined as a territory de facto removed from its host state's control, but unable to win sufficient international recognition to become a United Nations (UN) member, thus ending in a frozen conflict (Rossi and Castan Pinos, this special issue). To date, Kosovo is still unable to join the UN, as membership requires formal constitutive sovereignty, which requires, among other criteria, recognition from its host state, Serbia. Without this recognition, Kosovo's secession will remain disputed and rejected by those world powers opposed to unilateral declarations of independence. All of this has kept Kosovo sliding into a frozen conflict similar to other parastates like Northern Cyprus, Abkhazia, and Nagorno-Karabakh. It may have greater international support than these cases, but its prospects for international sovereignty remain highly problematic.

Most works note the rise of aggressive Serbian nationalism (Ramet 2005), Slobodan Milošević's ambition to dominate former Yugoslavia (Gagnon 2004) or both (Judah 2008) as causes of the conflict in Kosovo in the late 1990s. Though Serbia bears the brunt of responsibility in these studies, some authors criticized Kosovo's ethnic Albanian community for failing to facilitate the human rights of Kosovo Serbs in the 1980s (Bataković 2012; Bieber 2003; Simić 2000). This suggests that the origins of conflict in Kosovo stem from mutual animosity, social mistrust, and political discrimination between both Serb and Albanian communities (Norris 2005).

Stemming from the human rights premise, supporters of Kosovo's statehood often point to the allegedly unique circumstances that make it *sui generis* among breakaway territories; namely that international intervention and support for independence were the only solution to the violent conflict resulting from Serbian oppression of its ethnic Albanian minority's human rights and the only remedy in breaking the cycle of violence between the two groups (Guzina 2003; Nikolić 2003; Kostovicova 2005; Rossi 2016).[1] Kosovo's ethnic Albanian community, including its political leadership, certainly benefited from existing international condemnation of Serbia for its role in the disintegration of Yugoslavia that often put it as the chief aggressor. In light of the violence targeting Croats and Bosnians, and in the wake of war crimes like Srebrenica, international assistance for the Kosovo Albanian insurgency was justified as humanitarian intervention, and spurred by calls from Central Europe to have the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) enlarged and reinvigorated (Goldgeier 1999).

However, Kosovo's road to secession was shaped by at least two decades of Albanian separatism and national self-determination beginning with riots in 1981 that called for elevating Kosovo's status from a province of Serbia to a separate Yugoslav republic.[2] Throughout the 1980s, tensions rose between an increasingly restless Albanian majority, a threatened Serbian minority, and a beleaguered Serbian government in Belgrade that eventually reflected Slobodan Milošević's ambitions to redesign Yugoslavia as a "modern federation" (Milošević 1989).

Kosovo's Albanian political community originally declared independence in 1990, one year after Milošević reduced the province's autonomy, and more than a year before Slovenia and Croatia declared theirs.[3] Though it received no recognition other than from neighboring Albania, Yugoslav/Serbian institutions were abandoned and parallel political, economic, and social institutions were established. As the Milošević government was occupied elsewhere in wars of secession in Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia, Kosovo Albanians developed rudimentary foundations of a de facto state that set it on its path to more active resistance in the late 1990's and, after the intervention of NATO, declarative sovereignty.

Throughout the 1990s, ethnic Albanian leaders from Ibrahim Rugova to the leaders of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) all envisioned eventual sovereignty and independence as an end goal. However distant and unattainable that goal might have originally been, the common view is that Kosovo Albanian leader Ibrahim Rugova set the policy of passive nonviolent resistance early on, in part due to the lack of any leverage against Belgrade (Kuperman 2002; Judah 2008).[4]

Regardless of capability in achieving independence, passive and active resistance within Albanian parallel institutions were uninterested in any compromise or negotiated settlement with Belgrade. This was predicated in no small amount on the support and sponsorship of the United States, which originally opposed secession but offered support for ethnic Albanian political rights and civil liberties. To Rugova, this was enough to justify continued boycott of all cooperation and communication with Serbia and to treat Kosovo as a separate entity that would eventually be granted independence. Additionally, if American support was linked to the defense of human rights of Kosovo's ethnic Albanian community, the pursuit of self-determination could be strategically connected to the pursuit of human rights and democracy (Caspersen 2011). In other words, if secession is framed less as an ethno-nationalist and irredentist goal, and more as a way of escaping oppression, the parastate may win international sympathy and/or justify external support.

Whether Kosovo Albanian politics were essentially driven by Serbian oppression or Albanian nationalism is of fundamental importance. Its intricacies must be emphasized in order to understand how the confusing interplay between nationalist and human rights narratives shaped Kosovo's conflict, including international reactions, into the status of a parastate. If the driver of conflict was the Milošević regime's oppression of Kosovo Albanian human rights, as is the prevailing view, one must ask why Kosovo Albanians took such a reactionary position of consistently boycotting Yugoslav and Serbian elections throughout the 1990s when their participation could have ousted Milošević. The United States was sometimes inviting Albanians to vote. But, had the US been more persistent in this it could have ended any and all hopes for Kosovo's secession,

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even up to its unilateral declaration of independence in 2008. Yet at no point was this done. Speculations why have ruminated for years, but it is most likely that Washington maintained the deliberately ambiguous position in order to keep another potentially volatile region of Yugoslavia pacified, and to use it as leverage against Milošević in getting him to agree to a number of peace settlements in Croatia and Bosnia. If Kosovo remained a diplomatic bargaining chip for the US to use against Milošević, Kosovo's Albanian leadership seemed more than happy to cooperate.

This leads us to consider the underlying elements of self-determination that drove ethnic Albanians to take the calculated risks they did. If conflict was specifically orchestrated by Kosovo Albanian ethno-nationalism preceding (if not causing) Milošević's rise, passive resistance would become more active once it was clear that boycott alone would not deliver a desired outcome. Bieber (2003) and Vickers (1998) do not find surprising Kosovo Albanian resistance intensified in 1996, following the Dayton Agreement that ended conflict in Bosnia, because Rugova's credibility was damaged since Kosovo was neglected in Dayton. Therefore, a critical mass of Kosovo Albanian radicals opted for violence.

The assumption of this approach is that with the end of conflict in Croatia and Bosnia, the change in the international perception of Milošević from aggressor to partner for peace in the region, and the *uti possidetis* affirmation of Yugoslav republics' borders, the window of opportunity for Kosovo's secession was rapidly closing and years of passive resistance seemed to be amounting to nothing. Thus, if Kosovo was to ever secede from Serbia, it had to be now.

However, there is a problem with this argument, because it does not explain why Kosovo Albanian radicals assumed that resort to massive violent insurgency was going to win international sympathies right at the time when Serbia was opening to the West, sanctions were largely being removed, the inviolability of Yugoslav republics' borders was reconfirmed by the NATO intervention in Bosnia and Croatia in 1995 against Serb secessionists, and Western officials rejected any violent border changes. Thus, seemingly against all odds and rational expectations, Kosovo Albanian militias mobilized to violently fight for independence. This gives credence to the argument that Kosovo's secession was predicated more on longstanding Albanian ethno-nationalist self-determination from the 1980s, than the oppression of human rights, and also that Kosovo Albanian militants believed they were going to receive external support.

This article not only contends that Kosovo Albanians used human rights violations as justification for self-determination, but that the actions and policies of external patrons throughout the 1990s tacitly encouraged secession, even though secession itself was not necessarily the goal of external patrons. If Rossi and Castan Pinos argue that a parastate's pursuit of sovereignty is "rooted in contentious politics, defiant refusals to compromise with the parent, or 'host,' state over anything less than independence," while relying on the support of a "patron state" to ensure its "stability and longevity," then Kosovo was a parastate in the making as early as 1990 (Rossi and Castan Pinos, this volume).

The 1980s: Kosovo Albanians' Ethno-Nationalist Movement

As one of the primary examples of parastates (Rossi, this issue), Kosovo offers an important insight into the long-term deterioration of relations between a predominant political ethnic group and a mobilized minority that seeks secession. The nature of resistance, however, is critically important as Kosovo Albanians possessed neither political nor military leverage over the larger Yugoslav state. Additionally, as Kosovo was a constituent part of Serbia, it did not earn international support to secede as was given to Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, and North Macedonia[5] in 1991. Confronted with these obstacles, Kosovo's Albanian leadership nevertheless orchestrated strategies of resistance that were within their capabilities, which included elements of both passive and active resistance. This resistance had its roots in Yugoslavia's counter-insurgent interventions against Kosovo Albanian mobilizations in 1944, throughout the 1950's, and riots in 1968 and 1981; all preceding Milošević's rise to power. This legacy of violence and unrest, massive imprisonments of Kosovo Albanians, and increasing ethnic separation in everyday life led American analysts to conclude Kosovo was more

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likely to flare up in an armed insurgency than any other part of Yugoslavia in the late 1980's (Treverton and Miles 2015). Arguably providing one of the triggers of the disintegration of the Yugoslav state, chronic socio-political unrest in Kosovo was related to concerted efforts by dominant Albanian political elites to secede from Serbia, within or without Yugoslavia's state framework.

An essential question is whether Kosovo's secession from Serbia was driven by violations of human rights, national self-determination, or a combination of both. Put another way, did self-determination produce human rights abuses, or vice versa? This article advocates in favor of the former, as ethnic Albanians largely demanded de jure recognition of Kosovo as a formal Yugoslav republic as early as 1981 as a precursor to eventual secession; a right Kosovo Albanians believed extended to all of Yugoslavia's constituent republics in the 1974 constitution. Following Kosovo Serbs' own complaints of human rights abuses in Albanian dominated Kosovo throughout the 1980s, Milošević amplified Serbia's efforts to reduce Kosovo's autonomy to a pre-1974 level.[6] This triggered massive Albanian boycotts of Serbia's institutions, which presented the reduction of Kosovo's autonomy as oppression of Kosovo Albanians' human rights in order to appeal to the international community. Thus, the actual conflict in the late 1990's that served as a catalyst for Kosovo's separation was a product of years of tension and withdrawal of nearly all political activity in Yugoslavia by its Albanian community; both of which are primary elements of parastates.

What seems to be largely overlooked in studies on Kosovo Albanians' path to secession was that complete organizational detachment from both Yugoslav and Serb political institutions was the deliberate choice of Albanian leadership, even when encouraged to engage in politics by the international community. Having originally declared independence from Serbia in July 1990 and from Yugoslavia in September 1991 but receiving no major international support, Kosovo Albanians practiced a type of virtual secession through the boycotting of official elections, withdrawal from all official state institutions, and running parallel political organizations throughout the province as if they were governing a separate state. While this does not qualify as formal secession, it does show that elements of a parastate were already functioning for nearly two decades before sovereignty was declared in 2008, and pointed to deeply embedded goals of self-determination functioning for at least a decade earlier.

Prominent Kosovo Albanian politician, journalist, and intellectual Shkelzen Maliqi explained the differing concepts among the Albanian political elite in the 1970s (Maliqi 2014). "Enverists," sought Kosovo's elevation to the status of a republic as a stop on the way to the unification with Albania. "Titoists," wanted first to solidify Kosovo's de facto status of a republic. Both, however, shared dissatisfaction with Kosovo's status of a province and strived for elevation to a republic (Maliqi 2014, 163). After Josip Broz Tito's death and rising economic problems in Yugoslavia throughout the 1980s, the Kosovo Albanian political elite largely agreed on three acceptable solutions. First, if the Yugoslav federation was to survive, Kosovo must gain the status of a republic. This meant de jure secession from Serbia. Second, if the internal borders of Yugoslavia were going to be redrawn along ethnic lines, an envisioned Albanian republic would include some territories of Macedonia, Montenegro, and central Serbia. Third, if Yugoslavia was to collapse, Kosovo should have a referendum on independence, not excluding unification with Albania (Maliqi 2014, 164–196).

Under the leadership of the late politician and scholar Ibrahim Rugova in the 1990s, an alternative Albanian movement sought to unify both "Enverists" and "Titoists" in a collective goal of national self-determination that sought secession similar to Slovenia and Croatia.[7] This seemed to nullify any alternative political strategy that envisioned a future in Yugoslavia. Geert Hinrich-Aherns, a high-ranking German diplomat deeply involved in diplomacy of Yugoslavia's demise recollected:

> During visits to Yugoslavia in the early eighties and many times thereafter, I asked Albanians why they conducted violent riots in 1981, at a time when they enjoyed a high degree of autonomy in Kosovo. It would have been wiser for them to support the relatively reasonable

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> Serb administration under [Ivan] Stambolić in Belgrade in its controversy with Serb nationalists. I also asked Albanians why so many of the 1981 demonstrators turned out to belong to the nondemocratic radical left. Whom did they represent? A really convincing answer was never given. (Ahrens 2007, 309)

The late writer and activist Adem Demaci, known as the "Albanian [Nelson] Mandela" (Caplan 2005, 143), was explicit in emphasizing this objective.

> [Kosovo Albanian] Demonstrations in 1981 were the last strike which predicted the collapse of the then Yugoslavia, that great prison of peoples… Even though our merit in destroying Yugoslavia is large, there is another big problem, because we were not capable to use the results of our great sacrifices, of our great struggle, but others were. We were destroying Yugoslavia, Slovenia was liberated, Croatia was liberated, Macedonia was created, we were destroying Yugoslavia, Bosnia is created, while Albanians are still quarreling in a 'conflict' with hegemonic, dominating, discriminating and destructive forces of Belgrade regime. (Abazi 1996b)

Ahrens thus summed up Kosovo Albanians' rank list of preferences: (1) independence and incorporation in Albania, (2) independence along with Albanian populated territories outside Kosovo, (3) independent Kosovo, (4) provisional status leading to independence (Ahrens 2007, 321).

The popularity of self-determination was not just the work of political officials, but also held salience throughout the Kosovo Albanian population and its increasingly mobile community. One of the first reports in the West about inter-ethnic violence in Kosovo was a *New York Times* article written by David Binder and Marvin Howe, following the 1981 wave of deadly riots.

> Vice Chancellor Ali Turku said that [Pristina University] started out in 1970 with 7,661 students, more than half of them Serbians. Today, he said, the university has 47,284 students, nearly three quarters of them of Albanian descent… The authorities said that old claims of "Serbian domination" were unjustified. They said that ethnic Albanians have gained access to key jobs at every level in the provincial administration, the ruling Communist Party and the economy… "I am an Albanian and I can say we have complete independence except for a few trappings of a state like shooting off a cannon," a senior official in the provincial administration remarked. "We make our own decisions and run things without interference from the republic." (Howe 1981a)

At least nine people were killed in clashes with security forces in what started as a student protest in 1981. The violence inflamed chronic tension between Kosovo's Albanian Communists and the rest of Yugoslavia, itself divided over uneasy equilibrium between partisans of federal and confederal reforms of the political system. A controversy was summed up in the following questions:

> Why not a [status of a] republic… [for] Kosovo, since 85 percent of the 1.5 million inhabitants are ethnic Albanians? …It is just as difficult to understand why ethnic Albanians so fiercely demanded the status of a republic, when under their present status as a Socialist Autonomous Province they have virtually all the rights of a republic, including their own administration, banking, courts, flag and language - everything except the right to secede. (Howe 1981b)

One of the leading officials of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, Stane Dolanc (a Slovene), accused Albanian nationalists linked to foreign actors of instigating the violence (Howe 1981b). Federal interior minister Franjo Herljević (a Croat) lamented over the steady migration of "Slavic peoples" from Kosovo and passive resistance of Albanians to authorities ("Yugoslavia Adds…" 1981a). Even though tensions were calmed by October 1981, an American reporter observed how "Albanian nationalist slogans and underground activities are still in evidence in Kosovo. Foreigners

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are not allowed in the province without a special permit, and Serbs and other non-Albanian people continue to move to other parts of the country" ("Rioting by…" 1981b).

By the next summer, a new phrase entered the political dictionary of Yugoslavia. Kosovo Albanian political leader Bećir Hoti described the goal of Albanian nationalism in Kosovo as the creation of an "ethnically clean Albanian republic" that would later "merge with Albania (Howe 1982c). In the same article, based on the local sources, it was estimated that about 57,000 Serbs fled Kosovo in the previous decade, while the following article reported an estimate of 20,000 Serbs left Kosovo after the 1981 riots (Binder 1982).[8]

Passive Resistance: Boycott and Competing Strategies

As part of his promise to assist Kosovo's beleaguered Serbian population, Slobodan Milošević reduced the province's autonomy to pre-1974 levels in 1989.[9] In response, Kosovo's Albanian political leaders proclaimed independence from Serbia in July of 1990, and sought to create a series of parallel institutions and authorities. These actions were condemned by Serbia but were largely ignored (Judah 2008). The following year, Ibrahim Rugova founded the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), which functioned as if Kosovo was an independent state occupied by Serb forces. This alone was not enough for Kosovo to qualify as a parastate since the LDK did not possess de facto control over the territory and could not rely on any meaningful international support to offer diplomatic recognition. However, it did offer conditions for political life among Kosovo's Albanian population that would increase detachment from participating in Yugoslavia's political structure.

In 1990, the United States introduced the Nickles-Bentley Amendment that symbolically targeted Yugoslav federal policy in Kosovo; however, international attention soon shifted to the wars of secession that broke out in Slovenia and Croatia in 1991, and Bosnia the following year (Zimmerman 1996). Operating as it was within a philosophy of nonviolent resistance that ignored and was in turn ignored by Milošević's forces, ethnic Albanian demands for self-determination were largely overlooked. Even worse for Rugova's LDK in the course of the unraveling of Yugoslavia was the so-called Badinter Arbitration Committee in December 1991 which recognized that only Yugoslav republics, not provinces, would have the right to independence (Caplan 2005).[10] One would have expected that such a heavy political blow would have forced Kosovo Albanians to abandon secession in favor of participation in the Yugoslav (Serbian) political system to electorally alter the status quo in their favor. Yet even in the face of what seemed like insurmountable obstacles, the goal of secession never wavered.

Speaking in broad theoretical terms, explaining Kosovo Albanian leaders' decision to continue the boycott of all Yugoslav institutions takes two roads: they were either driven by nationalist emotion (Petersen 2002), or there was a rational calculation behind passive and, if necessary, active resistance (Fearon 1995). Considering the military inferiority of Kosovo's Albanian community and lack of clear diplomatic support for secession, one would assume that voting in Serbian elections, as ethnic Hungarian, Croatian, and Bosniak parties did, should have been the optimal course of action for Kosovo Albanians to take: it would enjoy full support from the US and the EU, and most likely would have been a critical factor in removing Milošević and his party from power.

Serbian leaders, especially the ones opposing Milošević, were ready for various concessions in order to have Kosovo Albanians vote, and pleaded with Americans to help get them mobilized (Vujačić 2015).[11] US Ambassador Warren Zimmerman recalled how he "worked hard" to get Albanians to vote, but failed to change their minds (Zimmerman 1999, 80–81). His assistant Louis Sell also confirmed "repeated entreaties" to make Kosovo Albanians vote (Sell 2003, 91). But herein lay the dilemma. If the crux of the problem was human rights (jobs, schooling, culture, self-government), this could have been solved through participation in the political system and conversion of Kosovo Albanian numerical strength into political power. However if the goal was ultimately secession, practicing political and human rights within the new constitution would have been self-defeating as it would have reaffirmed Yugoslavia's sovereignty and Serbia's territorial integrity.

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The strategy of conflating human rights and the right to secession was supposed to bridge Kosovo's de facto status of a "para-republic" in Yugoslavia with the independence, or at least de facto independence. Boycott was the operational expression of the strategy superior to both violence and electoral participation strategies against Milošević, which remained unopposed by external patrons.

Thus, Kosovo Albanian decision-making was a rational calculation on winning international support for their agenda and framing self-determination as a necessary solution to human rights abuses (Vickers 1998, 255; Malcolm 1999, 348; Kuperman 2002). The two needed to be inextricably linked. If external patrons believed Kosovo Albanians were aggrieved by the lack of human rights but did not support secession, they could have pressured Kosovo Albanians to exploit their numerical strength and participate in Serbian elections on the side of the pro-Western democratic opposition. Still, as noted by Vickers, "Kosovo's Albanians boycotted the Serbian elections despite calls from the international community [while] those Kosovars who advocated Albanian participation in the rump Yugoslav elections were dismissed as traitors" (Vickers 1998, 267) As the Kosovar leadership admitted at the time, "they did not want [Milošević] to go. Unless Serbia continued to be labelled as profoundly evil - and they themselves, by virtue of being anti-Serb, as the good guys - they were unlikely to achieve their goals" (Vickers 1998, 267–268).[12]

The decision by Kosovo Albanians to boycott all political participation in Yugoslavia indicates the strength of their perception of external support, *despite* formal diplomatic declarations acknowledging Serbia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. While they officially did not support Kosovo Albanian secession, external sponsors delegitimized Serbia's sovereignty over Kosovo by tacitly approving the Kosovo Albanian boycott of Serbian institutions.

Indeed, Kosovo's Albanian leaders were surprised with the mildness of US pressure to accept the offer made by the FR Yugoslavia's premier, Milan Panić, and participate in the 1992 elections (Sell 2003; Vickers 1998; Bellamy 2002). If nothing else, international concerns over Kosovo's provincial autonomy gave ethnic Albanians assurance that an eventual resolution would recognize them as important political actors. Winning the narrative proved more important than losing a diplomatic battle for the early recognition of Kosovo's independence in December 1991, and if that meant enduring political disenfranchisement as justification for identifying national self-determination as a basic human right, a narrative nearly all secessionist parastates enjoy, then so be it (Mertus 1999; Daskalovski 2003).

As there was no genuine international demand for Kosovo Albanian participation in Serbian elections, the option was easily sidelined in the market of narratives. For example, two highly respected intellectuals and activists Veton Surroi and Shkëlzen Maliqi did put forward the idea of taking part in the 1992 and 1993 elections (Maliqi 2014, 231–233; Hajdari 1993). Maliqi wrote that both Serbian opposition and foreign diplomats were in favor.[13] However, Rugova's party passionately rejected the idea, which helped keep Kosovo Albanian public opinion opposed as well. Without the threat of losing international sympathies for boycotting Serbian institutions including elections, "it was impossible to persuade the Kosovo Albanians that they should return to the orbit of Serbia" (Ahrens 2007, 320). Instead of being seen as pragmatists, Surroi and Maliqi were cast as "traitors" to the cause.

Additionally, even though foreign aid was sent to Serbia's political opposition, it was never used to incentivize Albanian participation in elections (Spoerri 2015). This is all the more glaring knowing the US involvement in supporting the consolidation of democracy in Macedonia through delegitimizing Macedonian Albanians' boycott of the 1991 Macedonian referendum on independence and demands for the federalization of Macedonia (Paquin 2008; Ahrens 2007, 397–412). The problem was not that Kosovo Albanians stuck with the boycott, but that there was no serious US and EU pressure to force it to cease, as had been done in Macedonia. Rugova thus emerged as the undisputed leader because of his connections with the US. As Maliqi recalled:

> "[Rugova] became [undisputed and untouchable] in the spring of 1990, especially after that hearing in the American Congress… later, in Kosovo, the extraordinary respect [Americans] showed to Rugova caused the spread of the impression that Rugova was "chosen by

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> Americans"… After meetings with [the US ambassador Zimmerman], Rugova would come out with euphoric statements that "the US support Kosovo's demands!"… [t]he people of Kosovo thought that the Americans were with us and that Rugova knew what he was doing… Americans would not have refuted him zealously, thus sending a threatening message to Belgrade to change its Kosovo policy." (Maliqi 2014, 213–215)

Rugova's message to Kosovo Albanians and the world was clear: "We know that if we wait patiently, we will win" (Kaufman 1992). Indeed, Rugova's patience was not without an external sponsor's input. In March 1992, Albanian American Civic League members led by the former US Congressman Joseph DioGuardi, met with Lawrence Eagleburger, the then deputy state secretary. Eagleburger said Washington was "not trying to put Yugoslavia back together," but would recognize new "entities only if arrived at through negotiations." Human rights in Kosovo were of "top concern," while DioGuardi concluded that "the greatest challenge the US faces is how to create the conditions in Kosova [sic] for Albanians to be free, secure and perhaps, even independent, without bloodshed" (DioGuardi 1992). The contradictory message was that while violence was discouraged, Kosovo's status was not yet resolved.

Rugova and his associates were hoping for the international community's sympathies and the long term developments will play into their favor. As he put in 1991: "We have never asked (unlike some other parties) weapons, destruction of other peoples, and war… We managed to internationalize the problem of Kosovo. We are satisfied that Kosovo became a topic demanding a solution in European framework" (Oroši and Džezairi 1991, 20). Rugova kept his line even after the failure of being treated by international actors as a republic during the second half of 1991, when the European Community's Badinter Committee declared that only Yugoslav republics were entitled to secession (Pellet 1992). Rugova was hopeful despite the ruling and said in early 1992, "it is encouraging that the world values our reliance on peaceful methods, political solutions, and not war, in overcoming this grave problem" (Oroši and Džezairi 1992, 24). Such hope was inspired, for example, by a large mission of Western (particularly American) observers in Kosovo's parallel Albanian elections in 1992 (Duka and Janjić 2013, 287).

Rugova's passive resistance, hence, was not guiding Albanian strategy because there were no alternative views and initiatives, but because his authority was decisively secured by firm support received from the United States. Maliqi leaves no doubt: "In every critical moment for the Movement and himself personally, [Rugova] would have been invited to Washington, also to London, Paris and Bonn. That would cement his popularity among the Kosovo masses anew and influence his opponents to stand down…" (Maliqi 2014, 216).

Frequent visits to foreign dignitaries were not the only source of Rugova's authority. The Clinton administration led the way in supporting Rugova by increasing and sustaining the US physical diplomatic presence in Kosovo. Rudolf Perina, the US Charge d'Affaires in Belgrade, (1993–1996) observed how the US Embassy had "officers specifically assigned to visit Kosovo on a weekly basis to maintain contact with the Albanians and show them that their plight had not been forgotten" (ADST *Bosnia - Herzegovina* 2012, 161–163). Perina requested Richard Holbrooke ask Milošević for permission to open a permanent US office in Pristina. When Milošević accepted, Kosovo Albanians "saw it as a big step forward in getting international recognition for the entire Kosovo problem. It was also seen as a victory for Rugova and his non-violent policies" (ADST *Bosnia - Herzegovina* 2012, 161–163). Maliqi confirmed that Kosovo Albanians were greatly encouraged by this move, as the strategy of boycott was producing tangible results (Maliqi 1996). It is hard not to conclude that, despite the official stance, the U.S. position was effectively the one of external sponsorship: challenging Serbia's sovereignty in Kosovo and inspiring Kosovo Albanians to continue a policy of disengagement from Belgrade through the implicit support of parallel institutions that operated separately from any official Yugoslav political institutions.

The gamble apparently paid off for Rugova. At the time of the contact group for Bosnia's peace plan negotiations in late 1994, Kosovo was effectively used by the United States as leverage to spur

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Milošević into pressuring Bosnian Serbs to yield. The EU as well as the UN adopted resolutions concerning Kosovo Albanians' human rights and conflict resolution, while Rugova went on a yet another international tour throughout Europe and the US, with German opinion including a "civilian protectorate in Kosovo" (Maliqi 1994a). The US put forward a policy of "maximum autonomy," while the EU and UK diplomats expected a return to Kosovo's 1974 position (Barani 1994). Kosovo's Helsinki Committee president recognized this diplomatic initiative as quite encouraging for Kosovo Albanians (Morina 1995).[14]

Active Resistance: Boycott and Insurgency

The benefits of boycott changed considerably following the Dayton Peace Accords in 1995 that affirmed the territorial integrity of all former Yugoslav republics, including Serbia. For Kosovo's Albanian leadership, this meant the prospects of independence became less likely. Yet, Maliqi suspected that "even though international factors keep saying that Kosovo can hope to get only some autonomy within Serbia, Rugova leaves an impression about some speculative 'extra offer,' that is, that he is in a secret collusion with Americans and other powers" (Maliqi 1995a).

Rugova's critics in Kosovo disagreed. Adem Demaci wanted a more active nonviolent struggle, while armed precursors to the KLA emerged in 1996. Maliqi noted that in the wake of the Dayton Peace Conference on Bosnia, international diplomats informally said to Kosovo Albanians that the only way for them to get what they wanted was war (Maliqi 1995b). This message would echo during the Rambouillet peace talks in early 1999. Kosovo Albanian delegation member Dugi Gorani described how a "foreign diplomat" told him that "unless [Albanians] pass the quota of five thousand deaths [they will] never have anybody permanently present in Kosovo from the foreign diplomacy" (Little 2000). Thus, boycott may have separated Kosovo Albanians from Serbian institutions, but the hawkish faction decided resistance had to escalate if full separation was to be realized.

To complicate matters further, Milošević lost local elections in late 1996 and 60% of the population ended up in municipalities controlled by the opposition (Stefanović 1996). Kosovo Albanian leaders worried that Milošević could actually be unseated, which would undermine the entire narrative of resistance. This scare of normalization with the end of conflict and the eventual victory of a pro-Western and pro-democratic government in Belgrade, coupled with Rugova's "more of the same" tactics of passive resistance through boycott pushed hardliners to escalate conflict, triggering the Serbian government's response.[15] When the Kosovo Liberation Army was formally established in 1997, violent incidents multiplied, involving more civilian casualties on both sides. Even though the KLA was sometimes criticized, most memorably as "terrorists" by the US envoy Robert Gelbard (Hill 2014, 123–124), accusations of human rights violations and the excessive use of force were still only directed against the Serbian government. Whatever objectives the KLA might have had, keeping international attention fixed on the deteriorating situation in Kosovo was a main priority.

Despite the EU's attempts to gain hold over the escalating violence (Kinkel-Védrine's Franko-German initiative), in the eyes of Kosovo Albanians it was the US envoy Robert Gelbard who brushed Europeans aside and reaffirmed US authority among the local population in late 1997 and early 1998. In late February 1998 Gelbard condemned all violence, but singled out Serbian police's responsibility to regain Albanian trust, simultaneously dropping the KLA's "terrorist" label he used previously. He added that no side was to achieve maximum demands (ideally Kosovo should enjoy a high level of autonomy) and that the US would have supported internal Kosovo Albanian elections, stating that "independence [was] not an option" (Caplan 2009, 142–143).[16] Gelbard supported both Rugova's leadership and passive resistance strategy, and confirmed the US expectation of Kosovo remaining "within the frame of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia" (Krasniqi 1998a). However, his position that "if [Serbian] army or police would be used, isolation of Belgrade could intensify" (Krasniqi, ibid.) objectively incentivized the KLA to attack.

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Shortly after this statement, a deadly ambush of Serbian policemen in March 1998 triggered retaliation against the KLA commander Adem Jashari. The clash left dozens of Jashari's militants and many of his family members dead. The contact group reintroduced some sanctions against Serbia, and Gelbard and Holbrooke arranged a Milošević-Rugova meeting in Belgrade, which definitely defeated Milošević's position that Kosovo was an internal Serbian affair (Rexhepi 1998; Maliqi 1998). Furthermore, the US State Department conspicuously referred to the KLA as a "military," not "terrorist," organization, thus implying some legitimacy to the KLA's actions. Though Russia firmly rejected any proposal toward military intervention, NATO demonstrated airpower around Kosovo threatening Serbia, and the UK Prime Minister Tony Blair and Foreign Minister Robin Cook met with Rugova (CNN 1998) who, to everyone's shock, endorsed the KLA's militarized resistance (Pacarizi 1998). An even bigger shock, especially in Belgrade, was a July 1998 video of the chief US negotiator Richard Holbrooke sitting among the KLA's militants, effectively legitimizing their existence and authority (Hill 2014, 133).[17]

It seems that the US strategy was to use the KLA to pressure Milošević into negotiating with Rugova under US auspices, while Rugova tried to beat competitors for the position of the KLA's political leader by endorsing its violent tactics. This delicate balance depended on keeping the KLA strong enough to challenge Serbian forces, and thus provide an excuse for US involvement, but weak enough to threaten Rugova's leadership and diplomatic leverage. However, strong Serbian counterinsurgent tactics throughout the late summer and early fall of 1998 threatened to completely destroy the KLA and with it the excuse for bringing Milošević to negotiate with Rugova under the US auspices. US involvement needed to intensify before Serbian forces restored control over the province.

Christopher Hill's fall 1998 peace plan envisioned wide autonomy for Kosovo, but also a three to five year period after which the status was to be settled (Krasniqi 1998b). This implied the possibility that Kosovo could be separated from Serbia, but also suggested a negotiated settlement with Kosovo remaining within current international boundaries. Not only was the plan considered controversial, but involving only Rugova and Milošević spurred the KLA's opposition. Holbrooke stepped in in October and, supported by UN Security Council resolution 1199 and threats of NATO attack, pressured Milošević into partial withdrawal of Serbian troops, to be verified by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) monitoring mission (Daalder and O'Hanlon 2000, 40–49). The withdrawal of troops allowed for the KLA, which had been on the brink of defeat, to regroup and reorganize for counterattacks that renewed fighting and produced more civilian displacements and victims (Weller 2008). However, the goal was not to stop the KLA violence, but to use it to justify pressuring Milošević into negotiating with Rugova under US auspices, without getting the KLA too strong to threaten Rugova's leadership. Without the threat of armed insurgency by the KLA, Milošević could have continued treating Kosovo as an internal Serbian matter and the Clinton administration would have lost any opportunity to inject itself into the negotiations.

As observed by the German NATO General Klaus Naumann, Serbian forces respected the agreement until November 1998, when the KLA escalated attacks, thus prompting additional Serbian reactions (ICTY 2009, 146). In what became known as the "Racak incident" in January 1999, 45 Albanians were reportedly killed by Serbian troops.[18] Debates raged over whether the incident was a legitimate fight between armed militants and state security forces, as Belgrade claimed, or whether it was an execution of civilians, as Kosovo Albanians declared. To further complicate matters, William Walker, the OSCE's Chief of Kosovo's Verification Mission, allegedly pressured Finnish pathologist Helena Ranta and other international diplomats including members of Finland's foreign affairs ministry to declare it as an unequivocal Serbian war crime (Bird 1999; Helsingin Sanomat 2008).[19]

Following the Račak incident, both General Naumann and General Wesley Clark asked Milošević to partially withdraw troops once again. They informed the NATO Council that "none of the incidents they had information about were instigated by the FRY/Serbian forces," yet they still recommended readying NATO for an attack (ICTY 2009, 146). The threat made Milošević accept

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the Contact Group's invite for the new round of negotiations in Rambouillet near Paris, despite the KLA's participation in the Kosovo Albanian delegation.

Two points were crucial during the Rambouillet talks: the final political status of Kosovo, which made secession a possibility, and the military implementation of the agreement, which reaffirmed the commitment of US support for Kosovo Albanian political leadership. The proposal itself was essentially a continuation of Christopher Hill's fall 1998 plan—confirming Yugoslavia's territorial integrity and Kosovo's strong autonomy, but also leaving the ultimate status of Kosovo to be decided after three years "on the basis of the will of the people, opinions of relevant authorities, each Party's efforts regarding the implementation of this Agreement, and the Helsinki Final Act" (USIP 1999, 48). The goal of such an ambiguous formulation was to incentivize Kosovo Albanians into accepting the plan by invoking "the will of the people." The Serbian delegation was incentivized to avoid military strikes by parts of the plan supporting Serbian territorial integrity. The "will of the people" could have meant people of all of Serbia, while mentioning the Helsinki Final Act implied the inviolability of internationally recognized borders, thus potentially reducing "the will of the (Albanian) people" to a mere self-determination within Serbia. Therefore, Kosovo Albanians were distrustful of the Clinton administration and demanded further clarification. They got it from Madeleine Albright on February 22, 1999 in a draft form, confirming the "right for the people of Kosovo to hold a referendum on the final status of Kosovo after three years" (Hosmer 2001, 14).[20]

In order to corner the Serbian delegation into accepting the agreement, the Clinton administration had to break Kosovo Albanians' suspicions. Everyone understood that Serbian rejection meant NATO attack. If Kosovo Albanians were not to sign, they would have been abandoned by the US (Albright 2013, 397; Simić 2000, 202; Kuperman 2002, 336).[21] Milan Milutinović, then President of Serbia, complained in Rambouillet that the focus was on NATO "troops, troops, troops" instead of on reaching a definitive political agreement before discussing its implementation (AP 2015; Simić 2000, 208). Milutinović feared that, once NATO was in Kosovo, Kosovo Albanians would declare independence under NATO cover. Emphasizing how NATO's role clouded all other problems, he even offered Christopher Hill a "commercial" agreement regulating NATO bases in Serbia as well as Serbia's membership in NATO (BBC 2001).[22]

From War to Declaration of Independence: 1998–2008

The failure to reach an agreement at Rambouillet and the resumption of insurgency and counter-insurgency in Kosovo led to NATO's attack on Yugoslavia from March 24 to June 11, 1999. According to the Humanitarian Law Center, 10,812 Albanians, 2197 Serbs and 526 other non-Albanians were killed, primarily in 1998 and 1999 (FHP-HLC 2015; J.J. 2015). Compared to the estimated 1991 Kosovo census, there were proportionately more Serb than Albanian casualties. Concerning the ratio of civilian to combatant casualties, slightly over four-fifths of those killed by Serbian troops were civilians, while almost two-thirds of those killed by the KLA were civilians.[23] Prior to NATO's attack, ratios were relatively similar, but the absolute numbers were much lower: 1100 Albanian civilians and 703 KLA combatants versus 195 non-Albanian civilians and 175 Serbian troops over 15 months.[24]

The ensuing United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 that ended the conflict revealed a "draw" that put Kosovo under UN administration. Serbian ("Yugoslav") territorial integrity and sovereignty were explicitly confirmed, followed by the vague notion of "taking full account of Rambouillet accords" in the process of establishing "substantial self-government for Kosovo" (UN 1999). Milošević lost physical control over Kosovo but managed to keep the issue within the UN framework, which remains one of the strongest elements of Serbian political leverage to this day. Serbian authorities were replaced by the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the international Kosovo Forces (KFOR) essentially under NATO, but formally under the UN. The UNMIK-regulated Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG) became dominated by Kosovo Albanians: the assembly, government, and judicial system.

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After Milošević's fall from power in October 2000, the new pro-Western government refreshed Serbia's democratic image, but continued to reject Kosovo's secession. The EU and the US rewarded Serbia by removing international sanctions, so the only leverage left was extraditions of political and military leaders indicted for war crimes and the prospect of EU membership for Serbia. NATO and the EU even partnered with the new Serbian government in defusing ethnic Albanian insurrection in 2001 in three central-Serbian municipalities (outside of Kosovo) where Albanians held a demographic majority and urged merging with Kosovo.[25]

The March 2004 outburst of Kosovo Albanian rioters' pogrom against Serbs in enclaves, including religious sites, effectively destroyed the "standards before status" fig leaf over the gridlock, introducing "status before standards" under the "status with standards" slogan (Serwer 2004). During the pogrom, NATO essentially found itself in the role of the Serbian security forces prior to 1999—killing Kosovo Albanian civilians by shooting at the rioting masses. While the top EU, NATO, and UN officials condemned "Albanian extremists," Kosovo Albanian parliament speaker, Nexhat Daci, described killed and wounded rioters as "people [who] died fighting for democracy and freedom" (Bouckaert 2004). The increasing potential for tensions between Kosovo Albanians and international personnel in Kosovo prompted a final solution.

New approaches to Kosovo's status became operational with the Vienna status talks under Martti Ahtisaari, who mediated the end of the 1999 NATO-Serbia war. Kosovo Albanian advisor Marc Weller noticed that Serbia "aligned with the structural principles of classic international law… favoring territorial unity," while offering substantial autonomy (Weller 2008, 30). Kosovo Albanians demanded independence, aware that the "international community" wanted a final settlement as quickly as possible (Weller 2008, 32). Serbian negotiators perceived from the start that Kosovo Albanians "did not seriously engage" since they were "obviously promised independence" (Batakovic 2017, 118). Ahtisaari indeed proposed "supervised independence" in 2007, supported by the US and the EU, but threatened by Russian veto at the UN.[26]

After receiving assurances from the US and other key EU states of their support, the Kosovo Albanian parliament unilaterally declared independence on February 17, 2008. Within a few short weeks it was recognized by most Western countries and their close allies.[27] On the ground, Serbian enclaves in Kosovo boycotted Kosovo Albanian institutions. The roles between Kosovo Serbs and Albanians reversed, but so did the predominant Western policy. Instead of conflating the human rights of Kosovo Serbs with self-determination, the prevailing policy was to use carrots and sticks to make Serbia abandon its "parallel structures" of influence in the enclaves, make Serbs end the boycott of Kosovo Albanian institutions, and force them to accept their role in what was considered a new country.

However, the EU failed to produce a unified policy on Kosovo as five of its member states (Spain, Greece, Slovakia, Romania, and Cyprus) refused to recognize Kosovo's independence and remain steadfast to this day. Though this nullified any real pressure the EU could exert toward Serbia, support for Kosovo's independence remains with its dominant members, as well as the US. Alongside the refusal of Russia and China to recognize Kosovo, which have been blocking its UN membership, and an ambiguous decision by the International Court of Justice that did not rule against Kosovo's declaration of independence but did not comment on that declaration's effects on Kosovo's status, Kosovo remains a parastate more than a decade later.[28]

Conclusion: Toward a Frozen Conflict?

As this article has emphasized, external sponsorship is crucial in a secessionist movements' strategizing, because they can direct secessionists to embody a particular image of their cause, while simultaneously reducing the host state's capacity to defeat them. The strategy used by Kosovo Albanians of boycotting the Yugoslav/Serbian state system was the optimal narrative for most Western powers, and the United States in particular, in the first half of the 1990s, since it addressed the initial opposition to supporting the independence of federal sub-republic entities (the Serbian provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina). Equally important, US support for the Kosovo Albanian

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boycott served as diplomatic leverage to pressure Milošević into making concessions concerning wars in Bosnia and Croatia.

Boycott was the optimal strategy because an insurgency would have been disastrous without international intervention. As long as Kosovo was regarded as an internal affair, Milošević did not seem determined to use overt violence against passive resistance. At the same time, voting was suboptimal for ethnic Albanians, since gaining self-government in Kosovo and a powerful position in Serbia's political affairs as a politically mobilized minority meant recognizing Serbian sovereignty and abandoning a decades-long goal of secession. Despite a few statements and encouragements, the U.S. and the EU never really pressured Kosovo Albanians to participate in Serbian elections because replacing Milošević with a pro-Western government might have complicated pressuring Serbia into ending military involvement in Bosnia and Croatia.

This article also argued that Kosovo possessed attributes of a parastate as early as 1990. Through the boycotting of all political and economic state institutions, most of Kosovo Albanians effectively seceded from both Yugoslav and Serbian political systems. With critical support from the United States in speaking out in favor of a restoration of political rights and civil liberties for the Albanian population, and the relations developed with Ibrahim Rugova, Belgrade's reassertion of control over Kosovo became extremely difficult. Thus, long before violence erupted that served as a moral pretext for separation, secessionist movements in Kosovo were driven by long-standing elements of Albanian nationalism and self-determination. Throughout the 1990s, those elements interweaved narratives of collective victimization through alleged political apartheid and abuses in human rights. That Kosovo's Albanian community largely chose to institutionally disenfranchise itself through boycott and refusal to reengage political participation that would most likely have changed the face of government in Belgrade is testament to the larger goal of territorial secession, and this exemplifies Kosovo as a parastate.

Evidence of Kosovo's independence being shaped more by policies of self-determination than human rights abuses is also witnessed by the KLA's escalation of violence, which was used to justify outside military intervention under the pretext of avoiding another humanitarian catastrophe similar to what befell Bosnia, without ever considering electoral participation as an alternative. The breaking point in the triangular negotiations involving Kosovo Albanians, Serbian officials, and Clinton administration was the refusal of the Serbian leadership to allow NATO's unlimited access to the whole territory of Serbia, and by extension, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. By the time of negotiations in Rambouillet, the Clinton administration became too invested in Kosovo's future to suddenly abandon it to an internal matter. Additionally, failure to act would have hurt the credibility of both the United States and NATO as the guarantors of European peace and the pillar of the post-Cold War liberal order. Furthermore, respecting the Russian veto in the UN Security Council would have set a dangerous precedent of Russia weaponizing the UN as a substitute for its lost strategic clout from the Cold War era. The humanitarian intervention norm as a doctrine of the liberal global order would have been delegitimized by a Russian veto aimed at defending the norm of state sovereignty. Since both sides had too much to lose by backing down, NATO attacked Serbia.

Once the US put NATO troops on the ground, its options became very limited. Without solving the status, Kosovo Albanians could have started perceiving NATO as the savior turned oppressor. Another violent conflict between Kosovo Albanians and NATO (following the 2004 deadly clashes) would have made NATO resemble Milošević's police. Not only that, the Milošević government could have been retroactively partly vindicated by the potential flare up of Kosovo Albanian–NATO conflict, but the flare up could have also discredited the humanitarian intervention narrative. Beyond that, Kosovo Albanians had been relying on unequivocal support from the US and major EU countries in rejecting even the widest possible level of autonomy for Kosovo, formulated by Serbian officials as "more than autonomy, less than independence" (Ertel 2006). US patronage thus played directly into Albanian self-determination that deftly managed to overcome its earlier diplomatic obstacles and make independence the least bad option for Kosovo, even if it received only limited international support.

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All of these factors contributed to Kosovo Albanians' declaration of independence, which set the course toward the frozen conflict, since the final status negotiations have been in gridlock despite limited progress concerning practicalities on the ground under the Brussels Dialogue (Emini and Stakic 2018). While Kosovo continues to enjoy international sponsorship from the United States and most of its Western partners, Serbia relies on Russia and China in its opposition to Kosovo's independence, but also legitimizes its stance as not anti-Western by associating itself with the EU and NATO members opposed to Kosovo's secession. Despite gaining access to some international organizations, a seat in the UN emerged as the key difference between a state and a parastate.

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Notes

1 This argument fails at answering why "remedial secession" should be "sui generis," since there were and are many conflicts worse than the one over Kosovo. Presumably, other oppressed minorities should have the right to secede. Naturally, problems of defining the level of oppression justifying secession and who should measure it come to mind.

2 Kosovo's status at that time could be described as one of a "pararepublic." It enjoyed republics' prerogatives, including direct representation in federal institutions, but de jure it was a province of Serbia. This will be discussed later in more detail.

3 One can often read how autonomy was "abolished" or "revoked," without much evidence (Judah 2008, 61; Clark 2000, 46). Some authors tellingly contradicted themselves. For example, Janusz Bugajski, a vocal critic of Serbian policies in the 1990s, described the 1989 constitutional changes in the following terms (my italics): "the powers of the provincial government were *curtailed* and the province was *increasingly* governed from Belgrade," "*more* direct control," and "*eroding* the autonomy," but then he claimed such policies aimed to "eradicate the *sovereignty*" of provinces (Bugajski 1995, 136–139). By equating "sovereignty" (pre-1989 de facto independence from Serbia) and autonomy, any reduction (curtailing/erosion) of autonomy was considered equivalent to abolishing it. Another author similarly claimed both "autonomy was removed" and "the provinces were given the usual characteristics of territorial and political autonomy" (Vickers 1998, 244–245). In fact, both Serbian provinces, Vojvodina and Kosovo, were treated equally. While Vojvodina held provincial elections in 1992 (also 1996, 2000), established provincial authorities and courts, kept several official languages (in both administration and education), and other provincial prerogatives, Kosovo's Albanian-dominated Communist parliament adopted unilateral declaration of secession from Serbia in 1990. In response, it was abolished, which led to a massive Albanian boycott of the political system. Comparing Kosovo and Vojvodina shows constitutional revisions did not abolish their autonomous prerogatives, but only their quasi-sovereign ("pararepublic") position vis-à-vis Serbia. Moreover, if abolishing the Kosovo parliament in 1990 meant abolishing autonomy, then the 1989 amendments to the Serbian constitution could not have abolished autonomy, because abolition cannot be done twice in a row. Furthermore, already in 1993, Milošević's party abolished the 1990 suspension of the Kosovo parliament, "effective on the day that the 'Parliament of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija' convened," but this invitation to elections was rejected by Kosovo Albanian leaders (Ahrens 2007, 350).

4 Rugova said in the early 1992: "[W]e have nothing to set against the tanks and other modern weaponry in Serbian hands" (Kuperman 2002, 344).

5 For the rest of the article I will refer to present day North Macedonia simply as Macedonia, since that name was most widely used in the period analyzed here, despite that its provisional name was "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia."

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6 It is important to note that previous Serbian administrations of Dragoslav "Draza" Marković and Ivan Stambolić increasingly resented the para-republic status of Serbian provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina (Jović 2009).
7 A contemporary American specialist on Yugoslavia reached the same conclusion in the early 1980s. The Kosovo Albanian Communist political elite was nearly unanimous in preserving the status quo at minimum, and reaching the status of a republic (de jure secession from Serbia) as an optimal solution (Johnson 1982, 1983).
8 Some scholars suspected, in fact never doubted, Milošević manipulated Kosovo Serbs into protests. Vladisavljević (2008, chapter 3) denies that and shows the grass-root essence of the social mobilization of Kosovo Serbs. Others would rather have largely economic causes driving Serbs out of Kosovo in the 1970s and 1980s, claiming that the level of violence was not significantly different in the rest of Yugoslavia (Malcolm 1999, 339). In that convenient case, the timeline of Yugoslavia's collapse could start with Milošević's ascendancy and revival of Serbian nationalism. However, even skimming through the historical record, one can easily find scores of reports recording various forms of oppression, including murders. Petrović and Blagojević (1992) offered a range of surveys and interviews with Serbs who fled Kosovo, recording personal safety primarily driving their decision to move elsewhere.
9 See Meier (1999, 75) for more details on bargaining in the federal party and Yugoslav presidency that resulted in the removal of Kosovo's leadership. This crucially enabled Milošević to get Kosovo's Albanian dominated parliament to approve the reduction of autonomy.
10 This was justified by applying the principle of *uti possidetis* which was supposed to regulate decolonialization in the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1990s, however, this principle was controversially extended to those constituent republics of federal states like Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union, and Czechoslovakia, but was denied to sub-republic units like Abkhazia, Kosovo, and Chechnya, regardless of differences among their constitutional provisions.
11 Professor Ivan Vujačić was one of the leaders of the pro-Western opposition and later Belgrade's ambassador to the United States.
12 However, Vickers, as well as other authors I am aware of, did not ask how it was possible for the international community to repeatedly fail in getting Kosovo Albanians to vote against Milošević.
13 Both Zimmerman and Maliqi mentioned the same example of Irish delegates in British parliament. The "abstentionists" do take part in elections, but then they refuse to sit in the UK parliament.
14 However, it should not be forgotten that important leaders such as Surroi, Demaci, and Bukoshi questioned Rugova's strategy at that time, so the international activities could have also been exploited to secure Rugova's leadership.
15 An interesting contribution to the scare of normalization was the 1994 initiative of several Serbian and Kosovo Albanian bankers to set up mixed Serbian-Albanian banks in Kosovo. Kosovo Albanians involved were Remzi Kolgeci and Jusuf Zejnullahu, former top Kosovo Albanian communist leaders (Maliqi 1994b).
16 Western neglect, even rejection, of Kosovo Albanians' quest for independence dominates in academia (Malcolm 1999, 353; Judah 2000, xxvi; Judah 2008; Clark 2000; Perritt 2008, 140; Daalder and O'Hanlon 2000, 9).
17 A few weeks earlier, Gelbard met with the KLA in Switzerland (Hill 2014, 132).
18 Finnish pathologists examined 40 bodies, concluding that 39 were men and one was a woman (Rainioa, Lalua, and Penttila 2001).
19 Walker himself labeled the incident as a crime upon arriving at the location, but he refused to do the same when six Serbian teenagers were killed a bit earlier, explaining that "when you don't know what has happened, it is a lot more difficult to sort of pronounce yourself" (Kuperman 2002, 335). The Finnish forensics team officially abstained from declaring "the manner of death" (Rainioa, Lalua, and Penttila 2001).

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20 This move was a step further than the draft of the agreement offered to the Serbian delegation, in which "the will of the people" did not specify the population entitled to express its will (see also Hosmer 2001, 14). However, Albright did not sign this draft document, demanding Kosovo Albanians sign the Rambouillet document (Hosmer 2001; Sell 2003, 298). She also "indicated that the outcome of the referendum would be but one of four elements in determining Kosovo's final status" (Daalder and O'Hanlon 2000, 82).

21 It is indicative that the threat of abandonment was never used to pressure Kosovo Albanians to vote against Milošević.

22 Hill responded that it was too late for that (BBC 2001). However, in 1996, Milutinović made the same offer to Holbrooke, who responded that it was "too soon" to talk about it (RTS 2010).

23 The KLA killed at least 300 Kosovo Albanian civilians perceived loyal to Serbia.

24 The numbers game around victims will later prove important in legitimizing the narrative that Serbs and Albanians could never again live in the same country, thus making Kosovo independence inevitable. Ironically, the narrative concerning Bosnia was completely the opposite, despite almost ten times more victims compared to Kosovo. In comparison, the number of Kosovo Albanian civilian victims in 1998 was close to the Palestinian civilian victims in Israeli operations in 2001—roughly 100 per month (Kuperman 2002, 371). Also, the 1989 Panama invasion provides for a demographically comparable case: US troops admitted killing more than 200 civilians in less than two months of ground operations, but the numbers were probably several times higher (Rohter 1990).

25 In comparison, unlike the Kosovo Albanian insurrection, the 2001 Macedonian Albanian insurrection failed to mobilize external support. NATO supported Macedonian sovereignty, albeit at the price of decentralization primarily at the municipal level.

26 Indicatively, Vladimir Putin condemned unipolarity, international law violations, and the Western approach to Kosovo in his momentous 2007 Munich Security Conference speech (Putin 2007).

27 Russia retaliated by immediately recognizing the independence of two breakaway Georgian provinces.

28 The ruling of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) stipulating Kosovo's parliament's declaration of independence did not breach international law perhaps illustrates the international legal and political spasm over Kosovo's status the best. Namely, the court evaded declaring its opinion on whether Kosovo was now an independent country by stating that it was only "asked to take a position on whether international law conferred a positive entitlement on Kosovo unilaterally to declare its independence" (ICJ 2010, 27). The ICJ divorced declaring independence from effecting independence by declaring it, thus enabling everyone to claim they were right, without setting a dangerous precedent.

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