

Interpreting the Role of Insurgency Inside of the Yugoslavian Wars

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ABSTRACT

Over two decades ago, bloodshed at the heart of the Balkan peninsula devastated Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo. The wars were pure acts of ethnic cleansing, massacres, and expulsion from the historical territory of Bosnians, Croatians, and Kosovo Albanians. The conflicts ended with the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republics of Yugoslavia (SFRY) and the independence of Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo, and Slovenia. The Yugoslavian War is a well-discussed subject in political science, especially in International Law, nationalism, ethnic studies, and nation-building. However, there needs to be more expanded and elaborated literature that examines the role of insurgency in one of the major conflicts in Yugoslavia—the Kosovo War. The article analyzes the role insurgencies play in asymmetric warfare. It also points out the factors that make insurgency successful and the factors that challenge counterinsurgency (COIN) measures. The research found that—when it comes to insurgency’s success—the determinant factors are international support and practices COIN uses to respond to the conflict. Lastly, the study also found that COIN measures produce negative results and lead to losses if they escalate the conflict and engage in collective punishment, coercion, intimidation, and other measures of repression.

Keywords: asymmetric warfare, insurgency, ethnic cleansing, identity cleanings, guerrilla warfare, mobile conventional warfare, warlord insurgency, traditional insurgency, liberationist insurgency, reformative insurgency, frontal warfare

Interpretación del papel de la insurgencia dentro de las guerras de Yugoslava

RESUMEN

Hace más de dos décadas, el derramamiento de sangre en el corazón de la península balcánica devastó Bosnia, Croacia y Kosovo.

Las guerras fueron puros actos de limpieza étnica, masacres y expulsión del territorio histórico de bosnios, croatas y albanokosovares. Los conflictos terminaron con la disolución de las Repúblicas Federativas Socialistas de Yugoslavia (RFSY) y la independencia de Bosnia, Croacia, Kosovo y Eslovenia. La guerra de Yugoslavia es un tema muy discutido en ciencias políticas, especialmente en derecho internacional, nacionalismo, estudios étnicos y construcción de naciones. Sin embargo, se necesita una literatura más amplia y elaborada que examine el papel de la insurgencia en uno de los principales conflictos en Yugoslavia: la Guerra de Kosovo. El artículo analiza el papel que juegan las insurgencias en la guerra asimétrica. También señala los factores que hacen que la insurgencia sea exitosa y los factores que desafían las medidas de contrainsurgencia (COIN). La investigación encontró que, cuando se trata del éxito de la insurgencia, los factores determinantes son el apoyo internacional y las prácticas que utiliza COIN para responder al conflicto. Por último, el estudio también encontró que las medidas COIN producen resultados negativos y conducen a pérdidas si escalan el conflicto y se involucran en castigos colectivos, coerción, intimidación y otras medidas de represión.

Palabras clave: guerra asimétrica, insurgencia, limpieza étnica, limpieza de identidad, guerra de guerrillas, guerra móvil convencional, insurgencia de los señores de la guerra, insurgencia tradicional, insurgencia liberacionista, insurgencia reformadora, guerra frontal

解析叛乱在南斯拉夫内战中的作用

摘要

二十多年前，巴尔干半岛中心地带的流血事件摧毁了波斯尼亚、克罗地亚和科索沃。这一系列战争纯粹是种族清洗、大屠杀、以及将波斯尼亚人、克罗地亚人和科索沃阿尔巴尼亚人驱逐出历史领土的行为。伴随南斯拉夫社会主义联邦共和国 (SFRY) 的解体以及波斯尼亚、克罗地亚、科索沃和斯洛文尼亚的独立，冲突最终结束。南斯拉夫内战是政治学中广泛讨论的主题，尤其是在国际法、民族主义、民族研究和国家建设领域。然而，需要更广泛和更详尽的文献来研究叛乱在科索沃战争（南斯拉夫主要冲突之一）中的作用。本文分析了叛乱在不对称战争中所发挥的作用。本文还指出了一系列促使叛乱成功的因素以及一系列对反叛乱 (COIN) 措施发起挑

战的因素。研究发现，就叛乱成功而言，决定性因素是国际支持和COIN的冲突应对实践。最后，研究还发现，如果COIN措施使冲突升级并采取集体惩罚、胁迫、恐吓等镇压措施，则会产生负面结果并导致损失。

关键词：非对称战争，叛乱，种族清洗，身份清洗，游击战，移动常规战，军阀叛乱，传统叛乱，解放主义叛乱，改革叛乱，正面战争

The roots of the conflict in the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia 1989–1999

The 1990s were a period of war, devastation, and rampant violence in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). The end of the Cold War and the shift in the balance of power impacted all the countries once part of the Eastern Block. Their political future was still being determined. The dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) after 80 years baffled the international community about potential tensions rising between the republics. Eastern European states were struggling to avoid bloody revolutions and transition peacefully to democracy. Much like the USSR, Yugoslavia faced the same dilemmas: Transition to democracy and dissolution of the federation. The late 1980s were fraught with political dissent, and the former republics of Yugoslavia were not outside of the predicament.

When communism finally collapsed, the political unrest and the self-determination movements erupted and turned into armed conflicts. Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, and Slovenia de-

clared independence, resulting in war and devastation from 1991–1995. In 1999, the conflict erupted in the province of Kosovo amidst a self-determination movement led by the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). Although the political and clandestine activity in Kosovo started to morph into an insurgency years before the Kosovo War. The early stages of the Kosovo Liberation Army date since the 1990s—after the constitutional changes of 1989 revoked Kosovo’s autonomous status.¹ Such constitutional amendments led to contentious politics and organized political dissent in Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo, and Slovenia. The nature of the conflict in Yugoslavia was political, ethnic, religious, and territorial. Bosnia Herzegovina’s four-year conflict, apart from being political was also religious. It targeted Muslim Bosnians. In Kosovo, the conflict was ethnic. Serbs massacred with the same revulsion, Catholic² and Muslim Albanians. By the 1990s, the SFRY had become a conundrum of ethnic and religious hate crimes. The shelling of Sarajevo, the expulsion of ethnic Albanians from their homeland rekindled old dreams of Greater Serbia.³ The images of massacred people on the

streets of Sarajevo, and Kosovo Albanians wiping their tears near graves of slain family members still haunt our collective memory. Bogdan Denitch, an American sociologist of Serbian background, in 1993 wrote for *Dissent Magazine*: “The war in Bosnia is obviously an uricide; Cities I have known and loved have been relentlessly bombed into shambles.”⁴

Nationalism in Serbia is not a new idea. It dates back centuries. The wars of the 1990s were a nationalist revanche prompted by political circles in Belgrade and their jingoistic claims. At that time, Yugoslavia faced a systemic crisis. The federation was on the verge of collapse. Communism was no longer relevant to hold the federation together—hence Slobodan Milosevic, the president of Serbia from 1989–1997, changed the rhetoric from communism to nationalism. He fueled ethnic tensions in the heart of Kosovo during the Gazimestan speech in 1989.⁵

Such divisive politics have been around for centuries in the Balkans. The 1990s proved to be an existential crisis and it was evident that SFRY was headed to war. Almost 50 years after World War II (WWII) ended, the Balkans were trapped in one of the bloodiest conflicts in modern history, and they could not contain it without the help of the international community and NATO’s intervention.⁶ The painful dissolution of SFRY, the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, and the state collapse in neighboring Albania in 1997, made the Western Balkans one of the most unstable regions in Europe.⁷

The dissolution of the USSR turned into a sour lesson for the former Socialist Federation Republics of Yugoslavia. It had an unfavorable prognosis due to the economic, legal, and political complexities. The socialist system and the planned economy had collapsed—as in many Eastern European countries. The transition into a capitalist system and market economy was a long-term process that required the decentralization of the economy. Fraught with many challenges, Yugoslavia also faced legal and political hurdles about the future of the republics seeking separation from the federation.⁸ Secondly, the ethnic minorities tangled in the same communities became mortal enemies competing for power and territories.⁹ Croatia and Slovenia were in a more favorable position to declare independence due to their ethnic uniformity, and Serbs in these republics were less than 15% of the population. At the same time, Bosnia Herzegovina was made up of three strong ethnic groups that competed for power. Bosnian Serbs comprised 33% of the population, Bosnian Croats 17%, and Bosnian Muslims 44% of a four million population in total.¹⁰ There were also two provinces: Vojvodina, with a Serbian ethnic majority, and Kosovo, with an overwhelming ethnic Albanian majority. Vojvodina’s status did not change. It remained a province of Serbia. Northern Macedonia peacefully declared independence on September 8, 1991, and Montenegro declared independence on June 3, 2006, through referendum.

The more problematic regions were Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosovo.

Ethnic groups often become belligerent due to irreconcilable differences. Internal conflicts are usually caused by the failure of the state to guarantee equal rights and protections under the same constitution. An ethnic nation or a religious minority in a multiethnic state/federation will seek solutions to satisfy their needs and exigencies. It is a way of expressing grievances and what makes the ethnic or religious group feel threatened by the state or other groups in power. Secession becomes inevitable when human rights are greatly violated, and there are no longer remedies provided by domestic and international law.¹¹ When parties agree to an independence treaty—the problem can be solved peacefully without exhausting resources. If the option of independence is off the table, then insurgency rises, and guerrilla warfare becomes inevitable. In this case, the war is perhaps the only solution to independence.

The likelihood for a conflict to erupt and spill over in regions with multiple ethnic nations is high. During the Yugoslavian ethnic tensions, Serbia sought to expand the war and cause an international conflict between NATO and Russia.¹² The Yugoslavian conflicts prompted by chauvinistic means eventually led to the system's demise and collapse in these territories. It ended in multiethnic wars and led to what Serbia feared the most—the independence of the former republics, including the secession of Kosovo.

Images of Sarajevo Siege, Bosnian neighborhoods daily shelling with heavy artillery, the Srebrenica Massa-

cre, Ethnic Albanians leaving Kosovo in caravans—mass graves, tortured men, women, and children—are still vivid. The Srebrenica massacre in 1995 set an awful historical precedent replicated in Kosovo between 1998 and 1999 in many massacres, extrajudicial killings, ethnic cleansing, wartime rape, etc. In many massacres, Serbian police separated men and boys they suspected had ties with the Kosovo Liberation Army and executed them. The Human Rights Watch reports revealed mass murder, rape, and hate crimes, and in many cases, the victims were tortured alive and left to die in pain.¹³

Since 1949, insurgencies have increased worldwide due to discontent with the government and contentious politics. At the same time, counterinsurgency (COIN) measures and operations have become essential in solving political crisis and conflicts. However, the international factor has played a major role in the success or failure of various insurgencies. In the late nineties, when conflict erupted in Kosovo, NATO and its allies sided with the insurgents — which helped to solve the crisis and facilitate the return of Kosovar Albanians to their homeland after months of expulsion and identity cleansing.

The Yugoslavian wars ended decades ago with NATO's presence in Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Kosovo, yet the region remains unstable and prone to nationalist flares. The balance of power is fragile and sensitive. A plethora of literature covers the Yugoslavian conflict from 1990–1999. Most of it focuses on nation-building and ethnic

conflicts. There are also numerous reports about human rights violations, war crimes, and ethnic cleansing. Yet there is a need for expanded studies on insurgency and asymmetric warfare during the decade-long conflict in the Balkans. This study examines the case of the Kosovo Liberation Army during the Kosovo War from 1998–1999. It offers a theoretical overview of insurgency and asymmetric warfare. Lastly, it gives a historical perspective on the events that impacted the Kosovo War for Independence.

Military Doctrines and Practices: Insurgency and Asymmetric War

The insurgency doctrine describes the organization's structure, ideology, leadership, *modus operandi*, and zones of operations. Consistent with the insurgency doctrine, asymmetric warfare will examine field operations and combat strategies. In addition, the asymmetric warfare approach will analyze the effectiveness of the Kosovo Liberation Army and determine whether it reached its full potential as a conventional, mobile insurgency.

Insurgency: Theoretical Interpretations

Insurgencies have risen throughout the twentieth Century, especially after WWII. Many of them intend to overthrow regimes and install other forms of government. They operate in asymmetric warfare and are armed political movements. Generally speaking, in-

surgencies have an ideology that bonds them to the people they represent, except for warlord insurgencies. The warlord insurgencies lack ideology and evolve around an autocratic figure. The ideologies vary depending on the conflict. In the last century or so, we have seen ideologies ranging from both extremes of the political spectrums and religious doctrines. However, many insurgencies have risen because of ethnic conflicts. In the last thirty years, the Balkans have been troubled by ethnic conflicts. The tensions between Bosnians, Croatians, and Serbs resulted in a war from 1992 to 1995. In 1998 and 1999, an armed conflict erupted in Kosovo between Serbs and ethnic Albanians. Around the same time, war and devastation were rampant in Africa due to ethnic hostilities. In 1994, the genocide in Rwanda was an ethnic conflict between the HLU-led government against the Tutsi ethnic minority. In 2003, the Darfur genocide in Western Sudan was committed against the Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa ethnic groups. The Kurdish-Turkish conflict is an ongoing struggle between Kurdish insurgent groups and the Turkish state. In such cases, insurgencies protect an ethnic group when the other (the majority) becomes an existential threat.

In contrast to a military force, often insurgents lack conventional training, resources, weaponry, and experience. As a result, insurgencies are in a less favorable position and are weaker than the military. Even so, they can destabilize the country and temporarily paralyze various sectors of the economy.¹⁴ Insurgents clash with states

or state actors to bring about regime change. Such are the reformative insurgencies. Secessionist insurgencies seek the independence of an ethnic group or a nation in their historical territory. Lastly, liberationist insurgencies aim to liberate a region or a country from its enemies. There have been countless uprisings and other forms of military insurgency worldwide, some of which have been in conflict for more than 50 years.¹⁵

Insurgent movements sometimes produce desired results, but generally, they hardly translate into success. Christopher Clapham (1998) offered a typology for examining insurgencies in Africa, making distinctions between secessionist, liberationist, reformist, and warlord movements.¹⁶ According to Clapham, reformative insurgencies are highly disciplined units with a clear ideology and a set organizational structure. These insurgencies seek to create a new type of state within the territory of an existing state. In other words, a regime, or a system change. Revolutionary changes such as large-scale movements constitute a well-rounded leadership, clear vision, strategy, and military doctrine. Outside support is also known to be one determining factor in the insurgency's success.¹⁷ In contrast, warlord insurgencies are neither reformist, separatist, nor liberationists. Clapham argues that warlord movements exploit underlying economic and political conditions to create conflict in their favor.

Bernard B. Fall calls guerrilla warfare a "small-scale war."¹⁸ Fall of-

fered a simplified formula, explaining that revolutionary warfare equals guerrilla warfare plus political action. There are a few factors that determine the success of revolutionary warfare, such as guerrilla tactics, political actions, ideology, military doctrine, and the populace.¹⁹ In the case of the Kosovo Liberation Army, the ideology galvanized the population and successfully recruited thousands of members in a very short period in Kosovo and the diaspora. However, various insurgencies adopt transnational and religious ideologies. These types of uprisings are yet to have measurable or sustainable success. This ideology becomes an international cause that can command sympathy but cannot achieve lasting success. An example is Marxism, the ruling ideology of Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the National Liberation Army (ELN), and the Viet Cong. On the other hand, religious insurgencies are self-explanatory. Religious doctrines are also transnational and can mobilize sympathizers but can never amount to nation-state building.

The CIA conducts detailed analysis of insurgency as one of the most extreme forms of discontent with a government, political system, or political entity. The study is a compact protocol on insurgency structure and activities. Depending on the terms used, the document defines an insurgency as a political-military force whose goal is to control, in part or in total, the resources of a legitimate political unit through guerrilla warfare or other military operations.

Insurgencies vary. Their success depends on the political, social, and military situation in the areas in which they operate. The objectives of a political and military insurgency are, among others, limiting the government's capacity and enhancing the insurgents' capabilities to provide public service; broaden and obtain support in various segments of the population. An insurgency seeks to isolate the government from the international community, and lastly, an insurgency will seek international help to advance its cause.²⁰

Insurgencies are usually suppressed by the state, counterinsurgency, or even other political opponents. The CIA's framework has an empirical approach and validity. It also has some limitations due to regional differences, history, and ideological values embodied by the insurgency.

Stages

The stages of an insurgency depend on political events or developments. In the pre-insurgency stage, leadership emerges due to contentious politics. The effect of the insurgency at this stage is minimal. Thus, the government response is also minimal. In the *organizational* stage, insurgencies tend to take control of the infrastructure, resources, mobilize, recruit, and seek international support. In response to a growing insurgency, the government starts planning and mobilizing counterinsurgency. In the *guerrilla warfare* stage, insurgents engage in various tactics, such as ambushing, hit and run, and sabotaging strategic and infrastructure objects. To

counterbalance, the government takes a social approach toward the population impacted by the conflict through political, economic, and social reforms. Some of the aid consists of social and psychological operations.

The mobile conventional warfare: It is worth mentioning that many insurgencies do not reach this stage. Although, it implies that the insurgents are well organized in large units, the government response includes full-scale and conventional military operations.²¹

Typology

Although the objective is to disable the government and take partial or complete control of the territory and institutions, they differ in the types of operations, ideology, scope, and zones of influence: The most "popular" insurgencies are known to be political, military (or both). Additionally, there are two types of insurgencies known as traditional insurgency and urban insurgency.²²

It is well known that political insurgency is the pre-stage of military insurgency. A political insurgency includes a shadow government to undermine the authority in the contested areas. In addition, political insurgencies seek to mobilize, recruit, and organize military operations. Military insurgencies launch their operations against the government to destabilize and control the disputed areas. *Traditional insurgency* has to do with tribal or religious fighting. Recruitment in traditional insurgency is done based on religion or ethnicity. Tribal insurgencies lack clear

strategies, and leaders are often ineffective. Lastly, *urban insurgency* typically operates in cities and metropolitan areas. This type of insurgency is auxiliary to insurgencies in rural areas.²³ The

table below represent the organization of an insurgency, its resources, ideology, recruiting methods and other vital components that make the insurgency a competitor for state power.

Insurgency

Organizational structure	<i>Leadership, flow charts, commanders, positions, and titles</i>
Resources	<i>Financial, weaponry, food, water, clothing, shelter</i>
Operations	<i>Tactics, strategies, methods, zones of operations</i>
Recruiting	<i>Propaganda, community outreach, ideology</i>
Support	<i>Population support, foreign support</i>
Logistics	<i>Mobile or temporary stationary</i>
Terrain	<i>Countryside, rural, urban, mountainous terrain, forests</i>

Interpretations of Asymmetric Warfare

Asymmetric warfare is a well-known and discussed topic in international relations as well as military doctrines. Every war is asymmetric. The belligerent parties are never identical. In simple terms, an asymmetric war is a conflict that involves two or more belligerent actors that differ in many levels. The term *asymmetric* is very loose, and it involves particularities depending on the conflict, and the warring parties. Conflicting parties can be symmetrical, but most of the time they are asymmetrical.²⁴

Asymmetric warfare is characteristic of internal conflicts where state actors fight non-state actors, rebels, guer-

rillas, or (private) paramilitary units. In the case of internal asymmetrical wars, the state has a superiority in weaponry, resources, and people. The weaker party avoids frontal war, yet engages in other belligerent acts such as ambushing, hit and run, sabotaging, etc. In the last two decades, asymmetric warfare has involved state and non-state actors, but the definition has not changed. Asymmetric warfare is an armed conflict fought between two or more belligerent forces—a state-to-state, and a state to a non-state entity. Non-state actors, in this case, include insurgents, paramilitary forces, and mercenaries financed by foreign governments or other entities. In either case, asymmetric warfare is an armed conflict with a disparity in

the use of military force, financial resources, military tactics, operations, members and recruits, weaponry, tactics, grand strategy, and organizational structure. In other words, an asymmetric conflict can be a war waged by a weak state against the strongest state or states. As peculiar as the questions why

sounds, this phenomenon dates back to wars of ancient empires—whether a smaller army against a stronger army or a less powerful military force against a more superior one.²⁵

The following is a summary of internal asymmetric warfare in the Kosovo War.

Internal Asymmetric Warfare

State actors (COIN)	Non-state actors (INSURGENTS)
Strong military resources	Disparity in military resources
Organized military Private paramilitary	Guerrilla Purged military
Military budget	Diaspora support, local support
Frontal warfare	Non-frontal warfare
International support	International support
Sovereignty over the use of force	No legal authority over the use of force
Targets non-state actors	Targets military and strategic assets
Counterinsurgency measures against non-state actors	Protects the population that supports insurgency.

Insurgencies inside the asymmetric war

From various sources and interpretations, a few conclusions concur with insurgencies inside the asymmetric wars. First, insurgencies always fight in asymmetric wars. They are considered the weaker belligerent yet can challenge the state and make a tremendous impact. Insurgencies can create shadow governments or run structures parallel with the government in the zones they control and operate. Their strength relies on the populace that supports them. Second, insurgencies are inferior in men, weaponry, resources, finances, etc. For this reason, the insurgents

avoid frontal warfare. This way, they preserve their fighting power. Insurgencies usually engage in actions that disrupt the life of a country and can cause great grief. Thirdly, insurgencies often initiate conflict due to grievances and contentious politics. As a result, the conflict can be continuous and last for a long time contributing to state weakening and exhaustion of resources. The state can militarily challenge the insurgency, but it can also delegate powers to non-state actors such as counterinsurgency, paramilitary, and intelligence services. In the end, insurgencies are rarely victorious. The success of the insurgency depends heavily on a military force from security alliances and

international institutions. In this case, insurgencies can become full-scale belligerents and challenge the state on a much larger scale. Yet systemic change can only happen when the state collapses and surrenders. Then, the insurgency can declare victory over the state.

Kosovo War: Historical background

Kosovo—in the Albanian language, “Kosova”—is an independent country in the western region of the Balkan peninsula. It borders Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, and Northern Macedonia. Its population is around 1.9 million people: Albanians 92.9%, Bosniaks 1.6%, Serbs 1.5%, Turk 1.1%, Ashkali 0.9%, Egyptian 0.7%, Gorani 0.6%, Romani 0.5%, other/unspecified 0.2% (2011 est.) Albanian (official) 94.5%, Bosnian 1.7%, Serbian (official) 1.6%, Turkish 1.1%, other 0.9% (includes Romani), unspecified 0.1%.²⁶ Kosovo Albanians are also called Kosovars. They are the same ethnic group as Albanians living in Albania, in Northern Macedonia, and in Montenegro.

Kosovo declared independence in 2008, almost a decade after NATO and the allies undertook a 78-day bombing campaign against Serbia to stop the slaughter and the ethnic cleansing. Kosovo is recognized as an independent state by 115 UN members. Serbia opposed such a decision, and Russia does not recognize Kosovo for its own political agenda and purposes. Historically speaking, Kosovo Albanians are an old people in the Balkan Peninsula whose dwellings date as early as 700

BC—pre-Roman times—or earlier. Serbs arrived much later and occupied the central Balkans around 7th century AD. Upon their arrival in the Balkans, Serbs founded the First Serbian Principality of Vlastimirovići, which ruled over modern-day Montenegro, Bosnia, Dalmatia, and Serbia.²⁷ In 1540, Serbia became a part of the Ottoman Empire and in 1878, it gained its independence from the Ottoman Empire and was internationally recognized as the Principality of Serbia.²⁸

Until 1912, Kosovo was one of the four Albanian vilayets under Ottoman rule. On the verge of the First Balkan War (October 1912 to May 1913), the Ottoman Empire had weakened politically and militarily. It was a favorable moment for the four Albanian Vilayets²⁹ to declare independence. Thus, on November 28, 1912, delegates from the four vilayets gathered in Vlore (Albania) and declared the independence of the first Albanian state. After the First Balkan War ended with the defeat of the Ottoman Empire by the Balkan League—Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Montenegro—the Great Powers gathered in London to establish the new borders. The Treaty of London was signed in May of 1913. The conference redrew Balkan’s borders leaving 40% of the ethnic Albanians outside of the Albanian state.³⁰ Kosovo went to Serbia. Greece and Montenegro received territories from Scutari and Ioannina vilayets. In July of the same year (1913), Albania, a much more reduced territory, was recognized as the Principality of Albania, a constitutional monarchy under the auspices of the Great Powers.



KLA Commander Ekrem Rexha (Drini - war name), assassinated in May of 2000 - unknown circumstances. Photo taken by Valbona Karanxha Ed.D. [War Monument, Prizren, Kosovo.]

The New Serbia

The London Conference granted Serbia considerable territory. The Treaty increased the territorial area from 48,300 km² to 87,770 km² and the population to more than 1.5 million inhabitants. From 1913 to 1939, Serbia started the colonization process of Kosovo by expelling Albanians from their homes and banning the Albanian language.³¹ Serbia named the new land Yugoslavia, meaning the land of the South Slavs. In 1937, another nationalistic protocol titled *Iseljavanje Arnauta* written by Vaso Cubrilovic, encouraged the expulsion of Kosovo Albanians from their land.³²

The Balkan's borders during WWII were loose. After Germany capitulated in May of 1945, the borders went back to before WWII and remained the same as after the Treaty of London. Josip Tito, the Yugoslavian leader, consolidated the territories into six federal republics and two provinces to avoid ethnic wars. Kosovo became a part of the Federation of Yugoslavia as one of Serbia's two provinces (Kosovo and Vojvodina). During WWII, the dictator Enver Hoxha (of Albania) established a relationship with Yugoslavian communists who facilitated the founding of the Albanian Communist Party in 1941.³³ Yet after WWII, the relationship between Hoxha and Josip Broz Tito soured over Tito's affinity with the West. After the borders closed in 1945, many families lost ties with their loved ones on either side of the border. The relationship between SFRY and Albania remained tense and sour for the next forty years.

Kosovo Under the Federation of Yugoslavia and the Birth, of KLA

Under the Federation of Yugoslavia, Kosovo was an autonomous province with self-governing powers. After the death of Josip Broz Tito, in 1981, protests erupted in Prishtina. Albanians demanded more self-governing powers and higher autonomy. Students at the University of Prishtina and intellectuals led the rebellion, and many protesters were arrested. Nine people were killed, and 250 were wounded. In the mid-1980s, Croatia and Slovenia were seeking secession through political activism.³⁴ In 1989, Slobodan Milosevic became President of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In the first months of his presidency, Milosevic made drastic changes to the constitution, which fueled a lot of tensions between Kosovar Albanians and Belgrade. The constitutional changes took away the self-governing powers of the autonomous province of Kosovo. The Serbian government started firing the Albanian employees and purging the Albanian military officers.³⁵

Albanians in Kosovo, at the time, accounted for 1.7 million people. Serbs in Kosovo were a minority of 200,000 people. Vilifying Albanian nationalism was a means to change the narrative in efforts to expelling Albanians outside of Kosovo to the neighboring countries, and it was a plan that was executed prior in Bosnia Herzegovina. The narrative was used to take over Kosovo and expand Serbia's borders to balance the potential secession of the northern republics (Croatia and Slovenia). Amidst

uprising and protesting, in 1989, the Kosovo Parliament passed the constitutional amendment and gave away Kosovo's self-governing powers to Serbia. By the early nineties, the war in, Bosnia Herzegovina, and Croatia had devastated the Balkans. Meanwhile, Kosovo was still under the regime of Slobodan Milosevic, and the Kosovo Liberation Army was not only an idea. The diaspora in Western Europe and the U.S. had already fundraised nearly 100 million dollars in preparation for secession and a potential independence war.³⁶

The Dayton Accord and the uncertainty about Kosovo's future

After thousands of innocent civilians died in Bosnia Herzegovina, the international community pressed for the warring parties to stop the conflict and sign a peace accord. The people of Bosnia Herzegovina had suffered human losses in one of the most traumatizing conflicts ever produced in the Balkans. Held in Dayton Ohio, the agreement was meant to put an end to the bloody conflict that had devastated the region.

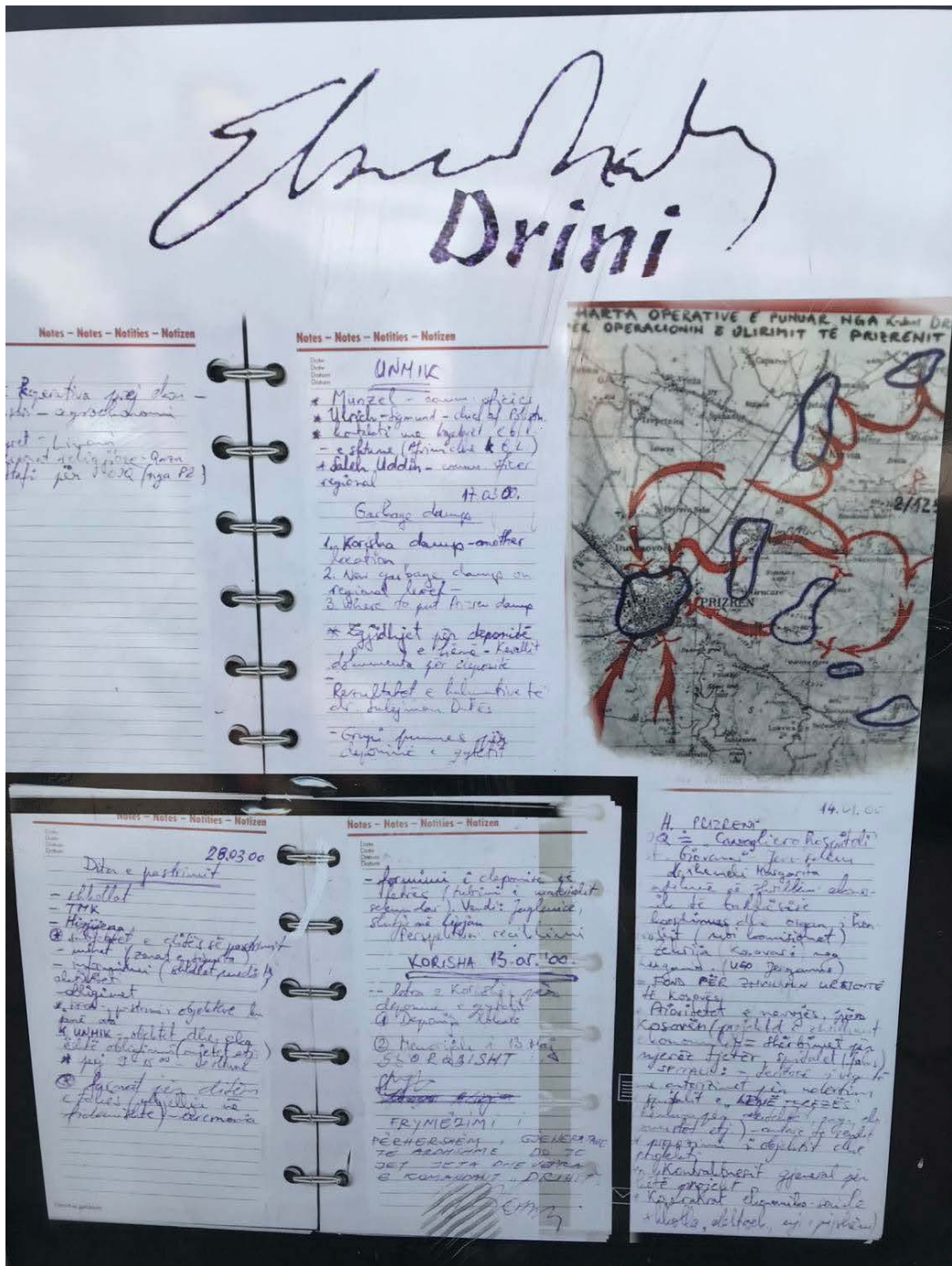
The agreement stated that the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia recognized the need for a comprehensive settlement to bring an end to the tragic conflict in the region to promote an enduring peace and stability.³⁷

The Dayton accord left out Kosovo's future. Serbian aggression on ethnic Albanians was a matter of time. Milosevic had publicly expressed concerns about the American influence in the

Balkans and claimed that the U.S. was using Albanians as a pretext to install NATO in Kosovo. Amidst rising tensions, in the mid-1990s the first units of the Kosovo Liberation Army started to take shape, they came out as the first ethnic Albanian insurgency seeking Kosovo's independence. Members came also from the diaspora in the U.S. and Western Europe: They joined the Kosovo Liberation Army as the Atlantic Brigade. The winter of 1998 put the insurgency to test. The Kosovo liberation Army, not only survived, but they found themselves efficient on the ground and politically as one of the forces to determine the political future of Kosovo.³⁸

The Rambouillet Conference

By February 1999, the fighting parties decided to meet in Rambouillet to discuss the terms of a peace agreement between Serbia and Kosovo. The participating countries were the U.S., NATO allies, Russia, Serbia, and a delegation from Kosovo including representatives from the Kosovo Liberation Army.³⁹ The accord failed to secure a peace deal between the belligerent parties, but it remains one of the most important historical events for Kosovo and Serbia since it decided the political future of both countries. The conference was as complex and the conflict itself. First and foremost, Milosevic was prepared to fight till the end and not give up Kosovo. At the beginning of the talks, it seemed that France and Russia set the tone.⁴⁰ The general perception was that Serbia's borders would remain inviolable and the independence option for Kosovo was off the table.



Notes of the KLA Commander and a map of Prizren Liberation. Photo taken by Valbona Karanxha Ed.D. [War Monument, Prizren, Kosovo.]

Milosevic was playing a dangerous game at the expense of Kosovo as well as Serbia including Serbs living in Kosovo. In his view, he believed that Rambouillet was a trope, a charade to install the western influence in the region through NATO's presence.⁴¹ Both sides (The Albanian and the Serbian delegations) had their own non-negotiables and that seemed to have been the NATO's presence in Kosovo. Yet NATO's presence did not grant the people of Kosovo the right to self-determination. The Albanian delegation insisted that Kosovo Albanians be given the right to a referendum—which they were positive would produce an absolute yes to independence. *The Washington Post* explains, "The second round of Kosovo talks began Monday in Paris. They essentially ended Thursday night when the ethnic Albanian delegation signed the accord giving Kosovo's ethnic Albanians broad autonomy for a three-year interim period."⁴²

The wording in the agreement seemed vague, hence the Albanian delegation asked for written assurances from the United States and Secretary of State Albright. The referendum was also a deal breaker for the Serbian and Russian delegations. The move created an impasse. It seemed that Milosevic was defeated at his own game. Either way, he had lost Kosovo. The Serbs and the Russians withdrew from the talks and at that moment, it was clear that Milosevic had no way out of this political conundrum, except for full scale war. The fate of 1.7 million Albanians was left in NATO's hands. There was mounting pressure from the international community

on the Albanian delegation to sign the accord. The promise that the Kosovo Albanians in the next three years will decide their own fate was enough of a reason for the Albanian delegation to sign the agreement. It was the only hope for independence. Thus, the U.S. and Kosovo delegates signed the accord—Russia and Serbia boycotted the signing. Hashim Thaqi, the KLA representative, stated: "We have signed an agreement to bring peace to Kosovo, we hope that the force of the international community will make Yugoslavia sign. We say: The violence must stop."⁴³

Rambouillet remains a key event in hastening the end of the war in Kosovo, even though it did not result in a peace deal. These events must be viewed through the lens of U.S. foreign policy and diplomacy. Rambouillet remains one of the most brilliant moves in U.S. diplomacy. It ended Slobodan Milosevic's regime in Kosovo and gave him the option of withdrawing his troops voluntarily or through war. Milosevic chose the second option, deepening the conflict and pushing ethnic Albanians westward into Albania, North Macedonia, and Montenegro.

Situation in Kosovo Prior to NATO Bombing Campaign

The situation in Kosovo prior to NATO's intervention was dire. It was a human tragedy at the heart of Europe. After refusing to sign the Rambouillet Accord, Milosevic launched a full-scale war and mobilized nearly 125,000 soldiers, 20,000 police officers, some 1,400 artillery pieces, 240 aircrafts, 2,032 ar-



A riverside view of the city of Prizren now.

Photo taken by Valbona Karanxha Ed.D. [Prizren, Kosovo.]

mored vehicles and tanks in and around Kosovo. Serbian paramilitary forces and Russian volunteers were fighting on the ground. Milosevic was waging war against innocent people: Their military might, and trigger aimed at 1.7 million unarmed ethnic Albanians and 24,000 poorly trained guerrillas.⁴⁴

The U.S. diplomacy did not accept anything short of all troops withdrawing from Kosovo. Milosevic promised partial withdrawing. Yet there were no indications of pulling pack. It was an international crisis, a power struggle between NATO and the U.S. on one side, Serbia, and its strongest ally Russia on the other side of the conflict.⁴⁵ Since the diplomatic efforts did not produce

any result in stopping the slaughter and withdrawing the Serbian Army out of Kosovo, NATO was left with no option but to start the bombing campaign deterring Milosevic from committing mass murder on innocent civilians. While NATO started the bombing campaign (Operation ALLIED FORCE KOSOVO), the Serbs increased their military operations, the ethnic killing and cleansing. Milosevic's retaliations were acts of ethnocide.⁴⁶ In a matter of a few weeks, almost 800,000 ethnic Albanians were forcefully displaced, and expelled from their towns, and villages. Their identity papers were seized and destroyed. Many were killed and buried in mass graves. As the caravans

were headed toward the Albanian border, Serbs pillaged and destroyed entire villages and communities with shells and artilleries. Secretary of Defense William Cohen called the Milosevic actions atrocious behavior. It was one of the bloodiest military operations since mid-1990s in Bosnia's War resulting in thousands of civilians killed and massacred. The same nationalist revanche that devastated Bosnia Herzegovina in 1995 was carried out in Kosovo by the Serbian Army, and Russian and Belarus paramilitary volunteers. The genocide of Kosovo Albanians included many massacres from 1998–1999. Amongst others: Raçak massacre, Prekaz massacre, Velika Kruša massacre, Izbica massacre, Drenica massacre, Gornje Obrinje massacre, Čuška massacre, Bela Crkva massacre, Meja massacre, Orahovac massacre, Dubrava Prison massacre, Poklek massacre, and Vučitrn massacre.⁴⁷

The U.S. Department of State on June 1999 reported: Serbian military, paramilitary and police forces in Kosovo have committed a wide range of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other violations of international humanitarian and human rights law: forced expulsion of Kosovars from their homes; burning and looting of homes, schools, religious sites and healthcare facilities; detention, particularly of military-age men; summary execution; rape; violations of medical neutrality; and identity cleansing.⁴⁸

Kosovo Liberation Army

The Kosovo Liberation Army dates as early as the 1990s. The first members

were farmers, intellectuals, or former military trained in the Yugoslavian Army, yet purged after Slobodan Milosevic rid Kosovo of its autonomous status. After Prekaz' massacre,⁴⁹ the number of recruits proliferated. Their mission was to protect Albanians from genocide, ethnic cleansing and to protect their historical territory.

The self-determination movements, unlike other forms of nationalism, especially in the Balkans have a particularity that relates to their historical past. Ethnic cleansing and ethnocide have been around in the Balkans for centuries.⁵⁰ In 1878, the Principality of Serbia expelled ethnic Albanians from their territory in the provinces of Sanjak and Scutari (today's Shkoder). In 1937, Vaso Cubrilovic, a Serb politician, released a memorandum on ethnic cleansing. The memorandum is one of the country's most undignified historical documents. The rationale behind such memorandum was the slow process of colonization and assimilation into Serbian culture and way of life. Albanian population growth exceeded the Serbs', and that was a concern.⁵¹

In 1989, after Milosevic sent Kosovo back to its 1945 status, a few Albanian intellectuals led by Ibrahim Rugova founded the LDK (Democratic League of Kosovo); a political party whose primary objective was a non-violent independence process. Rugova's efforts led nowhere. Disagreements between Rugova and the KLA grew tense, and movements drifted apart as the KLA went into an armed insurgency in the mid-1990s. However, both political structures continued their fight for



A current street view of Prizren.
Photo taken by Valbona Karanxha Ed.D. [Prizren, Kosovo.]

independence. In 1997, the Albanian State (in Albania) collapsed. People flooded the streets with weapons and tanks. During the chaos, people looted military barracks, seized weapons and other munitions. A great deal of the weapons and ammunition ended up in Kosovo in the hands of the KLA.

Leadership

Amongst others, the war produced strong leadership from intellectuals, academics, simple workers, farmers, and students. The Kosovo War also produced political, ideological, military leaders, as well strong political advisors. Yet the transformational leadership in a time of war can only be contributed to the Kosovo Liberation Army, its commanders and political advisors. It is also worth mentioning three other historical figures that contributed to Kosovo's independence through diplomatic talks. Such figures were Ibrahim Rugova, Albanian politician, founder of the LDK (Democratic League of Kosovo), Rexhep Qosja—an Albanian writer and academic also a well-known figure in Kosovo's politics and a participant on the Albanian side in Rambouillet. Lastly, Adem Demaçi, a former political prisoner, became one of the political leaders of Kosovo Liberation Army. He has been an independence proponent since 1958.⁵²

When analyzing leadership, it is paramount to understand that leadership means transformation through evolutionary or revolutionary changes. This paper's purpose is to describe the revolutionary changes in Yugoslavia during the 1990s—and what occurred

in Bosnia and Kosovo. Whether legal or political, changes were revolutionary. The nature of the conflict did not permit "slow evolutionary processes." Instead, they turned into bloody and transformative revolutions with two or more opposing forces. The republics and provinces fighting for independence faced the strength of the Serbian Army. Hence, the restraining forces in the 1990s were the old regimes that wanted to keep the status quo, which led their countries to war.

Kosovo, just like Bosna Hercegovina, had advanced considerably in the conflict to keep the status quo. The differences between Serbia and Kosovo were irreconcilable. In fact, after numerous massacres, there was no turning back for the KLA leadership and the people of Kosovo. Bogdan Denitch, in *Tragedy in Former Yugoslavia, Nationalism Berserk*, (1993) wrote: "A democratic solution to the Yugoslav crisis is now almost unimaginable. And yet it is even more urgent. Bosnia has been destroyed as a viable multi-ethnic polity through the brutal war and massive ethnic cleansing. The price for the Milosevic's regime staying in power could well be an extension of military aggression to Kosovo, the Moslem areas of Serbia, and even Macedonia."⁵³

The status quo meant submission to the Serb rule, and the people of Kosovo would refuse it which would have perpetuated the conflict. The devastating effects of the Yugoslavian wars not only hurt Bosnians, Croats, and Albanians, but it also hurt Serbs living in those republics and provinces, as well as Serbs living in Serbia.⁵⁴ A NATO re-

sponse would have had an impact in all republics of former Yugoslavia. But most of all, with the fragile political situation, the conflict could have spilled over in Northern Macedonia, Montenegro, and even Albania.

Leadership of the Kosovo Liberation Army

Amongst the first insurgent leaders of the Kosovo liberation army who made an impact not only as charismatic figures, but also as fierce fighters were Adem and Hamëz Jashari. The two brothers were killed in Prekaz massacre by the Serbian police along with their families. Adem and Hamëz were both leaders of the Drenica Chapter. Hashim Thaqi, and Ramush Haradinaj, were commanders and later became Prime Ministers. Hashim Thaqi also represented the Kosovo Liberation Army in the Rambouillet talks. A handful of Kosovo Liberation Army commanders were killed in battle. Such are Zahir Pajaziti, Sali Cekaj, Bekim Berisha, and Agim Ramadani. The casualties suffered on the KLA side were more significant due to the lack of the military training and experience.

Operations: Insurgency tactics and Counterinsurgency response

The asymmetric nature of the Kosovo war between the Serbian state and KLA has to do with the tactics used to attack the enemy and how the Serbian counterinsurgency operated. As a response to KLA operations on Serbian police, the Serbian state exceeded the response and COIN measures. Hu-

man Rights Watch reported hundreds of tortures and extrajudicial killings of ethnic Albanians between the 1998 to 1999. The Serbian State did not only hit back hard, but it executed civilian population indiscriminately. On 28 February 1998, the Kosovo Liberation Army ambushed a unit of the Serbian police near Likoshan, killing four and seriously wounding two policemen. This event prompted large-scale police operations in the villages of Likoshan and Qirez in the following day, leading to the killing of 4 KLA members and 26 Kosovo Albanian civilians in both villages.⁵⁵ A few days after, the police entered Ahmeti's house suspecting that they harbored KLA members. The police extrajudicially executed ten males, and a guest, ages 16-50. The victims were tortured, and the house was looted by the police.⁵⁶

The Prekaz massacre

On March 7, 1998, Serbian police shelled Adem Jashari's family compound with heavy artillery. The Serb police and paramilitary organized a military operation to eliminate Jashari and his family members. The operation involved tanks, APC, helicopters, and heavy artillery from a nearby munition plant. Amidst the reprisal, KLA members and their families found refuge in Jashari's compound. After it surrendered the compound, the Serb police, heavily armed, invited Jashari and other KLA members to surrender. Several families left the compound. Jashari stayed behind and ordered his family to resist to the last man. After the deadline had expired, the two sides started exchanging fire. The Serb police

and paramilitary launched mortars at the compound's roof, demolishing the place to rubble with people inside. After two days of fighting, Jashari and 57 other family members died, including his sons, wife, brother Hamëz and his family. The only survivor was Besarta Jashari, Hamëz's daughter, at the time eleven years old. The Prekaz battle became one of the pivotal moments in the history of Kosovo. Ethnic Albanians from the diaspora in Western Europe and the United States joined the Kosovo Liberation Army and the numbers proliferated in a matter of months.

Conclusions

Why and when an insurgency becomes successful?

After being labeled as a terrorist organization, KLA was able to not only remove its name from the terrorist groups list, but its leadership was able to negotiate a peace deal with great powers, on the side of NATO and as a close ally of the U.S. They were able to be a vital part of Rambouillet deciding on the future of Kosovo. KLA emerged as a force in one of the most significant power struggles in the Balkans since WWII.

There are a few processes that contributed to further their cause, and some of these processes were internal and a few were external. *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency* by Christopher Paul et al. described the case of the Kosovo War as a success due to NATO's intervention and the bombing campaign. It

also gives a rationale for why the COIN measures failed. According to the study, the failure of COIN can be explained by a lack of a balance between good COIN and bad COIN practices. From the narrative, it can be deduced that some of the COIN practices used to crush the KLA and pacify the revolt were:

- Collective punishment and escalating repression.
- The use of militia aside the COIN forces.
- The removal and the resettling of the population.
- The COIN measures were perceived as worse than the insurgency actions.⁵⁷

The KLA started as an ideological group that was inspired by the historical past, the Albanian quest for independence against the Ottoman Empire and against the chauvinistic claims of the neighboring countries.⁵⁸ Otherwise known as the Albanian Renaissance of 1878, it was the strong ideology and their historical past what galvanized and mobilized the people to join the Kosovo Liberation Army.

Oppressed under the Serbian rule for the last 90 years, the people saw themselves as prisoners in their own homes. The oppression prompted clandestine and dissident activity in the 80s and 90s. Kosovo supported KLA as the only armed forces that protected the people from Serbian police and paramilitary—even when the COIN response was fierce and deadly. Beyond

that, it was the only structure that was fighting for independence with actions. Pacifist strategies in the nineties would not work or produce any result with the Serbian state.

The KLA recruited and fund-raised inside and outside of Kosovo, from the diaspora, and had absolute support from Albanians in different parts of the world, including the U.S. KLA mobilized many fighters who left their lives and families behind to join the cause. Finally, the Kosovo Liberation Army had strong political advisers who played an important role in international politics and achieved results.

The dichotomy of Self and Other

To understand the ideology that mobilized the KLA and turned it into one of the fastest-growing insurgent movements, one must understand the dichotomy of self and other. Self represents the minority ethnic group, the other is the usurper, the colonizer, and uses force and institutions to oppress the minority. Kosovo, even though populated by ethnic Albanians, was a minority in Yugoslavia and later Serbia. Its political status degraded as the dissenters demanded more autonomy and self-governing powers. The systematic oppressive policies had one objective—the expulsion of ethnic Albanians through the denial of their historical territory, their language, their culture, and their traditions. Lastly, by ethnically cleansing the entire population and terminating their natural rights—to live, be free, and own property, Albanians in Kosovo would eventually leave or stop existing

as a nation. The theories of nation state building argue that: An ethnic group will seek its own state if the existential threat from “the other” becomes pervasive. Serbs, being in a position of power, took an aggressive approach toward their new nation state building after the collapse of communism. Building a nation-state for Serbs was done at the expense of the other or wiping the other nations off the map. They followed the same path as they had done less than a decade earlier in Bosnia led by Radovan Karadzic and supported by Slobodan Milosevic’s regime.

Insurgency

The framework shows that support from outside plays a key role in determining the success of the insurgency. In the case of Kosovo, international support became paramount in shifting the balance of power in the Balkans. With the escalation of the ethnic cleansing, and mass murder, NATO forces supported on the ground by the KLA, intervened in one of the most successful bombing campaigns, which resulted with the withdrawal of Serbs from Kosovo and the international control over Kosovo. Studying the case of the Yugoslavia Wars 25 years after is always of great interest, primarily because it shifted the balance of power in the Balkans. It created new nation-states and democratic countries from a federation of socialist republics. For the first time in modern history, Kosovo became an independent state with self-governing powers and the right to self-determination. The combined operations of NATO’s airstrike and the Kosovo Liber-

ation Army on the ground solved one of the most intense international crises that ended genocide in Kosovo. Lastly, it expanded NATO's influence in the Balkans and decreased Russian power over the Balkan states. It also allowed new democracies to adhere to the EU. Nevertheless, the peace and the balance of power in Western Balkans remain fragile, yet it is a stable region.

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Endnotes

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- 5 The Gazimestan speech is a known historical discourse by Milosevic in Kosovo on June 28, 1989. Gazimestan gathering marked the 600th anniversary of the defeat of the Ottoman Empire by Serbs in the Kosovo Battle. Milosevic claimed that Kosovo is the birthplace of Serbian nationalism and unity. At the same time, he fomented ethnic divisions by emphasizing that Serbs should not be ashamed of their past – they should fight for their dignity. The speech came amidst ethnic tension between the Serbs minority in Kosovo and Ethnic Albanians and marked one of the most irredentist moves on the verge of SFRY collapse.
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 - 13 Ethnic cleansing in Kosovo an account of forced expulsions, looting, burning, detentions, use of human shields, summary executions, exhumations of mass graves, systematic and organized mass rape, violations of medical neutrality and identity cleansing, DOS, December 1999.
 - 14 The insurgencies encounter many organizational problems, and it is quite impossible to compete with the state. However, they can paralyze various sectors and cause damage to the infrastructure of other state sectors. In addition, insurgencies can sometimes control national territory and question the sovereignty of the state and its jurisdiction.
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