

IT'S ALL THE SAME, ONLY THE NAMES HAVE CHANGED:
THE IMPACT OF THE KOSOVO ISSUE ON DOMESTIC POLITICS
IN POST-MILOSEVIC SERBIA

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ABSTRACT

PATRICK O'DONNELL: It's All the Same, Only the Names Have Changed: the Impact of the Kosovo Issue on Domestic Politics in Post-Milosevic Serbia
(Under the direction of Dr. Milada Anna Vachudova)

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the link between the Kosovo issue and Serbian domestic politics. My hypothesis is that Kosovo has been decisive in turning Serbia away from the European Union and the West and toward ultra-nationalism. Shunning the West and EU membership allows corrupt politicians to delay political and economic reforms that would likely impact the way they profit from the Serbian political system. There is also a measure of ethnic outbidding that is taking place. Although some political parties are willing to compromise on Kosovo, they do not feel it is a politically viable position to hold. With the election of Boris Tadic and his pro-reform Democratic Party in 2008, however, Serbia may be ready to move past an issue that has held its politics hostage since the breakup of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s.

I dedicate this to the people of Kosovo and Serbia. May you turn the page of history to a new chapter of peace, prosperity, justice and forgiveness.

I also dedicate this to my mother Kathleen and my late father Joseph. The appreciation of knowledge that you instilled in me will be one of the many gifts I will take with me the rest of my life. Thank you for everything.

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INTRODUCTION

On July 22, 2010, car horns blared and shouts of joy rang out across Kosovo. On that day, the International Court of Justice handed down its ruling on the contentious issue of Kosovo's independence. While a celebratory feeling spread across Kosovo, frustration and disappointment was felt throughout Serbia. Vuk Jeremic, Serbia's foreign minister, said before the decision that a ruling in Kosovo's favor would set a global precedent and that "no border in the world would ever be secure" (The Economist, 2010). It was another chapter in a long-running saga that has consumed the region and at times drawn the attention of international powers.

Kosovo has been one of the central issues in Serbian politics since the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. While most of the other states in the region eventually moved away from ultra-nationalist politics, the situation in Kosovo has allowed Serbian political elites to stoke the embers of nationalism until today. This has helped keep Serbia out of the orbit of the European Union and the West. Although the 2008 election of Boris Tadic and his Democratic Party signaled a move toward embracing the EU, the ultra-nationalist Serbian Radical Party still received considerable electoral support. All but one party in the Serbian parliament, including the ruling Democratic Party, routinely present the loss of Kosovo as a fundamental problem for Serbia.

This purpose of this thesis is to explore the link between the Kosovo issue and Serbian domestic politics: What kinds of incentives has the Kosovo issue created for

Serbia's political parties? Following on that, why are Serbian politicians willing to use Kosovo and maintain a political discourse so deeply rooted in ultra-nationalism?

My hypothesis is that Kosovo has been a decisive factor in turning Serbia away from the EU and the West and toward ultra-nationalism and Russia. This has happened for two reasons: The first is that shunning the West and also EU membership allows corrupt politicians to delay much-needed political and economic reforms that would almost certainly have an impact on the way they profit from the Serbian political system. Having to come in line with European Union norms and standards would call for more transparency and accountability, making rent-seeking much more difficult. Nationalist politicians and parties use Kosovo both to foment support for their positions and also take the attention away from other problems in Serbian society. The rejection of the West and the EU by Serbian leaders has not always been explicit. Vojislav Kostunica, former president and prime minister of Serbia, often projected himself as a reformer and modernizer to the outside world. The truth is that his party often formed coalitions with ultra-nationalist parties in parliament and did very little to cut ties with many members of the Milosevic regime.

The second reason is that a measure of ethnic outbidding is taking place. Although some political parties are willing to compromise on Kosovo, they do not feel it is a politically viable position to hold. Without at least saying Kosovo is a fundamental issue for Serbia, these pro-EU parties feel they will lose electoral support. Pro-reform parties espouse hard-line rhetoric on Kosovo, but recent evidence seems to show that they are willing to compromise to some degree. Both corruption and ethnic outbidding have delayed reforms in Serbia and allowed most of the other states from the former

Yugoslavia to pass it on the road to EU accession. For much of the last decade Serbian political discourse has been mired in a morass of post-Milosevic nationalism.

This thesis is divided into six sections, followed by a conclusion. The first section explains how Kosovo came to be so important to the Serbian people. A battle waged in a field in Kosovo more than 600 years ago has been ingrained in Serbian consciousness as one of the most sacred moments in Serbian history. This battle has been exploited by nationalists to a large degree since the breakup of Yugoslavia, beginning with Milosevic in 1987.

The second section demonstrates, on a larger scale, how Kosovo has had an impact Serbian politics by comparing Serbia to other countries from the region. Although Serbia shares a post-World War II political history with countries such as Croatia, Slovenia and Montenegro, it has been one of the slowest to move toward the EU. I will also compare Serbia to two nearby states that had illiberal regimes following communism, Romania and Bulgaria. Unlike Serbia, they were able to move past illiberalism and ultra-nationalism to eventually join the EU, albeit with some difficulties. I contend that what made Serbia different from all these other countries is the Kosovo issue. There is no territorial problem of this magnitude in these other states. Kosovo has made it worthwhile for Serbian elites and political parties to continue to rely on nationalist rhetoric to gain electoral support.

The third section shows how and why Serbian politicians and parties have used nationalism and Kosovo for electoral gain in the post-Milosevic era. Upon coming to power following Milosevic's ouster, new Serb leader Vojislav Kostunica did very little to break with the previous regime. Corrupt elements continued to participate in the Serbian

government, using ties ultra-nationalist parties to remain in power. The Kosovo issue never allowed for true debate over political and economic reform in Serbia to take place.

The fourth section will explore the link between nationalism and corruption. Nationalist Serbian political elites are mistrustful of the EU, not only because many EU countries supported Kosovo's independence, but also because acceding to the EU would mean significant political and economic reforms. By looking at Transparency International's corruption index we will see that Serbia has a corrupt political and economic system. The changes that the EU would press upon Serbian elites would threaten their rent-seeking capabilities. This has an impact on party incentives because it makes joining the EU much less attractive for political elites – and especially for some of their key financial backers.

In the fifth section, Serbia since the rise of Boris Tadic and his pro-EU parliamentary coalition will be explored. Despite hard-line rhetoric on Kosovo, including sending the foreign minister on a tour of world capitals to argue Serbia's position prior to the ICJ ruling, Tadic and his coalition have continued down a pro-EU, pro-Western path. Serbia has officially applied for EU membership and even sat down with Kosovo in talks sponsored by the EU. The tide may finally be turning away from an obsession with Kosovo and toward something more meaningful and beneficial for Serbian society.

In the sixth section I will explore alternate ideas of why Serbia has been slow to reform and join the EU. Jelena Subotic writes that the difference between Serbia and Croatia is that Croatia had a Western orientation and saw joining the EU as a return to Europe. Serbia, with its culture of victimhood, instead sees international actors as threats. She claims these perceptions of Europe color politics to this day in the two countries.

Another idea that has been put forward is that the remnants of Milosevic's security forces have held massive amounts of political and economic power in Serbia, making any reform difficult.

CHAPTER ONE

Why is Kosovo Important to Serbia?

On June 28, 1389, in a field in Kosovo, two armies stood opposite each other. On one side stood Sultan Murad and his forces from the Ottoman Empire. On the other was Stefan Lazar Hrebeljanovic, the most powerful prince of the Serbs, along with his allies. By the end of the day, both Murad and Lazar were dead and the Ottomans controlled the battleground. The two sides both sustained heavy losses and, despite an Ottoman victory, the sultan's forces quickly returned to Anatolia to complete the transition of power from the deceased Murad to his son Bayezit. Aside from these facts, little more is known about that day. It was a bloody fight in a series of battles throughout the Balkans at the time (Malcolm, 1998; Bieber, 2002). The difference is that this battle would go on to eventually form a crucial part of Serb cultural identity and be called upon many times throughout history as an example of Serb bravery in the face of defeat. It is perhaps the central myth to Serb identity and is the reason why ties to Kosovo remain so strong in Serbia today. What has emerged is something scholars call the "Kosovo myth", although the truth is that it did not take its primal place in Serb consciousness until the 18th or 19th century.

Since the ascension of this battle's centrality to Serb identity, June 28 has time and again marked dramatic turning points in Serb history. It was the day that Gavrilo Princip assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914. In 1921, the Kingdom of the

Serbs, Croats and Slovenes passed a constitution. Slobodan Milosevic gave his fiery speech in Kosovo on that day in 1989, the 600-year anniversary of the battle. It was also the day that Milosevic was extradited to The Hague for prosecution at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in 2001 (Bieber, 2002).

Although not central to Serb identity yet, songs and hymns were composed to commemorate the men who died in the battle. One such song concerns a knight named Milos Obilic (or Kobilic). In the song, Obilic pretends to be a traitor of the Serb forces as a way of gaining entry into the Ottoman camp. When he is close enough, he kills Sultan Murad, becoming a champion of the Serbian people. Although the veracity of this story is in doubt, Obilic is seen as a major symbol of Serbian identity, willing to risk his life for his nation, the ultimate Serb martyr. Another story has to do with a Judas figure of Serbian mythology, Vuk Brankovic. According to the story, he betrayed his Serbian compatriots and was the reason for Serb defeat. Along with the loss in the battle, this story of treason helped to cement the Serb feeling of victimhood, that they are the perpetual losers of history (Bieber, 2002).

Although stories of the battle lived on through song, the historic significance of the day had more or less receded into the background of Serbian identity for generations. By the 1600s, only one church, Ravanica, commemorated Lazar's passing. In fact, it was not even an official holiday in the Serbian Church until the end of the 19th century (Malcolm, 1998).

At the end of the 1700s, nationalist sentiment swept throughout Europe. As ethnic groups around the continent began to explore their historical and cultural identities, men such as Serbian linguist Vuk Karadzic and writer Petar Petrovic lifted the Battle of

Kosovo to the status of a momentous Serbian cultural event. Although a battle did take place in Kosovo that day, the major significance attributed to it was largely a social construction. It was now the moment the Serbs lost their autonomy to their Ottoman rulers and was the end of a Serbian Golden Age. In the reconstructed myths of the 19th century, Lazar was given a choice between a kingdom in heaven or a kingdom on earth (Malcolm, 1998). He chose a kingdom in heaven. This guaranteed a loss on the battlefield but won a special place with God for the Serbian people (Bieber, 2002).

At the beginning of the 19th century, Serbs began to rebel against Ottoman authority. The first major uprising started in 1804. The Serbs eventually gained the right to collect taxes, some of which went to the raising of small militias. Ottoman Janissaries, a group of bodyguards and soldiers expelled from the army, were now living in the Western Balkans. These Janissaries attempted to peel back the rights the Serbs had gained and began a period of violent crackdowns on Serb village leaders. Serbs then fought back, led by a man named Karadjordje Petrovic. While Ottoman troops were preoccupied with various conflicts in Europe, the Serb rebels had a string of victories. When the conflicts in Europe finally abated, Ottoman leaders used their troops to crush the Serbian rebellion (Lampe, 2000).

A second rebellion began in 1815 under Milos Obrenovic. Through uprisings and skillful diplomacy, Obrenovic was able to secure significant Serb autonomy by 1830 (Lampe, 2000). Serbians again took up arms against the Ottomans in 1876, this time alongside Bosnian rebels. Unrest throughout the Balkans led to the Congress of Berlin in 1878, a meeting where major European powers reconfigured the map to reflect new political realities. With Russian backing, Serbia gained full independence from the

Ottomans. The Serbs, along with a sizeable number of soldiers from other Balkan groups, then ejected the Ottoman Empire from its remaining European possessions in 1913 (United States Department of State, n.d.).

The post-Ottoman era is critical for understanding the relationship between Serbs and other groups in the Balkans. After independence, Serbians asserted a leading role in the region. They saw themselves as the most influential and powerful of the southern Slavs and looked to assert political and cultural control over other groups. Unsurprisingly, non-Serbs wanted a more equitable share of power and resented Serbia's attempts at hegemony.

These conflicts were interrupted by World War II, when Axis forces took control of Serbia. Serbian soldiers, loyal to the Yugoslav crown and called Chetniks, fought the occupation. Eventually, Communist guerillas under Josip Broz Tito, along with Allied support, were able to drive the Axis out and also subdue the Chetniks. Tito then created a communist Yugoslavia. This new state, although dominated by Serbs in many important areas, took steps to quell nationalist sentiments (United States Department of State, 2011). Tension among groups remained, but ethnic animosity was pushed below the surface of Yugoslav daily life. Although the Serbian Orthodox Church continued to commemorate the June 28 anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, the Church was marginalized under Tito and had little influence on the general public (Bieber, 2002).

This began to change in the 1970s and 1980s. After Yugoslavia adopted a new Constitution in 1974, Kosovar Albanians were given increased rights and autonomy. Upon Tito's death in 1980, however, these rights were in danger of being rolled back. In 1981, unrest began when Kosovo Albanian university students protested the poor quality

of food at their school. This largely apolitical event morphed into a month-long demonstration that called for Kosovo to be given republic status, which would ensure that Kosovo would keep the autonomy it had gained from the Constitution of 1974 (Morus, 2007).

Serbs in Kosovo began to feel threatened by the increase in Albanian political activity and saw it as an affront to the Serbian spiritual homeland. Shortly after the 1981 Kosovo Albanian university demonstrations, the Serbian Orthodox Church took up the Serbian cause. A petition signed by 21 priests called for the government to increase the protection of Serbs and Serb cultural landmarks in the province. Serbian writers and intellectuals, such as Danko Popovic and Vuk Draskovic, then began to incorporate the Kosovo myth into their work, fanning the flames of Serb nationalism. The myth was used to make the case that Kosovo belonged only to the Serbian people (Bieber, 2002).

These tensions eventually spilled into violence, resulting in a number of Serbs fleeing Kosovo for Serbia, which prompted the Serbian media to report a large-scale emigration. Azem Vlasi, the Communist leader of Kosovo, called upon Serbian president Ivan Stambolic to intervene and calm the situation. Stambolic instead made the fateful decision to send his second-in-command, Slobodan Milosevic (Bieber, 2002; Morus, 2007).

Milosevic arrived in Kosovo in April 1987, greeted by a throng of Kosovo Serbs. This group told Milosevic about the harassment and abuse heaped upon them by the local police forces, which were made up of largely Albanian officers (Morus, 2007). Milosevic was to give a speech in Kosovo Polje, near the location of the 1389 battle. Before giving the speech, he was caught on camera telling local Serbs that “No one has the right to beat

the people!” His comments were rebroadcast throughout Serbia, rekindling the fires of Serbian nationalism. This was a dramatic shift from the usual political rhetoric of the Yugoslav political elites, who took great pains not to pit one ethnic group against another (Bozic-Roberson, 2005).

This utterance by Milosevic, seemingly done in an offhand manner, helped fuel his political ascendance. Scenes of police beating Serb protestors in Kosovo were also beamed throughout Serbia, adding fuel to the fire. What was lost in the news reports was the fact that the Serb protestors had been throwing rocks at the police in an attempt to get a reaction. Without this context, Milosevic was seen as standing up for a victimized Serb population (Morus, 2007).

Milosevic gave a speech the next day, exhorting the Serbs in Kosovo to stay in their homes and fight for their ancestral homeland. He said that Serbs were a proud people who did not back down. Their ancestors had fought and died for Serbia hundreds of years before, now it was their turn. Unlike the battle against the Ottomans, Milosevic said this was a battle the Serbs would win (Morus, 2007).

Sensing it was his time, Milosevic called on a session of the Serbian parliament to unseat his mentor, President Stambolic, in September 1987. After months of equivocating, Stambolic left office in December and Milosevic took control of the Serbian Communist Party. Seeking to consolidate his power, Milosevic traveled the Serbian countryside attempting to appeal to nascent feelings of Serbian nationalism. In 1988, Milosevic spoke to a crowd of a million people in Belgrade, calling upon past fights against Turkish and German invaders and comparing that to the fight in contemporary Kosovo (Morus, 2007).

Milosevic's hold on power tightened in 1989 when he was named to the presidency of Serbia. To commemorate this event, he planned an inaugural address in Kosovo on the 600th anniversary of the mythical battle. Estimates for those in attendance were between one and two million people (Bieber, 2002; Morus, 2007). Some hopeful observers thought the event might be a call for national unity and pan-Yugoslavia ideals. Instead it was a reinforcement of Serbian nationalism. Milosevic ratcheted up his nationalist rhetoric, at one point foreshadowing the conflict to come: "Six centuries later, now, we are again engaged in battle and are facing battles. They are not armed battles, although such things cannot be excluded yet" (Milosevic, 1989).

After taking power, Milosevic went about dismantling the autonomy that Kosovo had gained before the death of Tito. The irony in this is that Milosevic was a latecomer to the Serb nationalist cause. In 1986, the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences released a memorandum that said Serbs in Kosovo were under siege by the Albanian population and that Serbs in Croatia also faced grave threats. It was an incendiary and significant statement put forward by Serbian elites. The Yugoslavian leadership took steps to denounce the document and separate themselves from it. One of the leaders who dismissed the memorandum was Milosevic. His embrace of nationalism was more likely a method to gain power than a sincere feeling, setting a template for future Serbian politicians (Glenny, 2000).

As the 1990s continued, much of the former Yugoslavia descended into war. Croatia and Slovenia declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1992. And while Slovenia was able to leave relatively unscathed, Croatia was not as fortunate. Much of the fighting centered in and around Bosnia, where Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks engaged in the

bloodiest conflict Europe had seen since World War II. Ethnic Serb paramilitaries in Bosnia committed war crimes as they destroyed Bosniak villages and raped and murdered civilians in their efforts to cleanse large parts of the country of Bosniaks. Croats engaged in similar crimes trying to cleanse “their” part of Bosnia. Bosniaks were also implicated in war crimes by the end of the bloody 4.5 year war. This led to the term “ethnic cleansing” entering the common lexicon. Sarajevo, which had hosted the Winter Olympics in 1984, was the subject of persistent Serbian shelling attacks, which culminated in the February 5, 1994 bombing of the Markale market, which left more than 60 people dead and shocked the world. The fighting finally came to a stop after the massacre in Srebrenica of 8,000 Bosniak men and boys spurred NATO to bomb Serb military positions in August 1995. A complicated peace was at last brokered in November 1995 with the signing of the Dayton Accords (Glenny, 2000).

During this time, the Kosovo issue faded to the background of Serbian politics. The Albanians, led by Ibrahim Rugova, created a parallel state within Serbia. This state had its own “taxes, parliamentary committees, private health service, and, most impressively, unofficial education system” (Garton Ash, 1999, para. 16). This method of asserting power was rooted in Rugova’s adherence to non-violent pacifism. Although he never wavered from his call for an independent Kosovo, he also never wavered from his non-violent methods, much to the relief of Western powers (Garton Ash, 1999).

Paradoxically, what started the conflict in Kosovo may have been the Dayton Accords. Albanian activists were angered that the U.S. made Milosevic sign a deal over Bosnia but did nothing to advance the cause of Kosovo. Many Kosovo Albanians were starting to feel that Rugova’s emphasis on non-violence was largely ineffectual. More

ominously, Dayton showed Albanians that violence was effective for bringing about change. Without using force to grab the attention of the U.S. and Europe, Albanians felt that their status in Kosovo would not change (Garton Ash, 1999).

The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) soon emerged as a challenge to Rugova's leadership. It sought direct armed conflict with Serbia. Formed in the early 1990s, its early history was inauspicious. When the attacks began, Rugova said it was the work of the Serbian police to try to foment discontent with his pacifistic approach. When the government of Albania collapsed in 1997, KLA operatives amassed weapons from military arsenals and were ready to step up attacks on Serb targets in Kosovo. As time passed and the attacks seemed successful, the KLA and its methods gathered the support of much of the Kosovo Albanian population (Mulaj, 2008).

Milosevic decided to respond swiftly and with force. The Serbian military was dispatched to the area and retaliated with ferocity. Serbian reprisals were so severe that the international community began to take notice of Kosovo. Although there is some dispute over when the refugee crisis started, the official NATO account says that before the bombing campaign "Tens of thousands of people began to flee their homes in the face of this systematic offense" (NATO, 1999, para. 16). NATO, fearing a repeat of Bosnia, eventually decided to step in with air attacks in March 1999. Milosevic answered by creating a refugee crisis to destabilize the entire region and permanently change the ethnic composition of Kosovo. His forces swept through Kosovo and ejected more than 800,000 Albanians from their homes (OSCE, 1999) and killed 10,000 more (Ball, Betts, Scheuren, Dudukovich, J., & Asher, J., 2002).

Some have posited that Milosevic became involved in Kosovo not to protect Serbs, but as an attempt to maintain power. A crisis would allow Milosevic to clamp down on political opponents, who had taken to the streets on various occasions during the preceding three years. Even if he had to acquiesce to NATO, it would fall in line with the Serbian myth of victimhood, with a foreign power once again making Serbs the victims of history. It would also be easier to lose to a coalition of Western nations than to guerilla KLA fighters. Milosevic may have calculated that he could use war in Kosovo as a way of stirring up nationalistic fervor and consolidate flagging political support (Katz, 1999).

One author wrote

once the fire of ethnic nationalism has been lit, especially when combined with the security dilemma, it can spread uncontrollably and do great damage. So Milosevic's rule can be viewed as that of a typical totalitarian dictator confronted with the collapse of the basis of his support, who responded to this collapse by playing with the fire of ethnic nationalism. (Wintrobe, 2002, p. 2)

After seeing the international community equivocate during the Bosnia War, Milosevic thought that he could wait out the bombing, which would eventually cause rifts in within NATO. Instead, his attacks on Kosovo Albanians hardened the resolve of NATO members and made Serbia an international pariah (Mulaj, 2008).

Due to the dispersion tactics used by Serbian troops, at first the NATO bombing campaign met with little success. When NATO commanders instead decided to bomb strategic targets within Serbia, Milosevic finally started to crack. The bombs used by American war planes were the most precise in the world, leading to a relatively low amount of civilian casualties. Milosevic was forced to take his troops out of Kosovo and Albanians displaced by the fighting returned to their homes. The United Nations Security

Council then passed Resolution 1244, which set the terms for administrative and governmental control of Kosovo by international actors (Papasotiriou. 2002).

Regime Change Comes to Serbia

By the fall of 2000, the people of Serbia were sick of the Milosevic regime. On September 24, Vojislav Kostunica defeated Milosevic in an election. Not satisfied with the result, Milosevic called for a run-off election in early October. In response, the Serbian people took to the streets. The opposition that had risen up against Milosevic in the past finally had the support of the Serbian populace. Milosevic left office in early October, ending a period of leadership marked by four wars and economic ruin (The Economist, 2000). He was then arrested in March 2001 and extradited to The Hague to face war crimes charges at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (BBC, 2001; BBC, 2001a). Milosevic went on trial and acted as his own lawyer, perpetually questioning the legitimacy of the tribunal (Bass, 2003). A judgment could never be handed down since Milosevic died in his cell of a heart attack in 2006 (BBC, 2006).

The man who swore he would save Kosovo for the Serbs in the end lost it. The Milosevic era was the culmination of Serbian nationalism and the myth of Kosovo's role in it. It led the country on a path to economic and physical destruction. Despite this, Kosovo lingers in the hearts and minds of the people of Serbia to this day. They still elect far-right nationalist parties and Kosovo is still a major issue for the electorate. The events of the 1990s reinforced the self-image of Serbians as victims of history and delayed the country's economic and political development. But Serbia was not alone in being in war

in the 1990s, nor was it alone in having an illiberal regime following the collapse of communism. I will now explore how Serbia fared compared to neighboring countries in similar situations, which will help demonstrate the centrality of the Kosovo issue in Serbian politics.

CHAPTER TWO

Serbia in Context

In distilling whether or not Kosovo is the most critical issue that prevents Serbia from turning to the West and the EU, it is helpful to look at surrounding countries who have shared much of Serbia's history since World War II. Perhaps other factors are critical to Serbia's reluctance in joining the West. When examining these other states, however, it becomes apparent that the shared political history of Yugoslavia and communism did not prevent Serbia's neighbors from looking to join the EU. If the comparison is expanded to include nearby states that also had illiberal regimes following the collapse of communism, Serbia still lags behind in satisfying the requirements for EU membership. The one critical factor none of these countries had was a domestic conflict such as Kosovo. Ultra-nationalist leaders in other countries had no similar issue to exploit for support, and the electorates did not have an emotional concern which occupied as much attention.

One theory for Serbia's delay was that it was involved in numerous costly wars and was seen as the aggressor by the international community. This stunted Serbia's political and economic development while also reinforcing the Serbian image of victimhood. Although the wars and their aftermath were significant in delaying Serbia's development, they are not the only reasons. Croatia, Bosnia, and to a lesser extent Montenegro, were involved in the Balkan wars of the 1990s. Bosnia has been held back by a complicated political system that reinforces ethnic divisions, but Croatia and

Montenegro have sped past Serbia in the accession process. My contention is that Serbian politicians, instead of spending the last decade modernizing the political and economic systems and moving the country in line with EU norms, have instead used the Kosovo issue to maintain power and delay reform.

Another issue which has held Serbia back has been cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Some of the most popular parties, such as the Serbian Radical Party and the Democratic Party of Serbia, oppose cooperation with the ICTY. Non-compliance has been severe that in April 2006 negotiations on Serbia's Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU were suspended (International Crisis Group, 2007). The Netherlands has been particularly insistent that Serbia find Ratko Mladic, one of the two remaining ICTY fugitives, going so far as to block the passing of the SAA until he is found (Balkan Insight, 2008). The Netherlands finally dropped its opposition to the SAA in 2010, allowing the accession process to continue even though Mladic still remains at large (Lungescu, 2010).

The ICTY, however, does not have the widespread appeal of Kosovo to Serbian voters. Nationalist parties would have a far more difficult time getting votes if cooperation with the ICTY were the sole issue that stirred the Serbian electorate. So although the ICTY has definitely slowed down EU progress, it has not been the most important factor. Kosovo has far more power with the Serbian electorate and has allowed nationalist parties to maintain their popularity.

To help see this clearly, a comparison between Serbia and local states is instructive. Regarding the EU accession process, Serbia has been slower than neighboring countries. It did not officially apply to the EU until December 2009, and did

not initial its Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA), an important initial step toward EU membership, until the end of 2007. Montenegro, which was the same political entity as Serbia until 2006, was able to apply to the EU and initial the SAA before Serbia. As for other former Yugoslavia countries, Slovenia became a member of the EU in 1996, far faster than any other Yugoslav republic. Croatia applied for membership in 2003 and has been named an official EU candidate country. Other official candidate countries from the former Yugoslavia are Macedonia, which applied in 2004, and Montenegro, which applied in 2007.

Table 1:

**European Union Accession:
Serbia Compared to Its Neighbors**

Country	Application Date	SAA Initialed	EU Entry	Notes on Accession
Serbia	12/2009	11/2007	Not a member	
Bosnia	Has not applied	12/2007	Not a member	Cannot submit a formal application until the Office of the High Representative is abolished
Bulgaria	12/1995	No SAA necessary at the time of accession – had the European Agreement	01/2007	
Croatia	02/2003	05/2001	Not a member	Official EU candidate country
Macedonia	03/2004	11/2000	Not a member	Although an official EU candidate, a name dispute with Greece has delayed accession
Montenegro	12/2008	03/2007	Not a member	Official EU candidate country
Romania	06/1995	No SAA necessary at the time of accession – had the European Agreement	01/2007	
Slovenia	06/1996	No SAA necessary at the time of accession – had the European Agreement	05/2004	

The first comparisons will be with the other states that emerged from Yugoslavia. These states had a common political and historical experience with Serbia for much of the second half of the 20th century. The country that Serbia is perhaps most often compared to is Croatia. Croats were the second largest ethnic group in Yugoslavia after the Serbs. From the time that Serbia started to assert itself as the leader of the Slavic people in the Western Balkans at the end of the 19th century until the war for independence in the 1990s, Croats and Serbs had a difficult relationship. Serbian leaders tried to centralize Yugoslavia whereas Croatians wanted, if not their own state, then significant regional autonomy (Glenny, 2000).

Relations hit their nadir during World War II. Croats, given a rump state by the occupying Axis powers, ran roughshod over Serbs in the region, committing mass atrocities. According to some estimates, the Croatian regime “killed between 320,000 and 340,000 ethnic Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina between 1941 and 1942” (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d., para. 7). Entire Serb villages were burned down and their residents killed, often in brutal fashion (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d.). The Jasenovac detention facilities, about 60 miles south of Zagreb, were a Croatian version of a concentration camp. It is estimated that between 77,000 and 99,000 people were killed there during the war (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d.).

Relations hit another low point in the 1990s, when Serbs tried to assert control over the region, leading to a complex conflict involving Serbs, Bosniaks and Croats (Glenny, 2000). Interestingly, it was later revealed that Serbia’s Slobodan Milosevic and Croatia’s Franco Tudjman met to come up with a plan on how to divide Bosnia, leaving

Bosnian Muslims out of the process (BBC, 2003). Not long after Croatia declared independence, however, Serbs within Croatia appealed to Milosevic for help and war broke out between Croatia and the remaining military forces under Milosevic. Around 20,000 people were killed in Croatia, and nearly a half million became homeless (BBC, n.d.).

Franco Tudjman and his party, the Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ), were similar in many ways to the regime of Milosevic in Serbia. Tudjman and Croatia funded Bosnian Croats during the war, some of whom committed atrocities and were perpetrators of ethnic cleansing (Maas, 1993). Like Milosevic, Tudjman put into place an authoritarian regime that was distrustful of the EU and overtly nationalist. Tudjman saw himself as a victor in the Yugoslav wars and felt he had *carte blanche* to rule in a manner he saw fit (Jovic, 2006).

When he died in 1999, Croatian politicians took a decided turn toward the West and the EU. Unlike Serbia, most issues that would conjure Croatian nationalism had been resolved by this point, making overtly nationalist politics less viable (Jovic 2006). This was largely because Croatia swept away much of its ethnic Serb population during Operation Storm in 1995, when the Croatian military forced 200,000 ethnic Serbs to flee Croatia, as well as committing atrocities against Serbs and destroying their property (Prodger, 2005).

With no lingering nationalist issues, consensus emerged among the major parties that the EU was the right direction for the country. Croatian elites no longer saw merit in maintaining an isolationist route. Eventually, Tudjman's own HDZ party was taken over

by reformer Ivo Sanader, marginalizing what remained of those who subscribed to Tudjman's nationalistic policies (Jovic, 2006).

Breaking free from the shackles of Tudjman, Croatia stopped vying to be a Balkan power competing with Serbia. Political elites instead turned to the EU. Croatia took an important first step toward membership when it ratified the EU's Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) in October 2001 (Jovic, 2006). Croatia then submitted its application to the EU in 2003 (BBC, 2003). Despite these moves away from nationalism, old hardliners remained. Croatia's accession process was delayed by not bringing to justice fugitive war generals. The SAA was not ratified by the Netherlands and the United Kingdom until 2005 (Jovic, 2006).

Interestingly, public support for the EU in Croatia has not been strong. In Eurobarometer surveys from 2004 to 2009, Croatians who agreed with the statement "Generally speaking, do you think that (your country's) membership of the European Community (Common Market) is good" have consistently hovered between 24 and 35 percent (European Union, 2010)¹. Much of the time, as a country heads further down the road to EU accession, public support for the EU drops. For example, in Poland, 80 percent of the population was in support of EU accession in 1997. On the eve of membership in 2002, however, that number dropped to 55 percent (Bielasiak, 2002). Support for the EU in Croatia has not even been as high as 55 percent over the last seven years. Croatia has been more skeptical of the EU than most other acceding countries, even noted skeptics Serbia and Poland. A 2011 report from the European Parliament expressed concern by writing:

¹ Taken from the Eurobarometer surveys in 10/2004, 06/2005, 19/2005, 04/2006, 05/2007, 10/2007, 04/2008, 10/2008, 06/2009, and 11/2009. A direct link to the table displaying the survey's results is in the works cited section.

MEPs are very concerned that the majority of Croatian citizens think that Croatia's EU membership would not benefit the country, according to the latest Eurobarometer survey. They therefore urge the Croatian authorities and civil society to mobilize and make citizens "feel the European project is theirs as well." (European Parliament, 2011, para. 7)

Despite this and other difficulties, Croatia has been tapped as the frontrunner in the EU accession process (European Parliament, 2011). Like Serbia, Croatia had a post-Communist illiberal regime that espoused nationalist-isolationist rhetoric. Croatia may be the country most similar to Serbia and therefore provides the best comparison for how the Kosovo issue may have impacted the incentives for its political parties. Although nationalists persisted and cooperation with the ICTY was not always forthcoming, Croatia was able to move past Tadjman and his legacy. Its political elites were more harmonious in their support of EU accession and it is likely that prominent members of the Croatian business community also supported moving toward the EU. Serbia, burdened by the Kosovo issue, has not been so lucky.²

Montenegro provides an interesting test case for comparison. Part of the same political entity as Serbia from World War II until 2006, it is a state that also shares a common language, system of writing, history and religion with Serbia. (Malesevic & Uzelac, 2007). Although around 43 percent of people in the country identify themselves as Montenegrin, around 32 percent identify as Serbian. These ties were strong enough that in an independence referendum in 1992, the people of Montenegro elected to stay in a union with Serbia (Darmanovic, 2007).

Although the results of the vote were somewhat dubious, the message was still clear: stay with Serbia. But with Milosevic's destructive agenda in the 1990s making

² Another reason given for Croatia's ability to move past the Tadjman era is that Croatia was culturally more oriented toward Western Europe, a theory which will be discussed in detail in the alternative theories section.

Serbia an international pariah, the tide for independence began to turn. Even with the downfall of Milosevic in 2000, the Montenegrin independence movement continued unabated (Darmanovic, 2007). Voters elected to separate from Serbia in 2006, with the number of people voting for independence just barely exceeding the 55 percent threshold. The ultra-nationalism that kept its grip on political parties in Serbia did not resonate in Montenegro. In fact, it is likely that the anti-EU stance and lack of cooperation with the ICTY from Serbian political parties actually worked in favor of the pro-independence movement. Montenegrins became frustrated with Serbia's lack of progress (Emerging Europe Monitor, 2006). Following independence, Montenegrin political leaders quickly moved to enter the EU. The Stabilisation and Association Agreement was signed in October 2007 and Montenegro submitted its application for EU membership in December 2008 (European Commission, 2011).

It is important to note that a country that shares a similar historical, political, linguistic and religious background with Serbia has come into the EU fold far faster than Serbia. Once again, the crucial factor is that the Kosovo issue did not resonate with voters in Montenegro as much as it did in Serbia, so voters and political parties alike were able to move on to other concerns. The vice grip Kosovo has on Serb identity is not nearly as strong in Montenegro.

Of the countries to emerge from the former Yugoslavia, Slovenia had the smoothest route to the European Union. Compared to Serbia, and most of the rest of the Yugoslav republics, it had a high level of ethnic homogeneity. Perhaps more importantly, it did not have a significant Serbian minority which would draw the attention of Milosevic (Mann, 2005). A 10-day conflict did ensue following Slovenia's declaration of

independence in the summer of 1991, but the well-prepared Slovenian defense was able to repel advances by the Yugoslav military. Milosevic was more focused on protecting Serbian interests in Croatia at the time and soon removed his troops from Slovenia (Lampe, 2000).

Without the war and ethnic conflict that plagued much of the rest of the former Yugoslavia, Slovenia soon embarked on a process of Europeanization. It applied for EU membership in 1996, far earlier than any other state from Yugoslavia. It entered the EU along with other countries from Eastern Europe in 2004 and the eurozone in 2007 (Delegation of the European Union to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 2011).

The two remaining countries from the former Yugoslavia do not provide the best basis for comparison. Bosnia was the subject of a vicious war involving Serbs, Bosniaks and Croats that did not end until the signing of the Dayton Agreement in 1995. It split the country into two parallel entities, the mixed Croat-Bosniak Federation of Bosnia and Hercegovina and the Serbian Repulika Srpska (BBC, 2010). Although Bosnia signed the SAA in 2008, it has not yet submitted its application. Bosnia's Dayton-created political framework has institutionalized deep ethnic divisions and created a deadlock on issues related to strengthening the central government (Vogel, 2011). Without a new constitution that empowers a central government that can implement the EUs acquis communautaire and negotiate effectively for EU accession, Bosnia is at a standstill in the process.

Macedonia is also not a good point of comparison for Serbia. Although it escaped the wars that engulfed much of the rest of the region, Macedonia experienced ethnic

division and conflict. Macedonians include a significant Albanian minority that is around 25 percent of the population. In 2001 there was an armed uprising of Albanians demanding equal rights. Behind a Western-brokered peace deal, called the Ohrid Agreement, the two groups came together and have made significant progress in integrating Albanians into government institutions (BBC, 2010a).

The bigger issue regarding EU integration has been a dispute with Greece over the name of the country of Macedonia. Greeks feel that a Slavic country taking the name of one of its own regions is an affront to Greek culture and may signal future territorial claims. Macedonians argue that the name is their identity and that they have nothing to change it to. As puzzling as this may be for outsiders, it has been serious enough to significantly delay Macedonia's entry into the EU and NATO. Various attempts at international mediation have not met with success. So although Macedonia has taken some steps to joining the EU, such as signing the SAA in 2001, full membership will not be granted until it solves the name dispute with Greece and improvements are made in its occasionally violent election process (International Crisis Group, 2009).

Although not part of the former Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Romania are two Balkan countries that struggled in the post-communist era with illiberal regimes and provide a good point of comparison for Serbia. Romania was led by Ion Iliescu, head of the National Salvation Front (FSN). In a country with no movement like Poland's Solidarity, former communists filled the power vacuum in the transition era. Unlike Serbia, there was no divisive issue such as Kosovo that would allow Iliescu to hold on to power. To placate the electorate, he had to make some overtures to the West, such as strengthening ties with NATO and signing a Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the

EU in 1991. Despite these efforts, Iliescu took shots at the Hungarian minority as being unpatriotic. When Iliescu and his FSN party saw that they were trailing in the 1996 elections, they tried to garner support by playing the ethno-nationalist card, blaming Hungarians and other minorities for troubles. This did not resonate with the public and FSN lost (Vachudova, 2005).

This is in stark contrast with Serbia, where the nationalist card has been played with great frequency and effectiveness. Without anything like Kosovo to truly stir the passions of the Romanian electorate, Iliescu's xenophobic strategy was ineffective. Romania continued down its occasionally rocky road toward EU membership, which was granted with some ambivalence in 2007.

Bulgaria also had a circuitous path to the EU. Like Romania, Bulgaria had no opposition group similar to Solidarity to help navigate the transition away from communism. The Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), a party made up of former communists, won the 1990 election by promising to manage the economic change to capitalism in a manner that would not hurt Bulgarians. Patronage networks intact, BSP was an especially corrupt party. It lost elections in 1991 and the opposition Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) won. This party reflected the strong pro-Western sentiment of Bulgaria and tried to distance itself from the Russian sphere of influence (Vachudova, 2005).

The next government did not have a party but was supported by the corrupt BSP. When BSP won the 1994 elections, it made no attempt to follow EU economic policies. With the international community's attention focused on the situation in Bosnia, the BSP robbed the public coffers of Bulgaria in spectacular fashion, leading to an economic crisis

in 1996. Bulgarians responded by holding massive demonstrations, bringing an end to BSP rule (Vachudova, 2005). Bulgaria was then able to continue on its path toward EU membership in earnest, although like Romania, it was fraught with difficulty. Also like Romania, entrenched corruption helped delay Bulgaria's full accession to the EU three years. Bulgaria was finally accepted, with some reservations, in 2007.

It is not just with EU accession and ICTY cooperation where Serbia has fallen behind. A glance at economic measures reveals that Serbia's lack of reform has kept it from developing as much as its neighbors. One way to determine of a country's wealth is purchasing power parity, which seeks to measure the standard of living across different states (The Economist, 2011). According to the latest figures from the CIA World Factbook, Serbia ranks 103rd, behind Croatia (67th), Romania (96th), Bulgaria (89th) and Slovenia (50th). Newly independent Montenegro ranks just behind Serbia at 110th (CIA World Factbook, 2011). Although Serbia has made some changes in its economic system, a 2009 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report found that legal public monopolies still existed in many important sectors such as transport, energy, natural resources and public utilities. The authors concluded that this was why "the market economy does not exist to the full extent, thus narrowing the space for implementation of competition rules" (OECD, 2009).

The purpose of this section was to understand Serbia in the context of surrounding Balkan states. Many of these countries share a significant part of post-World War II history with Serbia. All of these states have decided to become part of the EU and join the West. This happened despite ultra-nationalist politics in Croatia, illiberal regimes in Romania and Bulgaria, war in Bosnia and a shared cultural background with Montenegro.

The critical factor in all these cases is that political parties and elites were not able to use a decisive issue such as Kosovo to maintain a hold on power. Serbia, whose political discourse remains embroiled in a nationalist debate over Kosovo, has not been able to move as quickly toward reform.

CHAPTER THREE

The Kosovo Issue and Nationalism in Post-Milosevic Serbia

This section will explore how political parties and elites in Serbia have used nationalism and the Kosovo issue for electoral gain. Since Milosevic left office, Kosovo has remained central to the political debate in Serbia. Anna Di Lellio writes that

Far from being a marginal disturbance on the path toward European integration, or a simple relic of political folklore, the Kosovo ethno-nationalist myth continues to frame political choices domestically and internationally, playing both a normative and an instrumental role. It fuels the political rhetoric of authoritarian and fractious nationalist elites who use it to lay out the moral and political obligations to the nation and never cease to tap its capacity for rallying large sections of the Serbian public. (Di Lellio, 2009, p. 375)

Kosovo was an issue even before the Milosevic era. Tensions between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo increased following the implementation of the 1974 Constitution. Although no politicians took full advantage of Serb unease with Albanians until the rise of Milosevic, Serb leadership tried to assert control over Kosovo from 1974 onward. Making it difficult for Serbs was the reality of the demographics of the region. Albanians had increased from 74 percent of the population of Kosovo in 1971 to around 90 percent by the 1990s (Papasotiriou, 2002).

In 1977, the Serbian League of Communists formed a commission that tried to return key elements of governmental control in Kosovo back to Belgrade. Following the 1981 student uprising at the University of Pristina, the state press claimed that the demonstrations were partly orchestrated by the Albanian government, even though there

was no evidence of Tirana doing anything more than issuing supportive public statements. To make matters worse for Kosovo Albanians, an intense police crackdown took place throughout the 1980s for anyone perceived to be advocating Albanian nationalism. Arrests and police violence were becoming more common, and ethnic Albanians were increasingly demonized. In 1984, a Serbian Orthodox Archimandrite, or leader of a monastery, spoke about the mass rapes of Serbian girls and women by Albanians, fanning the flames of anti-Albanian sentiment in Serbia. These accusations were made even though some studies found that Kosovo had the lowest incidence of rape in Yugoslavia, and most cases were between people of the same ethnic group (Bellamy, 2000). The mounting tension and increasing violence in Kosovo set the stage for the rise of Milosevic, who was the first leader to effectively take advantage of Serbian unease about Kosovo.

After the violence subsided and Milosevic was ousted, Kosovo remained a central issue in the Serbian political discourse. In a 2004 report on Serbia, International Crisis Group wrote “Kosovo continues to hold Serbian politics hostage and push it toward nationalism. Any politician who attempts to sign any form of political settlement with the Albanians places both his life and his political future at risk” (International Crisis Group, 2004, p. 15). In simple terms, the political spectrum in Serbia following Milosevic was split into two camps: the pro-Western parties who favored EU accession, more cooperation with the ICTY, joining NATO and did not take a hard line on Kosovo. On the other side were the nationalist parties who were against any sort of compromise on Kosovo or cooperation with the ICTY and were resistant to the EU and NATO. This side

also looked to Russia for economic aid and as an ally in international affairs (International Crisis Group, 2007).

Like other post-communist states, there was a fierce debate how to transition into a new era. Scholar Eric Gordy split the two sides into supporters of a rapid or “hard” transition with those who wanted a slow or “soft” transition. Those who supported a “hard” transition wanted to move as fast as possible from the previous communist regime and replace it with a political and economic system that was closer to EU norms. These were the pro-Western, pro-EU parties. Supporters of this method, such as Zoran Djindjic of the moderate Democratic Party (DS), said that although it may be difficult for Serbia to make these adjustments at first, it would pay off in the long-term. On the opposite side were those who wanted a “soft” transition, or the nationalists. Supporters said that an abrupt change would be a shock to the Serbian people and safeguards must be in place to minimize the effects of the transition to capitalism and democracy. Vojislav Kostunica, head of the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), argued that to assure stability, as much of the previous governmental and legal infrastructure should be kept in place as possible (Gordy, 2004).

Kostunica and his DSS were the early winners of this debate. Kostunica was initially portrayed as a moderate who would support democratic institutions and lead Serbia into a new era. What looked like a break from the past to the outside world was largely a continuation of the nationalism from the Milosevic regime. Kostunica took a hard line on Kosovo, with his DSS party often working with the ultra-nationalist Serbian Radical Party (SRS) in parliament. The leader of SRS, Vojislav Seselj, has been on trial at the ICTY since 2003. Time and again, Kostunica put himself in an alliance with parties

whose main aim was to continue with Milosevic's vision of creating a Greater Serbia (International Crisis Group, 2007).

Upon coming to the presidency in 2000, Kostunica kept much of Milosevic's security apparatus in place. One individual, Nebojsa Pavkovic, was eventually convicted of war crimes at the ICTY. In 2001, Kostunica and his party broke with the Democratic Opposition of Serbia coalition, the group of parties that took over following Milosevic, because he did not agree with Djindjic's decision to cooperate with the ICTY. The party began to take in disaffected members of Milosevic's old party, the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS). Kostunica became prime minister after the assassination of Djindjic in 2003, and the opening of Serbia to the West that Djindjic initiated was halted. After taking power, Kostunica appointed to office many of Milosevic's old associates, including people who were still on the EU's visa ban list. Kostunica also clamped down on state media, although not to the degree of Milosevic (International Crisis Group, 2007).

For a short time, Serbia did seem as though it was going to go in a more pro-EU direction. When Djindjic was prime minister, Serbia made significant steps toward joining Europe, despite the protests of opposition nationalist parties. His most controversial move was to send Milosevic to the ICTY for prosecution. He also oversaw a loosening of the connection between Serbia and Montenegro, navigating it in such a way that it did not inflame irredentist or nationalist passions. He also sought to liberalize and modernize the economy (Hathaway-Zepeda, 2004).

Unfortunately, this turn away from ultra-nationalist policies was not to last. Djindjic was killed by remnants of Milosevic's security forces because of his pro-EU

stance and his collaboration with the ICTY (Di Lellio, 2009). Following the assassination, Serbian public support of Djindjic's DS party spiked. At first it seemed as though this would be the final impetus for Serbia to move past the shadow of the Milosevic era. As time passed, the investigation into the assassination dragged, and the energy of the populace toward reform began to wane. Also responsible for flagging momentum for reforms was that Zoran Zivkovic, the man who took over the premiership from Djindjic, was mired in a series of scandals, lessening public faith in him (Gordy, 2004). In a eulogy for Djindjic, Bishop Amfilohije Radovic, a staunch Serbian nationalist, said: "This is what happens to those in Serbia who try to take her to the West; they always have been and always remain traitors, which is why they represent a legitimate target for elimination" (Di Lellio, 2009).

The end result was that nationalist parties maintained a grip on power following Milosevic. In fact, many in the Serb government and security forces were also figures in the Milosevic regime. Kostunica did not represent a significant break from Milosevic. Parties obsessed with Kosovo and Greater Serbia controlled much of the government, allowing no space for constructive dialogue on political and economic reform. Zoran Djindjic tried to move Serbia in a new direction, but corrupt and violent elements in Serb society brutally put an end to his time as Serbia's leader. His assassination gets to the crux of the problem in Serbia: the web between nationalism, corruption and crime.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Link between Corruption and Nationalism

My main argument in this thesis is that nationalist politicians have used the Kosovo issue to augment their electoral support, thereby preventing needed reforms from taking place. This cycle keeps reformers from seizing enough power to make substantial change and keeps Serbia turned away from the EU and the West. Another factor that has delayed Serbia's accession to the EU is non-compliance with the ICTY. This caused talks between Serbia and the EU to come to a halt in 2006 and delayed the EU passing Serbia's Stabilisation and Association Agreement (Prodger, 2005).

As stated above, Serbia is split between two groups of parties: the first group is Western-oriented, pro-EU and willing to cooperate with the ICTY. While often espousing hard-line rhetoric regarding Kosovo, they are still willing to go down the path of EU accession. This group is more or less made up of current president Boris Tadic's Democratic Party (DS), free market advocates G17 Plus, and the only group that openly accepts Kosovo's secession, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) (International Crisis Group, 2007). Slobodan Milosevic's party, the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), in recent years has moved away from ultra-nationalism and is now a part of Boris Tadic's ruling coalition (BBC, 2008a).

On the other side are nationalist parties who have often used fiery rhetoric on Kosovo and the ICTY. These parties are Vojislav Kostunica's Democratic Party of Serbia

(DSS) and the right-wing, ultra-nationalist Serbian Radical Party (SRS) (International Crisis Group, 2007). An interesting outlier party was formed in 2008, when Tomislav Nikolic, former presidential candidate for the Radicals, left the party after disagreements with its leader, Vojislav Seselj. His new party, the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), is pro-EU but also staunchly nationalist. It will be interesting to see how it fares in the next elections and who it decides to work with. Nikolic has said that he will not be part of Tadic's DS-led government (B92, 2011a), but also criticized Kostunica and his DSS party for their anti-EU position (B92, 2010).

These differences are crucial in understanding Serbia since Milosevic. Kostunica was prime minister for four years, from 2004 to 2008, and also president from 2000 to 2003. He and his DSS party had significant amounts of power during this time and the regime was largely a continuation of the Milosevic era. In a DSS campaign letter in the possession of International Crisis Group, a non-profit, non-governmental organization that seeks to find solutions to global conflicts, the vice president of the party claimed that the ouster of Milosevic was not a "revolution or an overthrow, but rather a continuation" (International Crisis Group, 2007, p. 3).

During the Milosevic regime, corruption ran rampant through all levels of the Serbian government. By 2000, "corruption rose to a level correlated with the most impoverished and unstable countries in the world" (Palairt, 2001, p. 910). This is not to say that corruption did not take place in Yugoslavia before Milosevic, but in his regime it reached epic proportions. Not long after coming to power, Milosevic and his allies seized control of almost all state institutions, extracting what they could for their own profit. Milosevic's wife formed a political party, the Yugoslav Union of the Left (JUL), which

soon came to be controlled by gangsters and war profiteers. The party was given control of Yugoslavia's banking system, and also had significant clout in the courts. JUL was able to install judges who would protect their interests, allowing corruption to run rampant (Palairret, 2001). Milosevic's Yugoslavia was a place where nationalism and corruption were tightly linked. Under Kostunica, many of these dysfunctional relationships continued.

Nationalist parties, who were affiliated with organized crime and corruption during the Milosevic era, continued with these connections following his ouster. It is likely that they are fearful that moves toward the EU would threaten their livelihoods since accession would require significant political and economic reforms. The EU will be skittish about taking in corrupt countries after its experience with Romania and Bulgaria, so Serbia will likely have little room to maneuver regarding reform. Recognizing this, nationalist parties exploit legitimate concern over Kosovo to produce support, therefore delaying accession and protecting their interests. This gives political elites involved in nefarious activities space to continue business as usual at the expense of the development of Serbia.

I turn now to recent data on corruption in Serbia that helps show the depth of the problem and the poor company that Serbia keeps in the rankings. Transparency International (TI) is a leading global organization in the fight against corruption. Perhaps its most widely cited method for measuring corruption is the Corruption Perception Index (CPI). It is a "composite index, a combination of polls, drawing on corruption-related data from expert and business surveys carried out by a variety of independent and reputable institutions" (Transparency International, 2010, para. 1). It is important to note

that TI states it is difficult to use the rankings as year-to-year comparison because methods and the polls used change over time (Transparency International, 2010). Although not a perfect metric for measurement, it at least gives some idea of what the state of corruption is in a country.

In 2003, not long after Milosevic fell, Serbia ranked 106th in the world, on par with Zimbabwe, Bolivia, the Sudan and Honduras. A good point of comparison is Croatia, since it had just emerged from its own illiberal regime, which ranked 59th. Bosnia was 70th and Albania, just years removed from a completely collapsed government, ranked 92nd (Transparency International, 2003). Clearly corruption was a major issue in Serbia. By 2007, Serbia had risen to 79th, tied with Georgia, Saudi Arabia, Trinidad and Tobago and Grenada. Croatia was 64th, but Serbia had passed Bosnia and Albania (Transparency International, 2007). The situation remained largely the same in 2010, with Serbia 78th in the ranking, tied with China, Colombia, Greece and Lesotho, among others. Croatia stayed ahead, in 62nd place. Albania was 87th and Bosnia was 91st. Slovenia, the only country from the former Yugoslavia to enter the EU, was 27th (Transparency International, 2010a).

Although Serbia is not the worst-performing country in the Western Balkans, and some improvements have been made, it is still far below most EU countries and lags behind Bulgaria, 71st, and Romania, 69th, two countries in the EU with reputations for widespread corruption (Transparency International, 2010a). The problem in Serbia is that corruption has followed the nationalist parties from the Milosevic era to the present day. These parties have largely continued with Milosevic's way of conducting governmental affairs, even using some of the same people, and are a major impediment to reform.

Timothy Edmunds writes that “Corruption and criminality also remain important informal institutions in Serbian politics and society” (Edmunds, 2009, p. 135). One of the major problems following the Milosevic era was the remnants of his security forces running roughshod over Serbian society. Most prominent among them was the Interior Ministry’s Special Operations Unit (JSO). This group utilized as many of its tools as possible to block reforms from taking place in Serbia, using a “range of intimidation tactics against reformers who were threatening its autonomy, its criminal interests, and potential war-crimes indictees in its ranks” (Edmunds, 2009, p. 132). Some of its members were involved in the assassination of reform-minded Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic. Although steps have been taken to crack down on organized crime, unlawful actors have done a better job of hiding their behavior (Edmunds, 2009).

Clientelism and patronage networks have been a part of Serbia’s politics since the days of Tito. Serbia since Milosevic has continued with these practices. In order to secure power, politicians and parties utilize patronage networks. Complicating matters is that reformist parties, most prominently Boris Tadic’s and his DS, have not been able to win enough seats in parliament to pass tough and widespread reforms. DS has also been linked to its own corruption scandals, diminishing some of its credibility as a reformist party (Gordy, 2004). This allows nationalist parties and their underworld ties to continue to have a major hand in governmental affairs.

Forming coalition governments in the Serbian system has also been difficult. After the elections of 2003, 2007 and 2008, it took months to build working coalitions. The fragile state of political affairs meant that it was difficult for politicians to take positions that would be politically unpopular, such as extraditing suspects to the ICTY or

being willing to compromise on Kosovo (Edmunds, 2009). Nationalists controlled the political dialogue and could continue to focus on issues such as Kosovo.

In the 2002 and 2007 parliamentary elections, the far-right Serbian Radical Party (SRS) garnered more votes than any other. And in the 2008 presidential election, its candidate narrowly lost to Boris Tadic. SRS has been the most consistently strong party of the post-Milosevic era. Its leader is Vojislav Seselj, a Serbian politician who is on trial at the ICTY. The trial has been delayed due to allegations of witness intimidation, with Seselj even publicly disclosing the name of three witnesses in a book he wrote (BBC, 2010b). It is important to note that the SRS is one party that is staunchly opposed to any compromise on Kosovo. When Tomislav Nikolic tried to chart a more moderate course for the party in the mid-2000s, he came into conflict with Seselj's anti-West, anti-EU ideology. Nikolic eventually resigned and started his own party, the Serbian Progressive Party (Balkan Insight, 2010).

Organized crime's power has been especially apparent in the legal system, where witnesses have been intimidated or murdered, and judges have hastily resigned from cases involving the mafia. These realities have tied the hands of reformers and made it difficult to amend the system and reorient the political discourse in Serbia (Edmunds, 2009).

Kostunica has also proven to be a staunch nationalist. His continuation of many of Milosevic's structures, coupled with his feeble attempts to cleanse Serbia of holdovers from the Milosevic regime, have allowed crime and corruption to become firmly rooted in Serbia. While prime minister, although his DSS was technically in coalition with the pro-EU DS party in the mid-2000s, he often looked for support from the nationalist

Serbian Radical Party and the party of Milosevic, the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS). This ultimately led to the government collapsing in 2007 and necessitated a new round of elections in 2008. In coordinating with these other parties, Kostunica was able to dominate Serbian political discourse with a nationalist, anti-EU bent. Until recently, Boris Tadic, his DS party, and other reformers had little power to change the terms of the debate (International Crisis Group, 2008).

Following Kosovo's declaration of independence, Kostunica increased his nationalist rhetoric. He severely criticized the United States and the EU and called for a massive protest in Belgrade. Tadic and DS backed out of the event when they saw that Kostunica and his nationalist supporters were going to use the protest as a way to consolidate political support. The rally drew fewer supporters than expected, but was still between 200,000 and 300,000 people. Kostunica opened the proceedings with a fiery speech that blamed the West for Kosovo's independence and thanked Russia for their support (International Crisis Group, 2008).

Despite the rally's peaceful intentions, small-scale riots and looting broke out across Serbia. The U.S. and Slovenian embassies were attacked in Belgrade. Although Kostunica condemned these incidents, Velimir Ilic, a close ally, came to the defense of the rioters saying that the West has "broken our state, and we only broke a few of their windows. They should expect that, to learn what democracy is. Breaking some windows is also democracy" (International Crisis Group, 2008, p. 3). Not all political parties agreed with the manner in which the rioters acted. Tadic, his DS party, and other progressive parties criticized the protests (International Crisis Group, 2008). This reveals

the chasm in the opinions of Serbian political elites more than a decade after the fall of Milosevic.

Serbia's Fight against Corruption

Tracking corruption in Serbia is difficult. Corruption has run rampant through society with few checks on it since the Milosevic era. While in power, Milosevic controlled much of the media and security forces, so there were no entities within the country that could search for and expose corruption (Bozic-Roberson, 2004; Edmunds, 2009). Although media controls have loosened to a large degree since Milosevic's ouster, violence and intimidation against journalists still continues. The problem was severe enough that the United Nations Human Rights Committee released a document in March 2011 that asked Serbian authorities do more to protect journalists from harm (United Nations, 2011).

Compounding the difficulty in fighting corruption is that Serbian security forces and organized crime have had a notorious hand in Serbian society since the days of Milosevic, often using violence to silence any critics (Anastasijevic, 2008). The European Commission's 2010 progress report on Serbia also noted that corruption in the police remains a significant problem (European Commission, 2010a). The same people sworn to protect journalists and uphold the law are also some of the most corrupt in Serb society. These factors combine to keep corruption hidden, making it exceedingly difficult to tie illegal activity to the Serbian political elite.

The political establishment itself has done little over the years to truly tackle corruption. For instance, although a law was passed to track the financing of political

parties, parties use loopholes to keep their funding sources out of the public eye (B92, 2011b). Serbia does have an official Anti-Corruption Council (ACC), which was founded in 2001 (United Nations Development Programme, n.d.). Unfortunately, this organization has lacked the resources and manpower to do its job effectively, a point reiterated in the latest EU progress report on Serbia (European Commission, 2010a).

Liberal Democratic Party leader Cedomir Jovanovic recently said that Vojislav Kostunica was largely responsible for the culture of corruption in Serbia, and that Kostunica should not be above the law and evade responsibility for his actions. Jovanovic said that Kostunica

surrounded himself with a bunch of associates, advisers, Department of State Security (UDBA) members, anti-Hague-profiteers, the darkest circles of society, organized arrests, rigged court proceedings, false indictments, media lynching, firing and reassigning police officers who led Operation Saber (police operation following Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic's murder). Contacts with criminals were also personal, connected to his closest circle, and some of the people who took part in it fled the country in the meantime. (B92, 2011)

Without any entity that has real power to go after corruption, the link between nationalist parties and corruption is still not direct and clear. In January 2011, however, Serbian news outlet B92 reported on the questionable financial activities in a coal mine. The leadership of the mine was appointed by Kostunica's DSS party in 2004, upon which funds from the mine started to make their way to organizations around Serbia. One of the recipients was Srpski Sabor Dveri, an ultra-right Serb organization (B92, 2011d).

When and if the veracity of any of Jovanovic's accusations is ever known depends on the willingness of Serbian leaders to take on corruption. The activity at the coal mine may be just a small incident in a much larger web of deceit. Fighting

corruption will require a hard look into the darkest corners of Serbia's recent past, but the effort could help Serbia distance itself from its difficult post-Yugoslavia years.

One factor that may help make the fight easier, at least as long as a pro-EU coalition is in power, is European Union pressure on the Serbian government to combat corruption. For candidates and potential candidates, the EU releases yearly progress reports that chart the necessary reforms that need to take place within a country before accession. The latest report on Serbia, released in November 2010, was often critical of Serbia's fight against corruption. One promising development was that public officials were required to declare their assets to the Anti-Corruption Council. The council received declarations from 16,000 of the 18,000 public workers required to register. This information was posted online for public viewing. The report, however, reiterated that the council lacked the staff and the equipment to do its job effectively. This meant that the ACC had to rely on other government agencies for support and did not yet have the capability to fully function on its own (European Commission, 2010a).

The EU said that new laws needed to be passed that regulated political finance and that present laws did not give the Anti-Corruption Council enough power to scrutinize the Serbian political system. The EU noted that Serbia had done far too little in investigating and bringing to trial corruption cases. It also found that convictions in Serbian courts were far too low in number. When the ACC tried to implement a law that prevented people from holding more than one public job, a revision was passed that weakened the law, raising doubts among EU observers about how serious Serbia's political establishment was in taking on corruption (European Commission, 2010a).

Some areas where the EU was most concerned were in public procurement, privatization and the use of public expenditure. None of these has regular independent auditing. Making matters worse, whistleblowers lack solid legal protections and can only be protected if the information they divulge is of non-classified. The EU also expressed concern about corruption among law enforcement officials and the judiciary. Rampant corruption has impacted Serbia's government directly, making it more difficult to collect taxes and fund public programs (European Commission, 2010a).

Serbia stands at a significant crossroads in its fight against corruption. Verica Barac, the head of the Anti-Corruption Council, said that the marriage between the authorities and tycoons has led Serbia to economic ruin. She said this was a stern test of Boris Tadic's leadership and that "He will either make the change he needed to make in 2000 or in 2001 or he will go down together with the tycoons" (B92, 2011e). Although Serbia has made some progress in its fight against corruption, it has a long and trying road ahead.

CHAPTER FIVE

Serbia Since 2008

The post-Yugoslavia era has been difficult for Serbia. An illiberal regime led the country into four wars, devastated the economy and made Serbia a target of international condemnation. While other countries in the region have modernized their political and economic structures and cooperated with the ICTY, Serbia has lagged behind, dogged by corruption and a poisonous political climate. There are signs, however, that the tide may finally be turning in Serbia. To help aid in understanding Serbian politics today, an overview of the main political parties is necessary.

Table 2:

Overview of Major Serbian Political Parties

Party	Leader	Orientation	Background	Position on Kosovo
Democratic Party – (DS)	Boris Tadic	Center-left, pro-EU	DS was founded as an opposition party in 1989. One of its most notable members was reformist prime minister Zoran Djindjic, who was killed in 2003. Boris Tadic, Serbia’s current president, is the head of DS. It is pro-EU and is seen as cooperative with the demands of the ICTY. It is the lead party of the current ruling coalition, For a European Serbia, which won the 2008 parliamentary elections.	Although it is a pro-Western party, DS still takes a hard line on Kosovo. Its slogan in the 2008 parliamentary elections was “Both EU and Kosovo.” Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic went to governments around the world before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) asking them not to recognize Kosovo’s independence. Shortly after the ruling, Boris Tadic said that Serbia “will never recognize the unilaterally proclaimed independence of Kosovo” (BBC, 2010c).
Serbian Radical Party – (SRS)	Vojislav Seselj	Far right, anti-EU	The party is headed by Vojislav Seselj, who is currently on trial at the ICTY. Tomislav Nikolic took over the party in Seselj’s absence, trying to steer it toward more moderate positions. He focused less on maintaining Greater Serbia and more on fighting poverty, corruption and organized crime. Ultimately this led to disagreements between the two leaders, with Nikolic eventually resigning and forming his own party.	The main focus of this party is preservation of Serbia’s territorial integrity, which includes Kosovo. They will not support any attempts to partition the country.
Democratic Party of Serbia – (DSS)	Vojislav Kostunica	Center right, anti-EU	DSS is headed by Vajislav Kostunica, who defeated Slobodan Milosevic in the contested 2000 presidential elections. Initially seen by the outside world as a reforming force in Serbia, DSS has revealed itself to be more nationalist as time has passed. Within Serbia, DSS is seen as less corrupt than other parties.	DSS has taken a very nationalist stance on the Kosovo issues, with Kostunica threatening to suspend EU negotiations after some member states recognized Kosovo’s independence in 2008.

Socialist Party of Serbia – (SPS)	Ivica Dacic	Democratic Socialist, pro-EU	SPS is the party founded by Slobodan Milosevic in 1990. Upon Milosevic's death in 2006, Ivica Dacic steered the party in a more modern and moderate direction. SPS has taken steps to separate itself from its illiberal past and is a supporter of EU integration. After finishing fourth in the 2008 parliamentary elections, it became part of the ruling For a European Serbia coalition.	Although part of the DS-led, pro-EU ruling coalition, SPS remains committed to protecting Serbia's territorial integrity, including Kosovo.
Serbian Progressive Party – (SNS)	Tomislav Nikolic	Center right, mildly pro-EU	Formed in 2008 by Tomislav Nikolic, who resigned as leader of the Serbian Radical Party after falling out with Vojislav Seselj. Although a new party, Nikolic is a formidable political force in Serbia, narrowly losing the 2008 presidential election to Boris Tadic while still part of the Radical Party. SNS favors EU integration, although Nikolic led protests against the current DS-led government in February 2011, saying that they had not done enough to bring about reforms and fight corruption.	Although Nikolic is pro-EU, the first principle of the SNS political platform is the preservation of Serbian territorial integrity, including Kosovo and Metohija.

G17 Plus	Mladan Dinkic	Center, market liberal, pro-EU	G17 Plus was founded as a non-governmental organization and eventually became political party in 2002. G17 Plus supports free market reforms and concerted efforts to increase Serbian living standards. Its electoral base tends to be young and urban. It has formed alliances with both DSS and DS and are currently a major partner in the DS-led parliamentary ruling coalition.	G17 Plus takes a nationalist position on Kosovo, saying that it should be a part of Serbia. Despite harsh words from some members following the ICJ ruling on Kosovo in July, it has not interfered with G17's support of EU integration and economic reform.
Liberal Democratic Party	Cedomir Jovanovic	Market liberal, pro-EU	The party calls for market reforms and an end to corruption in Serbian politics. Leader Cedomir Jovanovic was a major student leader in the opposition movements of the 1990s and a close with reformist Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic. After disagreeing with Boris Tadic on the direction of the DS party, Jovanovic formed the Liberal Democratic Party.	It is the only major party in Serbia that believes that Kosovo should be recognized and that Serbia should move on. It claims that other parties cynically play up nationalist sentiment and therefore delay much needed reforms.

Source: (Balkan Insight, 2010)

As stated earlier, a very basic understanding of current Serbian politics splits the parties into two groups: the pro-EU, pro-Western groups who are not as hard-line on Kosovo and the nationalist parties who still hold on to a dream of a Greater Serbia and are not willing to compromise on Kosovo. The pro-EU block currently holds the presidency and is the ruling coalition in parliament. It is led by Boris Tadic, the current president, and his Democratic Party. Also in the coalition are G17 Plus, the Liberal Democratic Party, and, perhaps most surprisingly, Milosevic's old Socialist Party (Balkan Insight, 2010).

The nationalist, anti-EU group is made up principally of the popular Serbian Radical Party (SRS) and former president and prime minister Vojislav Kostunica's Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS). Standing in a grey area is Tomislav Nikolic's Serbian Progressive Party. Nikolic held a leadership position at the Serbian Radical Party, trying to steer it in a more modern direction. He eventually came into conflict with the Radical's true leader, Vojislav Seselj, currently on trial at the ICTY, for being too moderate (Balkan Insight, 2010).

For much of the post-Milosevic era, nationalists such as Kostunica and his DSS party, along with the Radicals, had significant power and dominated the political conversation in Serbia. As the first decade of the 2000s came to a close, however, a shift in the Serbian electorate took place. The first sign of change was the February 2008 presidential election. Pro-EU Boris Tadic defeated the nationalist, and then-Radical Party caretaker, Tomislav Nikolic. It was a narrow victory, with Tadic taking 50.5 percent of the vote, but was a major step for pro-EU forces in Serbia (The Economist, 2008).

The bigger surprise to the world was the victory of Tadic's DS party in the May 2008 parliamentary elections. Kosovo declared independence in February, and observers were expecting Serbians to support nationalist parties as a response to most EU members recognizing Kosovo. Voters defied expectations, however, and gave DS a shocking victory. Before the election, the EU lent support to pro-EU parties by offering the Stabilisation and Association Agreement to Serbia, a vital first step toward membership, in late April. The EU also announced that Serbians did not have to pay for visas to enter 17 member countries. These actions may have swung the election in the favor of DS, with voters believing that joining the EU was possible (The Economist, 2008a).

Table 3:

2008 Serbian Parliamentary Election Results

Party	Number of Votes	Percentage	Number of Seats
<i>For a European Serbia</i> Leader: Boris Tadic Coalition with: Democratic Party, G17 Plus, Serbian Renewal Movement, League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina, Social Democratic Party of Serbia	1,590,200	38.41	102
<i>Serbian Radical Party</i> Leader: Vojislav Seselj	1,219,436	29.45	78
<i>Democratic Party of Serbia</i> Leader: Vojislav Kostunica	480,987	11.61	30
<i>Socialist Party of Serbia – Party of United Pensioners – United Serbia</i> Leader: Ivica Dacic	313,896	7.58	20
<i>Liberal Democratic Party</i> Leader: Cedomir Jovanovic	216,902	5.23	13
Other Parties (Mainly ethnic minority parties)	95,205	7.72	7

Source: (OSCE, 2008)

Table 4:

2008 Serbian Presidential Election Results – Final Round

Candidate	Party	Votes Received	Percentage
Boris Tadic	Democratic Party	2,304,467	50.31
Tomislav Nikolic	Serbian Radical Party	2,197,155	47.97

Source : (OSCE, 2008a)

More progress followed when Radovan Karadzic, one of the two most wanted Bosnian Serb war fugitives, was captured and transferred to The Hague in July 2008 (BBC, 2008). Although Ratko Mladic still remains at large, recent evidence shows Serbia is making a good faith effort in finding and arresting him. A cable released by Wikileaks from the United States Department of State in 2009 shows that the US and other countries are pleased with Serbia's attempts to find Mladic (The Guardian, 2010). Serbia finally submitted its application to the EU in December 2009, but its path through the system was blocked by the Netherlands, who felt that Serbia was not doing enough to capture Mladic. The Dutch have since dropped their veto and the Serbian application can move to the next step of the process (The Guardian, 2010a).

The International Court of Justice's decision on Kosovo's independence sparked a flurry of nationalist sentiment throughout Serbia. Tadic's foreign minister, Vuk Jeremic, went on a worldwide tour to plead the Serbian side of the Kosovo issue to any government that would listen (Kurlish, 2010). The ruling, however, has not derailed Serbian efforts to join the EU. In August 2010, Serbia backed a U.N. resolution on Kosovo that contained softer language on Kosovo's secession than the draft they had initially submitted. This indicated a willingness on the part of Tadic to at least entertain the idea of some measure compromise on the issue and put Serbia in a better position for EU accession (Worship, 2010).

The EU responded with its foreign ministers passing Serbia's request for membership. Tadic even agreed to talks with Kosovo, a development the U.S. and U.K. had been advocating (The Economist, 2010). The dialogue got underway in March 2011 under the auspices of the EU. Critics contend that the Kosovar government, in office

since February, is woefully underprepared for such talks. But it could be an important first step toward finding some sort of solution to the Kosovo issue and allow Serbia's EU accession process to continue (The Economist, 2011a).

Conditions in Serbia are at a point where Boris Tadic and his parliamentary coalition may finally be able to make much needed political and economic reforms. To appease some of the Serbian electorate, Tadic must appear as a hard-liner on Kosovo. Shortly after Kosovo declared independence, he said that Serbia "will never recognize the unilaterally proclaimed independence of Kosovo" (BBC, 2010c, para. 9). This is where ethnic outbidding seems to be taking place. Ethnic outbidding is when multiple parties of the same ethnic group, having no incentive to bring in voters from other groups, constantly try to appear more nationalist than the other in order to secure votes (Brubaker & Laitin, 1998). Nationalist politicians have fanned the flames of Kosovo since the Milosevic era, keeping it a salient political issue. This push-and-pull between politicians and voters has created a feedback loop that has been difficult to break.

Prior to the ICJ ruling, Vojislav Kostunica, head of the nationalist Democratic Party of Serbia, gave a good example of overtly nationalist Serbian sentiment. Kostunica said that Kosovo

could never be a state, but only a temporary robbery and usurpation with the help of foreign powers. Serbian people living in Kosovo and Metohija represent the Serbian state and they are the best living witnesses that there is no state of Kosovo. That's why a pogrom was carried out on March 17 six years ago, with a goal to finish the ethnic cleansing of Serbs, and none of the crimes' organizers have been punished. (B92, 2010c)

Kostunica then attacked Tadic following the unfavorable ICJ ruling, saying "we are now faced with the result of that devious policy where the EU is more important to us

than our own state” (B92, 2010a, para. 9). He went on to say “Will the person who is the most responsible for this flawed policy resign, or not? Holding on to power at any cost, new political deceptions and delusions can only lead Serbia to new and harder defeats” (BBC, 2010a, para. 11). Tomislav Nikolic, head of the opposition Serb Progressive Party, also attacked the ruling coalition. He said that costs from the fallout of the decision should be felt “by those who assured citizens that all (Kosovo) problems would be solved if only the court was reached” (B92, 2010b, para. 6). Nikolic continued to toe the line between being pro-EU and being a nationalist when he said that “If we should be an EU for 20 years in order to wait to enter the EU with Kosovo, that’s all right. Being an EU candidate is a good position” (B92, 2010d). Considering these conditions, it is not surprising that Tadic talks tough on Kosovo. A look at the 2010 Gallup Balkan Monitor Poll shows that Serbians continue to feel very strongly on Kosovo.

Table 5:

**Gallup Balkan Monitor 2010:
Serbian Public Opinion on Kosovo**

1. Please tell me if you rather agree or disagree with “Kosovo has to remain part of Serbia.”		
Agree	-	73.1
Disagree	-	13.9
Don't know	-	11.6
Refuse to answer	-	1.4
2. Please tell me if you rather agree or rather disagree with “No matter what we do, Kosovo will become an independent state one day.”		
Agree	-	45.4
Disagree	-	35.7
Don't know	-	17.1
Refuse to answer	-	1.7
3. Please tell me if you rather agree or rather disagree with “People in Kosovo should have the right to decide about their independence.”		
Agree	-	49.2
Disagree	-	37.3
Don't know	-	11.4
Refuse to answer	-	2.1
4. Do you rather agree or disagree that as part of a future solution Kosovo could be partitioned?		
Agree	-	43.2
Rather disagree	-	37.4
Don't know	-	18.5
Refuse to answer	-	1.0
5. Would you personally agree or disagree that the Serbian government give up on keeping Kosovo in exchange for EU membership?		
Agree	-	15.4
Disagree	-	71.2
Don't know	-	12.5
Refuse to answer	-	0.9
6. When do you think Serbia will recognize Kosovo's independence?		
Within a year	-	4.4
Within 5 years	-	8.5
Within 10 years	-	8.1
Never	-	67.4
Don't know	-	11.1
Refuse to answer	-	0.5
7. Do you agree or not that there will be another war in Kosovo?		
Agree	-	23.1
Disagree	-	58.2
Don't know	-	17.4
Refuse to answer	-	1.3

Source: (Gallup Balkan Monitor, 2010)

Almost three-quarters of Serbians polled feel that Kosovo must remain part of Serbia. Despite this sentiment, there does seem to be some recognition that the conditions of the debate have changed and that Serbians must accept some difficult realities. Almost half agree that no matter what is done, Kosovo will be an independent state. Over 40 percent feel that Kosovo could be partitioned as a solution. Perhaps most surprisingly, almost half of Serbians polled feel that people in Kosovo have the right to decide about their independence. Although this is merely a snapshot of how people were feeling at a single point in time, the numbers suggest that Serbia may be ready to move beyond Kosovo and on to other important issues. At this time, however, this shift in opinion is very tenuous. An incident in Kosovo or perceived slights from the international community may roll back whatever gains have been made.

Despite enduring sentiment in the Serbian electorate and the strong nationalist rhetoric of almost all major politicians in Serbia, the country has made some progress on joining the EU, although significant obstacles remain. On the positive side, EU Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Fule said in February 2011 that Serbia has potential to make swift progress toward EU accession. He praised the Serbian government for completing the lengthy questionnaire from the European Commission so quickly (B92, 2011).

In the latest country report issued by the European Commission, mentioned previously in the section on corruption, Serbia received mixed reviews on its progress. Its judicial system was still in dire need of overhaul. The report praised Serbia for its cooperation with the ICTY, but noted Ratko Mladic and Goran Hadzic were still at-large. The EU lauded Serbia's improved relations with Bosnia and Croatia, as well as many EU

member states. Not surprisingly, the report came down hard on Serbia's relationship with Kosovo, although progress was made in cooperating with the EULEX mission in Kosovo. The EU also took Serbia to task regarding its economic policy. The report said that much work needs to be done in Serbia for a true market economy to emerge. The EU also noted that Serbia's labor market was in poor shape (European Commission, 2010).

So although some progress has been made in Serbia away from ultra-nationalism, corruption and a hard-line in Kosovo, Serbian politics can be quite volatile. Violence or harassment against Serbs in Kosovo could once again make Serbs turn their back on Europe. Nationalist parties still have significant voter support and are ready to pounce on any opportunity to regain power. The EU and Serbia must chart a careful, deliberate course for the future. The EU must hold Serbia accountable for its actions, yet also make Serbia feel like it has a legitimate shot at becoming part of Europe.

CHAPTER SIX

Other Theories of Serbia's Orientation

I argue that the continued effectiveness of Kosovo as a political tool for rallying and distracting Serbian voters has contributed significantly to Serbia's delay in EU-oriented reform. There are, however, other compelling explanations. In a comparison between Serbia and Croatia, Jelena Subotic noted that many in Croatia saw themselves as European and that joining the EU as a way of rejoining Europe. Croatian political elites felt that many of the EU reforms were intrusive, but looked at themselves as Western and were willing to take on the changes. Subotic says that Croatians felt more like a part of Europe than a part of the Balkans. Croatians sought to assert their ethnic identity and reject Serb attempts to control the region. When they acquired independence from Yugoslavia, they made the state as Croatian as possible, often through ethnic cleansing or mass murder, but also as European as possible. Croatian elites tried to group Croatia with other Central European states. Throughout his authoritarian rule, Tudjman stressed that Croatia belonged with Western Europe. Subotic contends this made the task of joining the EU much easier for Croatians than for Serbians. Although the ultra-nationalism of the Tudjman era was a detour away from a pro-European path, Croatia returned to the road to Europe under Stjepan Mesic, the next leader of the country (Subotic, 2011).

Subotic says that Serbia did not share the sentiment of rejoining Europe. Instead, what developed was a strong sense of ethnic identity that made Serbians the perpetual

victims of outside forces. During the wars of the 1990s, Serbs were fighting against the tide of history, which sought to attack Serbia and diminish its role in the region. The 1999 NATO campaign in Serbia further cemented this notion of victimhood. The outside world and international community were not to be trusted because they were only looking to damage Serbia. Subotic contends that Serbians do not blame Milosevic for fighting the wars in the 1990s; instead they blame him for losing just conflicts. In contrast to Croatians, who saw only gains from joining the EU, Serbs felt that they had to lose Kosovo and send alleged war criminals to the ICTY to accede (Subotic, 2011).

This outlook provides some insight into the Europeanization of the Western Balkans. The Serbian cultural identity of victimhood and mistrust of foreign entities helps explain why its road to the EU has been so circuitous. One flaw in Subotic's argument is that levels of support for the EU are consistently higher in Serbia than in Croatia. The percentage of those who thought joining the EU was a good thing in Croatia in 2006 was 34 percent, while in Serbia it was 60 percent (Gallup Balkan Monitor, 2010). Support in both countries dropped in 2010, with 25 percent of Croatians saying it was a good thing versus 44 percent of Serbians (Gallup Balkan Monitor, 2010).

Subotic does address the high rate of support for EU accession in Serbia, saying it reflects an unusual dichotomy in the political discourse of the country. Serbia and Croatia seem to be the inverse of each other. In Serbia, the people want to join the EU but the elites do not, whereas the reverse seems to be true in Croatia. While Serb attitudes toward Europe may play a role in how Serbia has handled accession, it is clearly not the only answer. The Kosovo issue prolongs the life of parties in Serbia that have a staunch anti-EU point of view. They have little incentive to reform and move past their anti-EU

platforms. The Serbian electorate is split between pro-EU, pro-Western forces and those who still see as critical the retention Kosovo and the project of Greater Serbia. The pro-EU parties in Serbia have, until 2008, found it difficult to gain traction in parliament due to the continuing popularity of the ultra-nationalist Serbian Radical Party and the Kostunica-led DSS. This has made forming effective governing coalitions particularly difficult, delaying needed reforms (Edmunds, 2009).

Another possible critique of Subotic's thesis is that the Serbian rejection of the EU has not been a refutation of European or Western values, but instead that Serbia upholds these values in their most pure form. Some ultra-nationalists view Serbs as the true defenders of Europe, fighting on the front line against the growing Islamization of the continent. Serbia stands not only against a growing Islamic threat, but also against secularization, individuality and liberal democracy. It is an extension of the myth of the Battle of Kosovo, that Serbs are on the front lines of the war, and along with the Serbian Orthodox faith, represent true European ideals (Di Lellio, 2009).

Another theory put forward, by Dejan Anastasijevic of the European Stability Initiative, was that the security apparatus that was left in place following Milosevic's ouster has controlled Serbian society to the extent that reform is almost impossible. The governments of the post-Milosevic era continued with the rampant corruption that took place during the 1990s. To get a sense of how powerful and reprehensible these forces were, they were not only involved in organized crime, but also in political assassination. Along with Djindjic, the reformist prime minister, the forces murdered Ivan Stambolic, Milosevic's mentor and former president of Serbia, and Slavko Curuvija, a journalist and newspaper publisher, among others (Anastasijevic, 2008).

The security forces organized a special forces unit called the Red Berets, which not only took part in the war but also became heavily involved in the trafficking of smuggled goods during the embargo of Serbia. They stayed involved in the Serbian underground until they were finally disbanded in 2003. After Kostunica came to power, he did little to disband the group. A massive destruction of government documents related to the security forces took place shortly after Milosevic fell, but no charges were ever brought against the perpetrators. Anastasijevic writes that the security agencies still control large parts of the media, economy and government and that any reformer who tries to make changes “risks finding incriminating details about his private life published in one or more of several tabloids known to be affiliated with the agencies” (Anastasijevic, 2008, p. 4). Attempts at reform threaten the livelihood of a very dangerous, very determined group of people. After seeing what happened to Djindjic, Anastasijevic says that reformer politicians fear for their lives, making real attempts at change difficult.

The idea that corruption and intimidation by the security forces is what is ailing Serbia has validity. Underworld elements have played a crucial role in Serbian political life. This is, however, not a problem but a symptom of the problem. The real problem is that corrupt, rent-seeking nationalist politicians are able to stay in power by using Kosovo and the ICTY to inflame passions among the electorate. The connection between Milosevic’s fraudulent regime and the current Serbian nationalists is a crucial part of the equation. These parties will do all they can to protect their interests. They use the legitimate concern over Kosovo in the Serbian electorate for their own benefit. In all likelihood, they view EU accession as a threat to their way of doing business. Without an overtly nationalist issue such as Kosovo to rely on, ultra-nationalist parties would have a

harder time staying in power, at least in their current form. Since they do have Kosovo, it has provided a convenient platform to protect their interests and block or delay reform, all under the guise of protecting Serbia and Serb identity. Unlike other very corrupt countries, such as Romania and Bulgaria, the corrupt politicians in Serbia never had to give lip service to EU accession. Hard-line nationalist sentiment in the populace has given them a cushion against moving toward Europe, thereby delaying reform.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I tried to show the impact the Kosovo issue has had on incentives for Serbian political elites and parties. The first part of the thesis described the reasons why the Kosovo myth is so central to Serb identity. Serbian history was also explained, as was the Serbian tendency to assert itself as leader of the Southern Slavs. This caused friction with other ethnic groups, leading to resentment and, at times, violence. In the late 1980s, these historical trends culminated with a Serbian ethnic awakening and the rise of Slobodan Milosevic. This set Serbia on a disastrous path from which it is only now recovering.

To help see how critical a role Kosovo has played in Serbian politics since the fall of communism, Serbia was set against its Balkan neighbors. Croatia, a country with which Serbia is often compared, shared a post-World War II state with Serbia and also had an illiberal regime following communism. Despite having much of the same historical trajectory as Serbia, Croatia was able to shake off the shackles of ultra-nationalism much earlier than Serbia and make significant strides toward EU membership. Most of the rest of the former Yugoslavia has also been more eager to join the EU, with Slovenia even becoming a member in 2004. Like Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria had illiberal regimes and vast amounts of corruption after communism. They also turned to the EU much earlier. The difference between Serbia and the other states

was they did not have an issue like Kosovo that nationalists could exploit for votes and keep reforms at bay.

A discussion of how Kosovo and nationalism has shaped the Serbian political landscape since Milosevic was next. After the ouster of Milosevic, much of his economic and governmental structures were left in place. Soft reformers, who wanted to ease away from the troublesome policies of the 1990s, won the debate over those who wanted a hard and abrupt break with the past. Although a brief period of reform took place under Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic, his assassination in 2003 marked a turn away from the EU and the West. Using Kosovo and cooperation with the ICTY as lynchpin issues, nationalist parties were able to set the terms of the political debate, giving reformers little room to maneuver on Kosovo or any sort of reform in general.

The next section was a discussion on the connection between corruption and nationalism. Using data from Transparency International, we saw that Serbia is one of the most corrupt countries in the Balkans. Many of the corrupt actors are holdovers from the Milosevic era or are part of the nationalist parties. Corruption penetrates nearly all aspects of Serbia's political and economic landscape, making it difficult to institute any sort of reform. Since Milosevic, the Kosovo issue has been exploited by nationalist parties to maintain power. This in turn keeps Serbia's culture of corruption running and stifles any meaningful change in Serbian society. With the rise of Tadic and his pro-EU parliamentary coalition, Serbia has the potential to make significant changes.

Unfortunately, from what we have seen with Romania and Bulgaria, stomping out corruption can be exceedingly difficult and Serbia faces a long and difficult road in tackling a substantial issue.

A discussion of Serbia since 2008 followed. The election of Boris Tadic and his pro-EU coalition has given hope to those who want to finally move away from Milosevic and his destructive nationalist policies. Despite an unfavorable ruling by the International Court of Justice on Kosovo's independence in 2008, significant steps have been taken by Serbia to join the EU. It has officially submitted its application for membership and even agreed to talks with Kosovo sponsored by the EU. Although Serbia has an arduous journey on the way to modernization and the EU, conditions may have finally arrived where the Kosovo issue does not frame every political debate and true reform can take place. Kosovo is still vital on the minds of many, but a new reality may be dawning on Serbs that compromise on such an emotional issue may be the best way forward. It is important to remember that this is still a fragile situation, and incidents against Serbs in Kosovo could significantly erode the progress that has been made.

Two other theories why Serbia has lagged behind the rest of the Balkans were then explored. In comparing Serbia and Croatia, Jelena Subotic contends that it was the cultural orientation of these two countries that has been the difference. Croatia saw the EU as a way to return to Europe, while Serbia felt like the perpetual victim in history and never saw itself as completely European. Next, Dejan Anastasijevic's idea that Serb security forces were the decisive factor in Serbia's turn away from the West was explored. He posits that holdovers from the Milosevic era have participated in corruption and assassinations that have crippled the Serbian government and made it difficult to make any significant reforms. Although these two theories have their merit, they do not tell the complete story. Without Kosovo to rely on, nationalist parties would have been forced to acquiesce to the demands of the Serbian electorate, who favor EU membership.

Future scholarship should seek to make a direct connection between Serbia's political parties and corruption. Since corruption is something that is done in great secrecy, finding a smoking gun can be difficult. As long as nationalists have significant power in Serbia, finding the details of what exactly has been happening will not be easy. If Serbia, with luck and courageous leadership, can begin to move away from its past, more facts will surely emerge.

Many observers feel that the key to peace in the Balkans is a peaceful Serbia. Although many more problems must be resolved, most significantly Kosovo's status and Serbia's attitude toward it, the pieces may finally be in place for Serbia to finally emerge from the shadow of the Milosevic era. It is likely to be a long, and at times torturous, road, but one well worth taking.

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