RESURRECTING THE PAST: DEMOCRACY, NATIONAL IDENTITY AND HISTORICAL MEMORY IN MODERN SERBIA

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Resurrecting the Past: Democracy, National Identity, and Historical Memory in Modern Serbia

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The increasing number of states transitioning from authoritarian rule over the last twenty years has prompted scholars to develop more robust definitions of democracy. Specifically, calls among social scientists for more dynamic models of democratic transition have included a need in identifying a particular “quality” of democracy that exceeds earlier models of procedural electoral regimes. However, even these deeper understandings of democracy that account for civic institutions, regime transparency, social justice, and the rule of law often fail to account for how states can develop a more robust democratic society. The divide between theories of “thick” democracy and the increasing number of illiberal democratic regimes that operate within a hybrid system of democratic and authoritarian practice has, I believe, encouraged greater research into a reexamination of the relationship between politics and culture. This study argues that a political movement, regardless of ideology or orientation, that roots itself within specific historical and cultural narratives of a community, enjoys greater degrees of social control and public acceptance. Conversely, a movement that ignores national symbols and historical narratives risks both political irrelevancy and social disengagement. Through
an examination of historical documents, historical school textbooks, 2008 presidential and parliamentary election campaign material, personal interviews, and polling data collected from research institutions throughout Serbia and Europe, I argue that the legitimacy and saliency of either democracy or authoritarianism is dependent on how political elites shape their personal strategies and goals to be congruent with collective identity.
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“There is no present or future – only the past, happening over and over again – now.”

Eugene O’Neill – *A Moon for the Misbegotten*

“In the battles between truth and prejudice, waged on the field of history books, it must be confessed that the latter usually wins.”

Steven Runciman – *The Emperor Romanus Lecapenus & His Reign*

“Well, how’d you become King, then?”

“The Lady of the Lake. Her arm clad in the purest shimmering samite, held aloft Excalibur from the bosom of the water signifying by Divine Providence that I, Arthur, was to carry Excalibur. That is why I am your king!”

“Listen. Strange women lying in ponds distributing swords is no basis for a system of government. Supreme executive power derives from a mandate from the masses, not from some farcical aquatic ceremony!”

Dennis the Constitutional Peasant and King Arthur – *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*
Chapter 1 - Introduction

What is the relationship between democracy, national identity, and historical memory? Under what conditions do particular forms of historical memory promote democratic principles, and under what conditions do they impede it? What can theories of historical memory contribute to the studies of democratic transition and consolidation in not only understanding why societies occasionally accept non-democratic forms of government, but also in explaining how social forces for democratic reform compete with forces of exclusionary nationalism and authoritarian politics amid rapid social change? With these large questions in mind, I contend that historical memory can serve as a useful mechanism for elites, both political and civic, to augment their legitimacy and credibility among the popular masses, shape a collective identity that bases itself on popularly recognized symbols of the past, and link these symbols to present-day issues. A political movement that roots itself within specific historical and cultural narratives of a community enjoys greater degrees of social control and public acceptance. Conversely, a movement that ignores national symbols and historical narratives risks both political isolation and social alienation.

This study focuses on three general issues. First, I am interested in examining the “quality” of democracy in transitioning states.¹ With the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, the dismantling of the Soviet Union, the spread of global markets to

almost all corners of the world, and the steady decay of state-centric authoritarian
governments in dozens of countries from Turkey, to the Philippines, to South Korea, to
Chile, theories of democratic transitions have become one of the most important, if not
one of the most popular, subfields of Political Science. Yet within the past two decades, it
has become all too apparent to both scholars of democratic transition theory and general
policymakers that not all transitioning states have reached full democratic consolidation
and maturity. Prolonged transitions with no clear resolutions, uncompromising and
entrenched elites, international pressures, and a restless and increasingly vocal public are
all producing a new phenomenon of states and societies existing in a proverbial “halfway
house” that provides an uneasy mixture of elements from democratic and non-democratic
camps. It might be premature to classify such states as part of a “reverse wave” of
democratization, but there is some validity in theorizing that there are an increasing
number of states that operate, some rather successfully, within a hybrid framework of

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2 The literature of democratic transition and degrees of consolidation in the post-communist world is
enormous. For a good “all around” text that compares the patterns of democratic transition in various
regions of the world, see Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, Problems of Democratic Transition and
Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe, (Johns Hopkins University
Press, 1996). For a comparative framework of competition and cooperation between and within post-
communist parties, see Herbert Kitschelt et al, Post-Communist Party Systems: Competition,
Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation (Cambridge University Press, 1999). For an examination of
the role of historical and cultural legacies in former communist states, see Grzegorz Ekiert and Stephen
Hanson, eds., Capitalism and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe: Assessing the Legacy of
Communist Rule (Cambridge University Press, 2003). For recent studies on the relationship between
political economy and democratic stability and sustainability, see Daron Acemoglu and James A.

3 As originally coined by Giuseppe DiPalma, “halfway houses” are defined “not by the incompleteness of
democratic consolidation, but a more basic resistance to a democratic agreement”. See DiPalma, To Craft
Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transition, (University of California Press, 1990), p. 154. See also
Marina Ottaway, Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism (Washington D.C: The
Democracy at Home and Abroad (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), and Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way,
65.
Assessing the “quality” of democracy requires social scientists to extend their research beyond the simple minimalist, or “thin”, definitions that constitute a significant part of this debate. Recent studies have acknowledged that research needs to move beyond measuring the presence or absence of electoral regimes, and develop broader conceptualizations of democracy. As recent examples have shown, electing a government does not automatically produce a liberal democratic government, nor do democratic elections always meet with international approval. Free and fair elections in the Palestinian territories that brought Hamas to power in Gaza in 2005 has resulted in Israel, the United States, and several other countries refusing to recognize the Hamas-led government, and even secretly assist rival forces in undermining its authority. Washington’s reluctance to support free elections in Egypt and its continued support for the quasi-authoritarianism of Hosni Mubarak is largely due to the concern that free

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4 The terms “wave” and “reverse waves” are derived from Samuel Huntington’s *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).


elections will sweep the anti-Western Muslim Brotherhood into power. Even in Austria, the formation of a coalition government with the national populist (many would regard as “far right”) Austrian Freedom Party (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ) in January 2000 caused widespread outrage throughout Europe that resulted in at least fourteen EU member-states to recommend ceasing cooperation with Vienna, despite the FPÖ winning nearly 27% of the popular vote. All these examples point to cases where publicly supported and popularly elected governments operate within the structural tenets of democracy, but whose illiberal values are genererally dismissed by Western international consensus. The question is what wins out in the end: the democracy citizens vote for regardless of ideology and orientation, or the the democracy favored (some would even say “pushed” or “imposed”) by key democratic powers such as the United States or Great Britain, or powerful democratic institutions such as the EU?

Efforts in identifying the necessary criteria for a more substantive, or “thick”, definition of democracy over the more procedural, or “thin”, variants, has led Robert Dahl to expand his earlier research and argue that democratically consolidated states must also account for the rule of law and human development. For the former, the rule of law is not just drawn from principles of constitutional liberalism, but traditions accessible to and recognizable by the people who have a say in the making of state decisions. In terms of the latter, human development is a condition that requires, or at the very least facilitates, the economically powerful and economically poor to be placed on equal

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10 I attribute the term “thick democracy” to Kenneth A. Strike’s “Can Schools be Communities? The Tension between Shared Values and Inclusion”, Educational Administration Quarterly, vol. 35, no. 1 (1999), pp. 46 – 70.
political footing. In other words, economic disparity should have no affect on political equality. Issues of social justice, political rights, and civil liberties are universal and inalienable to all citizens of the state. Ultimately, both Dahl and Munck argue, a broad definition of democracy frames it as more than a set of procedures. Both policymakers and citizens understand democracy as a “powerful normative concept” that contributes to an “overall increase in valued political goods.”

A broad definition of democracy also deepens our understanding of how democratic consolidation is reached in a state. Though the phrase has been widely used in the literature to the point of becoming a cliché, the most basic understanding of democratic consolidation is when democracy becomes “the only game in town” for a state. A democratically consolidated state is one where the chances of a non-democratic government coming to power are little to none. Multiple parties compete for votes but all parties operate within prescribed boundaries and thought processes. Different interpretations of democracy may be contested, but the fundamental principles of democracy and the democratic rule of law are never questioned. In this regard, politics is heavily characterized by a state-sanctioned democratic political framework and also by a citizen-based contribution of social and political values that “limit the scope of the

12 Ibid. pp. 129, 130.
13 While the term “only game in town” is frequently used by Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, the authors attribute the term to Giuseppe di Palma in To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transition, (University of California Press, 1990), p. 113.
14 The incentives to participate, and the shifting payoffs between participating or remaining complacent in a democratic system stem from larger studies on collective action. In what David Laitin has described as a “tipping point”, the choice to participate in a democratic system and play by the prescribed rules of the game, even if those participating do not completely agree personally with those rules, occurs once the payoffs for participation outweigh the payoffs for not participating. See David Laitin, Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad, (Cornell University Press, 1998).
political process to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to” both groups.\(^{15}\)

It would be erroneous to conclude that democratic consolidation is anything close to resembling political hegemony. However, I believe there is a similar set of features between democracy as a dominant form of political practice and hegemony as the saturation and resonance of a particularly ideological discourse at state and community levels.\(^{16}\) While democratic political actors and participants encourage rule by the people through political and civic groups respectively, “all forms of political organization have a bias in favor of the exploitation of some kinds of conflict and the suppression of others because organization is the mobilization of bias. Some issues are organized into politics while others are organized out.”\(^{17}\) In other words, even in countries with strong traditions of democratic practice, the price for deviating from the official democratic narrative is, almost invariably, political obscurity and social stigma.\(^{18}\) Nevertheless, by democratic consolidation meaning democracy is the “only game in town”, democracy is

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\(^{16}\) Antonio Gramsci, to which scholars most popularly attribute to the term, never provides an official definition of hegemony, but the concept is generally understood as the “attempt of political elites to generalize their interests to the populace at large. Hegemony involves not only an effort to elicit the consent of subaltern groups through encouraging them to internalize the ruling elite’s norms and values, but also an effort to generate a set of foundational myths that define and institutionalize a particular nationalist imagery.” See Davis (2005), p. 2. Additionally, Kubik writes that hegemony has two aspects: semiotic (saturation) and psychological (resonance). See Kubik and Aronoff, *Anthropology and Political Science: Culture, Politics, and Democratization* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, forthcoming). See also Perry Anderson, “The Antimonies of Antonio Gramsci”, *New Left Review*, vol. 100 (1976 – 77), pp. 5 – 78


\(^{18}\) Alexis de Tocqueville notes that unlike absolutist governments, which punish non-compliance with death, the “tyranny” of democratic republics is treating non-compliant members as outcasts. Tocqueville writes, “No longer does the master say: ‘You will think as I do or you will die’; he says ‘You are free not to think like me, your life, property, everything will be untouched but from today you are a pariah among us. You will retain your civic privileges, but they will be useless to you, for if you seek the votes of your fellow citizens, they will not grant you them and if you simply seek their esteem, they will pretend to refuse you that too. You will retain your place amongst men but you will lose the rights of mankind … Go in peace; I grant you your life, but it is a life worse than death.” Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans Gerald E. Bevan. (Penguin Books, 2003), pp. 298-99.
behaviorally, attitudinally, and constitutionally embedded within a political and social framework.¹⁹

The second, more case-study specific, issue in this study examines the multiple interpretations of identity and democracy in Serbia and its relationship with the rest of Europe.²⁰ By Dahl’s structural and institutional criteria, Serbia has met all the necessary minimal conditions to be classified as a consolidated democracy.²¹ Since October 2000, Serb citizens can freely choose their government, engage in public debate, criticize their leaders, and enjoy freedoms of speech and association. Elections are widely recognized as both fair and transparent. Constitutional rules of law are universally recognized and there are no organizations that seek power via circumvention of the rule of law, nor the overthrow of the state and its laws. Serbia has not only one democratic political party, but several. Minority communities all have their own recognized political parties at both national and local levels. The Serbian Radical Party (Srpske Radikalne Stranke, SRS), often regarded as “far right”, “hardline” and “ultranationalist” in Western media circles, operates under a program of national populism within the confines of constitutional and parliamentary law.²² Since 2000, multiple parliamentary and presidential elections have

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¹⁹ According to Linz and Stepan, democratic consolidation is realized when “democracy becomes routinized and deeply internalized in social, institutional, and even psychological life, as well as calculations for achieving success.” See Linz and Stepan (1996), p. 5. For working definitions of democratic consolidation along behavioral, attitudinal, and constitutional axioms, see p. 6.

²⁰ Though Serbia is a multiethnic country with various forms of identity corresponding to each ethnic group and within each ethnic group, I am primarily, if not exclusively, interested in examining predominant forms of collective identity among the ethnic Serb majority in this study only. With the notable exception of Kosovo’s Albanian communities, no definitive work in English to my knowledge has been done on the politics of collective identity among Serbia’s ethnic minority groups.

²¹ Robert Dahl, On Democracy, (Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 35 – 43. Dahl identifies five general criteria for democracy: effective participation for debate and cooperation by all elected officials, equality of voting, “enlightened understanding” in which both elected officials and citizens have access to information concerning the benefits and potential consequences of policies as well as alternative ideas, control and management of policy, and full universal suffrage. See also Dahl, Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition, (Yale University Press, 1971).

²² For a review of theories and models of national populism, see Chapter 7
been held, and government turnover has been both peaceful and orderly. As the most recent parliamentary elections in May 2008 have also shown, the Socialist Party of Serbia (Socijalistička Partija Srbije, SPS), the former party of Slobodan Milošević, has made extraordinary strides in distancing itself from the era of the 1990s, and is even a key governing coalition partner with pro-Western and pro-EU parties.

However, simply citing structural necessities often yields misleading conclusions. Serbia represents a country that has all the institutional and structural features of a functioning democratic state, yet still lacks a functional democratic culture.23 Political parties remain largely undefined and undifferentiated from one another. The most visible features of each party are the party leaders, whose actions and decisions primarily shape the party and public support for said party, not the other way around. Government still remains top-heavy in the sense that all decision-making resides in Belgrade, and anything passed at the local levels, must fall under the capital’s perennial scrutiny. Corruption is still a major problem in Serbian political circles, and many of the above-mentioned democratic parties have been known to engage in questionable practices ranging from embezzlement to involvement in organized crime.24 Certain areas of Serbia such as Belgrade and the northern province of Vojvodina are more Western oriented than less

23 As I will explain in Chapter 3, a “democratic culture” is generally regarded by social scientists to equate with what Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba have termed a “civic culture”, which is defined as “a pluralistic culture based on communication and persuasion, a culture of diversity, a culture that permitted change but moderated it.” While indices of civic cultures might differ from country to country, the primary theme present in all civic cultures is participation, or more specifically, the willingness of the citizen to participate in the political process. See Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations, (Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 5. See also the abridged version of The Civic Culture, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1963), p. 8. However, as I will also explain, conceptual understandings of “civic culture” have been highly problematic when examining post-communist countries due in part to decades of state-controlled social activities, and also in part to the civic culture model evaluating political culture solely through an examination of publicly observable measures of support through official political and institutional channels.

developed areas in central and southern Serbia.\textsuperscript{25} Also, political and economic development is primarily focused in key urban areas like Belgrade and Novi Sad, while rural locations and smaller industrial centers have remained neglected and undeveloped from the communist era.

Serbia represents a clear case where the patterns of “thick” democracy that are both institutionally self-sustaining and socially embedded have yet to take root.\textsuperscript{26} Many see little to no difference between the democratic leaders in office today and those in power during the Milošević regime in the 1990s. Many others also feel their lives have not substantially improved since Milošević was removed from power in 2000 and some feel it has gotten worse. There is little trust in government institutions, little faith in Serbia’s elected leaders, and a growing sense that Serbia’s fate is largely determined and directed by outside powers.\textsuperscript{27} While low levels of faith for government by the public

\textsuperscript{25} While it is incorrect to ascribe fixed voting patterns to each region, Belgrade and Vojvodina have a higher percentage of voting for the Democratic Party (DS) and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), while central and southern Serbia have displayed greater support for the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), along with its coalition partner New Serbia (NS) particularly around the region of Čačak, home to Velimir Ilić, leader of NS. The Serbian Radical Party (SRS) enjoys relative strength throughout Serbia, but most significantly in southern Serbia as well as Kosovo. See Republika izborna komisija http://www.rik.parlament.sr.gov.yu/

\textsuperscript{26} The subject of “thick” or “strong” democracy, has its roots in John Dewey’s Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1912), in which he describes democracy as a “way of life” instead of simply a process of organizing political power and selecting people for public office. Additional works have expanded on a “culture of democracy” or a “democratic culture” by noting the importance of fraternity and interdependent trust with people outside one’s immediate community of family and friends. A “democratic culture” is therefore one that is characterized by public policies and social habits that promote and strengthen shared interests across communal boundaries. The best way to promote such a culture is through education not just through formal channels of schools and universities but also within a general framework of communication and mutual respect for all citizens as equal members of the community. See Reinhard Bendix, Nation-Building and Citizenship: Studies of our Changing Social Order (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1964); James David Barber, Citizen Politics: An Introduction to Political Behavior (Chicago: Markham Publishing Company, 1969); Wilson Carey McWilliams, The Idea of Fraternity in America (University of California Press, 1973); and Benjamin Barber, Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age, (University of California Press, 1984).

\textsuperscript{27} Only 30% of Serbs trust their government, while an even lower 20% trust politicians, and 27% trust the parliament. This is contrasted with a 68% confidence in the Serbian Orthodox Church and its hierarchy, as well as nearly 52% trust for the army, two of the country’s most recognizable institutions that preserve traditional Serbian identity. See Political Divisions and Value Orientations of Citizens of Serbia, Center za
exists in other post-communist countries, a culture of national populism that campaigns against globalization, immigration, multiculturalism, and international organizations, similar to far right political movements in the rest of Europe, continues to enjoy a strong public following in Serbia.\textsuperscript{28}

Democracy in Serbia can therefore be described as consolidated, but still “thin”, due to what Kubik and Linch identify as the “lack of symbolic closure of the state socialist period and the negotiation-based transition.”\textsuperscript{29} In other words, the establishment of a democratic political framework after October 2000 has failed to produce a democratic political culture that has reconciled the past with political, social, and ethnic communities in Serbia, throughout the former Yugoslavia, and with Europe. This, I argue, has largely resulted from two general factors. First, democratically-minded political and cultural elites have largely failed to take advantage of the plentiful reservoir of “symbolic material” in Serbian history, both recent and distant, in which a compelling set of narratives could be fashioned for a new, post-communist, post-authoritarian, democratic Serbian state. Not only have the democratic parties failed to provide an alternative set of symbols and narratives to those used by the Milošević regime, but democratic political rhetoric has been co-opted by the nationalists.

Second, the apparent failure in crafting an alternative democratic narrative for Serbia has been in large part due to the residual effects of international involvement that,


\textsuperscript{29} Jan Kubik and Amy Linch, “The Original Sin of Poland’s Third Republic: Discounting ‘Solidarity’ and its Consequences for Political Reconciliation”, \textit{Polish Sociological Review}, vol. 153, no. 1 (2006), p. 12. As the article title implies, the authors are referring to Poland. Yet I have found striking similarities between Poland and Serbia in regards to the lack of broadly accepted narrative of post-communist democratic identity.
while under the pretext of achieving regional stability, have actually exacerbated political
tensions, deepened ethnic cleavages, and turned previously nationalistic rhetoric into
mainstream political thought. Unresolved issues from the 1990s notwithstanding, the
recent events following the U.S. backed unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo
by its large Albanian majority has affirmed in the minds of many Serbs that the West is
determined to punish Serbia and reward its enemies. If Serbian democratic elites are
guilty of disregarding their state’s own history, key international actors are doubly
culpable. The actual belief among various Western officials that stability in the Balkans
could be achieved if Kosovo were given independence, and that Serbia would just simply
have to accept that Kosovo, the historic and cultural heartland of the Serbian nation, is no
longer theirs, represents a complete disconnect between internationally based notions of
political stability and those shared by the vast majority of Serbian citizens and Serbian
political elites.

Nearly two years after Kosovo’s declaration of independence the territory’s
sovereignty continues to remain contested between Serbs and Albanians, keeping the
issue front and center to the political debate. This has not only forced pro-Western parties
in Serbia to maintain narratives of national defense, but it has significantly aided illiberal
democratic parties that have openly called for the cessation of further cooperation with
the West until Serbia’s territorial integrity is guaranteed. Many Serbs lend their support
and votes to parties like the SRS and the recently established Serbian Progressive Party
(Srpska Napredna Stranka, SNS) not because of their unapologetic espousal of
exclusionary nationalism, as many analysts in the West seem to conclude, but because
both parties have functioned as an opposition bloc to both the ineffective democratic
governments in Belgrade, and to a series of international policies that have shaped Serbia’s ongoing political and social evolution. Since 2000, the SRS has been relatively free of criticism and blame for government ineffectiveness, political elitism, and economic greed that the pro-democratic coalition has received in the last eight years from a discontented citizenry. The SRS and SNS have also portrayed themselves as the defender of Serbian culture and identity against internationalism and Western globalization. They repeatedly defend the traditional institutions such as the army, the state, and the Serbian Orthodox Church. Both have taken an unequivocal stance regarding the importance of Kosovo as an integral part of Serbia’s territory, arguing that Serbia, like any state under similar circumstances, is defending its territorial integrity against perceived Western imperialism.

Within the larger literature on democratic transition, calls for a broader understanding of democracy beyond minimalist conceptions of electoral procedures and institutional accountability have remained unsure about how to proceed for states trapped within a stalled transition. In other words, the previous twenty years of democratic transition throughout Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union was characterized by

30 On September 8, 2008, Tomislav Nikolić, acting president of the SRS in place of Vojislav Šešelj, who is currently on trial in the Hague, formed a new parliamentary group Napred Srbijo (Forward Serbia) with a number of SRS party members after a series of disagreements with Šešelj that led to a political schism. On September 11, 2008, Šešelj, in a written statement, condemned Nikolić and all other defectors as traitors and Western puppets, and called on all loyal SRS members to remain true to the ideology of “Serbian nationalism, anti-globalism, and Russophobia.” The following day, Nikolić and his supporters were expelled from the SRS. On September 14, Aleksandar Vučić, Secretary General of the SRS also resigned. On October 10, 2008, Nikolić and Vučić founded the SNS. As this study will argue, much of the populist character that defined the SRS throughout most of the post-Milošević years, can be attributed to Nikolić’s leadership. While it is still too early to make any definitive predictions at the time of this writing, it is highly probable that the SNS will inherit the populism of the SRS, while the remnants of the SRS under Šešelj remains a party of the far right. As recent as July 2009, the SNS emerged as the most popular party in Serbia. Unless otherwise indicated, all references to the SRS are made prior to the political schism, but it can be highly assumed that the national character of populism will continue to be represented by the SNS. For information on the SRS split, see “Nikolić Quits Radicals”, B92.net (September 12, 2008). For SNS popularity, see “SNS Emerges as Most Popular Party”, B92.net (July 18, 2009).
large numbers of states transitioning from authoritarian rule, but resulted in only a handful of states actually reaching full liberal democratic consolidation. More robust definitions of democracy have differentiated the types of democracies between the more “embedded” democracy of the Czech Republic and Poland, and the more “defective” democracy of Slovakia and Serbia. But these sources provide little in predicting how “weak”, “thin”, “illiberal”, “defective”, or any other type of democracy with an affixed pejorative adjective can complete the transition to the “strong” democracies of Western Europe, North America, and the Anglo-Saxon Pacific (Australia and New Zealand). Thus, identifying the necessary criteria for establishing a strong liberal democratic framework in Serbia continues to remain elusive.

Assuming (some would even say hoping) that conditions will improve with eventual EU membership is the most commonly proferred solution, but remains, theoretically, little better than wishful thinking. This lead me to a third critical component to this study--a deep understanding of the culture of a state and society can provide the necessary legitimacy to state power in facilitating greater citizen participation and patterns of behavior that are crucial in establishing conditions for “thick” democracy.

The Serbia example thus illustrates that the establishment of democratic institutions is only one of three general objectives that must be met if democratic consolidation and maturity is to be realized. The second objective is the construction of a democratic narrative to operate as the cultural software to institutional hardware. The third objective is the deconstruction and reconciliation of pre-existing authoritarian

31 While not directly referring to the relationship between democracy and culture, the hardware/software metaphor is modeled on Thomas Friedman’s conceptual relationship between a global economy and the rule of law. See Thomas Friedman, The Lexus and the Olive Tree (New York: Anchor Books, 2000), pp. 145 – 166.
narratives. Dismantling the old order means more than disbanding the secret police, allowing for a free press, calling for general elections, and opening up the secret government archives. It also means that a culture of patrimonialism, suspicion, and exclusionary nationalism needs to be confronted, diffused, and replaced with a democratic civic culture of cooperation, trust, social justice, and ethnic co-fraternity. We cannot simply graft a democratic government onto a non-democratically oriented society, for doing so will only facilitate non-democratic elements to gain greater political legitimacy through democratic channels. Taking culture seriously in democratic transition moves our research beyond the minimal requirements of democracy, and places a greater emphasis on “thick democracy,” which is both self-sustaining institutionally and deeply embedded socially. Following this line of reasoning, democratic consolidation is reached when a “democratic culture” permeates society. Without active public support for democratic principles and a popular consensus that no other form of government is preferable to democracy, institutions, no matter how versatile, pervasive, or interdependent, will fail to gain public legitimacy and function amid a general feeling of public apathy and disengagement.

A central question to this study is what determines the electoral outcome of the first multiparty elections in the post-authoritarian period. Why would people choose to elect, and in many situations re-elect, openly committed nationalists? Do these parties portray themselves as nationalists, xenophobes, and quasi-authoritarians, or does the public view them as defenders of cultural values and the national interest? It seems highly improbable that people will voluntarily vote for a party that promises to curtail democratic freedoms and personal liberties, yet interestingly enough this seems to be the
general consensus reached by Western analysts when observing countries like Serbia both during and following the Milošević era. Scholars have been calling for cultural models to be taken more seriously for decades now, but behavioralist methodologies in social science still regard culture as more of a theoretical category that is unchanging and unflinching to variations in internal and exogenous stimuli, when it should be seen as a collection of adaptable beliefs and practices. As recent studies have concluded, a general dissatisfaction with ethnographies that present culture as uniform, uncompromising, and determinate have, not surprisingly, led to a general disillusionment of “the culture concept”, and a gravitation towards the more academically universal, quantitatively replicable, and less controversial approaches mentioned above.32

Scholars utilizing semiotic, or “interpretivist”, approaches to culture however, argue that rather than moving away from culture, we need to develop more robust models that treat culture as a dynamic phenomenon, subject to adaptability and growth over time and space. Semiotic approaches to politics focus on the “symbolic dimensions of politics, including the role of myth and ritual,” while culture is understood as the “collective meanings that groups create, share, and symbolically express.”33 Interpretivist approaches to culture, while providing the necessary “thick” description of group identity through myth, ritual, and discourse, also seeks to identify distinctions of cultural cleavages within

32 For a thorough discussion of the different approaches to political culture in the fields of sociology, anthropology, and political science, see William H. Sewell, Jr. “The Concept(s) of Culture”, in Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture, Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt, eds. (University of California Press, 1999), 35 – 61.
groups that are themselves defined by alternative, and oftentimes competing, preferences and discourses that more static models of culture fail to identify. The strengths of these approaches are particularly acute when examining transitions from authoritarian rule in multiethnic societies that, during rapid social change, may seek more familiar patterns of collective identity around ethnocentric narratives.

Again, Serbia is a particularly good example of this, because politics in Serbia throughout the past two decades reflect the uneasy relationship between democracy and identity. Both remain politically contested and socially incomplete because Serbs have yet to agree on a universally accepted model of political community. Since the mid-nineteenth century, two general frameworks of collective identity have characterized Serbian political discourse reflecting social, cultural, and economic cleavages. One embraces traditional Serbian values rooted in extended familial relations of Slavic, Byzantine, and Ottoman customs that emphasize group solidarity and collective freedom over Western concepts of individual liberty and social justice. The other, while not completely rejecting the core principles and beliefs of these customs, has sought to associate Serbian culture as a component – albeit a leading component – of a larger South Slavic heritage comprised of co-fraternal ethnic groups and enriched by multiple cultural and intellectual traditions of central and western Europe. Both identities are rooted in a

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series of historical narratives that give them legitimacy, but neither side has ever achieved political or cultural dominance.  

At present, the former model of identity continues to characterize Serbian political culture since the overthrow of Slobodan Milošević in October 2000, while the latter has been most visibly present in protest politics, student organizations, avant-garde movements, and personal choices of association both during the Milošević period and afterward. Today, Serbia is governed by a pro-Western coalition that is eager to integrate the country with the European Union as quickly as possible. However, unresolved issues concerning Serbia’s relationship with the West during the breakup of Yugoslavia, the political and economic and social isolation during the Milošević period, and the recent administrative loss of Kosovo, have all forced pro-democratic parties to continually maintain considerable degrees of nationalist rhetoric that champions ethnic group solidarity before civic co-fraternity. As this study argues, the collapse of a civic-wide Yugoslav state and the absence of any broadly-accepted alternative democratic variant in any of the former republics, inevitably forced elites to seek political reconfiguration within culturally illiberal democratic structures. Open-ended issues in Kosovo and the wars in the 1990s, and the actions of international actors in seeking solutions without fully understanding the cultural legacies of these issues, have only exacerbated, and in many respects lent electoral legitimacy to, democratic illiberalism in Serbia. I hypothesize that the inability of Serbs to institutionally appropriate a viable, and unified, model of political community that links Serbian identity with the democratic values of

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Europe has been the greatest obstacle in achieving full democratic maturity, political stability, and European integration since 2000.

I argue that a combined model of theories of historical memory and theories of democratic transition and consolidation can assist scholars in reaching more definitive conclusions of the areas they are researching by understanding why people’s attitudes, beliefs, and preferences are conditioned by current crises. Additionally, by identifying the interpretive frameworks of competing historical narratives, theories of historical memory explain how ethnic conflict can erupt in previously tolerant multiethnic societies. By placing an emphasis on democratic growth through regional identities and historical sensitivities, scholars and policymakers may come to a better understanding of how public attitudes and present concerns can be utilized to embrace democratic values of civic cooperation, fraternity, and community activism that functions beyond simple voting patterns. Finally, a greater emphasis on the culture of a society may help scholars identify certain patterns of democratic transition that may be ineffective, or even counterproductive to the country under study. In other words, policymakers need to “custom tailor” democracy for each country, rather than rely on the mass produced “one size fits all” models that fail to identify alternative political cultures beneath the political surface. Searching for democratically compatible narratives not only moves our research forward, it also leads to a better understanding of why some states or regions enjoy

greater degrees of public activity and civic engagement in politics than others.\textsuperscript{39} A number of consolidated democracies in Western Europe are today defined by cultural narratives that fundamentally differ from the prevailing collective identities just one or two generations ago. It is therefore essential to identify what these societies did to reconcile cultural values with democratic principles.\textsuperscript{40}

**Historical Memory and Democratization**

The study of memory in the social sciences is often, if not always, associated with concepts of identity. In many respects, both terms have become so matter-of-factly interconnected that they are not only generally understood as being conceptually inseparable, but are often regarded as mutually reinforcing causalities.\textsuperscript{41} However, more recent works on the role of memory have contextualized it as a causal variable for


political power and social control. These works associate memory with studies of political culture, and have challenged preexisting assumptions that culture, identity, and thus memory also, are monolithic phenomena that are present and apparent to all members of a specific group without any internal cleavages.42

The study of historical memory is a useful approach for both identifying and interpreting these forms of identity in Serbia and elsewhere. In its most basic understanding, I define historical memory as a collection of narratives about the past that a specific group shares and reifies into non-negotiable truths to explain current political, social, cultural, and economic circumstances.43 It is a specific interpretation of the past for political legitimization of the present. In other words, the study of historical memory is both the study of what we remember and how we remember it. It is an examination of the emotional quality we ascribe to events, places, people, symbols, and ideas. It places particular emphasis on certain elements of the past, while giving passing reference to,


43 My definition draws from Eric Davis’ understanding of historical memory as “the collective understandings that a collective group shares about events in the past that it perceives to have shaped its current economic, social, cultural, and political status and identity.” As will be explained below, I also follow Davis’ distinction of historical memory from collective memory in that the former is state-sponsored collective memory. See Davis (2005), p. 4.
downgrading, ignoring, or even denying others. Historical memory is also a state-sponsored interpretation of the past that links past and present in one cumulative story, or narrative. Narratives, as will be explained later in greater detail, help to “establish apparently logical connections between what are otherwise unconnected, contradictory and ambivalent political events, ideas and figures.”

Unlike official history, which demarcates time between past and present, historical narratives provide an interpretive framework of history that blends both past and present within one continuous and ongoing sequence. Interpretations of the past, while intangible, symbolic, and in some respects even irrational, are reified by elites representing broad social movements in order to ascribe legitimacy to their activities, gather public support, and link their own philosophies and ideologies with traditional understandings of national identity that the greater population regards as both commonsensical and non-negotiable.

Concepts of historical memory have remained ambiguous, as the term has been frequently used as a synonym with more broad-based understandings of collective memory. Both terms do share considerable degrees of conceptual overlap, but unlike more commonly known models of collective and social memory that characterize general collective consciousness and group identity, historical memory is an appropriation of the past to serve political ends, “and is mobilized by both states and oppositional forces in their efforts to impose ideological hegemony and influence the distribution of power in

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45 Eviatar Zerubavel, Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past (University of Chicago Press, 2003)
46 Halbwachs (1992) p. 24, only classifies historical memory as impersonal and indirect memory that is preserved and interpreted by social institutions.
Though some form of collective memory characterizes nearly every social organization, it is the state that has, above all other institutions, the power to facilitate a politically ascribed national memory. In this regard, historical memory serves as a critical component for elites in that it functions as both a cultural and institutional mechanism of social control and ultimately an access to, and maintenance of, power.

Political elites however are rarely, if ever, able to appropriate historical memory that exerts a particular form of group identity that conflicts with the population’s own recollection and sense of truth without extensive ideological coercion. Whatever the origin, specific models of historical memory are almost always sensitive to “content, audience, and goals”. Intellectuals play a critical role in the creation, dissemination, and legitimization of historical memory either through their own independent work that is subsequently adopted by the state, or through political channels that seek to identify specific tenets and ideologies of the movement with general beliefs and values of society.

Regardless of ideology or orientation, a reading of history that affirms the “authenticity” of present political strategies and collective actions with accepted practices of an esteemed bygone age is key to the discourse of the state. Collective memory at the

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47 This type of “ politicized” historical memory is used by both hegemonic and counterhegemonic elites, and is differentiated from a more “organic” historical memory that represents a society’s understanding of the past, but develops outside the formal apparatuses of the state. See Davis (2005), pp. 4 – 5.

48 Davis (2005), p. 5

49 The role of intellectuals is closely related to Gramsci’s categorization of “traditional” and “organic” intellectuals. “Traditional” intellectuals are the lexicographers, linguists, philosophers, national historians, literati, and other academics that are usually afforded a special honor in a group’s history as an architect of national identity. “Organic” intellectuals are those who openly and actively operate within a particular political and ideological discourse and represent a distinctive socio-economic class. While the former have achieved a sort of inter-class aura of authority and recognition, the latter are identified less by their profession than by their role in directing ideas and aspirations of their group. The ideas and writings of traditional intellectuals may very well be co-opted by the state, but it is the state that bears the burden of living up to the ideals and teachings of those intellectuals. Organic intellectuals, while not necessarily being propaganda ministers, are ultimately ideological deputies of the state. On the role of intellectuals, see Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, (New York: International Publishers, 1971), pp. 3 – 23. For a more specific role of the Gramscian “traditional” intellectual, see Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (New York: Verso, 1983), pp. 67 – 82.
non-political level may contain multiple interpretations of the past, including multiple interpretations of a particular event. But ruling elites even in the most democratic societies attempt to project what they believe to be the correct interpretation of history for the sake of national cohesion and thus emphasize a continuity of culture between present norms, values, and traditions with those of a selected Golden Age during which the nation reached its political, social, cultural, or territorial apogee but has since “lost its way”.

Attempts to formulate and practice monolithic historical memory have been primarily associated with authoritarian regimes and their maintenance of power. Exercises in state-sponsored ideology, characterized by public commemorations, official versions of history, and penalties for non-compliance are all visible characteristics of hegemonic projects designed to inculcate loyalty to the state and enhance the power of

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50 For example, slavery and the apparent complacent attitudes of many American statesmen from the Founding Fathers to the eve of the Civil War has remained an incredibly controversial issue in American history. While a general reading of American history today concludes that slavery was a great evil, the fact that slavery was a legally recognized institution in the United States until 1865, and that many of America’s immortalized Founding Fathers, including George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, were slave-owners, remains a blight on historical memories of the United States as a land of freedom and opportunity for all oppressed peoples. While historiographies on American slavery cannot deny these facts, they nevertheless attempt to portray historic individuals as either reluctant participants of a perennial evil, or individuals who accepted this evil and thus deserve present-day contempt for deviating from true American values of freedom and the rights of man. Today, Thomas Jefferson, writer of the Declaration of Independence, Founding Father, and slave-owner, is regarded to have thought of slavery as a “necessary evil”. Likewise, the image of George Washington has been continuously refashioned. In a series of portraits of Washington collectively titled “Father of his Country” by J. L. G. Ferris in 1909, Washington was depicted in simple everyday situations. One image of his was in his home smithy working with hammer and tongs alongside his slaves. If Washington was to be a slave-owner, he would be remembered as one that regarded his slaves as his brothers and equals that were unjustly placed in bondage, and as a progenitor to the American values and ethics that inspired Lincoln nearly a century later. For an historiographical view of slavery in America, see John David Smith, *Slavery, Race, and American History: Historical Conflict, Trends, and Method, 1866-1953* (Armonk, NY: 1999). For an excellent review of the changing image of George Washington in American historiography, see Barry Schwartz, “Social change and Collective Memory: The Democratization of George Washington”, *American Sociological Review*, vol. 56, no. 2 (April 1991), pp. 221 – 236.
political elites at the expense of alternative groups. Moreover, authoritarian uses of historical memory have functioned as tools of domination by particular ethnic and social groups. Whether it was Sunni Arabs in Hussein’s Iraq, Castilian Spaniards in Franco’s Spain, or arguably Serbs in Tito’s Yugoslavia, historical memory is a particular interpretation of the past that enforces sectarian rule, justifies the power of the ruling group, and vilifies other groups within the state perceived as threatening for purposes of social control.

But in addition to promoting sectarian fears between groups, authoritarian historical memories also serve to eliminate, or at the very least demobilize, social cleavages within the group. In examining Serbia under the Milošević regime, attempts by the SPS in maintaining power throughout the 1990s must be seen in relation to what it regarded as dangerous opposition movements that, while nationalist, had consistently called for economic liberalization, liberal democratic government, and rapid integration into the European Union. Since the 1960s Serbian communists had been divided between conservatives who wished to keep a strong grip over the Yugoslav economy, minimize market forces and maintain a centralized political system, and reformers who wanted to democratize the party at local levels, rely more on market forces, and decentralize the country to the republic level. When deepening economic crises allowed reformists to restructure the country, and when repeated attempts at obstructing change risked either party expulsion or, after 1990, electoral defeat, conservatives argued that further

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economic liberalization and political decentralization threatened the “Serbian nation” and empowered “historical enemies” of Serbia.

Particularly amid rapid social change when new social forces challenge what had previously been taken for granted, the study of historical memory provides useful insights in understanding patterns of collective action, identifying strategies of social control, and weighing the effectiveness of legitimacy that all characterize political transition. Though historical memory is almost always framed within a socio-cultural context, its messages almost invariably address issues that are economic and institutional. The past is not propagated simply because it serves as an arousing set of stories and narratives. The “past” is debated to arouse public sentiment to support current political policies. As Davis argues, these policies fall within two general frameworks: preservative and restorative. The first seeks to maintain of a set of principles and beliefs that, while currently still official socio-political narrative, have been increasingly challenged by dissenting social cleavages. The second, and one more frequently used by nationalist movements, actively seeks to reestablish society’s links to a glorified past that has been ruptured by “inauthentic” groups such as unpatriotic elites, external occupiers, treacherous minorities, and political dissidents.52 In Serbia, the success of Milošević regime was primarily in utilizing both frameworks to ensure loyalty and support from two different social strata that differed in goals but were united in common fears.

Restorative historical memory was officially associated with entrenched hardline Serbian communists who had favored a recentralization of the country in order to reassert direct control over Serbia’s two provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina, which had been recognized as autonomous units within the Serbian republic after the establishment of a

52 For examples of restorative and preservative historical memories, see Davis (2005), pp. 148 – 99.
Communist government in 1945, and also its large minority communities in Bosnia and Croatia. Since the mid-1960s, a series of official state policies had been progressively decentralizing Yugoslav authority to the republic level, and with the ratification of the 1974 Constitution each republic functioned as an autonomous political unit in all but name. Additionally, Vojvodina and Kosovo were also given sweeping powers that made them function as virtual republics themselves. While reformists within the League of Communists of Serbia were some of the most outspoken in all of Yugoslavia and were calling for even more political and economic liberalization by the mid-1980s, the once-privileged communist elite, along with many top-ranking officers of the Yugoslav People’s Army (Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija, JNA), interpreted the decentralization of the country as the greatest threat to national unity and a rejection of their power. By aiming to restore central authority in Belgrade by abolishing the autonomy of Serbia’s two provinces and placing these goals within the ideological framework of orthodox Marxism that originally defined the Yugoslav state, Serbian communists regarded Milošević as a vanguard against further instability and fragmentation.

Interestingly enough, another type of restorative historical memory was employed for the large percentage of Serbian workers primarily, though not exclusively, from Central Serbia and Kosovo who had been economically disenfranchised by the collapsing Yugoslav economy since the late 1970s.53 Particularly for the Serbs of Kosovo, the

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53 Equally interesting the apparent marriage of convenience between hardline Serbian elites in Vojvodina and working class Serbs in Kosovo. As Serbia’s most developed region, and one of Yugoslavia’s most economically advanced areas, Vojvodina was at the forefront of further political and economic reforms, thus making any elites interested in recentralization doubly entrenched. On the other hand, Kosovo has always been the poorest and most undeveloped region of Serbia as well as all of Yugoslavia. As a result, nearly all Serbian elites in Kosovo were in favor of recentralization, not the least because of increasing Albanian unrest that threatened to establish the province as a separate republic, if not outright secede. A strategic alliance between Vojvodina elites and Kosovo Serb workers ensued by which orchestrated protests were organized by high officials from Vojvodina who transported Kosovo Serb workers to urban
scarcity of jobs and weak economic infrastructure was accompanied by increasing social and ethnic tensions with the ethnic Albanian majority, who since 1981 had been in favor of establishing the province as a separate Yugoslav republic, with more extreme elements advocating outright independence and annexation to Albania. In response to what was generally regarded by Serbs as ethnocentric national movements among Croat and Albanian populations that actively sought to define their own national identity against perceived Serbian domination and oppression, Milošević unofficially courted the writings of contemporary Serbian intellectuals that rejected Yugoslavia as a workable state, and Yugoslavism as national identity. Particularly within the intellectual ranks of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (Srpska Akademija Nauka i Umetnosti, SANU), concerted calls had been made to reestablish and reassert fundamental components of Serbian national culture to not only counter the claims of competing national movements, but to safeguard the identities of Serbian communities scattered throughout Yugoslavia that could potentially be targets of apartheid and cultural assimilation. While hardly a nationalist himself, Milošević understood the importance of addressing these issues and promising to be someone who would finally rectify what had been neglected for far too long by members of his own party.

Yet in promising to restore both Serbian politics and society to a position of strength, historical memory under Milošević was also used within a particularly preservationist framework. Milošević may have cast himself as the “savior of the nation”,

areas in Vojvodina such as Novi Sad and Subotica throughout 1987 and 1988 to enforce the belief that Serbian displeasure with the current system was pandemic. For an excellent study of the relationship between orthodox Marxism and renewed Serbian nationalism, see Nebojša Vladislavljević, Serbia’s Antibureaucratic Revolution: Milošević, the Fall of Communism and Nationalist Mobilization (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

but these actions and policies were clearly meant to stifle further democratic socio-political development, preserve the power base of many of Belgrade’s communist elite, and facilitate a political environment in which the only legitimate, authentic, and stable political and ideological position was what was held by the ruling party. Throughout the wars of Yugoslav secession in the 1990s, the most vocal proponents of Serbian nationalism came not from the ruling regime but the opposition, including many pro-Western democrats, who were eager to gain a larger percentage of votes and prove they had a deeper understanding of suffering of the Serbian nation than Milošević’s self-serving inner circle. Yet this played perfectly into Milošević’s strategy of political preservation. During elections, Milošević would either portray his detractors as nationalist firebrands who would risk taking the country into further wars, or fifth column elements who were supported by Western organizations intent on weakening Serbia from within. The main appeal of Milošević and the ruling Socialist Party of Serbia (Socijalistička partija Srbije, SPS) was material well-being through the preservation of a socialist system that provided state-sponsored social security and stable economic growth. One of the party’s official slogans was “with us there is no uncertainty” to signify the dangers political and economic reform could bring by dividing a people that had strived for decades to reunite.

In this regard, repeated calls for social and political stability after decades of failed attempts at stemming economic decline, coupled with general fears of ethnic unrest stemming from the economic and institutional malaise, resulted in an emerging message by Milošević that promised security and stability through a reemphasis of Serbian values and customs. Indeed the historical memories of the Milošević regime were most
attractive to entrenched elites because it justified political and economic reconfiguration to the center, and to vast majority of Serbian working class families, particularly those in Kosovo, because it promised political stability, a continuation of the welfare state, and a security crackdown on rouge elements within nationalist movements of other ethnic groups. Historical memory under Milošević did not appeal to a glorious past to recreate, but rather made appeals to defend what was currently under attack from external forces. It was primarily preservative in continuing a single-party political framework, but also restorative in co-opting a Serbian national character within that framework as a means of social control and political monopoly.

Understanding the development of an authoritarian historical memory as a strategy employed by threatened elites attempting to maintain power and demobilize opposition, rather than grand attempts at establishing a “Greater Serbian” state at the expense of other ethnic groups, significantly alters our understanding of Serbian political culture during the Milošević period. It also helps to assess the prospects for democratic consolidation afterwards. First, it clearly points to the presence of internal social cleavages in Serbia. Indeed, some of Yugoslavia’s most ardent political and economic reformists were Serbs who openly supported a market economy and advocated political decentralization with secret ballot elections at municipal levels. These reforms directly affected the values, interests, and ultimately power, of conservative elites in Serbia and elsewhere. While it is not as simple as saying that conservatives resorted to “playing the ethnic card” to stay in power, reframing the contentious political issues of a centralized Yugoslavia versus a more federated state from an economic to an ethnic issue, and thus arguing that further reforms would result in the fragmentation of the Serbian “nation”
was a successful strategy by conservatives in halting further reforms and reframing authority around defending the national (Serbian) interest. The coming of Slobodan Milošević was certainly not a reflection of spontaneous ethnocentric nationalism among the Serbian people, nor was the violent breakup of Yugoslavia a sign of deep-seated “ancient hatreds”.

Second, ongoing debates of national identity in Serbian political and social circles from the early 1980s to the fall of Milošević in 2000, many of which were framed with mass protests and general strikes, challenge assumptions that historical memory is the particular vocation of authoritarian elites. Even during the heyday of the Milošević regime, individual thought and alternative understandings of Serbian collective memory were never actively suppressed and non-compliance was tolerated by the state as long as it did not threaten the position of entrenched elites. There were never any official attempts at reorienting political identity around tightly controlled state-society regulations as had characterized the Project for the Rewriting of History in Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, nor any ostentatious building of monumental landmarks to glorify a movement such as the Valley of the Fallen in Franco’s Spain. With the exception of the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, minorities in Serbia were largely left alone. Independent media outlets were occasionally harassed and its leading editors either fined or given light prison sentences, and history textbooks, as in nearly every other former Yugoslav republic that had previously stressed a shared Yugoslav history, were rewritten to present an ethnocentric definition of the nation that shared a common past and a common destiny apart from, and oftentimes in contention with, others. But in many respects alternative ways of thinking about Serbian collective identity continued to resonate in urban centers like Belgrade and
Novi Sad, and were even useful to the authorities who could point to them in times of crisis as dangerous elements in league with the West and were determined to erode the state’s national cohesion. Elements of exclusionary nationalism and sectarian conflict were indeed primary components in the historical memories of the Milošević regime, but almost all academic sources agree that neither Milošević nor any high-ranking member of his inner circle personally believed in, ideologically adhered to, these narratives personally.55

This raises a series of new questions to the study. First, if national identity was never formally crystallized into an official politicized historical memory and alternative memories were allowed to exist, why do exclusionary narratives that lent legitimacy to the Milošević regime continue to dominate Serbian political discourse and have even found new meaning in democratically oriented parties? Second, why have many of the democratic narratives that exist in Serbian history not been completely and competently appropriated by political and social movements eager to reconnect Serbia to the concert of European nations? Is it because nationalism and chauvinism are indeed endemic to Serbian culture, or is it because the political climate still necessitates even the most dedicated democratic leader to make frequent references to the authenticity of the nation and the mistrust of other communities? Third, if memory continues to function as a primary vehicle for collective action and political strategy, can democratically-oriented political and cultural elites appropriate historical memory to not only provide a set of

narratives that legitimize democratic governance, but also counteract entrenched beliefs left over from the authoritarian period?

In other words, can democratic regimes utilize historical memory and is a state-sponsored interpretation of the past a necessary element in democratic consolidation? If yes, what elements of Serbia’s past are conducive to crafting a democratic identity, what elements need to be expunged from active consciousness, and what elements reconciled with other ethnic communities? It may seem unorthodox to consider elements of historical memory as critical components of democratic state building. We would like to think that people embrace democracy because of its universal values and appeals, and that the efforts in toppling an authoritarian government are part of a larger struggle in yearning to be free. But, more often than not, political elites seek to legitimize their activities within the boundaries of “tradition”, “values” or “beliefs” of society. Democracy may very well be the political system that all states strive to achieve, but even democratic movements with the best intentions cannot hope to achieve democratic consolidation unless certain cultural values are compatible with democratic principles.56

General Challenges to Democratic Transition in Central and Eastern Europe

As articulated by Bandelj and Radu, the primary challenge of postcommunist democratic transition has been “the simultaneity of democratization, privatization,

56 Here I am specifically referring to the Weberian concepts of traditional authority, which bases itself within the “virtue and sanctity of age-old rules and powers”, rather than rational-legal authority, which Weber classifies on the grounds of universally legal applicability and the right of those elevated to authority to legislate and execute authority. Traditional authority rests not with the individual that executes authority, but the recognized position he or she occupies. See Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, trans. (University of California Press, 1978), pp. 226 – 27.
regionalization and globalization processes … Unlike the East Asian societies which started with democratization only after they established links to the global economy, Central and East European political transformations are congruent with liberalization of their economies.”\textsuperscript{57} While other democratizing countries throughout the world are seeking to integrate their politics and economy within the larger global market, it is only in Europe that states are seeking to integrate into such a pervasive and interdependent organization as the European Union, and it is only in Central and Eastern Europe that democratizing states are obligated to conform to an additional set of rules and norms in order to meet the stringent requirements for EU acceptance. As such, democratic transition and consolidation in Eastern Europe is unique in that domestic political matters can be heavily influenced by economic, social, and cultural changes that are conditioned by transnational forces. It is therefore worth studying whether or not there exists a direct correlation between the pressures of fulfilling international commitments and the continued strength and widespread appeal of nationalist parties across the region that since 1989 have won representation in local and national governments, and in the case of Croatia, Slovakia, and Serbia governed at the national level throughout most of the 1990s.\textsuperscript{58} It is equally important to study whether ongoing causes of democratic instability and rising levels of national populism, particularly in Serbia but also in Romania, are ongoing symptoms of chronic international encroachment on domestic political development and maturity.

\textsuperscript{57} Nina Bandelj and Bogdan Radu, “Consolidation of Democracy in Postcommunist Europe”, paper presented to Center for the Study of Democracy, Paper 06’04, (2006), pp. 2-3, italics are original.

It has been generally assumed that the “EU advantage”, as some scholars have referred to it, would make democracy all but unavoidable for transitioning states, and by signing the so called Stabilization and Association Agreements, each state begins the negotiated process by which pressures from the EU stabilize political and economic restructuring from the communist period and channel developmental efforts towards EU standards and eventual EU membership. Indeed, for many postcommunist states, the chance to institutionally integrate with Western Europe provided the most visible way to break with communism and the old political structures of the Cold War. Pro-democratic rallies in the late 1980s and early 1990s called for not just an end to communism, but in the slogans of Vaclav Havel’s Civic Forum, a “Return to Europe.” Many of these postcommunist countries suffered from a dilemma of institutional breakdown and, with the withdrawal of the Red Army, a lack of any military security. With little solid democratic institutions in place and hardly any capability of successfully treating with powerful transnational forces that were beginning to enter the newly emerging economic markets, many Central and East European countries would have found themselves politically adrift if not for the promised security and stability within the institutional framework of the European Union and NATO. The general assumption has been that the

earlier a country locks itself into a framework of international commitment, the quicker will be its stabilization from regime change, and the faster a democratic consolidation will be realized.⁶⁰

While it is clear that transitions from authoritarian rule have been seen by scholars to have greatly benefited from a safety net of international institutions, I feel the effects of exogenous variables on democratizing states have not been completely examined in the studies of democratic transitions. The successful process of political democratization and economic integration rests greatly on the commitments of governing parties to reform, as well as the degree of trust society places in its own government and international institutions. However, if domestic concerns conflict with these pressures, further political development may produce alternative forms of democracy that include components of populism, ethnic nationalism, and anti-globalism.⁶¹

When the Balkans are considered, the study of democratic transitions, while attempting to appear objective and empirical, has been heavily influenced by the events of the 1990s that bore witness to some of the worst losses in human life seen in Europe since the Second World War. In the wake of the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, most works on Central European and Baltic states have remained optimistic in predicting successful transitions to and consolidations of democracy. However, most


conclusions have remained decidedly pessimistic for the Balkans, a region of Europe that Maria Todorova regards as ignobly viewed by scholars, policymakers, and the general practitioner of history as being “cursed with too much history per square mile, with an excess of historical memory, protracted hatreds, and a proliferation of obstinate and incompatible ethnic and religious identities.” With the possible exception of Slovenia, much of the comparative politics literature has all but ignored the Balkans, specifically the countries of the former Yugoslavia. When these countries are considered, subject matter has tended to focus more on problems of ethnic cleavages and religious intolerance rather than democratic development. If democracy is considered at all, it is mentioned as a fatality to ethnic nationalism and quasi-authoritarianism.

Most of the literature throughout the 1990s and after concludes that current conditions in countries like Serbia make democracy a fleeting hope and an uncertain outcome at best. Serbia has frequently been referred to in Western media as a nation “struggling with its past”, a society that is mired in “ancient hatreds” of its neighbors, and a country that is “haunted” by a continuous history of one authoritarian regime after

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another. Western analysts, and even some Serbian scholars, consider democracy a new phenomenon to most Serbs, who would sooner put their trust in a strong, charismatic leader, than parliamentary rule of law. How, these analyses wonder, can a state that has “hated” the West, has lost four regional wars in the 1990s, has been openly “hostile” to European integration, and consistently reelected Slobodan Milošević and the SPS to office even hope to successfully establish a strong democratic government with capable and mature leaders to govern responsibly? Even after the overthrow of Milošević in 2000 and the founding of a new democratic government, analysts studying the region still refer to Serbia as being at the “crossroads”, glacially moving towards a democratic transition with numerous obstacles still to overcome. Most disturbing about current Serbian political trends is the resilience of national populism that was inherited from the SPS and gained new strength by the far right Serbian Radical Party, and has also been increasingly prevalent in the Democratic Party of Serbia (Demokratska stranka Srbije, DSS) under Vojislav Koštunica, the man who ousted Milošević from power in 2000.

Mass social movements in the Balkans challenged and ultimately brought down communist regimes in similar fashion to its Central European counterparts. What made these movements different however, were the overabundant propensity to espouse nationalism and populism instead of liberal democracy. Scholars have been loathe to

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64 Popular sources among Western audiences that played up stereotypes of never-ending hatreds and animosities between ethnic groups are Robert Kaplan’s Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History (St. Martin’s Press, 1993), Branimir Anzulović’s Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide (New York University Press, 1999), and Brian Hall’s The Impossible Country: A Journey through the Last Days of Yugoslavia (Penguin Books, 1995). Kaplan writes of the Balkans as “a time-capsule world: a dim stage upon which people raged, spilled blood, experienced visions of ecstasies”, p. xxi On Bosnia, Kaplan writes “the villages all around were full of savage hatreds, leavened by poverty and alcoholism. The fact that the most horrifying violence – during both World War II and the 1990s – occurred in Bosnia was not accident”, p. 22

include such social movements within the larger study of civil society due to these non-democratic, even anti-democratic, positions. As a term, “civil society” is still primarily reserved for those social movements that are inherently democratic in outlook and orientation. Thus, Solidarity in Poland, though heavily fused with Catholic and national symbolism, qualifies as a “civil society”, while both the Ravna Gora Movement and Slobodan Milošević’s “truth rallies” in Serbia have been regarded “national-populist” despite similar reliance on religion and history as collective identity for its members.66

General observations on Serbia since 1990 have only been partially correct. While it is true that many Serbs first supported Milošević and the SPS, and while it is true that nationalism was, and still is, used as a potent tool of political manipulation and mobilization, most studies have not adequately examined why people support these parties. Many accounts have loosely connected Serbian voting preferences with persistent myths of greatness and chauvinism; however, this conclusion has either been highly conjectural or simply assumed without proper historical contextualization.67 Even though Serbia has appeared to international observers as a country awash in anti-Western xenophobia, polling data has consistently revealed little to no enthusiasm among ordinary Serb citizens for the dismemberment of Yugoslavia, no strong support for the exclusionary versions of Serb nationalism, and little to no support for the formation of a Greater Serbian state.68 At the same time however, data has also revealed public

68 Currently, the best source available in English on Serbian and Croatian public opinion during the 1990s is V.P. Gagnon’s The Myth of Ethnic War: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s. Many of these surveys remain
skepticism about Serbian politics, little to no trust in international organizations, and a
general sense of dissatisfaction with life since the dissolution of Yugoslavia. While there
has never been any widespread public support for authoritarianism, neither has there been
any overtly enthusiastic support for the types of civic democracy that characterized
transition movements in Poland, the Czech Republic, or Hungary.

Why Serbia?

What can the Serbian case tell us not only of the shortcomings of standard
arguments of democratic transition and consolidation, but also of other states caught in
the gray area between full democracy and full authoritarianism? First, as already
mentioned, Serbia’s road to democratic consolidation is being accompanied by an
incomplete reconstruction of Serbian identity. Serbian collective memory is divided
between a cosmopolitan pro-European identity, and a more exclusionary, xenophobic,
anti-Western narrative. While a decade of economic sanctions and a huge influx of
refugees from other former Yugoslav republics has made it difficult to gage which social
strata falls within which identity, these competing identities are most visibly represented
in political parties and social movements. The task for Serbian politicians is to either de-
legitimize the authoritarian strands of history and incorporate unique Serbian values with
European values, or risk continuous political in-fighting and violence that has
characterized Serbia in the recent past. The more authoritarian and nationalist narrative is

untranslated and unresearched. As a result, earlier observations of Yugoslavia by international journalists
and academics were quick to assume that the apparent support for authoritarian regimes in Serbia and
Croatia reflected a popular shift towards ethnic extremism based on historical grievances and a lack of
functionally mature political institutions to shape political development. See also Thomas (1999); Edward
1 (Summer 1995), pp. 5-38; Jack Snyder, From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist
heavily interwoven with a specific interpretation of the medieval Battle of Kosovo in 1389. This “Kosovo Myth” valorizes Serbia’s epic struggle against foreign enemies and traitorous elements within its own ranks that seek to destroy the Serbian nation and the Serbian people.

The other vision of Serbian historical memory is one I would collectively call Serbia’s “European narrative”. This “other Serbia” has been a fundamental component of the Serbian state since the 19th century and Serbian society, especially Serb communities in the Hapsburg Empire, since the late 17th century. This narrative, while hardly as unified, as popular, or as pervasive as its exclusionary pan-Serb counterpart, primarily exists as a collection of events, symbols, and narratives that the latter ignores, overlooks, or discredits. As such, it might be more appropriate to refer to them as counternarratives at the present moment in Serbian political culture. Regardless, a number of narratives that I have identified as being possible symbolic material for a democratic Serbian narrative include the cosmopolitan character of the city of Belgrade towards the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the multiethnic character of Vojvodina, and the grass-roots communitarianism of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

The primary intellectual discourse that has characterized Serbian political culture from the mid-19th century to the present, and the source from which both frameworks of collective identity generally draw, is Pan-Serbism. Though many contemporary Western sources regard Pan-Serbism as little more than perennial attempts at stamping out and assimilating minority cultures to the dominant Serbian identity, it has served as the basis for a number of political initiatives in Belgrade that have ranged from a widening of territorial control to a deepening of national collective consciousness. In all inclusive and
exclusive manifestations, the cultural constants that have been at the core of Pan-Serbism was a glorification of the medieval Serbian kingdoms, particularly its apogee under Tsar Stefan Dušan the Mighty (1331 – 1355), linguistic similarities among the Southern Slavic peoples, and a spirit of independence and self-determination from foreign domination. This last element is most visibly represented in the collective memories of the Battle of Kosovo in 1389. While the battle itself was historically a stalemate, preceded and followed by far more historically decisive battles with the invading Ottoman forces, Kosovo has been remembered as the essential core of Serbian collective identity, the definitive end of the medieval Serbian state, and the symbolic rallying point around which the Serbian nation reestablishes itself.

Nineteenth and early twentieth century Pan-Serbism had generally been used by both political elites and cultural intellectuals to include other South Slavic communities such as Croats and Bosnian Muslims through linguistic commonality. However, since the breakup of Yugoslavia and the rejection by Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians of both a shared state and shared identity, Pan-Serbism has assumed an exclusively ethnocentric viewpoint that distinguishes less on linguistic commonality than religious and historic. While this has led to the solidification of differences between Croats and Bosnians and simultaneously forming deeper cultural bonds with Serb communities in Bosnia and Montenegro, it has also increasingly alienated minorities, most notably Albanians, as non-inclusive members of a Serbian state.

Second, Serbia is a case-study relationship between democratization and the effects of exogenous variables. Traditional theories of democratic transition and consolidation have often assumed all political change and the pressures for transition and
reform take place within the state. It is increasingly apparent today that democratic
transitions often require additional obligations beyond simply facilitating conditions for
free and fair elections, constructing a democratically oriented civil society, and
maintaining government accountability to its voters. In this study, I argue that
democratization in Serbia also means meeting additional standards of political and
economic maturity in conformity with the European Union (EU), cooperation with the
International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), and security
cooperation with NATO. While most other states in Central and Eastern Europe have had
similar commitments to fulfill, both resistance to and imposition of such obligations by
Serbian and EU elites respectively have been far more acute. Trying to meet both
international demands and the expectations of its own citizens, the democratic oriented
government in Serbia faces not only constraints imposed by the international community,
but also feelings of democratic malaise, political anomie, and general apathy in public
opinion polls resulting from a lack of improvement in living standards. Today many
Serbs, especially among the student and urban middle classes, favor EU integration and a
continuation of democratic consolidation, but there is also strong support for preserving
uniquely traditional Serbian cultural values such as religion, language, history, and
culture from international encroachment.69

69 According to a 2005 survey, if a referendum were held in regards to the ascension of Serbia to the EU,
64% of the population would vote in favor, with only 12% voting against. Of the reasons for joining, the
most popular reasons are the guarantees for a better quality of life, higher standards of living, and social
progress, alongside peace and stability with Serbia’s European neighbors. Of the potential fears of Serbian
citizens for joining the EU, 54% believe that it will lead to an increase in drug trafficking and crime, and
42% fear a loss in national identity and erosion of traditional cultures. “Presentation of Public Poll Results
in Relation to European Integration Process”, Government of the Republic of Serbia, European Integration
Office, October 2005. www.seio.sr.gov.yu. Further data provided by Dragomir Pantić in Basic Lines of
Party Divisions (Belgrade: Institute for Social Sciences, 2004), indicates that traditionalist attitudes in
Serbia prevail over those accepting modernity by 41% to 27%. An absolute majority of older generations
The majority of Serbs today are ready to accept European integration, but on the condition that Serbia is no longer treated as a pariah state if it does not immediately live up to international expectations and demands. Public opinion research also reveals that that Serbs feel they should not have to suffer collectively for the draconian politics of the Milošević era, nor should the country collectively be sanctioned for failing to turn indicted war criminals over to The Hague.  

Most important is the ongoing situation in Kosovo. While Kosovo is overwhelmingly populated by ethnic Albanians who unilaterally declared independence in February 2008, the region represents immense historical, cultural, and ideological value to Serbs as the cradle of their nation.  

International arbitration has continuously been unsuccessful in finding an agreeable compromise between Serbs and Albanians, and while the province enjoys some form of

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are traditionalists, while modernist beliefs predominate among those thirty years and younger. Among Serbia’s national minorities, acceptance of modernity is the prevalent attitude.

While 56.5% of Serbs polled indicated that the EU meant a “path towards a better future for young people”, 9.5% indicated it was also a risk of losing one’s cultural identity. Furthermore, only 25% of Serbs polled showed any confidence in the European Court of Human Rights, and 22% for the International Court of Justice. “Presentation of Public Poll Results in Relation to European Integration Process”, Government of the Republic of Serbia, European Integration Office, October 2005.

A question I have been faced with when writing this study is what to classify Kosovo’s official status. Though I cannot regard Kosovo as an integral part of Serbian political and administrative authority anymore, I equally cannot regard Kosovo as an independent state because numerous conditions at the time of this writing impede it from any form of sovereign parity with its European neighbors. The region has remained internally divided between Serbian and Albanian municipalities for years, and both operate on parallel levels in almost all respects. EULEX, the EU-based civil authority that assumed executive control of the province in late 2008, is officially operating under a “status neutral” agreement that does not regard Kosovo as an independent state, and is placed under the authority of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) that has been the official authority in the region since the passing of UN Resolution 1244 in 1999. At the time of this writing, little more than 60 countries have recognized its independence, and most of these recognitions have come at the behest of the United States. Security is provided by NATO, economic stimulus comes in the form of international aid, and international representation remains under the control of various international organizations. Without massive external support, Kosovo could not survive on its own as an independent state, and nearly all Serb-inhabited regions of Kosovo, particularly the northern region that borders Serbia Proper, remains under the influence, if not outright control, of Belgrade. At best, Kosovo can be regarded as an international protectorate, though Albanian officials in Kosovo’s capital Priština consider their authority absolute and non-negotiable. This work will consider Kosovo as part of Serbia prior to its unilateral declaration of independence in February 2008, and a semi-sovereign international protectorate afterwards. For a critical study of Kosovo’s limited sovereignty, see Vedran Džihić and Helmut Kramer, “Kosovo After Independence: Is the EU’s EULEX Mission Delivering on its Promises?” International Policy Analysis, July 2009.
nominal sovereignty, it has been de facto partitioned between Serb and Albanian segments of power since 1999. Some Western officials have even gone as far as making Serbia’s future EU membership contingent on its compliance with accepting Kosovo’s loss. This has placed many pro-democratic leaders in Serbia in a doubly difficult situation as their detractors see further democratization along Western standards as “selling Serbia out” to foreign forces.

Both full commitments to the ICTY as a requirement for EU membership and the administrative loss of Kosovo have created a general sense in Serbia that the state is constantly being unjustly punished for crimes committed under a previous regime by external powers functioning as judge, juror, and executioner of Serbia’s fate. Public opinion also indicates that the international community is practicing double standards in lending a helping hand to Albanian self-determination in its own territory, while turning a deaf ear to similar efforts by Serbs in Kosovo and Bosnia. What all this amounts to is that Serbia is operating within a democratic political structure but still contains large segments of society that are cynical to Western-based democracy. This study hypothesizes that as long as a sizable portion of the population feels democratization means compromising Serbian interests for the interests of the EU, the UN, or the United States, nationalism and populism will continue to obstruct further democratic political development and maturity.

Third, Serbia is a multiethnic state. Sizeable Albanian communities live in Serbia’s south, including Kosovo, while the more prosperous northern region of Vojvodina is home to Hungarian, Croatian, Romanian, Slovak, and Ruthenian (Rusyn) communities. A critical test for Serbia will be to construct a democratic narrative that
includes these minorities as valuable contributors to the state and is sensitive to their respective needs and wants, while simultaneously respecting the norms and identities of the Serbian community. Challenges to democratic development in multiethnic societies are also visible in Romania, Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey, and Bosnia, to name a few. Even in universally recognized democracies like Spain, the multiethnic relationship between Spaniards, Catalans, Basques, and other ethnic minorities, has often tested the limits of democratic stability. Questions of autonomy by “awakened” ethnic minorities in various states have added extra pressure on democratic proponents to find common narratives of a shared history that is as inclusive of as many ethnic groups as possible, while maintaining the territorial sovereignty of the state. Failure to do so risks collective identities and historical narratives of majority and minority communities becoming too entrenched for potential reconciliation.

In Chapter 2, I explore the different structural approaches to understanding democracy, and note some of the weaknesses of only working with institutional models. They may describe what the necessary conditions need to be in order for democracy to be consolidated, but they offer little help in explaining how these conditions can manifest. In chapter 3, I discuss the cultural component to democratic transition, but also note a number of empirical shortcomings with prevailing models that assume culture to be monolithic, unchanging, and defined as an aggregate of attitudes. My alternative model of historical memory argues that politically-driven interpretations of the past are effective

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tools for navigating through the rapid social change of transition because it accounts for how culture can be appropriated by elites to legitimize an array of discourses while still remaining true to a set of non-negotiable truths and beliefs. It is not the actual history itself that is important, but rather how history validates current policy. The success of any democratic historical memory is the linking of specific narratives and symbols to active initiatives that promote the guarantee of social justice, citizen-based cooperation, and national cohesion.

Chapters 4 through and 8 examine the cultural and institutional capital available to Serbs both preceding and following modern statehood. Chapter 4 identifies the social capital of Serbian collective identity between the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 and the First Serbian Uprising in 1804. Contrary to popular opinion that Serbs were an occupied people, they enjoyed some of the strongest elements of collective identity and institutional unity of any Balkan Christian society and operated within significantly democratic, albeit rudimentary, socio-political frameworks. Collective cultural identity was largely preserved through the still-functioning Serbian Orthodox Church, and a series of epic folk tales encapsulated a set of non-negotiable myths of identity into a collection of historic narratives that matured into cultural, historical and territorial markers for Serbs by the nineteenth century.

Chapter 5 introduces Pan-Serbism as the most commonly accepted model of political community in modern Serbia. While drawing heavily from the pre-modern institutions of collective identity mentioned in Chapter 4, political and intellectual elites constructed a discourse that combined political corporatism with cultural ethnocentrism as a way of shaping early modern Serbian political development within a state populated
by an overwhelmingly rural, illiterate, and politically inactive peasantry. Whereas recent studies on the roots of Serbian nationalism have frequently linked politics since the mid-nineteenth century as one ongoing attempt at creating a Greater Serbian state at the expense of other ethnic communities, I show that early understandings of Pan-Serbism were deliberately inclusive of South Slavic communities and understood Pan-Serbism to function through linguistic, rather than religious or historical elements. Chapter 6 continues with the Pan-Serb narrative through the Yugoslav period and argues again that contrary to prevailing opinions that Yugoslavism was a way for Serbs to dominate other ethnic groups, large numbers of Serbs abandoned ethnocentric narratives for multiethnic co-fraternity. The return of Serb nationalism in the early 1980s amid a collapsing Yugoslavia was neither a result of deep seated hatreds, nor a revival of ethnocentrism always existing below the surface of socialism, but a reaction to earlier competing national movements among Croatian and Albanian communities that themselves were reactions to dysfunctional state institutions in addressing declining economic standards of living. By the advent of Milošević, the last vestiges of Yugoslav unity had all but disappeared, and new theories of Pan-Serb identities embraced a type of cultural ethnocentrism that was far more exclusionary through delineation of membership along religious lines and historical memories of shared victimization during the Communist period.

Chapter 7 looks at the prevailing cultural narratives in a post-Milošević democratic environment. The structure of the Milošević regime might have been toppled, but the cultural narratives that lent it credibility and support remained and became official ideological platforms for nearly all of Serbia’s democratic parties. The persistence of
exclusionary nationalistic historical memories, coupled with the process of reintegrating Serbia back into the international community after nearly a decade of isolation, the administrative loss of Kosovo, and the apparent pervasiveness of exogenous forces exerting a significant influence over everyday life have all lent renewed credibility of national populism to the policies and positions of right-wing nationalistic parties like the Serbian Radical Party and its breakaway Serbian Progressive Party which espouses a “Serbia First” outlook. Subsequently, the notable strength of right-wing populist movements have necessitated pro-European democratic parties to equally espouse nationalistic rhetoric instead of finding alternative narratives of collective identity. The challenge for liberal democratic consolidation in Serbia is not the lack of a democratic identity, but the inability of political institutions to appropriate them at the national and even local levels. In Chapter 8, I show how Serbia’s democratic elite can use key symbols and historic narratives of Serbia’s past to construct an alternative model of Serbian national identity apart from the exclusionary nationalist variant without departing from non-negotiable truths of Serbian culture. By systematically demonstrating that Serbian heritage is just as much a part of Europe as other nations, democratic elites can create an environment receptive of political and economic reform. Re-embracing myths of multiethnic cooperation and European democratic liberalism in Serbia’s past may ease the transition to European reintegration and dispel fears of cultural discontinuity, not to mention contributing to higher levels of confidence in government and greater public participation in politics. As Petro noted a usable democratic past in the medieval history of Novgorod, and as Davis identified a series of democratic historical narratives in Iraq in the 1920s, I argue that the history of Serbia’s European heritage began in a series of
urban settings Habsburg Vojvodina between the late seventeenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, and continued to characterize the development of Belgrade from a small Ottoman town in the beginning of the nineteenth century, to one of the most cosmopolitan cities in Southeastern Europe by the outbreak of the Second World War.

I conclude by discussing the need for more culturally dynamic approaches to democracy. Serbia is an ideal test subject because it is a region that has tremendous political and economic potential. While one cannot argue that Serbia’s history is any more or less democratic than other states, the key here is how such a history is interpreted for democratic purposes. Like all uses of historical memory, some elements of the past will be played up, some will be overromanticized, and some will be dismissed and condemned. Still, I follow Petro’s argument, which asserts that for the rule of law, free markets, and greater democratic participation to gain public support, they must first make sense within local cultural traditions. The use of historical memory in appropriating the right symbols and narratives for democracy greatly assists in making that connection.

At the end of their work on democratic transition and consolidation, Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan identified the dangers of early calls of democratic triumphalism by overzealous scholars and policymakers and noted the continued need to not only create democratic institutions, but to continuously nurture and develop them. Without an ongoing commitment to democracy by both elites and citizens, institutions remain shallow and government remains detached from society. As they state, “new political projects, as well as research endeavors, must be devoted to improving the quality of consolidated democracies.” This work attempts to answer that call.

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Chapter 2 – The Limits of “Thin” Democracy

Over the last thirty years, the number of democracies in the world has grown by leaps and bounds. Beginning with the collapse of authoritarianism in Portugal and Greece in 1974, and the death of Francisco Franco in Spain the following year, the late 1970s and early 1980s were witness to the end of military dictatorships across Central and Latin America. These initial transitions from authoritarian rule may have been part of the inspiration for Samuel Huntington to publish an essay in the 1984 Political Science Quarterly with a title that doubled as the article’s main question: will more countries become democratic? His criteria for democracy was based on a series of preconditions: high levels of economic well-being, the absence of inequalities in wealth and income, greater degrees of social pluralism and the presence of a strong bourgeoisie, a market-oriented economy, and a culture predisposed towards diversity and compromise. Since then, the initial transitions in southern Europe acted as the opening salvos to what he would later classify as the “third wave” of global democratization that spread vigorously at the end of the 1980s, and continues to spread today. If we were to use the Freedom House rating of “free” as a rough indicator of democracy in a state, the number of “free”, or democratic, states increased from 53 at the end of 1984, to 76 ten years later. Today,

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75 Samuel Huntington, “Will More Countries Become Democratic?”, Political Science Quarterly, vol. 99, no. 2 (Summer, 1984), pp. 193 – 218. The only three countries in which Huntington gave any positive predictions were Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland, and all three were at the time under Soviet surveillance.

76 Samuel P. Huntington, The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991). A democratic wave, argues Huntington, is defined as a “group of transitions from non-democratic to democratic regimes that occur within a specified period of time and that significantly outnumber transitions in the opposite direction during that period of time”, p. 15. Huntington identifies the first wave of transition as roughly between 1828 and 1926. The second wave of democratization started shortly before the end of the Second World War and continued until the early 1960s.
there are 90 countries, or 47% of all countries, in the world that are democratic by Freedom House standards.  

Recent efforts at democratization in the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Middle East have only furthered an already strong interest in transitology and have led to louder calls by scholars for an understanding of how democratically oriented systems can be effectively constructed in each state.

The apparently decisive shift away from authoritarianism towards greater democratic freedoms and liberties has inspired scholars such as Larry Diamond to boldly ask if democracy is universal to the point that any country can become democratic? His conclusions are optimistic, but come with qualifications, in that democracy must be accompanied by a commitment on the part of the nation’s elite to govern by democratic means, as well as a willingness by the general population to participate in the democratic process via a civil society, and the resolve of the international community to provide the stimulus for democratic reform. His arguments seem to take the view that democracy is inevitable, and while there are a few holdout authoritarian states in the world, many of these regimes are run by a single leader such as Fidel Castro’s Cuba, Kim Jong Il’s North Korea, Robert Mugabe’s Zimbabwe, and Alexander Lukashenko’s Belarus, all of which

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77 Freedom House designates as state as “free” if it scores an average of 2.5 or less on two scales measuring political rights and civil liberties respectively. Each scale ranges from 1 to 7, with 1 being the most free, and 7 being the least free. “Partly free” states average between 3 and 5.5, and “not free” states average between 6 and 7. While Freedom House has come under criticism for selection bias and deference to countries with a pro-US position, the survey data has been frequently used by social scientists for rough estimates of democracy in the world at a given time, and serves my purpose in indicating where scholars derive their estimates of democratic spread throughout the world. For all Freedom House related data, see their annual Freedom in the World: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties (New York: Freedom House), as well as www.freedomhouse.org. For a critique of Freedom House data and methodology, see Kenneth A. Bollen, “Political Rights and Political Liberties in Nations: An Evaluation of Human Rights Measures, 1950 – 1984,” in Thomas B. Jabine, and Richard P. Claude, eds., Human Rights and Statistics: Getting the Record Straight, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), pp. 188 – 215.

will undoubtedly see some form of political liberalization once these leaders are no longer in power. One of the strongest points of his argument is the fact that Mali, a country where the overwhelming majority of the population is illiterate, live in absolute poverty, and where the life expectancy is little more than 45 years, has been a relatively stable democracy, in northwestern Africa of all places, for over a decade. If democracy can happen in Mali, argues Diamond, it can happen anywhere.

The problem we are faced with is that while democracy may be universally sought, it is not, and cannot, be universally applied. As mentioned in the previous chapter, there are many states today that claim to operate under the pretexts of some type of democracy, but are clearly authoritarian. There are also a number of states that appear to have all the structural trappings of democracy: an elected body of legislatures, periodic elections, a relatively free (if occasionally hassled) media, and multiple political parties, but are clearly dominated by one political or ethnic group that makes political competition incredibly limited and largely non-existent. Finally, many countries that do transition to democracy are often mired by voter apathy and lack of civic participation once the initial euphoria that greets the new regime dies down and democracy proves unable to provide immediate solutions to the major economic and social problems confronting the state. To amend Huntington’s question somewhat, more countries have

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79 Oftentimes, economic restructuring, social reorganization, and threats to cultural identity accompany democratic transition. A certain sense of “authoritarian nostalgia”, while rarely effective enough to bring back the old regime, and hardly enthusiastic enough to stifle current democratic rights and freedoms, may nevertheless disengage citizens from political and civic activity, especially if the old regime is remembered as a time when the economy was stronger, security was tighter, and a greater sense of law and order was ensured. On the study of “authoritarian nostalgia”, see for example Peter McDonough, Samuel H. Barnes, and Antonio Lopez Pina, “The Growth of Democratic Legitimacy in Spain”, American Political Science Review, vol. 80, no. 3 (September, 1986), pp. 735 – 760; Thomas C. Bruneau, “Popular Support for Democracy in Post-revolutionary Portugal: Results from a Survey”, In Search of Modern Portugal: The Revolution and its Consequences, Lawrence S. Graham and Douglass L. Wheeler, eds. (University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), pp. 35 – 36. On the relationship between democracy and socio-political
certainly become democratic, but some states are clearly more democratic than others. Some states have transitioned from authoritarian to democratic rule with relatively few problems. In other countries, the collapse of authoritarianism has been accompanied by economic inflation, organized crime, and a noticeable deterioration in standards of living.

The conditions for democracy and democratic sustainability in the world are neither linear, nor predictable. How is it that democracy seems to work in some countries, but not in others? Why Mali, and not Russia? Why Mongolia, and not Venezuela? Why South Africa, and not Zimbabwe? Why Slovenia, and not Serbia? Why can democracies take root in poor countries like India or Mali, but not in rich countries like Kuwait or Nigeria? How is it that political institutions are transparent in New Zealand, but corrupt in Turkey? How is it that ultranationalist parties exist but receive little to no electoral support in Germany, but sustain around 30% of public support in national and local governments in Serbia? Why is the standard of living far higher in democratic Hungary than in democratic Romania? Most studies attempt to answer these questions through explanations of institutions and institutional strength. But as will be seen, these explanations can only go so far before the resulting conclusions are taken on faith.

Institutional Approaches to Democracy

The most basic understanding of democracy, and the criteria that must be present in order for any state to qualify as democratic, were defined by Josef Schumpeter as an “institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s votes.” In other words, the fundamental tenet of democracy is the presence and operation of free, fair, and competitive elections. While no serious scholar would debate this primary importance, it is equally apparent that in today’s world, we must safeguard against “electoral fallacy” as being a “sufficient condition” for democracy. Increasingly, a number of national governments have found it convenient to facilitate electoral voting among its citizens but allow little else in the way of democratic government. To date, only a handful of states, such as North Korea, operate under no electoral procedures whatsoever. In other countries such as Egypt, Venezuela, Belarus, or Russia, elections are periodically held, but there is little doubt as to the outcome. Whether through more subtle channels of voter intimidation and oppositional boycott or outright ballot stuffing and electoral nullification, the ruling regime always “wins” the elections, often with resounding percentage points that belie any notions that elections were either free or fair. Even in countries that are generally recognized as democratic, voting is often performed under the perennial scrutiny of non-elected institutions, such as the judiciary in Iran or the military in Turkey and Algeria, that threaten to nullify the election and dissolve the government if

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the electoral winner is perceived to be a threat to the state’s national interests or the state’s national identity.83 Finally, democratic elections have in the past given way to electing non-democratic parties that either limit democracy, or dissolve it altogether. The example of the National Socialist Germany Workers’ Party (NSDAP) coming to power through electoral means in Weimar Germany, as well as the National Fascist Party in Italy, are two of the most poignant cases, while recent electoral victories of Hamas in the Palestinian territories attest to more current issues.84

Seymour Martin Lipset and Robert Dahl were some of the first scholars to expand Schumpeter’s model by considering the importance of stable, working, institutions. Lipset defined democracy as a “a political system, which supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governing of officials and a social mechanism, which permits the largest possible part of the population to influence major decisions by choosing among contenders for public office”.85 One critical component of Lipset’s social mechanism is strong economic development, which increases democratic stability while simultaneously decreasing degrees of social conflicts.86 This one model alone, says Adam Przeworski, has generated the largest body of research on any topic in comparative

84 While it is true that Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini were both personally appointed chancellor and prime minister respectively by the sitting governments, and while each leaders’ parties were seen as a potential (and useful) bulwark against the rising power and saliency of communism in both Germany and Italy that threatened the status quo of the ruling elites, the popularity that each party enjoyed among a percentage of the population was legitimately manifested through the electoral structure of each state. That both Paul von Hindenburg and King Vittorio Emanuele III felt the need to appoint them to power, though each may have personally distrusted their appointees, is indicative of the political influence each party held. For additional information, see Richard Evans, The Coming of the Third Reich, (New York: Penguin Press, 2003); R.J.B. Bosworth, Mussolini’s Italy: Life in the Fascist Dictatorship, 1915 – 1945 (New York: Penguin Press, 2007).
85 Seymour Martin Lipset, Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics, (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1963) p. 27
politics. Likewise, Robert Dahl is also frequently cited for his model of polyarchy, which he defines as “regimes that have been substantially popularized and liberalized, that is, highly inclusive and extensively open to public contestation.” Along with Lipset and Dahl, Barrington Moore’s monumental work on the democratic routes to a modern society argues that the role of an urban middle class is paramount to the creation of parliamentary democracy. His short but straightforward statement “no bourgeois, no democracy” has become a veritable mantra in the field of democratic transition theory. Schumpeter’s electoral process, Lipset’s economic development, Dahl’s social contestation, and Moore’s middle class are all critical components that together comprise the basic institutional elements of democracy.

These approaches to understanding democracy, while taking the definition further than mere voting, still rest on the belief that popular support for democracy is contingent on the effectiveness of state services. Here, democracy is largely interpreted as a top-down mechanism with little input required from ordinary citizens. A number of problematic conclusions are reached from such assumptions. First, democracy is understood as elite-driven and elite-constructed. The masses have limited roles in state building, and are not seen as influencing the activities and decisions of the elite class.

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88 Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: (1971)*, p. 8. The criteria for establishing a polyarchy are based on seven sets of conditions, including historical legacies, socio-economic conditions, and attitudinal beliefs of political elites, though the ultimate goal of measurement of these sub-categories is the degree and effectiveness of social contestation. The result helps expand the ability of groups to influence politics, and facilitates “a modern dynamic pluralist society [that] disperses power, influence, authority, and control away from any single center toward a variety of individuals, groups, associations, and organizations.” Dahl, p. 252

Public participation in political affairs, while necessary, operates through pre-designed elite-driven institutions.  

Second, models linking economic growth to democracy are problematic. While it is certainly true that the most democratic countries in the world are, and have been, simultaneously operating within a framework of capitalist industrialization, and while it is equally true that many impoverished states in the world function under some type of repressive regime or as the personal possession of some dictator and his immediate inner circle, there are an equal number of states that contradict this relationship. India has long been regarded as the quintessential democratic paradox: a relatively poor state with at least one-quarter of its population living in absolute poverty, illiteracy averaging about 30% of the total population, and the persistence numerous social and cultural practices of discrimination and intolerance. Yet India has only experienced authoritarianism for two years in the mid-1970s, to be immediately followed by a resumption of parliamentary democracy. Conversely, Singapore is one of the world’s wealthiest countries and one of the most stable in Southeast Asia. However, full democracy has been tempered under the presidencies of Lee Kuan Yew and his successor and son, Lee Hsien Loong. Furthermore, while Russia today is economically growing at the expense of its democratic freedoms, impoverished Mali is a founding member of the Community of

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90 Both Dahl and Moore make reference to Great Britain’s route to modern democracy as the archetypical, and the most stable, model of democratic transition in general, in which a small core of democratically-minded elites effectively demobilized the peasantry, disenfranchised the pre-industrial aristocratic class, and gradually over a period of two and a half centuries laid the foundations of modern parliamentary inclusiveness that all citizens would work and compete within. For critiques on these models, see James Mahoney, “Knowledge Accumulation in Comparative Historical Research: The Case of Democracy and Authoritarianism”, in Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences, James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, eds. Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 131 – 74
Democracies, an international forum that brings together those nations committed to promoting and strengthening democracy worldwide.\textsuperscript{91}

Today, most scholars agree that economic development does not directly produce democracy as was originally argued, but it certainly facilitates the likelihood of its development and the chances of its survival. As postulated by Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi, democracy can be initiated at any level of development, but “the chances for survival of democracy are greater when the country is richer.”\textsuperscript{92} Similarly, Przeworski et al, hypothesized that democracies are almost guaranteed to survive in countries with high GDP per capita levels. By their argument, no democracy before, during, or after the period they studied had ever been subverted in a state with a per capita income higher than Argentina’s 1975 level of $6,055. The general assumption is that people in wealthy countries are highly educated and have highly developed civil societies, and do not consider taking risks seeking alternative paths to politics outside the domain of democracy because it may invariably endanger their standard of living.\textsuperscript{93}

However, this model only speaks about the sustainability of preexisting democracies. It does not predict, nor does it clearly conclude, that once states reach a certain level of economic productivity, democratic transition is guaranteed. The model also cannot account for the sustainability of democracy in poor states, nor can it explain the

\textsuperscript{91} Nearly four decades later, Lipset revisited his original hypothesis. While he maintained that capitalism may address the corruption of non-democratic countries by offering a stable setting for a market economy and the development of a middle class, this alone is not sufficient to trigger democratization, as seen in several Latin American case studies. See Seymour Martin Lipset, “The Social Requisites of Democracy Revisited: 1993 Presidential Address,”\textit{American Sociological Review}, vol. 59, no. 1 (February, 1994), pp. 1 - 22. See also Carlos Waisman, “Capitalism, the Market and Economy,”\textit{Reexamining Democracy}, Gary Marks and Larry Diamond, eds. (Newbury Park, California: Sage, 1992), pp. 140 – 55


persistence of authoritarianism in wealthy ones.\textsuperscript{94} As seen in the chart below, the number of democracies with low per capita incomes, and the number of wealthy non-democracies, weakens the definitive conclusions about the relationship between economic strength and democracy. The countries in the third column are identified by Freedom House as either “partly free” or “not free”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>GDP/Capita</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>GDP/Capita</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>GDP/Capita</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>Dominican Rep.</td>
<td>5122</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>1040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesotho</td>
<td>661</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>5693</td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>7617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>715</td>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>6782</td>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>11,388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>856</td>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>6857</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>11,807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>1016</td>
<td>Mauritius</td>
<td>6872</td>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>18,988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>1066</td>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>7554</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>19,345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>1866</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>8197</td>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>27,248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongolia</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>8214</td>
<td>Brunei</td>
<td>37,053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanuatu</td>
<td>2442</td>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>9292</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>38,972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>4115</td>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>10082</td>
<td>U.A.E.</td>
<td>54,606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namibia</td>
<td>4135</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>10235</td>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>93,204</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Nominal GDP per capita 2008
Source: International Monetary Fund.

Third, the minimal requirements for a functioning democracy as reported in statistical data spreads have contributed to the overly optimistic assessment of democracy in the world. Nevertheless, the probability of New Zealand remaining a democracy a year from now is much higher than Nigeria. Many of the arguments for the spread of democracy are based on the number of “electoral democracies” in the world as reported by Freedom House. The problem with this data however is that the criteria for an “electoral democracy” is essentially the presence of periodic elections, and little else. This minimal definition certainly makes the number of democracies in the world both numerous and quantifiable, but at the same time, if we take additional criteria into consideration such as

\textsuperscript{94} For critiques of Przeworski et al’s model, see Acemoglu and Robinson (2006), and Carles Boix and Susan Carol Stokes, “Endogenous Democratization”, \textit{World Politics}, vol. 55, no. 4 (July, 2003), pp. 517 – 49.
extensive political rights and civil liberties, the number of “democracies” in the world drops considerably.

**Figure 2: Growth of Liberal and Electoral Democracies: 1987 - 2007**

As seen in the chart above, the number of liberal democracies in the world has consistently been smaller than the overall number of states operating within some electoral framework. Since 1992, an average of only 71% of all democracies in the world are liberal democracies, leaving nearly 30% or some 34 countries consistently operating between democratic and non-democratic practices, with no indication that this gap will narrow anytime soon. The increasing presence of “illiberal democracies”, or regimes that are democratically elected, but often ignore constitutional limits on power and deprive citizens of basic human rights, is a new phenomenon that challenge the

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95 The number of liberal democracies generated in the chart above was derived from separating all countries listed by Freedom House as “free”, that is, countries with an average of 2.5 out of 7 or lower between political rights and civil liberties, from a larger sample of electoral democracies that include a sizable percentage of “partly free states”.
assertions and the saliency of universal democracy. These signs are not encouraging as it seems those illiberal states have consistently managed to remain illiberal without any additional need for democratization.

As more countries made the transition to democracy during the last thirty years, it became increasingly necessary to develop a series of democratic criteria that differentiated the more recent and tenuous democracies from the established and stable ones. Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan have articulated one of the most comprehensive models of democratic institutionalism in the last ten years. In brief, five conditions must exist in order democratic consolidation to manifest: civil society, political society, rule of law, a robust state bureaucracy, and a market economy. A civil society is the most visible form of institutional public activity outside the formal trappings of state government. It is here that individuals and groups articulate their values, form fraternal associations, and advance their interests. Civil society can range from the most advanced institutions – non-governmental organizations, religious groups, trade unions, universities, or media outlets – to public protests, demonstrations, and general strikes. Where civil society can be effective in providing a public forum to challenge the power and legitimacy of the

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96 Fareed Zakaria, The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004). David Collier and Steven Levitsky, “Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research,” World Politics, vol. 49, no. 3 (April, 1997), pp. 430 – 51; Fareed Zakaria, “The Rise of Illiberal Democracy,” Foreign Affairs, vol. 76, no. 6 (November – December, 1997), pp. 22 – 43; Todd Eisenstadt, ed., “The Neglected Democrats: Protracted Transitions from Authoritarianism,” special issue of Democratization, vol. 7, no. 3 (Autumn, 2000); Larry Diamond, “Thinking about Hybrid Regimes,” Journal of Democracy, vol. 13, no. 2 (April, 2002), pp. 21 – 35. Levitsky and Way (2002), use the term “competitive authoritarianism” to denote states in which formal democratic institutions are widely viewed as the primary means of obtaining and exercising political authority. Examples included Croatia under Franjo Tudjman, Serbia under Slobodan Milošević, Russia under Vladimir Putin, and Peru under Alberto Fujimori. While it is often difficult to completely distinguish between the various terms used to describe political activity in states operating between full democracy and full authoritarianism, Levitsky and Way state that “competitive authoritarianism” is not even a type of democracy. Violations of democratic criteria are so pervasive and privileges between government and opposition are so disparate that these regimes cannot even be considered democratic at all.

state, political societies aggregate interests with political parties, elections, electoral procedures, and legislative structure, all of which facilitate the contestation of the legitimate right to exercise control over power.98 Democratically-oriented political societies essentially work to channel the momentum of public activity and collective will through democratic institutions and procedures. To achieve an outcome ending in democratic consolidation, the rule of law must prevail and be beholden to all public actors. More than mere institutional routinization, a “spirit of constitutionalism” must facilitate an environment in which rules and regulations are upheld and followed.99 Disputes between political parties and factions operate within a framework of negotiation and compromise, and are both interpreted by an independent judicial system, and regulated through national legislation.

Democratic states also need a stable state apparatus through which a regulated tax system can function, as well as rational-legal bureaucratic norms to protect and enforce the laws that guarantee the rights and freedoms of individuals. Oftentimes, weak democratic states lack stable state bureaucracies, which can frequently experience high levels of corruption and nepotism. Critical to our understanding here is whether new democratic regimes can either use former state ministries from the authoritarian period, or need to completely restructure state institutional government when the distinction between old regime and state were virtually interdependent. Finally, the presence of an institutionalized economic society produces the needed surplus to allow the state to carry out its services and provides a material base for both the autonomy and the pluralism of civil and political societies. This in turn allows them to contribute towards greater

98 For definitions and comparisons between civil and political societies, see Ekiert and Kubik (1999), pp. 82 – 6.
99 Linz and Stepan (1996), p. 10
democratic growth and self-sufficiency. In short, Linz and Stepan’s model enhances our understanding that democracy is an interacting system, where each component functions within a process of interdependent accountability. Key here is the establishment of strong institutions that facilitate conditions of social justice.

A Multi-Step Approach to Democratic Consolidation

The additional criteria have influenced more recent scholars to begin measuring democracy and democratic development along a continuum that moves through a series of phases: first from authoritarianism to democratic transition; second from democratic transition to democratic consolidation; and finally from democratic consolidation to mature democracies. By utilizing a continuum that maps each state’s level of democracy, we not only differentiate states by “strong” and “weak” democracies, but we also able to come to a better understanding of what each state needs to accomplish in order to strengthen its democratic effectiveness and identify the factors that are common to democratic development in all societies.

Phase I: The Collapse of the Old Order

The weakening and breakdown of authoritarian regimes begins when the state experiences a rupture in political control, or in the terms of Antonio Gramsci, a “crisis of authority.” The roots of these crises are numerous, but often stem from at least four commonly recurring causes: a loss of a perceived image of invulnerability of the regime, the unsustainable costs of coercion and control by the central authorities; the death of a
leader whose personal charisma and cult of personality embodied the state more than the political movement he/she was part of; and rising levels of economic income within an increasingly vocal and independent bourgeoisie.100 During this phase, democratic elements, if they exist at all in the state, function as both an ideology and a social movement against the official state institutions of authority and power. These elements exist in a variety of forms such as organized opposition movements, underground journalism, dissident writing, émigré influence, and everyday forms of passive resistance to the political and ideological propaganda emanating from the central authorities. Oftentimes, democratic groups present alternative forms of history, identity, and memory from official state narratives. Particular symbols, anthems, flags, songs, images, literature, even spoken dialects, that are minimized, or even outright banned, by the state are adopted by opposition movements to visibly show their rejection of official state discourse.101 In this early stage, democratic forces may be neither inherently organized, nor concise in goals for post-authoritarian state-building. If authoritarianism begins to break down, democratic movements may even collaborate with other of anti-regime elements in united collective action to help bring down the state apparatus. The primary objective is to provide a collective bulwark of opposition against the authoritarian regime that is seen as the common enemy.102

100 Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks (1971), pp. 210 – 18, 275 – 76
102 As Kubik and Linch (2006) argue, collective opposition to the state does not automatically imply long-term cooperation after the state’s collapse. Though the Solidarity movement in Poland in the late 1980s was certainly pro-democratic, various socio-political cleavages existed within this disparate collection of dissenters and formed the crux of post-communist political divisions. See pp. 17 – 19. A more poignant example is the eighteen party coalition against Milošević in Serbia in 2000 and the open differences in political and economic strategies between its two most visible leaders Vojislav Koštunica (DSS) and Zoran Đindjić (DS). Both had agreed that Milošević had to be removed but as will be described in greater detail in chapter 7, both had deep misgivings for each other.
As Linz and Stepan rightly argue, “the characteristics of the previous nondemocratic regime have profound implications for the transition paths available and the tasks different countries face when they begin their struggles to develop consolidated democracies.”

The point to be made here is that the nature of transition is largely dependent on the type of authoritarian withdrawal. Models of elite bargaining, in which the ruling regime realizes the game is up and begins a series of negotiations with the opposition for a smooth transition of power and a chance to participate in the new state, have been argued by many scholars to produce potentially more stable democratic society than transitions that are mired by authoritarian intransigence that either leads to social revolutions, or worse, civil wars. As Linz and Stepan further argue, such negotiated transitions are more likely if the authoritarian state already has highly developed institutions through which democratic movements can utilize. The relatively smooth transitions of power in Spain, Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic resulted in no small part from already established political and economic societies that developed in the

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103 Linz and Stepan (1997), p. 55
104 Models of elite bargaining are often employed by scholars to account for the transition from authoritarianism to democratization, and from democratization to full democratic maturity. As originally put forth by Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe Schmitter in *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), elite bargaining consists of the negotiated transfer of power from the old regime to a democratic government by political moderates in authoritarian and reformist camps. Such negotiations allow for the smooth transferring of power between governments, and the avoidance of political instability, social revolutions, or worse, civil wars. Key leaders of the old regime are often granted political immunity in return for peaceful multiparty elections and the guarantee that the military remains in the barracks. Reformers are guaranteed the use of preexisting government institutions and the assurance that remnants of the old regime, if they are participating in multiparty elections, will not abuse their privilege of notoriety and support from certain socio-political sectors to dominate politics in the post-authoritarian era. See also John Higley and Michael Burton, *Elite Foundations of Liberal Democracy* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006); Nancy Bermeo, “Myths of Moderation: Confrontation and Conflict during Democratic Transitions”, *Comparative Politics*, vol. 29, no. 3 (April 1997), pp. 305 – 22; Stephan Haggard and Robert Kaufman, *The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions* (Princeton University Press, 1995); Barbara Geddes, *Politician’s Dilemma: Building State Capacity in Latin America* (University of California Press, 1994); and Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge University Press, 1992).
last years of the regime. Conversely, transitions that were initiated by political coups or social revolutions due to authoritarian resistance as in Romania in 1989 and Serbia in 2000, or outright military defeats as Germany in 1945 or Iraq in 2003, building democracy was often accompanied by the simultaneous construction of political and economic society. In almost every case, how the old regime ends determines where the transition starts, and where the transition starts determines the difficulty of democratic consolidation.

Phase II: Period of Political Transition

The transition from opposition to democratic consolidation is an incredibly important. It is here that a social movement develops from an interim period of transition to an elected government to (hopefully) an consolidated democratic regime. It is also this phase that many states undergoing transitions either fail to achieve a consolidated democracy, return to some form of authoritarianism, or end up in some sort of “illiberal democracy”, or “hybrid regime” between democracy and authoritarianism.

The key question asked here is what necessary steps need to be taken in order to ensure democratic development and guarantee democratic consolidation? It is here that the institutionalist argument begins to weaken as some states easily move from transition to consolidation and others do not. What previous works largely miss is that social forces other than democratic ones are often present. Anti-regime movements, previously united in a collective effort to undermine the old order, may now compete with each other for

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political power and authority. Formal political parties are formed if they had not been
formed previously, key leaders during the opposition phase emerge as party leaders, and
the proliferation of civic institutions, media outlets, and social movements operate to
highlight the diversity of political, economic, cultural, and social preferences of society.
Rudimentary signs of a civil society may begin to visibly grow, but vertical bonds of
authority and hierarchy may be more prominent than horizontal bonds of co-fraternal
fellowship. Democracy and democratic ideals may be felt by a segment of the
population, but it may compete in the same public space for votes and support with
elements of nationalism, sectarianism, and neo-authoritarian parties and interests.

Particularly in transitions marked by an abrupt rupture from the old order,
democracy may not be a guaranteed outcome, and therefore democratic parties must
begin to develop a clear and concise program of building democratic institutions and
propagating “pro-democratic” culture once elected. Democratic proponents must win
public support not only for their policies and objectives, but they must also prove to be a
better alternative to politicians espousing traditional and emotional ties to exclusionary
nationalism. One of the primary challenges during the transition period are the
persistence of threatened elites from the old regime that have lost power, but still
command a strong influence over key sectors of society. According to Edward Mansfield
and Jack Snyder, entrenched elites in contemporary post-authoritarian states may resort to
nationalist appeals to regain popular support, and hail from local and national party

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106 See Sheri Berman, “Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic”, World Politics, no. 49, no. 3 (April, 1997), pp. 635 – 655 for an example on the weak democratic institutions of interwar Germany and the strength of extensively-structured, but inwardly-looking, organizations within communist, nationalist, and national-socialist groups. For a comparative look at democratic and non-democratically oriented civic groups along vertical or horizontal orientations in one country, see Ashutosh Varshney, Ethnic Conflict and Civil Life: Hindus and Muslims in India, (Yale University Press, 2003).
officials, military officers, ministry or firm leaders controlling outdated industrial capital, workers in such sectors, and people living and working in regions where such sectors predominate.\textsuperscript{107} Even in states where transition is negotiated, the ability of authoritarian elements to run in democratic elections may undoubtedly pull those loyal to the old regime away from newer, less established, democratic parties. As witnessed in many Eastern European states, many former communist parties “survived democracy”, reformed their agendas, and were able to return to power electorally in the mid 1990s. While this might not had any significant effect on the process of democratic transition per say, the continued presence of elites from the previous regime furthered the belief among the general population that democratic transition ultimately produces little change in leadership.\textsuperscript{108}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Phases_of_Transition_diagram.png}
\caption{Phases of Democratic Transition}
\end{figure}

\textit{Phase III: Consolidation, or Stalled Transition}

Pending the outcome of the first state-wide post-authoritarian election, two possible outcomes occur. The first is that democratic forces win public support and a parliamentary majority, and begin the final steps towards democratic consolidation. In forming a new government, democratic parties begin to re-organize the state around new

political, social, and cultural discourses of democratic ideals, replace and discredit the workings of the old order, and either incorporate or marginalize previous non-democratic competitors into its program. Under this phase, democracy begins the processes of institutional legitimization in government, the habituation in public practice, and the internalization of democratic norms. Diversity continues to exist, and opposition to government is encouraged, but all political and social contestation begins to gradually function within a clear set of democratic laws and parameters. Key here is the simultaneous development of democratic institutions alongside the deconstruction and delegitimization of the old authoritarian state apparatus. As many scholars have argued, a certain “social consensus” needs to be in favor of building a new democratic framework and working solely and exclusively within that framework regardless of the political, economic, or social crisis. When an agreement on democratic rules is successfully reached, says Di Palma, the transition is essentially over and the consolidation phase begins. We know we have reached the first signs of democratic consolidation, states Linz, when “none of the major political actors, parties, or organized interests, forces, or institutions consider that there is any alternative to democratic process to gain power.” When consolidation is complete, not only does democracy become “the only game in town”, but becomes, in the words of Diamond, “routinized and deeply internalized in social, institutional, and even psychological life.”


110 Di Palma (1990), p. 109


An alternative outcome is a stalled transition. Democratic forces either lose the election to non-democratic elements and return to serving as both a political and an ideological counterweight to the central authorities, or fail to delegitimize the old authoritarian apparatus. If a sizeable democratic minority is elected to the state legislature, organized opposition may continue to function within state institutions. If democratic movements are pushed back “underground”, opposition may continue to function in street protests, electoral boycotts, and general strikes. Future rounds of elections may bring democratic parties to power, or it may further solidify the position of non-democratic parties. States may even function within a general framework of democracy – elections, legislative government, independent media – but specific democratic ideals and values may not be generally accepted. In multi-ethnic societies where key elites play on ethnic fears and nationalist sentiments to shore up their own power base, the potential for sectarian conflict and even civil war may result if political differences are coupled with ethnic identities.\(^\text{113}\) As noted in numerous case studies in Latin America, many democratic transitions have not successfully delegitimized the old order, and as such, have developed political systems that are neither democratically consolidated, nor authoritatively deconstructed.\(^\text{114}\) Many sources on democratic transitions have also argued that regimes in transition need to rapidly evolve from authoritarianism, or risk “deconsolidating”. The rise in social tensions and a general


**The Limits of Institutional Approaches to Democracy**

How can we identify and explain which transitioning states evolve into consolidating democracies, and which remain in a stalled transition, or revert back to authoritarianism? Many of the approaches cited above provide models of what states need do so, but they offer little explanations of how they can be realized, and why consolidation happens in one place, and not another. For all of the nuances of systemic accountability provided in Linz and Stepan’s five-point model of democratic consolidation, much of the model rests on broad-based assumptions and indefinite conclusions that even the authors themselves acknowledge. Institutional approaches to democratic transition have certainly enriched our understanding of the democratic framework and have provided additional sets of criteria with which to measure and compare the degree of democracy in a state, especially between an established democracy and a state with nascent democratic foundations. However, these approaches suffer from numerous weaknesses that affect our understandings of newly transitioned countries, our understanding of measuring democratic growth, and our understanding of predicting democratic sustainability.
First, institutional approaches to democracy still give little regard to human agency, if not overlooking it altogether. Political behavior is often taken for granted, and assumed that similar structural designs in various case studies will produce, or at the very least should produce, similar outcomes. Such beliefs, argue the critics of institutionalism, are not only problematic for our understanding of the world, but also erroneous for the social scientific methodologies employed. In reality, institutions are made up of individual actors with choices that are constantly shaped and informed by past events, oriented towards future goals and objectives, and function in response to emerging demands, dilemmas, and ambiguities of present-time decision making.\textsuperscript{116} Too much focus on the primacy of structure overlooks the possibility for human creativity, innovation, preference, risk-taking, and unforeseen value orientations. By overlooking microanalytic details of individual choice and activity, democratic consolidation is often assumed to be final, stable, and self-sustaining once reached, when in reality, democracy requires constant development, renewal and active participation by both elites and ordinary citizens.

This is one of the primary weaknesses of elite bargaining models. Elite bargaining does not in itself lead to democracy. All parties must make conscious decisions to collectively work towards facilitating a democratic structure. However, bargaining could actually leave much of the old order intact, which in cases such as Serbia and Romania have produced additional obstacles towards full democratic consolidation in the forms of corruption, internal squabbling, bureaucratic ineptness, and clientelism. Furthermore, negotiated transfers of power may not even contain democratic elements. Internal

transitions from one authoritarian variant to another were defining features of most Balkan and former Soviet countries, and not every transition movement is going to have a dedicated democratic leader like Vaclav Havel, a democratic movement like Solidarity, or a universally respected arbiter like King Juan Carlos of Spain. Indeed, the conditions in which an authoritarian government willingly agrees to gradually transfer power to genuine democratic forces are less frequent than proponents of elite bargaining would think.

Second, institutional approaches are weak in accounting for historical subjectivity. Many studies of democratic transition and consolidation, particularly comparative analyses of multiple countries at a time, often begin focus on a country at the start of transition from authoritarian rule and usually end either just before or immediately after consolidation is said to occur. Very little information is given as to the historic nature of the authoritarian regime, the reasons for its collapse, or the prospects for a successful, and stable, democratic consolidation. In essence, the main thrust of the study seems more concerned with the effectiveness of the model than the conditions of the state under observation, and if the state either fails to transition or remains in some stalled state of transition, blame is often placed on the institutions of the state, not the model of inquiry. As a result, theories of democratic transition are applied to case studies that have varying degrees of strengths and weaknesses in, industrial growth, political development, public participation, and democratic “compatibility.” It is also assumed that once free and fair elections are held, the winning party will continue to adhere to the rules of the game, elected terms will be carried out to their designated end without threats of coups, dismissals, or assassinations, and that such stable elections will repeat indefinitely.
These assumptions are largely based on the reliance that institutions, in and of themselves, will shape political behavior and channel political activity through democratic means.

Third, by discounting human agency and historical subjectivity, institutional approaches to democracy engage in what Giovanni Sartori referred to as “concept misinformation” in comparative analysis, or the setting of quantitatively comparable parameters without accounting for qualitative idiosyncrasies.\textsuperscript{117} Even as early as 1970, the expansion of social scientific research into previously uncharted areas, both methodological and case study oriented, called for more robust models of analyses that could account for cross-area studies, and a broader understanding of terminological application. The response was not so much an expansion of methodology, but a practice of “conceptual stretching”, which simply applied original understandings of terminology and modeling criteria to new areas of study. As argued by Sartori, the problem with this practice, a problem that was highlighted nearly forty years ago and continues to haunt social scientific research today, is that we have either “stretched” the methodology wide enough to account for as many case studies as possible at the risk of making the model value-free and meaningless, or we have reduced each case study analysis to such a minimal level of understanding to fit the model that we lose all the nuances, subjectivity, and qualitative “stuff”, making comparative analysis hollow and empty.

In this respect, many scholars continue to note that the most “established” democracies in the world are Western democracies, and that it is the West that espouses the quintessential models of “mature” democratic government. These states serve not

\textsuperscript{117} Giovanni Sartori, “Concept Misinformation in Comparative Politics”, \textit{American Political Science Review}, vol. 64, no. 4, (December, 1970), pp. 1033 – 1053.
only as models of what aspiring states should be like, but also provide the criteria through
which most of the democratic world is evaluated. 118 As Guillermo O’Donnell states, when scholars argue that states lack democratic institutions, or that those institutions are weak, we are first basing our criteria on perceptions of “model” institutions in more established states, and secondly, we base our evaluation on Western criteria. In short, we prejudice our experiments by establishing a set of comparative parameters that may be only methodologically significant for one sector of the globe, and thus overlook, misunderstand, or outright dismiss alternative approaches to democratic growth. 119

O’Donnell also challenges many of the assumptions of democratic consolidation, and argues that the conditions commonly associated with determining when democracy becomes “the only game in town” are often misleading. 120 There is no discussion of dissention within democratic institutions, especially when considering what formal rules and procedures should be followed. As such, it is assumed that all adherents of democracy follow one particular pattern, operate within one particular set of rules, and consider the office they are elected to as a state service, not a medium of personal power and individual benefit. Democratic consolidation is seen as being the beginning of indefinite stability and political harmony. There is no discussion, nor any consideration, that democracy can be just as contentious, fragmented, ineffective, corrupt, and

118 As will be noted in greater detail in the following chapter, the most well-known work on the West vs. Rest debate is Samuel Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order (New York, Touchstone Books, 1996). However, these premises stem from earlier works on modernization theory, the belief that industrialization and economic development directly lead to positive social and political change. For earlier works on modernization theory, see Lipset (1959), and Gabriel Almond, “Comparative Political Systems,” Journal of Politics, vol. 18, no. 3 (1956), pp. 391 – 409
120 O’Donnell is specifically critiquing the ambiguous conclusions of democratic consolidation reached by Przeworski (1991), and Linz and Stepan (1997).
clientelistic as more authoritarian forms of government.\textsuperscript{121} This is a case when considering current situations in Serbia, Romania, Venezuela, India, and Turkey, among others, as many competing political parties, although operating largely within the democratic framework, carry significantly different – even confrontational – approaches and interpretations of democracy, how democracy should be implemented, and which social values should be emphasized.

O’Donnell however does not seem to provide a solution to the problem. The best we can hope for is a return to more minimal definitions of democracy because any further refinement risks imposing inappropriate values and measurements on incompatible cases. As such, we either end up with a vastly large group of states that share little commonality in terms of democracy beyond electoral processes and a market economy, or a small group of advanced industrialized societies in Western Europe, North America, and the Anglo-Saxon Pacific that meet the stringent criteria. The problems we as scholars are faced with is whether the models we employ rely too heavily on prerequisites and particular roadmaps of development that do not account for the specific challenges each case is accompanied with. In short, we risk making democratic transition an unreachable goal for many states in the world today if we attach too many caveats, but cheapen the entire enterprise if we apply too little.

We cannot retreat to more minimal definitions of democracy simply because the world has become more complex and multifaceted. If anything, we need to forge ahead with more robust definitions that go beyond the parsimonious and quantifiable

\textsuperscript{121} O’Donnell, pp. 49 – 52, specifically refers to “particularism” that defines each case. Within an institutionally functioning democracy that fits all the structural criteria of a polyarchy are nonuniversalistic relationships ranging from hierarchical exchanges, patronage, nepotism, and rewarding of certain actions that under the formal rules of polyarchy would be considered corrupt.
institutional models. Democracy is more than “electoral democracy”. Democracy is more than the end product of a negotiated settlement between elites that leave the vast majority of citizen preferences unaccounted for. If anything, democracy at the very least should be more than some sort of option that conflicting sides settle on when nothing else seems feasible.\textsuperscript{122} Democracy should not exist because people see no other alternative, or that it is the least “non-preferred” form of government. Democracy by default will at best result in minimal democracy with little public participation, weak civil liberties, and the always-present possibility that democracy could be preempted should a seemingly better idea come along.\textsuperscript{123} Gone are the days where we are still uncertain if more countries will become democratic. The new question we should be asking is whether countries become more democratic? Why are there still holdouts to complete democratization in the world, especially in states that seem to have all the institutional trappings to facilitate democracy? What are the necessary steps that must be taken for a state to evolve from “transitioning” to “consolidated” to “complete”, or liberal, democracy?

If retrospect, the third wave of democratization has been more effective in dismantling authoritarian states than in building democratic ones. With the increasing influence of international organizations and the power of free information via the Internet, there are very few states left in the world that can effectively monopolize coercive control over the state. However, this does not mean that all states are

\textsuperscript{122} See Leonard Wantchekon, “The Paradox of Warlord Democracy: A Theoretical Investigation”, \textit{American Political Science Review}, vol. 98, no. 1 (February, 2004), pp. 17 – 33. Wantchekon argues that contrary to popular academic thinking, popular democracy can immediately arise out of anarchy when economic interests depend on a an active citizenry, citizens’ preferences agree that power will be less biased within a democratic framework than a top-down elite driven “Leviathan” structure, and when there is an external monitor such as the United Nations that mediates state-building. However, Wantchekon’s model makes no consideration for the quality of democracy, nor the likelihood that previously warring parties will exploit the power of the ballot box to their own ends.

automatically gravitating towards democratic freedoms. Today, one of the greatest challenges to democracy is government operating within a vast gray area between full democracy and full authoritarianism. There is no universal definition by which all these states can be classified save that they cannot be identified as traditional authoritarianisms of one-party rule, limited civil rights, and a pervasive security apparatus. At the same time, they also cannot be classified as traditional democracies with wide degrees of political rights and civil liberties.\textsuperscript{124} These states “combine rhetorical acceptance of liberal democracy, the existence of some formal democratic institutions, and respect for a limited sphere of civil and political liberties with essentially illiberal or even authoritarian traits.”\textsuperscript{125} Furthermore, while some of these states may be considered non-consolidated or “incomplete” democracies, whose paths towards greater consolidation and institutionalization have become stalled, more often than not, these are states where regimes maintain the appearance of democracy with an elected legislature, political parties, civil society, an independent press, and some political debate, while simultaneously remaining consciously committed to limiting real competition for power and halting any momentum of visible dissent. There may be genuine movements within these states for greater democratic rights and freedoms but they are often unable to capture broad public appeal, and are frequently engaged in internal disputes and power struggles. The ruling regimes deliberately maintain an alternative system to complete

\textsuperscript{124} As Linz and Stepan point out, “no regime should be called a democracy unless its rulers govern democratically. If freely elected executives (no matter what the magnitude of their majority) infringe the constitution, violate the rights of individuals and minorities, impinge upon the legitimate functions of the legislature, and thus fail to rule within the bounds of state law, their regimes are not democracies.” Quoted in, Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, “Toward Consolidated Democracies”, Consolidating Third Wave Democracies, Larry Diamond, Marc. F. Plattner, Yun-Han Chu, and Hung-mao Tien, eds. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 15.

\textsuperscript{125} Ottaway (2003), p. 3
democracy and if many of the regime leaders had their way, this system would never change.

Traditional institutional approaches to democratization base their models on transition from authoritarian to democratic rule, but do not focus enough attention on the veritable “de-authoritarianization” of the state. In other words, while it is critical for democratic institutions to embed themselves within the political framework of the state, it is equally important to observe a clear decline in support for authoritarian practices and an authoritarian mentality. Democratic institutions operating in a state where authoritarian practices are still considered valid and even acceptable by large sectors of society will only blunt democratic growth and maturity. Today, the challenges of democratization are fought less between democratic and authoritarian sectors of government and society, than between forces advocating greater or lesser degrees of democratic liberties. As will be seen, there are an increasing number of states in the world that operate behind a thin façade of democratic structure, but still curtail many political rights and civil liberties to its citizens. Thus, while we, as Francis Fukuyama put it, might be approaching the end point of man’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government, we have not yet reached the “end of history”.126 The new challenges to states undergoing democratic transitions, and to the scholars studying them, will be in maintaining the gains already achieved, and the deepening of these gains to the point where democracy becomes “the only game in town” in both institutional as well as attitudinal meanings of the term. This can only be accomplished if these democracies become consolidated through the legitimization of democratic institutions and the habituation of democratic

126 Francis Fukuyama, The End of History and the Last Man, 2nd edition (Free Press, 2006)
norms to a degree that, even when challenged by severe political and economic crises, no other alternative forms of government are seriously considered by elites or citizens, and that any additional political change must function within the parameters of democratic formulas. Until such a critical point in democratic consolidation is reached, democracy cannot be considered self-sustaining, and risks potential decay and breakdown. How this can be avoided, and how social scientists can obtain greater predictive power in understanding the unique complexities of each democratic transition is the primary objective of cultural approaches to democracy operating alongside institutional arguments, the focus of the next chapter.
Chapter 3: Towards a “Thick Description” of Democracy

What can cultural approaches to democracy tell us that institutional models alone cannot? How does culture serve as either a catalyst or a retardant to democratic growth? Are there any cultures in the world that are inherently incompatible with democratic principles, or can cultures change to adapt to these democratic principles? Finally, why is “the past” so critical to elites interested in forging a new political system in the present? While addressing these conceptual questions in this chapter, I contend that culture should not replace institutional models, but rather to work in tandem with it. Culture matters, history matters, and legacies matter, yet all must be understood as dynamic models that adapt to current circumstances, mobilize collective action, and legitimize political strategy. While culture may appear timeless and unchanging, meanings shift and interpretations change with crisis and circumstance. By taking human agency and historical subjectivity into account, cultural approaches help us infer how preferences are made by ordinary citizens and define the constraints political and social elites operate under.

How we identify the relationship between culture and democracy has been hotly debated, and the demand for greater clarification and understanding of comparative political behavior has generated what Ronald Inglehart has called a proverbial “renaissance” in the study of political culture.1 Yet prevailing works which note the primacy of culture in social and political settings almost invariably treat it as unchanging and timeless; an assumption, as will be explained, that has led to rather exaggerated

conclusions about its relationship to authority and its compatibility with democracy of many cases under study. While it would be erroneous to conclude that every social scientific approach to culture and democracy thus far has been wrong, it is a fair and valid argument to say that many case studies have been weak on historical analysis. All too often have conclusions been reached that the culture of a society is incompatible with the basic principles of democracy simply because it has a long and inglorious history of deference to authoritarian government. Without an understanding of culture as a dynamic model that is subject to reflect new social, economic, and political realities, scholars who continue to argue that “culture matters” will also invariably argue it serves as more of a liability than an asset to democratic maturity.2

Cultural beliefs, values, and identities, provide legitimacy to political and social institutions, and provide these institutions with, in the words of Ernest Griffith, “an emotional content which will make its survival a fighting matter for those who love it.”3 Something that is “worth fighting for” is not adequately considered by direct institutional approaches to democracy, yet it seems almost obvious to the casual observer or everyday man in the street. Not every American knows every article and amendment of the United

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2 Debates throughout the 1990s surrounding the primacy of culture during political transition differed on whether culture would play a critical role in assessing the prospects for democracy in a state, but reached a seeming consensus that for many non-Western countries, culture, particularly when associated with legacies of the past, would be an obstacle to reform. A “break with the past” was considered the best solution for countries of the former Soviet Union and former Yugoslavia. But as Petro and other practitioners of more interpretivist models of culture argue, radical breaks with the past jeopardize the legitimacy of the state, undermining its capability to implement the very changes that are needed. See Petro, Crafting Democracy (2004), pp. 95 – 6. For debates on the importance of culture, see Philippe Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, “From an Iron Curtain to a Paper Curtain: Grounding Transitologists or Students of Postcommunism?” Slavic Review, vol. 54, no. 4 (1995), pp. 965 – 978, Valerie Bunce, “Should Transitologists be Grounded?” Slavic Review, vol. 54, no 1 (1995), pp. 111 – 127; Bunce, “The Political Economy of Postsocialism”, Slavic Review, vol. 58, no. 4 (1999), pp. 756 – 793, and Bunce, “Regional Differences in Democratization: the East versus the South,” Post-Soviet Affairs, vol. 14, no. 3 (1998), pp. 187 – 211.

States Constitution, the complete workings of Congress, how the Iowa Caucus works, or all three verses of “The Star Spangled Banner”. Yet nearly every American views the Constitution, the Founding Fathers, the American Flag, and the national anthem as timeless symbols of American democracy, liberty, and freedom. Present politicians constantly seek to liken their own activities to those of noteworthy and recognizable predecessors. Men like George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt, and more recently Ronald Reagan, have become veritable standards of leadership, morality, and courage, by which all presidents should aspire to. Politicians merely have to say that they are “defenders of the Constitution”, “advocates of a women’s right to choose”, or “champions of the common folk” without saying much else, in order to either win support or earn criticism from the voting public. Apparently, something other than institutional strength is at work.

What is at work is the way in which people systematize their daily worlds. As understood by Marc Howard Ross, culture is a “framework for organizing the world, for locating the self and others in it, for making sense of the actions and interpreting motives of others, for grounding an analysis of interests, for linking collective identities to political action, and for motivating people and groups towards some actions and away from others.” However, Ross has also noted that “culture is not a concept with which most political scientists are comfortable.” Causal explanations are complicated due to “just so” interpretive accounts of information culled from a collection of myths, rituals,

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narratives, and beliefs that are difficult to classify as units of analyses. As a result, culture remains understood as an epiphenomenon that may be described, but cannot be an explanatory component for why such beliefs are practiced and are seemingly resilient against change. Missing from most cultural analyses is the understanding that shared meanings and identities within a group are often highly contested, and are formed around internal variants and social cleavages.6

Studies of political culture add a slightly different application of culture. As explained by Myron Aronoff, political culture constitutes shared meanings that are socially constructed, and that either affirm or challenge the legitimacy of political institutions, offices, and procedures of a polity. As such, “political culture is employed to establish or contest the legitimate parameters of collective identity.”7 It demarcates “us” from “them” between groups, and stratifies central and peripheral fundamentals within the group. These classifications are defined by a limited, but recognizable, set of myths that express the goals and ideals most critical to the collectivity through symbols, historical narratives, and rituals. While a collective consensus on these narratives is hardly ever uniform, the myths these different understandings and interpretations are drawn from represent a set of non-negotiable truths and beliefs. The Battle of Kosovo, the Holocaust, the Fall of Constantinople, and the American Revolution are all historical events that have critically defined Serbian, Jewish, Greek, and American collective identity, and while all of these events have been continuously reinterpreted with changing political realities to accommodate both the transformation of power into authority and in challenges to authority, the myth itself appears to remain unchanged, timeless, non-

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6 Ibid. p. 43.
negotiable, and overwhelmingly immune from public criticism. When certain collective beliefs become non-negotiable truths, political change is constrained and elites are socially pressured to operate within a fixed set of cultural parameters. Those that opt to operate outside these parameters, and lack either a strong following or access to coercive control, risk their political careers and in some cases even their lives.

But for all the importance regarded in framing attitudes and beliefs as well as providing meaning to collective action and political strategies, most social scientific works on political culture continue to regard it as a collection of aggregate patterns of individual attitudes and opinions that are added up to form a general framework of behavior towards political orientations. Rarely do these works denote the importance, let alone the existence, of internal cleavages in shaping different, and oftentimes competing, political preferences. A primary problem with mainstream approaches to political culture is the continued assumption that official political expression is a direct reflection of deep-seated social values. These approaches do not consider the existence of alternative political cultures within a single nationality, nor do they examine public sentiment outside the political sphere. For example, criteria for a democratic “civic culture” has been continuously culled from advanced industrial democracies and applied to states recently emerging from authoritarian regimes.

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8 For a critique of empirical testing, a review of the primary literature on conceptual problems in social science, and a hypothesized solution for compatibility between the two, see James Johnson, “Conceptual Problems as Obstacles to Progress in Political Science”, *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2003), pp. 87 – 115.

9 A critique of mainstream models of political culture for their insistence of behavioral models of social inquiry forms the central argument of Petro’s earlier work *democratic political cultures in Russia*. He notes the continued use by Sovietologists to define Russian political culture within a narrow unitary framework not only resulted in the failure in predicting the collapse of the Soviet Union, but also in failing to recognize the serious weakness of state institutions decades earlier. See Nicolai Petro, *The Rebirth of Russian Democracy* (Harvard University Press, 1995).
The failure to identify a democratic culture in Serbia, both recently and historically, has largely been due to the tendency of scholars to look little beyond the official political rhetoric of the state. Prevailing studies throughout the 1990s interpreted the strength of ethnocentric politics under Milošević as a testament of the congruence between the politics of the regime and Serbian political culture. When the Milošević regime was overthrown in October 2000, a brief period of optimism dominated Western analyses that the Serbian people had finally thrown off the mantle of nationalism, had abandoned their alleged myths of historical greatness, and had finally begun to embrace Western democratic values. Nearly a decade following the collapse of the regime, the apparent persistence of ethnocentrism in Serbia’s political discourse has led even some of the most objective scholars on the former Yugoslavia to conclude that “it is widely understood that xenophobic nationalism is a vital part of Serbian culture today.”\textsuperscript{10} Petro finds that such faulty conclusions are however indicative of larger problems that continue to plague mainstream approaches to political culture: the persistence of behavioralism in the study of culture, the failure to identify culture as an independent variable, questionable methodology that treats culture as a source of officially sanctioned values, and a general misunderstanding of culture altogether.\textsuperscript{11} These approaches, I argue, fail to understand culture as a dynamic ensemble of discourses that reflect and influence individual beliefs and collective identity, coupled with the authority of the state and the role of political and intellectual elites.


\textsuperscript{11} Petro (1995), pp. 6 – 8.
Behavioral approaches to political culture have been the primary social scientific research method for decades. The general understanding of this school of thought is that the social sciences should be practiced in the same rigorous fashion as the natural sciences. Thus, empirically measurable attitudes are studied with the use of quantitative methods such as sampling, survey data, scoring and scaling techniques, and statistical analysis. The seminal work on the relationship between culture and democracy, and the work most often cited as the proverbial starting point for all subsequent social scientific works on political culture is Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba’s *The Civic Culture*.\(^{12}\) The central argument of *The Civic Culture* states that developing democracy in new nations would require far more than the institutional obligations such as universal suffrage, political parties and an elective legislature. What makes democracy truly work, they argue, is when “a democratic form of participatory political system requires … a political culture consistent with it.”\(^{13}\) Within the framework of political culture is a methodological and conceptual weaknesses of mainstream approaches to culture.

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\(^{12}\) Almond, Verba, and Lucian Pye were all pioneers in the study of “democratic modernization”, which examined how Western countries could assist in the development of democratic polities in the developing world. All were influenced by earlier writings of Talcott Parsons and Edward Shils in their examination of culture as a form of social cohesion. But whereas the Parsons and Shils ultimately regarded culture as an “as is” phenomena, Almond argued that culture can be understood as “empirically observable behavior”, while Pye posited that individual values are indicative of the larger social group, and even for the nation in its entirety. See Gabriel Almond, “Comparative Political Systems”, *Journal of Politics*, vol. 18, no. 3 (1956), pp. 391 – 409; Lucian Pye, “Culture and Political Science: Problems in the Evolution of the Concept of Political Culture,” *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 53, no. 2 (September, 1972), pp. 285 – 96; Talcott Parson and Edward Shils, eds., *Towards a General Theory of Action* (Harvard University Press, 1951)

\(^{13}\) Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*: (1963), p. 5. See also the abridged version of *The Civic Culture*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1963), p. 3. Because the full and abridged texts are often cited on a nearly equal basis, all subsequent citations will include page numbers from both the unabridged version, followed by the abridged text. By “political culture”, they refer to a political system internalized in the cognitions, feelings, and evaluations of its population. The concept of political culture “enables us to formulate hypotheses about the relationships among different components of culture and to test these hypotheses empirically.” See p. 14/13
specifically designed democratic culture, or “civic culture” as they call it: “a pluralistic culture based on communication and persuasion, a culture of diversity, a culture that permitted change but moderated it.”\textsuperscript{14} While indices of civic cultures might differ from country to country, the primary theme present in all civic cultures is the willingness of the citizen to participate in the political process, and a collective sense of social justice. Two subsequent questions arise: how to people become active citizens, and what constitutes active citizenship?\textsuperscript{15}

Behavioral approaches to culture are often utilized by scholars who measure levels of participation in organized civic groups as indicators of active citizenship in a state.\textsuperscript{16} This participation is neither obligatory nor necessary, but its importance lies primarily with it being a voluntary act. While many of these groups, such as bowling leagues, athletic clubs, and choral societies do not directly contribute to the overall quality of democracy in the political sense, they invariably create “trust networks” between members that lend support to public politics and thus give democracy some semblance of meaning and effectiveness.\textsuperscript{17} Robert Putnam’s work on civic participation

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, p. 8 / 8 
\textsuperscript{15} Paul Douglass and Alice McMahon’s \textit{How to Be an Active Citizen}, (University of Florida Press, 1960) is the civics textbook cited by Almond and Verba as the embodiment of the “rationality-activist” model, or “the model of political culture which, according to the norms of democratic ideology, would be found in a successful democracy.” The active citizen, as mentioned in the text above, is juxtaposed with the passive citizen, described as the nonvoter, the poorly informed, or the apathetic – all indicators of a weak democracy. Almond and Verba’s response that no state can claim to possess citizens that meet these models cite Bernard L. Berelson, Paul F. Lazarsfeld, and William M. McPhee, \textit{Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Campaign}, (University of Chicago Press, 1954); Agnus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes, \textit{The American Voter}, (University of Chicago Press, 1960); and Julian L. Woodward and Elmo Roper, “Political Activity of American Citizens,” \textit{American Political Science Review}, vol. 44, no. 4 (December, 1950), pp. 872 – 875. See Almond and Verba, p. 474 / 338, fn2. 
\textsuperscript{17} Charles Tilly, “Trust and Rule”, \textit{Theory and Society}, vol. 33. (2004), pp. 1 – 30. Tilly defines “trust networks” as religious and kinship groups “within which people set values, consequential, long-term
in Italy augmented Almond and Verba’s models by highlighting the effectiveness of participation in civic institutions that linked individual attitudes to a national character. According to Putnam, “participation in civic organizations inculcates skills of cooperation as well as a sense of shared responsibility for collective endeavors. Moreover, when individuals belong to ‘cross-cutting’ groups with diverse goals and members, their attitudes will tend to modernize as a result of group interaction and cross pressures.”

These approaches assume that there is some form of congruency between political culture and political structure. As articulated by Harry Eckstein, congruence exists if cultural attitudes are mirrored in political institutions. In this respect, the existence of democratic institutions implies the existence of a democratic culture. A political system that reflects the values, preferences, and attitudes of its people can enjoy periods of peace, free from threats of social unrest or revolutionary change. As argued by Huntington, a stable government is one in which politics “embodies consensus, resources and enterprises at risk to the malefeasance of others” (p. 5). While Tilly argues these networks were originally established to protect its members from outside tyranny, they provide an integral component of public policy in democratic societies. See also Francis Fukuyama, Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity, (New York: Free Press, 1995).

18 Putnam (1993), p. 90. Putnam also cites Alexis de Tocqueville as an early appreciator of the values of a civic community. Civic associations, Tocqueville writes, contribute to the effectiveness and stability of democratic government because it instills cooperation, a sense of shared responsibility and public spiritedness on members. Tocqueville noted that “the only way opinions and ideas can be renewed, hearts enlarged, and human minds developed is through the reciprocal influence of men upon each other.” Moreover, adds Putnam, when individuals belong to horizontal crosscutting groups with diverse goals and members, multiple values and ideas will facilitate moderating and cooperative attitudes. See Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, (2003), p. 598. See also Almond and Verba (1963), pp. 266 – 306; Arend Lijphart, Democracy in Plural Societies, (Yale University Press, 1977); Seymour Martin Lipset, Political Man (1963), pp. 10 – 11.

community, legitimacy, organization, effectiveness [and] stability.”

Regardless of the political system, people, at least from a theoretical point of view, remain passive but still cognizant of their political surroundings. If there is a firm link between institutions and deep-seated norms of behavior, these links are dependent on “antique bricks” to construct a political edifice.

Yet for all praise due to a model that formally attempts to link political structure with political culture and its framework of community, there are noticeable weaknesses with the civic culture model, both within Almond and Verba’s original approach, and among many of its subsequent theoretical derivatives. A primary weakness is the insistence of cultural determinism, which is heavily influenced by theories of path dependency. While path dependency is essentially historicist in view of institutional genesis and functionality, its understanding among social scientists varies. William Sewell broadly defines path dependency as a way of understanding how “what has happened at an earlier point in time will affect the possible outcomes of a sequence of

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20 Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, (Yale University Press, 1968), p.1. Huntington was a long-time believer in the stability of the Soviet Union because it seemed to embody the cultural attitudes of a people that favored paternalistic and authoritarian regimes. As such, congruency can exist for both democratic and non-democratic states. Huntington regarded the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union as countries that all embodied “a political community with an overwhelming consensus among the people on the legitimacy of the political system. In each country the citizens and their leaders share a vision of the public interest of the society and of the traditions and principles upon which the political community is based” (p. 1. italics mine).

21 Eckstein, “Congruence Theory Explained” (1998), p. 28. Almond and Verba are equally supportive of the theories of congruence to explain the existence, strength, and ongoing persistence of a civic culture of democracy. Democratic institutions such as political parties, interest groups, and a media for communication are actually secondary components to the democratic infrastructure. As they state, “unless they are connected effectively with the primary structure of community – family, friendship, neighborhood, religious groups, work groups, and the like – there can be no effective flow of individual impulses, needs, demands and preferences from the individual and his primary groups into the political system. The overwhelming majority of the members of all political systems live out their lives, discover, develop, and express their feelings and aspirations in the intimate groups of the community … In those societies in which secondary political structures effectively mesh with the intimate primary structures [of community], there is a gradation from “public” to “private”; from the full-time professional politician to the intermittently active citizen.” See Almond and Verba, p. 143 / 105
events occurring at a later point in time.” 22 However, this understanding provides little to no assurance that an early development facilitates pressures along the same sequence. James Mahoney provides a far more rigid definition of path dependency as that which “characterizes specifically those historical sequences in which contingent events set into motion institutional patterns or event chains that have deterministic properties.” 23

This sense of contingency stemming from determinism has led scholars to accept a considerable degree of “historical causation” that makes subsequent decision-making for political actors incredibly difficult to deter from. In other words, certain choices and strategies for state and non-state actors are marked by “increasing returns” for a continued course of action. 24 Relatively small events occurring at crucial moments in time can yield long-lasting effects, and once a particular sequence yields certain payoffs for continued adherence, alternative strategies of action may have little to no relevancy at all. 25 However, Katznelson has noted a number of weaknesses with path dependent models. By underscoring the importance of small, seemingly random, events that appear to occur at the right time and at the right place at the point of origin of a given sequence, path dependency “commits itself to a particular, highly partial, view of institutional genesis”. 26 Furthermore, Petro argues that the criteria for identifying “what is well established” is highly subjective, as “people tend to find exactly the type of path

26 Ira Katznelson, “Periodization and Preferences: Reflections on Purposive Action in Comparative Historical Social Science”, in Mahoney and Rueschmeyer (2003), p. 292 (pp. 270 – 301)
dependency they are looking for.” As such, conclusions reached by even the most well-intentioned scholars can produce assessments of political culture that are both superficial and insensitive.

A good example of the dangers of cultural determinism through models of path dependency can be found in the comparative works on political culture throughout Italy. By linking effective government with historical legacies of civic cultures, Putnam argued that modern-day elites in Italy’s most economically developed regions are continuing long recognized, and collectively accepted, patterns of cooperation that stretch back nearly 700 years. Conversely, regions of southern Italy where collective life was noted to be “blighted for a thousand years and more” by legacies of parochialism, feudalism, foreign occupation, and more recently the mafia, lack the civic qualities and traditions that historically characterized the more developed north. In short, a lack of public participation implies a weak civil society. A lack of public trust implies an apathetic community. However, as demonstrated in Sabetti’s work on community life in Sicily, rather than being an instrument for enhancing human welfare, the structure of political institutions, both historically and since the unification of Italy in the early 1860s, has been a constant source of frustration, conflict, repression, and apathy where corruption and bribery are active features of government. Far from assuming southern

27 Petro (2004), p. 106
30 Filippo Sabetti, Village Politics and the Mafia in Sicily, (Montreal & Kingston: McGill – Queen’s University Press, 2002). The unification of Italy in the 1860s, much like the unification of Germany and reunification of the United States during the same time, was less a formal unification than it was an outright conquest by a wealthier and stronger political entity that imposed its own laws, customs regulations, tax codes, and local administrators over a poorer, fragile, and relatively voiceless society. Local communities
Italian culture to be one of continuous servitude, deference, hierarchy, and mistrust, Sabetti argues that peasants understood themselves to be consistent losers whenever they had anything to do with landlords and public authorities, and came to rely on locally formed groups that functioned in direct contrast to the state, as in the mafia. As the incentives for the individual villager to take any opportunity available to his or her family increased, the reliance on official state channels decreased, and state-society relations atrophied. A self-fulfilling prophecy was thus created in which unofficial channels of collective action grew to become parallel organizations of authority, and official public office was reduced to little more than an instrument of private gain and institutional inefficiency that in many respects continues to plague southern Italy to the present day.31

A second weakness of behavioral approaches to political culture is the reduction of cultural attitudes and beliefs into empirically replicable variables. This in itself produces two fundamental problems. First, it engages in what Lowell Dittmer refers to as “psychological reductionism” by basing macro-social conclusions of political support and the decision to participate on micro-level snapshots of individual behavior. We cannot come to a definitive evaluation of a society’s culture based solely on the types of responses generated by our own empirically designed terminology. He argues that “although it is certainly useful – where feasible – to measure the relative assimilation of were brought into political life less through voluntary and cooperative associations, than through patronage, paternalism, and the lure of instant wealth. Wealthy southern Italian landowners who functioned as self-styled middlemen between wealthy northern aristocrats and poor southern peasants, ended up reinforcing social cleavages that “locked rulers and ruled, landowners and landless, in a more lasting iron circle.” Sabetti (2002), p. 63.

31 Sabetti writes, “an item in a questionnaire of the Jacini parliamentary commission sent to all the district judges and prefects in 1883 ran as follows: ‘What conception of public authority do Sicilian peasants have?’ The reply by the Camporano district judge noted: ‘Camporano peasants do not believe possible the exercise of public authority that does not have as its motive the self-interest of he who exercises that authority.’ … Camporano peasants had, thus, correctly learned to calculate the consequences that flowed from the structure of local government. At the same time, communal politics, rather than generating a supply of good will, served instead to produce malevolence among villagers. By the 1880s Camporanesi had come to use the well-wishing phrase ‘May you become a mayor!’ as a curse.” (2002), p. 80.
culture by questioning a sample of individuals, political culture should be conceptualized as an emergent variable, whose properties transcend the sum of its members’ belief- and value-systems.”\(^{32}\) Second, these works are plagued by Sartori’s “conceptual stretching”. Case studies that exhibit exemplary models of civic and democratic behavior are subsequently used as standards by which other cases are compared. Thus, low levels of non-Western civic culture that have been active for only a few decades, are derived from comparisons with high levels of American and British participation that have enjoyed centuries of gradual development. The general understanding that civic culture is weak, or even non-existent, in former communist countries of Eastern Europe are based on preset standards of political engagement in the West. That the quality of the evaluating criteria may be methodologically incompatible or conceptually interpretive is rarely taken into consideration.

A third weakness is the defining of culture as a uni-dimensional monolith composed of immovable and inflexible beliefs and practices with little regard to internal differences. Culture is seen as differentiated between groups, not within the group. Static and ahistorical beliefs, norms, values, identities, practices, fears, and principles define each member of the group, shape their political institutions, affect economic performance, and determine rational decision-making when engaging in statecraft. Furthermore, these cultural attributes are assumed to have existed and functioned without change or alteration for centuries. Moreover, studies of civic culture tend to use

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historiography that seems to be purposefully selected to validate the researcher’s hypotheses. More recent works that seek to provide “big picture” accounts of macro-social behaviors and norms fare even worse. Studies examining the relationship of culture to authority, its commitment to certain religious and ideological values, its handling of social disorder, and its readiness to work and cooperate with non-group members primarily engage in political and historical determinism that place Western cultures in a superior position, and draw conclusions about non-Western cultures that amount to little more than glorified stereotyping of entire societies, religions, customs, and beliefs.

33 Due to its widespread popularity, Putnam’s work on civic traditions in Italy have come under particular criticism for both using a selected time frame of history, the Renaissance, for contemporary political analysis, as well as missing a series of subnational components in Italy’s south that may not agree with his model on civic participation, but nevertheless gives ample evidence of a strong sense of community bond and local identity. As noted by Sidney Tarrow, “[I]n focusing on the golden age of the city-state,[Putnam] treats the five or six centuries that followed somewhat cavalierly, trolling rapidly through a long and turbulent stretch of history for analogues of the cultural patterns he found in the earlier period without specifying the links either theoretically or empirically … It would have been interesting to know by what rules of inference he chose the late-medieval period as the place to look for the source of northern Italy’s twentieth-century civic superiority. Why not look into the region’s sixteenth-century collapse at the hands of more robust European monarchies; at its nineteenth-century conquest of the South […] at its 1919 – 21 generation of fascism; or at its 1980s corruption-fed economic growth? None of these phenomena were exactly ‘civic’; by what rules are they less relevant in ‘explaining’ the northern regions’ civic superiority over the South than the period 800 years ago when republican governments briefly appeared in (some of) its cities?” See Sidney Tarrow, “Making Social Science Work Across Space and Time: A Critical Reflection on Robert Putnam’s Making Democracy Work”, American Political Science Review, vol. 90, no.2, (June 1996), p.393. For additional works addressing the problems and possible remedies of selection bias, see Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research, (Princeton University Press, 1994), especially pp. 128 – 139; David Collier and James Mahoney, “Insights and Pitfalls: Selection Bias in Qualitative Research”, World Politics, vol. 49, no. 1 (1996),pp. 56 – 91; Ian S. Lustick, “History, Historiography, and Political Science: Multiple Historical Records and the Problem of Selection Bias”, American Political Science Review, vol. 90, no.3, (September 1996), pp. 605 – 618.


35 Many of these works have become best-sellers in mainstream reading and non-academic policymaking due to analyses that deliberately place the West in a secure position of moral, ideological, political, and cultural superiority. For example, Bernard Lewis has been credited as one of the most influential figures
While these works provide a framework of culture that is generally understandable for the casual Western reader and simple for the Western foreign policy analyst, nearly all have come under intense criticism by the academic community for generating what amounts to little more than glorified stereotypes about entire ethnic groups, assuming such ethnic groups exist by their defined criteria, and engaging in armchair history to provide empirical evidence. Huntington’s bold assertion that “Western ideas of individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of
law, democracy, free markets, the separation of church and state, often have had little
resonance in Islamic, Confucian, Japanese, Hindu, Buddhist, or Orthodox cultures,” is
little more than a declaration that nearly two-thirds of the world’s societies are prisoners
of their own culture and history.37

What these and more empirical models of civic culture fail to account for is that
culture is a socially constructed phenomenon, rather than a set of primordial beliefs and
practices an individual is born into and has no control over. Unitary views of culture mar
one’s research in assuming that present-day political rhetoric is a clear reflection, or the
only valid reflection, of societal values. These flawed assumptions become particularly
acute during periods of rapid social change such as the collapse of communism across
Eastern Europe, the end of National Socialism in Germany, or the relatively peaceful
transition of power in Spain from dictatorship to parliamentary democracy in less than a
decade. However, scholars have been noted to actually apply some rather interesting post
hoc theories in order to explain how new political realities reflects a new traditional

37 Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, No. 3 (Summer 1993), p. 40. However, his well-documented division of the world into seven broadly defined “civilizations” lacks any sense of empirical reasoning beyond geographical gerrymandering for the sake of selection bias. In assigning the world into various civilizations, Huntington arbitrarily divides Europe between Occident and Orient along the fault lines of the historical Hapsburg/Ottoman border of 1500. This fault line places Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Croatia, and the Hungarian principalities of Transylvania and Vojvodina on one side, and places other Eastern European societies on the other. The basis for his classification of civilizations is extremely problematic. While distinctively identifying Slavic-Orthodoxy as one civilization, he places Polish, Czech, Slovenian, and Croatian societies, all Slavic, within the Western sphere according to religious confession. Yet while Western Christian Slavs are lumped in with Western Europe, Catholic Latin America receives a separate civilizational category. Additionally, Greece is somehow placed within the Western civilization, on account of Huntington’s need to acknowledge its Classical contribution to Western political thought, despite its more pervasive Byzantine Orthodox and Ottoman legacies. The same inconsistencies are practiced with including Transylvania and Vojvodina within the Western civilization sphere on account of the historical link to Hungary but its current Orthodox Christian majority. See Todorova, pp.130 – 32. See also Theodore Couloumbis, and Thanos Veremis, ‘In Search of New Barbarians: Samuel P. Huntington and the Clash of Civilizations’, *Mediterranean Quarterly*, vol. 5, no.1, (1994), pp 36-44.
culture. Petro notes the absurdity of such methods in that it contradicts the very claim of basic political beliefs and values are resistant to change and can be used as a reliable variable for measuring the stability of a political system.

The main weakness in mainstream cultural approaches to democracy is the apparent understanding that culture predetermines the political and social attitudes of individuals. This assumes that the culture of any society can be classified as either “democratic” or “authoritarian”. There are no societies that inherently gravitate towards one extreme or the other. The very countries that are frequently lauded for individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, and the separation of church and state, have also been the harbingers of imperialism, religious wars, fascism, and genocide. Conversely, Afghanistan has been portrayed by Western media as an overwhelmingly backward and untamed country with warfare being a way of life of centuries, but was regarded as the “Paris of Central Asia” by tourists from the 1950s to the mid 1970s for its political stability, cosmopolitan character, and state-sponsored efforts in promoting a multicultural and multiconfessional heritage. If Serbs are discerned today as a people awash in xenophobic nationalism, the Serbian peasant less than a century ago was known as “a gentleman in the true sense of possessing a profound self-respect and extending courtesy to all as being at least his

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38 Harrison acknowledges earlier studies had generally disregarded Roman Catholicism as antithetical to democracy due to its adherence to absolutist dogma. But because many Catholic countries today like Spain, Italy, Poland and Ireland are advanced industrial democracies, he needs to explain how Catholicism evolved from progress resistant to progress prone. His explanation lies in the Second Vatican Council’s work at demystifying the religion, and in the marked decline in regular church attendance and religious adherence in those countries.
40 For example, as late as 1952, nearly 40% of all West Germans affirmed it was better to have no Jews on its territory, and 25% still held a “good opinion” of Hitler. See Tony Judt, Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945 (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), p. 58
41 Paul Fitzgerald and Elizabeth Gould, Invisible History: Afghanistan’s Untold Story (San Francisco: City Light Books, 2009)
peers”, and his country was considered “one of the gateways of civilized Europe”, to which Western Europe, particularly Great Britain and France owed a tremendous amount of gratitude and debt for its support during the First World War.42 Undoubtedly not only cultural variations, but also institutional change, historical circumstance, and the actions of others influences the political culture of any society. This does not mean that culture radically changes, but new attitudes, beliefs, and preferences are drawn from the same set of foundational myths to reflect new political circumstances. Understanding culture as static and uniform yields a series of misleading conclusions not only about the national character of the group, but also its alleged compatibility with democratic principles.

An illustration of multiple ways of interpreting a single historical event may explain the benefits of a more dynamic approach to culture. The following event served as an anecdote to Tim Judah’s introduction on Serbian political culture, one of the many books published by Western journalists and so-called “Balkan experts” in the 1990s that quickly sought to analyze the reasons behind the violence that characterized the disintegration of Yugoslavia.43

In 1689, Serbian Patriarch Arsenije III Čarnojević encouraged the Serbian community living in the Ottoman Empire to rebel and aid an invading Austrian army. Though the Austrians had penetrated as deep as Skopje, the Ottoman repulsed the

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42 R.G.D Laffan, The Serbs: The Guardians of the Gate (New York: Dorset Press, [1917], 1989), pp. 262, 3. Additionally, nation-wide tributes to Serbia were arranged in Great Britain in 1916 to jointly commemorate the Battle of Kosovo. Bookshops throughout London sold voluminous literature on Serbian history and its people. The British weekly Punch printed thousands of copies of “Heroic Serbia” posters which were displayed throughout the country in schools, shop windows and private homes. Special commemorations for the Battle of Kosovo were celebrated in English churches and British schoolchildren were taught special lessons on medieval Serbian history. Cinemas showed films about Serbia and in some the Serbian national anthem was played. In total, the English press published more than four hundred articles and books on Serbia. See Thomas A. Emmert, “Kosovo: Development and Impact of a National Ethic”, in Nation and Ideology: Essays in Honor of Wayne S. Vucinich, Ivo Banac et al eds. (Columbia University Press, 1981), p. 77.
invaders by January 1690 and neutralized the Serbian uprising. Fearing severe reprisals, Arsenije led tens of thousands of Serb families away from their ancestral homes in Raška and Kosovo, the heart of “Old Serbia”, into exile in the Austrian Empire, in what is remembered as the Great Serbian Migration (Velika Srba Seoba). In 1896 the celebrated Serbian painter Paja Jovanović was commissioned by Patriarch Georgije II Branković to paint a mural of the Great Migration. Jovanović’s painting depicts soldiers, clerics, and peasants marching into the foreground. The saddled military commander on the left, bears many physical features of the legendary Miloš Obilić, the Serbian knight who sacrificed his own life at the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 by assassinating the Ottoman Sultan Murad I. That he is the only major figure in the painting that is looking behind him while others look forward can be interpreted as a testament to the ancestral land that the Serbian people are reluctantly leaving behind. Flanking the Serbian patriarch are

Figure 4: Paja Jovanović, The Exodus of the Serbs, first version
wounded soldiers, a mother and child, and lines of livestock and wagons laden with families and their belongings.

It is reported that the images of the peasants, and especially the livestock, were what made Patriarch Georgije order Jovanović to paint the picture again. The painting depicted a well-known historical event as more of a flight of peasants, instead of a noble exodus. What is more, the relatively middle-aged wounded figure in the foreground made it look like the Serbs were a weak people who could be easily defeated. For a rising power in Southeastern Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, a painting that attested to the perennial strength of the Serbian people was desired more than an image that served as a memory of weakness and suffering.

Figure 5: Paja Jovanović, *The Exodus of the Serbs*, second version
Jovanović’s second version was almost identical to the first, except that livestock, wagons, peasants – essentially anything that displayed frailty and helplessness – were removed. The allegorical image of Prince Miloš Obilić on his white horse remained; however, this time his ghost is leading ranks of more disciplined (and uniformed) soldiers away from their lands. The wounded soldier in the forefront is noticeably older than before, possibly signifying a village elder, rather than a soldier, and thus making his wounds more expected and also far more respected as the fighting spirit of the Serbs diminishes only slightly with age. Also noticeable is the central figure of Patriarch Arsenije, now holding a sword and looking more authoritative as the recognized spiritual and lay leader of the Serbian nation. Additionally, the Patriarch’s face seems somewhat altered. While there exists no contemporary image of the historical Arsenije III, his image in this newer version bears a striking resemblance to Georgije Branković. It is this painting that still hangs in the Serbian Patriarchate in Belgrade, while the original version is in an art museum in the nearby town of Pančevo.

The reasons for Judah’s inclusion of this small vignette are not altogether clear. His mentioning of the Patriarch ordering another version of the painting provides no other explanation than that the first version “lowered the tone, especially the inclusion of the sheep. It made the exodus look like a rabble on the run, [Georgije] said”, leaving the reader to wonder why the Patriarch thought this. In the next paragraph Judah abruptly jumps to July 1995 when most of Croatia’s Serbian population was expelled from the newly independent country, and writes that “the resulting exodus looked remarkably like Paja Jovanović’s epic pictures – but with more cars and tractors than horses and carts. And whether old Patriarch Georgije would have liked it or not, there were sheep this time
around too.”44 What we come away with from this story is that Georgije is one of many Serbian leaders who have consciously attempted to promote a myth of the Serbian nation as one of greatness and power over a history of flight and humiliation. While Judah does not necessarily ascribe to the “ancient hatreds” argument that prevailed among both policymakers and the general public in the West that knew anything about the violent breakup of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, he ultimately concludes that “politicians could not have succeeded if there had been no embers to fan”, meaning that deep-seated feelings of collective superiority and ethnocentric chauvinism have characterized Serbian collective memory since the nineteenth century and earlier.45 Patriarch Branković and, by way of his logic, Slobodan Milošević were not aberrations of Serbian culture but reflections of it.

Judah’s oversimplified account of culture, while attempting to link cultural beliefs in the present with past historical events, provides numerous reasons why a more dynamic model of culture is critically necessary. First, as evidenced in the two paintings of the Migration, interpretations of a single event produce multiple meanings. Judah offers no frame of reference for why Jovanović painted the first mural the way he did, but it is highly likely it represented one way Serbs collectively remembered the event as a traumatic moment of leaving their ancestral homeland. Its rejection by the Patriarch and the commissioning of a second version reflects the conscious effort of an elite to appropriate a particular understanding of national identity of stoicism amid crisis. Second, Judah might accuse Georgije of historical revisionism by literally painting over elements of the past from collective memory and making a certain historical event far

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44 Ibid. p. 2
45 Ibid. p. 309
more epic than it actually was. However, when placed within the context of Serbia at the end of the nineteenth century as a rising power in the Balkans that for the past fifty years had actively pursued a foreign policy of territorial expansion and eventual liberation of all Serb-inhabited lands, the decision to commemorate the Migration as a testament to the strength and resolve of the Serbian people, rather than its frailty and weakness, becomes far more understandable.

Third, Serbian cultural and intellectual life at the end of the nineteenth century was largely characterized by a departure from earlier themes of romanticism, and embraced new models of critical thinking through political individualism, artistic realism, and scientific positivism. This new generation of thinkers rejected the homogeneity of a patriarchal society and frequently targeted the Serbian Orthodox Church, which by the turn of the century was known for its reactionary bishops and metropolitans who were more interested in maintaining privileged positions of authority than concerning themselves with improving civil liberties and the quality of life for their flock. While there is no indication Jovanović personally harbored any anti-clerical feelings, his early artwork that depicted scenes from ordinary and oftentimes debased life in Montenegro, Albania and Bosnia, reflected a distinctive artistic style that the Church found distasteful.

Finally, the development in critical thinking was also accompanied by a shift from Novi Sad in Austria-Hungary as the center of Serbian learning for over a century, to Belgrade, which was rapidly transforming into a modern European city. The reactionary character of the church, especially its leading prelates, was partly a reflection of its dwindling role as a primary authoritative body. Prior to 1920, the Patriarchate had been located not in Belgrade, but in Sremski Karlovci, a small town a few kilometers south of
Novi Sad that has served as the ecclesiastic center of Serbian Orthodoxy in the Hapsburg Empire since the Great Migration. While the Church historically enjoyed a privileged status as an autonomous cultural and ecclesiastic unit within the Hapsburg state, its rights were frequently challenged by conservative Hungarian elites who were fearful of any form of independent expression. By the turn of the previous century, the authority of the Serbian Orthodox Church was considerably weakened by both Hungarian efforts at stymieing minority rights, and Serbian intellectuals who promoted more secular ways of thinking. Georgije’s decision to commission a second version of Jovanović’s painting that depicted the church in a more commanding position may have been just as much an attempt at resisting current institutional circumstances as it was an effort to visually depict an historical event.

Issues concerning multiple meanings of symbols, the nature and behavior of elites, the presence of internal sociopolitical cleavages, and the changing fortunes of institutions all provide additional criteria to explain one particular event. Without proper contextualization of the time period in which the painting was commissioned, the character of both Jovanović and Georgije and the schools of thought they adhered to, this episode could easily be interpreted as merely a crude exercise in Serbian historical revisionism. But it also illustrates of a larger debate on internal cleavages defined by competing cultural narratives of identity reinforced by competing sociopolitical institutions. The very fact that we know of the existence of Jovanović’s first version implies no attempts were made at destroying the original. That this version is also on display in a national museum, while the second is the private property of the Serbian
Orthodox Patriarchate, shows that historical revisionism has its limits. Political culture is far more complex than Judah’s account tells us.

**Interpretive Models of Political Culture.**

Postbehavioral understandings of political culture originate in anthropology, sociology, and semiotics. Perhaps the most fundamental departure from earlier behavioral models is the understanding of culture as a learned and fluid processes, rather than a unitary, static, and altogether ahistorical phenomenon. Interpretive approaches view culture as an interdependent phenomenon encapsulating the relationship between a frame of mind and patterns of action, both individual as well as collective. Instead of being viewed as a reflection of institutional outcomes, interpretive approaches view culture as a collection of scripts or narratives that function as either a catalyst or a constraint for action amid changing social, economic, and political circumstances. As a learned process, culture helps to shape identities that are both multifaceted and evolving.\(^{46}\) From a political viewpoint, it is closely related to power and authority, often represented visually in the form of symbols, rituals, and state-sponsored commemorations. But from a social, or public, viewpoint, culture can function as either a filter for accepting the rule of the state or as a barrier against perceived foreign elements.\(^{47}\)

\(^{46}\) As argued by Ortner, adherents to interpretivist theories utilize “a comprehensible mechanism” to identify the influence of symbols on political and social action, and construct models with “a kind of elastic distance” between symbols and actors so that the latter may be understood by observers to be agents, rather than passive vehicles of cultural patterns. See Ortner (1990), pp. 84–90; cited in Johnson (2002), p. 228.

\(^{47}\) In her work on culture in social change amid the Spanish transition to democracy in 1975, Edles draws from the studies in semiotics of Umberto Eco, which argues culture to be a system of “multicontiguous” representations that does not assign specific behavior, but provides a series of possible interpretations. In turn, these interpretations vary by social experience, ethical evaluation, institutional circumstance, and symbolic combination, all providing what Edles refers to as a series of “cultural maps” that draw from a
The strength of interpretive models of culture is its versatility in allowing researchers to identify patterns of representations that are displayed in the unofficial arena, and that influence the formation of alternative beliefs, which may challenge the legitimacy of state-sponsored visions of reality. Without discounting the primacy of certain beliefs, identities, and memories that a group considers non-negotiable, the framing of culture as something adaptable and responsive to social, political, and institutional change allows for the study of its dynamic character. Additionally, a dynamic model of culture can only be appreciated as both a facilitator and a product of institutions and the behavior of elites. Identities and, as we will see, memories are related to individual psycho-social attitudes and beliefs. But accounts of the collective identity and memory of any group are a result of semiotic practices in appropriating an “official culture” over a series of alternative, and often competing, variants.

In this regard, interpretive models of political culture can be best viewed as a synthesis of systems of meaning and political practice. In the introduction to his oft-cited work, David Laitin discusses the basic differences between these two divergent schools of cultural theory; “two faces” of culture that raise two separate arguments. The first face of culture has largely been shaped by the works of Clifford Geertz and other social anthropologists, who argue that culture is understood as “an historically transmitted pattern of meaning embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their fixed set of core identities and values to produce an array of interpretations, messages, and codes. See Edles (1998), pp. 20 – 21, and Eco, A Theory of Semiotics (Indiana University Press, 1976), p. 124.

knowledge about and attitudes towards life.”\textsuperscript{49} For Geertz, symbols are important because they are recognizable objects and concepts that provide a clear sense of meaning.\textsuperscript{50} Geertz understands culture to be man-made “webs of significance” that provide both an understanding of and access to power, authority, and justice.\textsuperscript{51} During times of uncertainty and crisis, people rely on the perceived certainty of culture to provide some semblance of familiar continuity.\textsuperscript{52} Culture provides a series of shared meanings that helps the adherent explain and the researcher understand why people do the things they do and believe the things they believe. In this, there is a strong emphasis on emotions as a mechanism for action rather than simple utility maximization.\textsuperscript{53} These understandings may be slightly divergent among members within the group, but still serve as distinctive boundaries of identity between in-group members, and the outside “other”. As such, culture provides tools for identifying what a group is, but also, and in many cases more importantly, what a group is not.\textsuperscript{54} As a web of meaning and significance, culture is a


\textsuperscript{50} In “providing a clear sense of meaning”, Geertz is referring to an affirmation of “common sense”, which he defines as an “organized body of considered thought.” Common sense is “an interpretation of the immediacies of experience” and as such is an historical construct that is bound to “historically defined standards of judgment.” “Meaning” is therefore understood within an “as is” framework, but this framework has been shaped around previous validation. See Geertz “Common Sense as a Cultural System”, in his \textit{Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology} (New York: Basic Books, 1983), pp. 75 – 6.

\textsuperscript{51} Geertz (1973), p. 5

\textsuperscript{52} In this regard, Geertz and others rely on the writings of Talcott Parsons, who developed the term “cultural system” to refer to an interdependent set of symbols and meanings that exists separate from a “social system” of norms and institutions. See Talcott Parsons, \textit{The Social System}, (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1951).

\textsuperscript{53} See for instance Kertzer, \textit{Politics and Symbols: The Italian Communist Party and the Fall of Communism} (Yale University Press, 1996), who notes the political importance of symbols because “by promoting a certain view of the world and stirring up emotions, symbols impel people to action”, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{54} Thomas Eriksen notes the definitions of identity invariably require a systematic distinction between insiders and outsiders, or between “us” and “them”. The presence of the “other” in cultural studies is paramount to identity, for if there is no “other”, there can be no identity. Identity “presupposes an
mechanism that locks one into a specific way of living, but can also provide one with an understanding of alternatives.

Culture’s second face argues that shared cultural identities facilitate collective action and function as a form of political practice. As articulated by Abner Cohen, culture is understood to be a “special style of life or a special combination of a variety of symbolic formations, that distinguish it from the rest of the society.”\(^{55}\) For Cohen, culture is important not because symbolic forms take on particular meanings, but that these symbols are collectively shared, making them tools for social and political cohesion. Through this approach, argues Laitin, “cultural identity becomes a political resource. Political entrepreneurs recognize that through appeals to culture they can easily attract mass followings. Individuals learn that by modifying their cultural identities they can improve their life chances.”\(^{56}\) For Cohen, the strength of cultural symbols lies in their ambiguity and thus their malleability by groups to enhance their political and economic power. Symbols provide a way of channeling divergent viewpoints into one unified message to help address a series of current problems and crises.\(^{57}\) While Geertz argues that culture needs to be “interpreted” in order for the outside observer to understand the inner workings of society, Cohen is more interested in examining how “old symbolic forms perform new symbolic functions and new symbolic forms perform old symbolic


\(^{57}\) See for example Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (Columbia University Press, 1999), who like Kertzer, stresses the emotional force of political symbols, but identifies the strongest use of symbolic meaning by political actors who are engaged in “reordering meaningful worlds” amid crises accompanying rapid social and political change, p. 35.
functions. Here, we are less interested in the interpretation of cultural phenomenon than in the elite-driven invention of tradition and the imagining of community for a consuming public. What Cohen is ultimately asking is “under what structural conditions, what customs, will perform what political functions, within which political unit?” Cohen’s objective is to find common strands of organizational problems and similar patterns of response in order to formulate a general, causally informed, and replicable theory about the role of symbolic manipulation for the accumulation of social, political, and economic benefits.

These two approaches only offer a partial picture of the role of culture in politics, and especially its relationship to either democracy or authoritarianism. If only one approach is emphasized over the other, not only can methodological conclusions be problematic, but an understanding of the society under study may be erroneously reached. In the case of Serbia, particularly when examining the popular support given to Slobodan Milošević in the late 1980s, studies utilizing the first face of culture have usually emphasized the tenacity of sectarian nationalism and the historical mission to create a Greater Serbian state, the persistence of patrimonialism in Serbian politics, and the anti-democratic character of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Nearly all works conclude that culture and nationalism have enormous influence over Serbian mass behavior and will

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58 Cohen (1976), p. 39
60 Laitin (1986), p. 15
continue to impede further democratic reform. Scholars focusing on the second face of culture have concluded that the basis for Milošević’s support from both Serbian nationalists and communist hardliners, stemmed not from any genuine feeling of Serbian patriotism, nor any sense of rectifying perceived historical injustices, but rather because they were threatened politically and economically by Serbian reformists and liberalizers. If adopting certain cultural practices and adhering to certain nationalist principles were keys to either gaining or maintaining privileged positions of power, then so be it. Under these approaches, culture was simply an instrument to a greater end. How can both views find common ground?

Treating culture as a means to political power as suggested by Cohen, is the approach largely favored by social scientists studying political transition because it places cultural preferences within a framework of rational decision-making. By reducing cultural studies to shared symbolic meaning and identifying all relevant players as utility maximizers, Cohen has certainly simplified the discipline by allowing divergent cultural practices to be subsumed within large thematic categories that can be universally understood and quantitatively replicated. But Laitin notes that Cohen’s rationalist-based approach to culture is problematic in that it is unable to predict what the preference functions of a cultural group will be, given that they share a set of symbols which not only carry multiply meanings themselves, but are also interpreted in various ways by


individuals and codified into divergent symbolic meanings by groups. First, to assume that all individuals act rationally in order to maximize their goals, does not tell us what goals take precedence over others, either for an individual or a group. Second, what may appear to be a rational choice to the individual or social group under study may be an irrational option to the observer, and vice versa. Whether it is Hitler’s decision to use trains to carry Jews to concentration camps rather than using them to carry troops to the front to halt Allied advances, the Palestinian choosing to blow himself up on a crowded Israeli bus during rush hour in the name of Islamic martyrdom, or efforts by the democratic government in Belgrade to retain an otherwise economically impoverished and socially restless Kosovo within its territorial boundaries, rational choice theorists are unable to establish the rationality of political action without access to, and a considerable understanding of, independently derived data about actor preferences, values, and beliefs.

This is where Geertz’s “thick descriptions” of symbolic systems proves to be valuable. Elites may choose to appropriate certain symbols and values for their own ends, but their preferences must come from somewhere. As Laitin argues, “only with a keen

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63 Laitin (1986), pp. 15 – 16. Additionally, Ann Swidler argues that culture does not shape the ends and goals one pursues, but rather provides “the characteristic repertoire from which they build lines of action.” In other words, strategies of action are cultural products in that they provide moods and motivations, ways of evaluating reality, and mechanisms in forming social bonds. See Swidler, “Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies”, American Sociological Review, vol. 51 (April, 1986), p. 284. These findings are supported by additional questions of how rationality itself is defined. Green and Shapiro note that while most theories of rational choice agree on the primary importance of utility maximization, consistency of preference ranking, and decision making of individuals amid imperfect information, the nature and content of human goals remains a source of debate. See Donald Green and Ian Shapiro, Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory: A Critique of Applications in Political Science (Yale University Press, 1994).

64 Petro notes that the most serious drawback of rational choice theory is that it “clings to inherited definitions of ‘reasonable behavior’ long after institutions that give rise to such behavior have collapsed. Without institutions to anchor them, interest based analyses lose their moorings and are helpless as guides.” Petro (2004), p. 97. Johnson also argues that rather than critique theories of rational choice as flawed from the start, many practitioners of rational choice, in an attempt at engaging conceptual problems via empirical performance, unintentionally and unknowingly complicate their own models. See James Johnson, “How Conceptual Problems Migrate: Rational Choice, Interpretation, and the Hazards of Pluralism”, Annual Review of Political Science, vol. 5 (2002), pp. 223 – 48.

understanding of the meanings embedded in shared symbols – the first face of culture – can one adduce cultural preferences without tautologically claiming that preferences can be derived from the behavior of actors who are assumed to be rational.”

One of the main strengths of a thick description of culture is that it allows us to understand what choices and options are available for social actors in directing policy, what beliefs are critical to group identity, and what are incompatible. For example, Serbian political leaders today can make a convincing argument that Serbian socio-political development has historically been influenced by Western European values as much as Byzantine/Ottoman legacies. However, no social or political elite in Serbia would be taken seriously if he or she argued that Serbia’s religious heritage lies anywhere other than the Orthodox Church. Likewise, the Irish Republican Army is closely associated with the Roman Catholic Church. While many of its actions have been counter to Christian teachings, and many of its leaders could hardly be regarded as pious Catholics, the IRA could not separate itself from Catholicism, especially if it purposefully differentiated itself from the British Crown and the Church of England.

In the plainest sense of the word, culture can be socially constructed, but its operations, in Edles’ words, cannot be reduced to a simple calculation in utility. Cultural meanings need to be rooted somewhere. Cultural symbols may be manipulated as a means to a greater end, but elites are constrained to act within a certain framework of collectively familiar, and thus politically legitimate, network of symbols, identities,

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66 Laitin (1986), p. 16
values, and norms. Without a comprehensive understanding of history to determine where a society’s cultural roots are, no scholar can properly understand value-orientations, attitudinal preferences, and social constraints of the group under study. To understand how culture as a system of symbols and meanings guide political preferences, argues Laitin, is to appreciate the first face of culture. To understand how culture as practice facilitates collective action of the sharing of symbols, and the resulting creation of an aura of political legitimacy, is to appreciate culture’s second face.

The Versatility of Memory

The need for cultural meanings proposed by leading social and political actors to be somehow “rooted” in tradition in order for it to find resonance with the public highlights the critical importance of the past as ways of validating of the present and explaining for the future. As argued by Hobsbawm, the past is a “permanent dimension of the human consciousness, an inevitable component of the institutions, values and other patterns of human society.” Whether we consciously know it or not, whether we willingly practice it or not, the past, both in the form of individual and collective

69 This is Alon Confino’s (1997) primary contention with prevailing studies of memory and cultural history in that the often-made argument that the past is constructed not as fact but as myth to serve the interest of a particular community, risks reducing culture to little more than the tool of politics and ideology, “whereby memory is separated separated from other memories in society and from the culture around it.” Regardless of its political significance, memory must always be contextualized “within a global network of social transmission and symbolic representations”, p. 1402.
70 Ibid. See also William H. Sewell, Jr., “The Concept(s) of Culture”, (1999), pp. 35 – 61. Sewell argues for a dialectic between what he sees as culture as system and culture as practice. Symbols rarely, if ever, are as bounded and coherent as some ethnographers would argue. Rather, symbols possess real but thin coherence that is continuously questioned and reinterpreted to fit present concerns, and therefore subject to transformation. The ability of actors to play on multiple meanings of symbols is what gives potency to cultural practice and makes culture a far more dynamic variable than assumed by most social scientific works.
memory, orients our values, directs our goals, and provides the necessary meaning for how we respond to present situations.\(^{72}\) Even those groups and individuals who work to bury the past, must be aware of what is being buried and why it must remain buried. It should therefore be the goal of both historians and social scientists to analyze and understand a group’s sense of the past and to trace its roots and transformations through socio-political institutions, if any dynamic knowledge of that society is to be gained.

Memory is a socially constructed interpretation of the past. Most of the events, people, and places a person remembers occur indirectly through readings, listening, or in commemorations. Through memory, the past is stored and interpreted by social institutions, social classes, families, religious groups, political parties and other associations that have distinctive group memories constructed over time, and encapsulated in the enduring traditions of region, province, ethnicity, and nation.\(^{73}\) Memory also functions as a political appropriation of the past in order to emphasize a particular message that lends meaning to contemporary identity, be it a tale of valor of one’s ancestors, treachery of one’s enemies, nostalgia for a long gone Golden Age, validation of present needs and objectives of current elites, or an explanation for why things are the way they are at the present.

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\(^{72}\) While it is beyond the scope of this work to critically assess the differences in types of memory, I nevertheless feel it necessary in noting the differences between collective memory as an aggregation of socially framed individual memories, and collective memory \textit{sui generis}. Most social scientific works on memory in relation to collective identity or political culture focus on the latter, but neglect to understand that social and cultural of public and personal memory are constituted in part by psychological dimensions. While social frameworks shape what individuals remember, it is individuals who do the remembering. To neglect this risks commemorative objects, symbols and structures taking on a life of their own. See Jeffrey K. Olick, “Collective Memory: The Two Cultures”, \textit{Sociological Theory}, vol. 17, no. 3 (November 1999), pp. 333 – 48.

The study of the formation and practice of historical memory is the approach most suited for explaining cultural preferences and choices during periods of political transition. During such periods of rapid social change, beliefs, ways of life, social orientations – essentially everything that was previously taken for granted – are now thrown into question. Laws, customs, priorities and expectations are questioned by social organizations and even replaced by political parties. But if change occurs too rapidly for a society to assimilate, a condition of cultural discontinuity, or “formlessness”, arises in which individuals and groups can no longer find compatibility between shared collective identities and existing socio-political conditions. This risks creating deep cleavages within society and an entropic retreat to more parochial beliefs.74 Because individuals almost automatically respond to socio-political disorientation by attempting to reestablish congruity, formlessness underscores the political significance of culture. It is particularly in these conditions that elites use historical memory as a mechanism in identifying and, if necessary, re-establishing control over the symbols of power. However, the past is not simply reestablished as before. Forced to develop new strategies within the framework of old cultural models, elites, argues Cohen, fuse new meaning to old patterns and practice. Interpretive frameworks that “resonate with cultural narrations, that is, with stories, myths, and folk tales that are part and parcel of one’s cultural heritage,” are key to social mobilization and, if that mobilization is successful, often gets translated into public policy.75

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75 Mayer N. Zald, “Culture, Ideology, and Strategic Framing,” in Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings, Doug McAdam, et al, ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 270 – 71
As I signaled in the Introduction, “historical memory” shares similar features as “collective memory”, but there are a number of differences that are particularly important when considering the direction of political development and statecraft. Formal institutions shape identity and invoke memories of the past to explain present situations. While collective memory is a collection of different variations of one narrative depending on region, class, or subnational identity, historical memory privileges one approach to the society’s view of its past. Its proponents seeks to make that the national – and dominant – narrative for the entire group, regardless of class, region, and in some cases language and religion. It provides an official chronology of events that emphasize certain events of the past while downplaying over others. In short, if collective memory is a series of narratives, historical memory is a selected narrative.  

It is what makes it to publication in official histories. It is what is the state chooses to celebrate, commemorate, memorialize, demonize, emphasize, and preserve. Regardless of whether it is one particular narrative, or a series of narratives pooled into one meta-narrative, historical memory is the official narrative of the state offered for public consumption. If history is a way of defining and demarcating the past, and memory is a way of remembering the past, historical memory

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76 As this work was being edited, United States Senator Edward Kennedy died on August 25, 2009. Immediately eulogies from Democrat and Republican lawmakers poured in, regarding the late senator as one of America’s greatest statesmen in modern history. Newspapers and media commentary notes his tireless efforts for healthcare reform as well as his championing of the downtrodden. He was regarded as a “Liberal Lion” and the notable member of the powerful Kennedy dynasty. However, largely missing from official commemorations of his life was his controversial involvement in the death of a presidential campaign aide after a party on Chappaquiddick Island in 1969 and was subsequently given a two month suspended sentence. Additionally, though he was remembered as a leading figure in brokering the Good Friday Agreements in Northern Ireland in 1998, his relationship with various members of the Irish Republican Army, his outspoken Irish nationalism, and his calls for the complete withdrawal of British forces from Northern Ireland were left out of American coverage, though they were included in British reports of Kennedy’s death. See, “Obituary: Edward Kennedy”, The New York Times (August 25, 2009). For an examination of Kennedy’s relationship with the IRA, see Martina Purdy, “Kennedy ‘Instrumental’ in Peace Process”, BBC News (August 29, 2009), http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/8222606.stm

77 Diane Barthel, Historic Preservation: Collective Memory and Historical Identity (Rutgers University Press, 1996)
is an official interpretation of the past. It is a specific appropriation of culture that uses myths and symbols as a “tool kit” to be used in varying configurations to solve different kinds of problems through culturally filtered “strategies of action”. If people look to institutions to provide them with some reassurance of the familiar, particularly amid periods of uncertainty and rapid social change, the state is one of the first institutions looked to. Because the state has the power to shape cognition, it is in a unique position to orient social perceptions to the degree that even when challenged by incontrovertible counter-evidence, a large percentage of the population will still believe the government.

But far from what Kubik characterizes as a simple exercise in “picking-your-past-and-asserting-its-relevance-to-the-present”, historical memory raises a number of new themes related to culture and collective identity. The first is the framing of a national history to advocate a collective sense of loyalty and belonging. However overt or benign, all members of a group are said to share common foundational myths of origin, as well as key historical experiences, interests, and culture. The myth functions in a dual role of being the core of a nation’s identity and the source of its non-negotiable truths. There the laws to uphold, the ethics and values to emulate, the language to preserve, the religion to follow, the legacies to live up to, the homeland to defend, the traditions to commemorate, and the sacrifices never to forget. They form the collection of immutable traditions that were, are, and always will define who we are. These truths are essential for the cohesion of a group that is often differentiated along smaller differences of region, dialect and local history, but are also ambiguous enough to adapt to and explain any situation, either

past or present. In this regard, myths remain timeless, unchanging, and outside the realm of human agency.  

Second, rather than demarcating historical eras as separate from the present as formal history sometimes does, historical memory ascribes ownership of the past through the construction of one narrative that strings various events of the distant past into legacies for contemporary society. History is told as an ongoing epic, complete with heroes and martyrs, great sacrifices and persistence, treacherous enemies, staunch friends, unfaithful allies, fifth column traitors, lessons, legacies, curses, and national destinies. Events long passed become as real to us as if they happened last week. People long dead enter into everyday language. Most importantly, achievements and defeats of one’s ancestors become “our achievements” and “our defeats” and are accompanied by feelings of pride, sorrow and anger. Rulers of the medieval period become “our” emperors, kings, princes, and lords that are compared with contemporary leaders. Relics that dot the landscape, even in places we no longer reside, become “our” castles, churches, villages, ruins forming a sort of historical boundary of the nation. Formal history demarcates and differentiates. Memory encapsulates and blends. By eliminating the formal boundaries

81 Deliberate attempts at appropriating history for national identity and legitimate rights to sovereignty are just as much a vocation of Western European elites as Eastern. Whether it was attempts by Francisco Franco to find a link between modern Spain and the Visigothic tribes of the fourth century, Jean Marie Le Pen declaring “the French [are] people born with the baptism of Clovis in 496, who have carried this inextinguishable flame … for almost one thousand five hundred years”, or even Thomas Jefferson who originally wanted to place images of Hengist and Horsa, the first Saxon chieftains to arrive in Britain, on the Great Seal of the United States, legacies of the past have been just as much a part of Western political life as anything emanating from Milošević’s speeches about Kosovo being the cradle of the Serbian nation, Albanians claiming direct heritage from the ancient Illyrians, or Croats fashioning their medieval history as the Antemurale Christianitatis, the “Ramparts of Christendom”, against both the Muslim as well as the Orthodox world. For examples, see Patrick J. Geary, The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe, (Princeton University Press, 2002), Ronald Grigor Suny, “Constructing Primordialism: Old Histories for New Nations”, Journal of Modern History, vol. 73, no. 4 (December, 2001), pp. 862 – 896; and Gale Stokes et al, “Instant History: Understanding the Wars of Yugoslav Succession”, Slavic Review, vol. 55, no. 1 (Spring, 1996), pp. 136 – 160.

82 For a study on the social topography of memory, see Eviatar Zerubavel, Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past (University of Chicago Press, 2003), especially pp. 37 – 54.
between the past and the present, and by establishing ourselves along an anachronistic continuum of events that began centuries, even millennia ago, we claim the past for our own.83

Third, historical memory fosters nostalgia for an imagined past. It is “imagined” because it is rare, if ever, that what is remembered is what actually happened. We remember what we choose to remember and often do so through the evaluative lenses of the present. We remember the past as the “good ol’ days”, as a time when life was simpler, morals were stronger, and ways of life were simpler than they are now. Nostalgia reaffirms identities affected by recent turmoil when “fundamental, taken-for-granted convictions about man, woman, habits, manners, laws, society and God [were] challenged, disrupted and shaken” as never before.”84 But these memories are romanticized and idealized to a degree that makes what we think of the past considerably different than what actually happened. We may imagine the village or town our grandparents were born in, or the “old country” our ancestors came from, as idyllic; the perfect setting for our own conception of what life must have been like. Yet we visualize the grass being greener, the fruit being juicer, the water being purer, and all the villagers living as one happy extended family. We tend to overlook the illiteracy, the lack of hygiene, the social stigmas and superstitions, and of course the reasons why our ancestors left in the first place. If emigration is an unavoidable part of the narrative, it is almost

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always caused by someone else either forcing them to leave, or making conditions too
unbearable to stay. Rarely do our ancestors voluntarily leave supposedly idyllic locations.

In addition to providing the solace of stability and a comparison of what was to
what is now, nostalgia is the search for a conceptualized “Golden Age”, in which all
things were perfect: a time when our laws were just, we reached the pinnacle of our
artistic creativity, our lands covered the largest territorial expansion, our military was
strong and respected, and our leaders were contemporary philosopher-kings. Never mind
that people at that time might have been imagining their own Golden Age in an even
further past, the purpose of romanticizing a particular era is to juxtapose the malaise and
pitiful conditions, however real or imagined, we are in today. It also serves to remind us
that immediately following this glorified past, decay began to set in – for if a certain time
in the past was one group’s political and cultural apex, obviously all subsequent periods
have been less than glorious. Therefore, in addition to conceptualizing a Golden Age that
reminds us of “what once was”, it also serves to painfully remind us “what has gone
wrong” since that time.

But just as the past is glorified, the past can be just as easily demonized. We do
not always seek to link every element of the past with our current identities. Many
periods in the past are deliberately marked as something fundamentally different from
where we are now. We might remember elements of the past as eras of irrational
superstition like the Inquisition, ignorance like an age preceding religious enlightenment,
deravity like Nazi Germany, or weakness from oppression and foreign domination. In
these cases, the past is remembered, but marked as something never to repeat in the
present age. Victimhood is also used when remembering the past. While little mention is
ever given to events where one’s own group victimized another group, entire history books, public monuments, and national holidays often commemorate the suffering of one’s own people at the hands of others. The number of deaths is frequently inflated, and methods of brutality, torture, and murder by the victimizing group are described in exquisite detail. The goal here is not to highlight the sense of weakness of one’s own side against the superior strength of the other, but to emphasize the unjust suffering of “our” people by the constant savagery of “those” people. Whether it is the Armenian Genocide, the Holocaust, the Serbs of the Second World War, or the Albanians of Kosovo, a memory of suffering forms a critical part of one’s collective memory and actively seeks to remind its members of what was done to them in the past.85

Finally, like collective memory, historical memory often facilitates a subjective, rather than detached view of the past.86 In the effort to find a past that is usable, glorious, epic, and legitimate claimant to territory contested by another group with competing historical narratives, elites often construct a past that begins with a few grains of truth, but is often exaggerated and embellished to make the present society look greater than it actually is. Through straightforward history, the past is seldom ancient or glorious, the past is revised to enhance self-esteem, to aggrandize property, and to validate power. Minor rebels that deserve no more than a footnote in the general annals of history are

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85 See for example Taner Akçam, A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 2006); Memorandum of Kosovo and Metohija by the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church (Belgrade: The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church, 2004); Ellen S. Zinner and Mary Beth Williams, eds., When a Community Weeps: Case Studies in Group Survivorship (Philadelphia: Taylor & Francis, 1999).

86 While it is difficult, if not outright impossible, for history to be completely objective and bias-free, Halbwachs notes both collective and historical memory is not the same as formal history. General history, Halbwachs says, “starts only when tradition ends and the social memory is fading or breaking up” (1980), p. 78. History “is a record of changes” that is detached from current group identity. Collective memory, on the other hand, is a way of remembering a past that has a specific importance to the group in the present. As such, collective memory is a far more biased and subjective in that it crafts continuity through a selective remembering of the past. See Halbwachs (1980), pp. 78 – 87.
given epic attention as freedom fighters, Robin Hoods, and martyrs who knowingly died for their nation. Ruins that dot the landscape are regarded as markers of a society’s ancient past – often when land is contested with another group over rightful claims of ancestry and cultural accomplishment. Uprisings by one’s own group against another are refashioned as ongoing struggles against oppression and noble yearning to be free. By blurring the line between past and present, and then seeking to embellish the past, states can make all sorts of historical claims: Slovenian efforts to assert itself as “Alpine”, rather than “Eastern European”, or worse “Balkan”; Croatian efforts in the 1990s to link its heritage to “Central European” and “Hapsburg” traditions; Macedonia’s efforts to claim the history and symbols of pre-Slavic Macedonia, and Greece’s efforts to remain the sole users; Albanian insistence of their direct descent of the 5th century Illyrian tribes; Romanian emphasis of its “Roman” and “Dacian” heritage; Pakistan’s “5,000 year heritage” even though “Pakistan” as a cultural concept did not exist before 1932; or Turkish claims of Trojan ancestry even though Turks did not enter Anatolia until 1071.

These myths of origin are part of another important aspect of historical memory. A community cannot regard itself as a constituted society until it is ascribed with a “sacred beginning” with a mythical heritage that affirms and explains its founding to subsequent generations. These narratives may only be scant pieces of various speculations, tales, and interpretations that give only vague references to some ancient tradition of belonging, but they are generated through the state into large-scale historical accounts of the birth of the nation in the distant past. Whether these accounts are historically substantiated, fabricated, or a hybrid of both they are codified as myths. They become state-sponsored non-negotiable truths, regardless of historical reliability and
proof and often serve as the starting point of resolving social conflicts through a renewal of the past in the present. By this, their presence and importance is never doubted, but their interpretation and applicability to address whatever crisis is affecting society forces them to remain elusive and obscure enough to retain the necessary flexibility and malleability.

Elites subjectively reinterpret the past in order to “sanitize” it. Aspects considered successful, beautiful, and meritorious are embellished, played up, and even exaggerated, while the ignoble, the ugly, and the shameful are played down, ignored, or in some cases outright denied. Negative events can even be refashioned into new interpretations and explanations. Military defeats become draws; routs become stalemates; prejudice becomes pre-enlightened ignorance; backwardness and poverty become feudal oppression; collaboration becomes costs of survival; military aggression becomes defensive warfare; outright defeats become unfair fights by the victor, or even treachery from within. In all these interpretations, the past is not outright denied or altered; it is simply excused: nothing less than an unblemished and continuous string of virtuous and “right” deeds will suffice for a nation’s history.

Social beliefs, whatever the origin, are dynamic and continuously changing. They are collective traditions and recollections, but they are also ideas and conventions that are shaped by conditions of the present. As Halbwachs writes, “social thought is essentially a memory and that its entire content consists only of collective recollections or remembrances. But it also follows that, among them, only those recollections subsist that in every period society, working within its present-day frameworks, can reconstruct.”87 In other words, the past may be a set of non-negotiable truths and identities, but it is a

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87 Halbwachs (1992), p. 189
foreign country whose features are shaped by today’s predilections, its strangeness domesticated by our own preservation of its vestiges.”

The Prospects of Democratic Historical Memory

How can historical memory be utilized in crafting a democratic narrative of a nation? If exclusionary forms of historical memory rest on particularistic and xenophobic interpretations of historical events, democratic forms must first and foremost embrace historical patterns of inclusiveness. Questions of who belongs to the political community of the state can neither discriminate nor exclude any group without risking the likelihood said group withdraws from political life and, if large and compact enough as the ethnic Albanians of Kosovo, seek their future elsewhere. Additionally, for a country like Serbia that is seeking reintegration with Europe but still facing political, economic, and cultural legacies of the breakup of Yugoslavia, a reconfiguration of the collective

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89 Edles (1998) notes that a key factor in the stability of democratic community-building in post-Franco Spain was the congruency between new symbols of Spanish democracy and core symbols of Catalan culture. As one of two potential breakaway regions in post-Franco Spain, Catalonia and Basque Country experienced severe restrictions on cultural autonomy and regional identity under Franco. Fears of a potential fragmentation of the country similar to that of Yugoslavia were widely felt by most of Spain’s main political actors. But this did not happen, primarily because “core symbols at the heart of Catalan nationalist identity – pragmatism, democratic inclusions, and Europeanization – were not merely contiguous with the core symbols emerging in the post-Franco period; Catalanism itself helped define the new modernist, transitional symbolic framework.” Catalan nationalism included memories of medieval autonomy and long traditions of liberal democratic institutions. The Catalan parliament was established at the same time as the signing of the Magna Carta, and by the fourteenth century, the constitutional system of the Crown of Aragon (Catalonia, Aragon and Valencia) was regarded as one of the most advanced in Europe. Additionally, collective behaviors known as *seny* (pragmatism) and *pactisme* (compromise), were extolled as Catalan national characteristics. In other words, “Catalonia has long been said to ‘face Europe’ (rather than Spain); and in the transition everyone wanted to ‘face Europe’”, pp. 117 – 18. Because core Catalan identities were congruent with the core narratives of all participating elites during Spain’s “period of consensus”, Catalan nationalists could embrace their own cultural heritage of early modern autonomy without conflicting with state-wide policies now emanating from Madrid. In contrast, Basque nationalist leaders became increasingly estranged from Spain’s consensual transition to democracy as evidenced in the sustained violence by the insurgent group Basque Homeland and Freedom (*Euzkadi ta Azkatasuna*, ETA).
memory of the dominant group is also necessary and rests within meeting three main objectives.

The first objective is in crafting a democratic narrative for the ethnic Serbs, which demonstrates Serbia’s heritage is just as much a part of Europe as other nations in the region, if not more. As Petro demonstrated in elite-driven initiatives in Novgorod that defined its history as a prosperous state of self-governing people, democratic historical memory is a memory that embraces the heritage and contributions of one’s own group, but recognizes that such heritage was in part due to participating in a larger community of nations. In other words, democratic historical memories champion shared memories with other groups. Democratic proponents in Novgorod specifically channeled memories of the city’s medieval heritage and its relationship with the Hanseatic League. Likewise, Kubik’s study of Poland noted symbols and ceremonies of Solidarity – popular folk art of the Gdansk shipyards, the White Eagle, Pope John Paul II, and the memory of Józef Piłsudski – united popular opposition against the communist regime and inculcated a specific sense of democratic socio-political community. In both cases, the politics of collective identity were a critical variable in the establishment of democratic government and in providing the symbolic capital to ensure its stability.

The roots of Serbia’s democratic heritage may be built on the memories of self-sustaining village communes, known as a zadruga that defined Serbian socio-political

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90 In an interview with then-mayor of Novgorod Mikhail Prusak, Petro noted Prusak’s acknowledgement that it would be difficult to educate generations of Russian brought up within the Soviet Union to become familiar with their own local history. Still, Prusak firmly believed that rather than simply mimicking Western patterns of political and economic development, Russians can look to their own past for affirmation of traditions in communitarianism and cooperation: “There is no need to invent artificial ideas, no need to mechanically transfer the American Dream onto Russian soil. If we refer to our own past, we see that in Russian history there was a city that combined democracy, free market relations, and other accomplishments of civilization with national traditions. That city was Lord Novgorod the Great, the capital of a once-flourishing civil republic that extended from the White Sea to the Urals.” Petro (2004), pp. 155 – 6.
community prior to and during the Ottoman period, and in a series of free towns within the Austrian Empire between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Serbian democratic heritage was furthered with the establishment of Belgrade as a center of learning and government for South Slavs at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. Multiple civic organizations and cultural societies were founded on the premise of enhancing life “in the European manner”.\textsuperscript{91} By the eve of the First World War, both Serbian and South Slavic nationalists attributed Belgrade as the proverbial “Piedmont of the Balkans”, and even during the late seventeenth to late nineteenth centuries, the Habsburg city of Novi Sad was widely regarded as the “Athens of Serbia”. A democratic historical memory is one that allows a group to embrace the values and principles of the larger world while remaining comfortable with one’s own past. It fosters social communion without losing group solidarity.

The second objective in crafting a democratic historical memory is reconciling with non-group members that were previously targeted by the authoritarian regime. This is probably the most difficult to achieve since opposing sides often define their own identity in contrast to the “other” and over time, such deliberately defined identities solidify into intractable differences. Yet as Edles shows, Spanish political culture in the wake of Franco underwent a completely unexpected transformation in a short period of time with former enemies (including communist leader Santiago Carrillo and ex-Francoist minister Manuel Fraga) agreeing to put aside ideological differences in a \textit{pacto olvido} (pact of forgetting) and combat the “mutual enemy” of worldwide inflation and

achieving a “common” goal of democracy.\textsuperscript{92} Regardless of whether opposing sides agree to “bury the past” for the sake of consensus, or formally reconcile differences and apologize for past wrongdoings, the key to establishing a democratic framework is facilitating a political environment of social justice.\textsuperscript{93} Exclusionary narratives that collectively defined formerly dominant and subordinate groups need to be redefined to accommodate narratives of shared political communities. While present situations stemming from Kosovo make reconciliation between Serbs and Albanians highly unlikely for the immediate future, efforts in solidifying a shared political community with Serbia’s Muslim, Hungarian, Roma, Croatian, and Romanian minorities are certainly feasible.\textsuperscript{94}

The third objective in crafting a democratic historical memory is placing the narratives within a framework of embracing modernization and change. Authoritarian narratives are, more often than not, extremely preservationist in character and foster a sense of a “nation besieged” by outside forces determined to destroy the state. The politics of Milošević promised stability through a preservation of the old order and a

\textsuperscript{92} Edles (1998), p. 140
\textsuperscript{93} Barbara A. Misztal, “Memory and Democracy”, \textit{American Behavioral Scientist}, vol. 48, no. 10 (2005), pp. 1320 – 36. Mistzal does not conclude whether remembering or forgetting is a better condition of justice. Oftentimes, efforts to reexamine and reconcile the past, though initiated with the best intentions, can simply keep wounds open and inhibit a society to start afresh without inherited resentments. Additionally, “groups that turn toward their past to glorify specific aspects of it and demand a recognition of suffering risk allowing collective memory to be used as a political instrument that legitimizes myths and nationalist propaganda” (p. 1326). However, reconciliation also allows one’s own group to come to terms with its past and formally expunge a recognized wrong done in the name of the group. As such, reconciliation defuses the virulence of narratives and affirms that such wrongdoing will happen “never again.” For additional thoughts on group reconciliation, see Nigel Biggar, ed., \textit{Burying the Past: Making Peace and Doing Justice After Civil Conflict} (Georgetown University Press, 2003).
\textsuperscript{94} In a public opinion poll conducted in Serbia in 2005, 80% of respondents agreed that “Serbia should be the country of all citizens irrespective of their nationality”. See \textit{Political Divisions in Serbia – Five Years Later}, Center for Free Elections and Democracy (CeSID), May 2005. Even regarding the alleged irreconcilable differences between Serbs and ethnic Albanians in Kosovo is not completely pessimistic. In a recent opinion poll conducted by the United Nations Development Program, roughly 50% of both Serbs and Albanians indicated they were willing to work with each other. However both sides still largely blame the refusal to cooperate by the other when asked about why interethnic relations have not improved over the years. See “Early Warning System Opinion Poll, no. 25”, UNDP – Kosovo, August 2009.
rejection of economic and political reforms, euphemistically referred to as the New World Order. As will be articulated, Serbia’s democratic heritage is almost exclusively defined by individuals openly embracing the teachings and philosophies of the Enlightenment, the social theories of the 1848 revolutions, and even the ideas of Romantic Nationalism. This is not to say that Serbia’s democratic spirit came at a rejection of her own values and ideals. Far from it. What characterized some of Serbia’s most democratic thinkers, writers, artists, and politicians was their ability at finding common threads between the pan-national principles of these teachings and the values and traditions of their own culture. Democratic narratives are those that accept rapid social change. Authoritarian narratives are those that not only reject it, but aim to stave it off.

Societies are not forever prisoners of their own past. Nor is definitive progress and social change constantly impeded because of a need to keep to tradition. Alternative historical narratives, argues Alison Brysk, can become new official narratives if they are first persuasive – being culturally appropriate, having historical precedent, reinforced with other symbols, and signal a call for action – and second originate from legitimately accepted sources – parents, clergy, intellectuals, elected officials. Alternative narratives must also raise salient issues to current situations that current narratives ignore or dismiss. This can be accomplished either by finding congruence with issues and events that have recently become widely accepted, such as universal human rights, electoral

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transparency, or international law, or by directly challenging the regime by showing that it failed to satisfy its own claims to legitimacy. In essence, we are not beholden to traditions of centuries ago. We are beholden to centuries-old traditions and values that continue to exhibit present-day saliency.

97 Ibid. pp. 577 – 79
Chapter 4: Serbia’s Cultural and Institutional Capital on the Eve of Uprising

It is common among historians to mark the First Serbian Uprising of February 14, 1804 as the beginning of modern Serbian statehood. As a direct response to the so-called “slaughter of the knezovi”, or dukes, in which many high-ranking Serbs were hunted down and executed on the order of local Ottoman authorities, what initially began as a rebellion against these authorities in favor of restoring direct rule by the more-benign sultan, evolved into a clear attempt at establishing local self-government and the rudimentary elements of a state the following year. Authority was however short-lived as Ottoman authorities reasserted control over the Belgrade pashalik in 1813. But the subsequent reign of terror on the remaining Serb population resulted in a Second Uprising in 1815. Its elected leader, Miloš Obrenović, successfully negotiated an agreement with authorities in Constantinople for the creation of a semi-autonomous Serbian state under Ottoman vassalage, with himself as obor-knez, or senior leader. With the end of the Second Uprising in 1817, the Belgrade pashalik formed the nucleus of what would be the political and territorial core of modern Serbia.

Yet in order for not only one but two uprisings to manifest within a society that was overwhelmingly poor, rural, and illiterate, additional factors must have been present. With the notable exception of Greeks and Armenians, whose upper classes in Constantinople, Smyrna, and Thessaloniki enjoyed privileged positions within the Ottoman state system, the Serbs formed the large mass of Slavic Christian raya that

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inhabited the Balkan peninsula. The Serbs had no considerable wealth of their own, no cities to function as either financial or military centers, and no learned elite to elicit external support, let alone sympathy. Despite these handicaps, the Serbs enjoyed a series of historical advantages that directly contributed to the institutional and cultural cohesion that was necessary to resist Ottoman domination for over four centuries. By the time of the emergence of modern nationalism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Serbs had the most developed ethnic identities of any society in the Balkans save the Greeks.2

Prelude to Modern Statehood: Serbia’s Culture and Institutional Antecedents

It is worth noting that prevailing historical narratives of Serbian collective identity that formed the core of Milošević’s politics in the 1990s and continues to shape much of the current attitudes of collective memory of Serbian history are based on narratives of suffering and victimhood in the Ottoman Empire. While it is certainly not particular to Serbia, collective memory of most Balkan Christian communities clearly juxtapose between a flourishing medieval period of their own and a four to five century-long era of Turkish barbarity in which Christians were not only reduced to second-class citizens, but existed at the very mercy of a brutal Muslim sultanate that repeatedly forced conversion at swordpoint. Popular accounts today are rich in detailing the brutality of the Ottoman Turk. Stories of the notorious devşirme, the systematic collection of non-Muslim children

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where girls were rounded up for the harem and boys were forcibly converted to Islam and indoctrinated as the sultan’s personal bodyguards, are told to accentuate the hopelessness of Christians under the Ottoman yolk be they Greek, Serb, or Bulgarian. Within Serbian collective memory, the hardships facing Serb communities in Kosovo from the 1970s to the present time are replete with parallels likening the Albanian to the modern-day Muslim that aims to stamp out all Serbian presence in the region.3

Yet for whatever regressive factors the Ottoman Empire might have caused in preventing Serbs and other Balkan peoples from fully partaking in the modernization movements that characterized Western and Central Europe, the Serbs had numerous advantages in working within the system they lived in, and used these advantages to their benefit in preserving their unique identity and working to be the first group to throw off absolute Ottoman control.4 One major advantage was that the Serbs had sizeable communities living in both the Ottoman and Hapsburg empires. The Hapsburg factor is a vital but often overlooked component in early modern Serbian politics, as it provided the bulk of Serbian financial and intellectual capital as late as the Treaty of Berlin in 1878. Urban centers such as Sremski Karlovci, Novi Sad, Budapest, and Temesvár (Timișoara),

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3 Much publication on Serb suffering in Kosovo in 1389 was commissioned for the 600th anniversary of the battle in 1989. See “Kosovo 1389 – 1989”, Serbian Literary Quarterly: Special Edition on the Occasion of 600 Years since the Battle of Kosovo, vols. 1 – 3 (Belgrade: Association of Serbian Writers, 1989)

4 Though Greece is not normally considered a “Southeastern European” country, even though it lies in the same region as the Balkans and is the most Southeastern European country on the continent, it is worth noting that Greece’s formal declaration of independence was recognized by the London Protocol of August 30, 1832, a ratification of the Treaty of Constantinople from the previous February. Though Serbia’s semi-independence was ratified by an Ottoman firman in 1830, two years before Greece, Serbia was not recognized as a fully independent state until the Treaty of Berlin in 1878. The first signs of a basic administrative government in Serbia was in 1805 after the First Serbian Uprising at Kragujevac and moved to Belgrade after its capture in early 1807. But for all intents and purposes, the modern Serbian state was established as a principality within the Ottoman Empire in 1817 by Miloš Obrenović and the Ottoman commander Marašli Ali Paşa, though this was more an agreement by word-of-mouth. The firman of 1830 was the first official document. For works on the Greek War of Independence, see David Brewer, The Greek War of Independence: The Struggle for Freedom from Ottoman Oppression and the Birth of the Modern Greek Nation, (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 2001).
in which small but vibrant Serbian communities operated, challenge the idea that all Serbs were a poor and backward people living on the Ottoman frontier with only mythologized stories of a long-dead medieval kingdom that did little more than nurture superstitions and prejudices of others. By noting the Serbian cultural and institutional legacies that existed in both the Ottoman and Hapsburg empires, we can come to a better understanding of what factors directly facilitated the uprisings in 1804 and 1815, as well as the factors that most directly contributed to the social and cultural capital available to early modern statecraft in Serbia.

Five factors contributed to Serbia’s independent resistance to Ottoman rule and provided the core foundations of the modern Serbian state. The role of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the establishment of Serbian political, economic and cultural centers in the Hapsburg Empire at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and the collective memory embedded in Serbian epic poetry that developed into modern Serbia’s first collective memories were three critical factors that preserved Serbian national identity in the centuries between the Battle of Kosovo and the establishment of a modern state in 1804. A network of decentralized government institutions and village assemblies under local chieftains in the Ottoman Empire, and a notable military tradition provided two ancillary, yet equally important, conditions. With the exception of the Church, which dates to the early thirteenth century, these factors are rooted in the Ottoman era, and as will be noted below, even the Serbian Church owes much of its importance and heritage to its continued existence within both the Ottoman and Hapsburg empires. As noted in chapter 3, modern historical memory attempts to connect the present period as much as possible with a Golden Age that preceded the era of decline, downfall, and domination by
others. Yet at the same time, these memories of the distant past are almost always shaped by current crises and values, which in and of themselves are products of the recent past. In other words, Serbia’s “history”, like the history of all nations, is neither democratic, nor authoritarian; it is fashioned and interpreted by contemporary elites for current strategies and public consumption.

The problem however in shaping a modern identity based on centuries-old cultural heritage is that entire eras deemed foreign to the nation are disregarded and forgotten. To be sure, the Serbs suffered like all other Christians as second-class peoples under the Ottomans. But despite the 415-year occupation between Kosovo and the First Uprising, the Serbs had much in the way of social, cultural, and even institutional cohesion for a stateless people. These factors directly contributed to the founding of the modern state and dismiss assertions that the Serbian nation “died” at Kosovo in 1389 as more nationalistic interpretations of the past tend to allude. More than just a testament in survival, it is a vivid demonstration of how a nation among many adapted to new political structures and functioned with available cultural and institutional capital. As the only official Serbian institution throughout most of the post-Kosovo period, the Serbian Orthodox Church provided an organized framework that all Serbs regardless of geography or status could associate with. The establishment of Serbian communities in the Hapsburg Empire in the late seventeenth century provided a link to the Enlightenment and other social and intellectual revolutions that affected Western and Central Europe throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Serbian epic poetry not only functioned as a source of information and remembering for an overwhelmingly illiterate population, but it also acted as a repository of history and identity for a stateless people.
The autonomy of Serbian communities known as the *zadruga*, provided a tradition of community co-dependency and decentralization that eliminated any feudal or hierarchical social structure. Finally, the use of Serbs as mercenaries and auxiliary military units in Ottoman, Hapsburg, Russian and Venetian armies led to the development of a military tradition that defined much of Serbian society, so that by the time of the First Uprising a sense of conflict and rebellion defined much of its culture and identity.

The cultural and institutional capital that comprise the core of Serbia’s historical legacies are unavoidable, but highly interpretive, and have formed the basis of political action towards Europe or away from it. It is these elements that provide the cultural capital for an exclusionary version of Serbian collective identity, but it is also the pool of resources that Serbian democratic proponents can, and should, also draw from. Therefore, if we are to understand the underlying premises of Serbian exclusionary historical memory under Milošević and after, and if we are to understand how a democratic culture can be drawn from the same non-negotiable myths and symbols, an objective view of history is the first requirement.

**The Role and Function of the Serbian Orthodox Church**

Almost all historians and social scientists regard the Serbian Orthodox Church as one of the most important social, cultural, and political institutions that provided the link between Serbia’s medieval and modern period. Some observers would even regard the Serbian Orthodox Church more as a political organization than a religious one. But

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while this could be said about almost any religious organization in the world that advances certain policy agendas, the Serbian Church is a national church, and like the churches of Greece, Russia, Poland, Ireland, Spain, and even England, it functions as a primary repository of the nation’s culture, history, myths, and symbols. The political element emphasizes identity and cultural norms more than universal policies. In this regard, these churches defend the soul of the nation, rather than the soul of the individual. With the exception of England, these national churches predate the modern nation-state and have played a key role in its establishment. They also often function as the only surviving link between the modern period and the pre-modern or medieval. Particularly in societies once dominated by outside powers, these national churches acted as the only legitimate source of cultural identity for its people, sometimes in cooperation with the external powers, but often at its consternation, as in the case of Ireland. Indeed, it is not altogether implausible to argue that national churches such as the Serbian Church have actually functioned as political organizations in the absence of civil authority and formal state institutions. The Ottoman millet system in particular was purposefully designed to allow Christian communities some form of autonomy through its religious bodies, so long as its ecclesiastic heads remained on good terms with authorities in Constantinople. As will be seen below, the Serbian Church also formed the only officially recognized political and cultural organization of Serbs in the Hapsburg Empire. In more recent times, the Serbian Church provided organized authority for Serb communities in Croatia, Bosnia, and most recently Kosovo when civil authority either broke down or was no

longer recognized. Thus, though some scholars have noted the role of the Serbian Church as a political organization with noted criticism, often hinting at elements of “Caesaropapism”, its role in this manner has been historically recognized, and even supported, by both internal and external agents.⁶

While religion has traditionally been regarded as essential for social integration along with technology, language, and social organization, it also provides a universal narrative for a nation separated by local incoherences and idiosyncrasies.⁷ But what is more than simply a tool of fashioning collective identity around a political unit, “Orthodoxy ‘sacralizes’ the Serbian identity by framing the parameters of its existence.”⁸ It has historically provided the Serbian community with a particular vision of the nation

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⁶ I am generally opposed to labeling Orthodox churches “casearopapist”, as Weber originally ascribed, because it often denotes the legal primacy of authority to the state. As Huntington seems to allude, “God is Caesar’s junior partner” in Orthodoxy (1996, p. 70), and Ramet argues that the Serbian Church, while having an autonomous existence, provides a useful tool for state organs to perpetuate policies that limit ecumenism. See Ramet, “The Politics of the Serbian Orthodox Church”, (2005), pp. 255 – 85, and Ramet, “The Serbian Orthodox Church”, in Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twentieth Century, vol. I (Duke University Press, 1988), pp. 232 – 48 (published under Pedro Ramet). The problem with the casearopapist model is that it first ascribes too much power and authority to the state, which has historically remained in a far weaker position than the more universally recognized authority of national churches, and second because it is a departure from the original Byzantine concept of synergy of “sinfonia” between the sacred and profane of Christian society. In other words, Church and State function as two equal units – Patriarch and Emperor in Byzantium – that tends to human needs. Where one component weakens, or in the sense of the Ottoman era disappears, the other takes on the dual responsibility. In this regard, national Orthodox churches, much like national Catholic churches, can hardly be said to be subordinate ministries of state. On the autonomous functions of Orthodoxy, see, Peter L. Berger, “Orthodoxy and Global Pluralism”, Demokratizatsia: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization, vol. 13, no. 3 (Summer 2005), pp. 437 – 48; Elizabeth Protoponom, “The Ambivalent Orthodox”, Journal of Democracy, vol. 15, no. 2 (April 2004), pp. 62 – 75; Stepan, “The World’s Religious Systems and Democracy: Crafting the “Twin Toleration”, in Arguing Comparative Politics (2001), pp. 213 – 253; Ludvik Nemec, “The Pattern in the Historical Roots of Church-State Relationship in Central and Eastern Europe”, East European Quarterly, vol. 20, no. 1 (March, 1986), pp. 3 – 16; E. Turczynski, “The Role of the Orthodox Church in Adapting and Transforming the Western Enlightenment in Southeastern Europe”, East European Quarterly, vol. 9, no. 4 (1975), pp. 415 – 440


and its connection to the world, translated through narratives, myths, symbols, and commemorative ritual, and reformulated as a national property. These have formed the primary non-negotiable truths that have defined Serbian collective identity for centuries and through which new challenges and experiences are evaluated. Because the Serbian Church has been the only major cultural institution of the Serbian people for so long, the interpretation of the past, particularly that of the pre-modern era has taken on a fundamentally religious character. History is reduced to a few key narratives that account for the glory and decline of tradition through the eyes of the Church. As a result, Serbian historical identity passes through the church, giving it a “sacred heritage”.

Like its role within the Greek communities of the Ottoman Empire, an established Serbian Orthodox Church functioned as heirs to the medieval kingdoms and traditions of its peoples, and in the absence of formal rulers, functioned as both ecclesiastic and civil authorities. However, unlike their Greek counterparts which in both Byzantine and Ottoman periods functioned, at least in theory, as authorities in ecumenical Orthodoxy, the Serbian Church functioned particularly as a cultural and quasi-political institution, “which embodied and expressed the ethos of the Serbian people to such a degree that nationality and religion fused into a distinctive ‘Serbian faith’”. Liturgical cycles and commemoration of distinctive national saints, as similarly practiced by Greeks and Bulgarians, provided rudimentary demarcations of national Orthodoxy well before the establishment of modern nation-states. In particular, the Serbian Church actively preserved the memory of Serbia’s medieval heritage and the ruling dynasty of the Nemanja family through literature, art, sermons, and canonization. Nearly all of Serbia’s

9 Mylonas, p. 21
10 Petrovich, (1976), p. 10
medieval monasteries were built as endowments by ruling kings, queens, and princes, each with their image prominently displayed alongside the saints, clearly emphasizing a sanctified lineage that “gave to the Serbian people saints who had come from among their ranks and would in heaven be tireless protectors of the Serbian state”. These endowments often served as the burial place for their founders, as the monastic community constantly prayed for their souls at every service, but also served to immortalize these temporal leaders as both royal and spiritual founders of the Serbian state. 

Within the Serbian church calendar, there are nearly sixty Serbian saints, including eighteen tsars, kings, queens, princes, and lords beginning with St. Sava and his father Stefan Nemanja. The cult of Serbian royal saints, the “sacred stock of Nemanja” was visually represented as “family trees” in all medieval churches with an aim of popularizing the lineage, justifying rule, and sanctifying Serbia’s founders centuries later. As stated by Petrovich, these images “constantly reminded the Serbian people, with all of the awesome pomp and artistry of the Byzantine ritual, that the Serbs had once had an independent kingdom, indeed and empire, blessed by God through His wonder-working saints.”

Of all the Serbian saints, St. Sava is accorded primary authority as the patron saint of the nation. Born as Ratsko Nemanjić, the son of Stefan Nemanja, the founder of the

12 Stefan Nemanja, the founder of the medieval Serbian state, began this tradition with the construction of Studenica monastery in 1190. His eldest son Stefan Prvovenčani built Mileševa monastery in 1234. Sopočani monastery was founded in 1265 by Uroš I, son of Prvovenčani, while his wife founded Gradac monastery in 1270. Their youngest son Milutin founded a number of churches including the monasteries of Gračanica and Banjska in 1310 and 1312 respectively. Milutin’s son Stefan Uroš III, later called Dečanski, founded the monastery of Visoki Dečani in 1327. See Sima M. Ćirković, The Serbs, Vuk Tošić trans. (Blackwell Publishing, 2004), pp. 58 – 61.
13 Petrovich (1976), p. 13
medieval Serbian state, he abandoned his hereditary rights and joined the monastic communities on Mount Athos and took the monastic name Sava. Upon his abdication and passing of all authority to his younger son Stefan, Sava’s brother, Stefan the father took monastic vows and moved to Athos in 1197. Two years later, he and his son Sava commissioned the rebuilding of Hilandar monastery, which had been given to the Serbian people by the Byzantine Emperor Alexios III Angelos, and would quickly become one of the most important centers of Serbian monasticism up to the present era. In 1219, Sava was ordained as the first archbishop of an autocephalous Serbian Church by Patriarch Manuel I of Constantinople, cementing the nation’s membership in an Orthodox commonwealth and securing its identity through a unique church-state symbiosis. Over the next few centuries, St. Sava would emerge as the single-most important patron saint of Serbia, akin to St. Patrick for Ireland, and St. Stanislaus for Poland. As both the founder of the Serbian Church and the hereditary heir of Serbia’s medieval dynasty, Sava, more than anyone else, serves to fuse the sacred and the worldly together in one interdependent symbiosis. Nearly all of Serbia’s medieval kings, queens and princes would later be canonized, further cementing the symbolism of a sanctified lineage, but it was Sava who had first refused the entitlements of authority for the life of a monk. His burial site at Mileševa monastery in central Serbia quickly became a shrine for both Christians and Muslims for over three centuries until 1595 when his remains, on order from Grand Vizir Sinan Paşa, were exhumed and burned at Vračar hill in Belgrade. However, this act now transformed Sava’s legacy into that of a martyr. Today, the massive Temple of Saint Sava, architecturally resembling that of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, stands over the believed site of the burning.14

14 For a general history of St. Sava, see Nicolai Velimirovich, *The Life of St. Sava*, revised edition
Like most other Christians of the Ottoman-controlled Balkans, the Serbs were given tacit religious freedoms as protected subjects of the sultan, and were largely left to manage their own private affairs so long as the authority of the Porte was never challenged. However, unlike other Balkan Orthodox communities, whose churches were brought under the direct ecclesiastical control of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, the Serbian Orthodox Church maintained some form of autonomy in medieval Hungary until the Battle of Mohács in 1526. Yet even here, the unique role of Serbian Orthodoxy was not extinguished for long. Mehmed Sokollu, Grand Vizir to Sultan Suleiman, was a Serb from Bosnia by birth and a product of the devşirme. Having already established himself as a brilliant military commander against the Holy Roman Empire at Mohács, he also set about the task of improving the lives of the sultan’s Christian subjects, particularly his former Serb-inhabited regions. Under his authority, the Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate of Peć in Kosovo was reestablished in 1556, and his own brother Makarije Sokolović was appointed its first patriarch. The Serbs were recognized as a separate millet, or group, of Christians in the Ottoman Empire, whose reestablished ecclesiastical administration ran separate from Constantinople. During this time, the Serbian Church enjoyed something resembling an artistic and literary renaissance. Monasteries were repaired and reopened, and new monasteries were built with expanding Ottoman territory. Biographical writings of later Serbian despots and martyrs sought to incorporate their names and histories within the larger pantheon of Serbian kings and bishops of the medieval period. Of particular note was Patriarch Pajsije (1614 – 49) who wrote *The Life of Emperor Uroš* (Život cara Uroša) in an effort to connect the life and work of this ruler within a larger Serbian historical narrative that began with the Nemanja

(Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1989.)
line of kings and progressed up to his time. Pajsije also made great efforts at preserving older manuscripts of which he personally copied, rebound, and placed in safer monasteries.\textsuperscript{15} Within a century, the Patriarchate of Peć widened its authority beyond the boundaries of the medieval Serbian kingdoms, expanding with additional Ottoman conquests that reached deep into Dalmatia, Croatia, Hungary, Transylvania, and Banat with a network of at least forty metropolitans and bishops.\textsuperscript{16} Even after Ottoman decline set in, these Serbian dioceses continued to exist within the Hapsburg Empire. In many respects, the authority of the autonomous Serbian Church within the Ottoman Empire surpassed that of its medieval period.

\textsuperscript{15} Ćirković, (2004), p. 139
\textsuperscript{16} Ilarion Ruvarac, \textit{O Pečkim patriaršima od 1557 do 1690} (\textit{On the Patriarchate of Peć from 1557 to 1690}), (Matica Srpska: Sremski Karlovci, 1931).
The Serbian Church maintained relatively cooperative relations with the Ottoman Empire as long as the state remained prosperous. However with the onset of the long decline of the Ottoman state after their defeat at the Battle of Vienna in 1683, internal rule in many parts of the empire became corrupt and abusive against local inhabitants and the Serbian clergy began to encourage participation in insurrectionary movements. These revolts, often encouraged by other European powers, particularly the Hapsburgs, could never shake off Ottoman domination and often led to mass migrations of Serbs from Ottoman territory to escape reprisals from local Muslim officials. As Ottoman officials
increasingly saw Serbs as insurrectionary, the Patriarchate of Peć was finally abolished and reabsorbed into the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1766. However this actually led to the strengthening of the Serbian Church in two ways. First, the return of Phanar-controlled Greek clergy to Serb-speaking dioceses was seen as equally oppressive by the Serb peasantry. Secondly, and more importantly, the migration of entire Serb communities to Austria helped establish new centers of Serbian ecclesiastical authority. An alternate center for the Serbian Church was established in Sremski Karlovci, with equally influential locations in Buda and Temesvár, and a network of monasteries in the nearby Fruška Gora mountain range, all providing ecclesiastic and administrative focal points as well as a continued line of priests, monks, and teachers in Serbian parishes in both empires. While the Metropolitanate of Sremski Karlovci endured repeated attempts at cultural assimilation by the Hungarians and ecclesiastic incorporation by the Catholics almost up to the twentieth century, an autonomous Serbian church provided the cultural and institutional link between the medieval, Ottoman, Hapsburg, and modern Serbian periods.

**Serbia’s Hapsburg Heritage**

A tremendously important, but far less appreciated, aspect of Serbian cultural capital at the beginning of the nineteenth century was the Serb presence in the Hapsburg

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17 Phanar was the neighborhood in Constantinople where the wealthiest and most powerful Greek families of the Ottoman Empire resided. In addition to housing the headquarters of the Ecumenical Patriarchate since the early 17th century, several prominent Greek families held near-hereditary investiture of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and other major Orthodox Metropolitanates and Archbishoprics, as well as governors or voivodes of the Moldavian and Wallachian principalities of Romania. See Steven Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity* (Cambridge University Press, 1986)
Empire the century before. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Serb migrations north of the Danube resulted in an agreement between the Patriarch Arsenije III and Austrian Emperor Leopold I to establish an autonomous Serbian Church under the authority of Vienna. Though this relationship was hardly harmonious, it did facilitate the growth and expansion of a vibrant Serbian community in what would become today’s Vojvodina. Serb communities were already present as early as the sixteenth century when Radić Božić and Pavle Bakić, Serbia’s last medieval despots, helped defend the southern frontier of the Hungarian Empire in Srem and Slavonia. Along with these despots who crossed north over the Danube, a network of Serbian monasteries were erected in the Fruška Gora mountain range beginning in the early sixteenth century with the establishment of Krušedol sometime between 1509 and 1514, and was followed by fourteen others before the end of that century.

It is after the Great Migration of 1690 that a critical turning point in Serbian history took place, marking the definitive beginning of modern Serbian socio-political development. Arsenije negotiated an agreement with Austrian Emperor Leopold I for limited religious and cultural autonomy in exchange for active military service within the so-called Military Frontier (Militärgranne / Vojna Krajina), a fortified security zone along the Hapsburg-Ottoman border that stretched from the Adriatic coast to the western regions of Transylvania. After initially establishing his new seat of power at Krušedol

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monastery, the little town of Sremski Karlovci was chosen as the new location of the Serbian Church in Hapsburg lands in 1702 and would grow to become a major spiritual and cultural center over the next two centuries.\(^{19}\) While Arsenije was still technically the Patriarch of Peć, his decision to literally vacate the Patriarchate necessitated a replacement in Kosovo. The Greek Kallinikos I was chosen as his replacement even though Peć continued ecclesiastical autonomy until 1766. Arsenije was chosen to be first Metropolitan of Karlovci, with the understanding that it would remain subordinate to Peć.\(^{20}\) Nevertheless, after the senior church was formally reincorporated into the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1766, Karlovci functioned as Serbia’s *de facto* independent church, with its subsequent metropolitans acting as formal Heads of Church and informal Heads of State.

A series of circumstantial factors directly aided in facilitating Serbian political and cultural autonomy, however tenacious at times, up to the end of the First World War and the incorporation of Vojvodina into the first Yugoslav state. First, Serb “privileges” included exemption from all feudal duties and obligations as well as the freedom of religion for the free-settlers. If religious and cultural autonomy in an overwhelmingly Roman Catholic empire came with an agreement for the Serbian community to guard the border, it was a marginal price to pay. Second, the vaguely outlined living arrangements given to Serbs, coupled with constant threats to these privileges by Hungarians and Croats, inevitably thrust the metropolitans of Karlovci into the role of civic statesman.

\(^{19}\) For a general history, see Žarko Dimić, *Sremski Karlovci* (Karlovički Krug, Sremski Karlovci, 2003), and Velimir Ćerimović, *Sremski Karlovci i Dalj: Prestolni centri Karlovačke Mitropolije* (Sreški Karlovci and Dalj: Capital Centers of the Metropolitanate of Karlovci) (Belgrade: Stamparija Srpske Patrijaršije , 2007).

\(^{20}\) The first seat of the Metropolitanate under Arsenije (1691 – 1706) was actually located at Szentendre. Between 1708 and 1713, the seat was moved to Krušedol monastery. It was only in 1713 that the seat of the Serbian Church was finally moved to Karlovci, but historians have generally regarded the Metropolitanate of Karlovci as spanning the entire period since 1690.
alongside their ecclesiastic duties. Serbian metropolitans and other church leaders acted as veritable diplomats, civic administrators and negotiators for the Serbian community, and could be found as often at royal courts and general assemblies as they could in monasteries and churches. Much like its privileged position in the Ottoman Empire after the decrees of Mehmet Sokollu, Serbian cultural and institutional autonomy was established around nationality, not just fixed territory. This meant that even within large Serbian urban communities well outside the Military Frontier, such as Szentendre, Buda, Sombor and Vienna, some form of cultural autonomy was guaranteed.

Figure 7: The Hapsburg Military Frontier
Source: Jelavich (1983), p. 145

Regular church council meetings either in Karlovci or at Krušedol closely resembled national assemblies. While they were primarily held to appoint bishops and heads of monasteries, they also served as the highest authority in handling general problems and day-to-day matters of interest to the Serbian community, including the
publication of printed materials and the opening of schools. After 1749 at the behest of imperial authorities, memberships of these assemblies were divided into three equal groups: twenty-five clergymen, twenty-five laymen representatives of the Military Frontier, and twenty-five from other territories and towns with a Serbian population throughout the Hapsburg Empire.\footnote{Jelavich, (1983), p. 149.} Prior to the establishment of a Serbian state south of the Danube, this was the closest thing to parliamentary government in modern Serbian history.

Third, the establishment of permanent Serbian communities in Vojvodina exposed new generations to the Enlightenment, the Scientific and Industrial revolutions, and the Age of Nationalism. Within the Ottoman Empire, Serbs were generally divided into two classes: peasantry and clergy, and even here “clergy” in many rural areas accounted for little beyond rudimentary literacy. After their migration to the Hapsburg Empire, Serbs gained access to areas in economics, civil administration, and higher education that were previously denied to them, or just altogether non-existent. The special status of the Military Frontier significantly limited feudal stratification and facilitated conditions for “free town royalships”, in which larger towns purchased their freedom from the Court Chamber, the supreme body that managed Hapsburg state property. In addition to providing autonomy and representation in the Diet of the kingdom, citizens were exempt from customs duties or road and trade taxes, and were allowed to elect administrative bodies. Furthermore, recently acquired territory in Banat, Transylvania, and southern Srem were all incorporated into the Frontier, turning lands that were largely uninhabited into fertile ground for a network of urbanized free-towns. In 1748, Petrovaradin was purchased and renamed Novi Sad, though the fortress itself remained in Royal hands.
Sombor followed one year later, as did Subotica in 1779. By the mid-nineteenth century, there were about 20 Serbian “free royal townships”, including Sremski Karlovci, Sremska Mitrovica, Zemun, Vršac, and Pančev. The free towns provided settings for the development of crafts and the formal establishment of guild organizations. From these guilds, a vibrant merchant class soon developed within Serb communities who acted as economic and administrative mediators with the Ottoman state.22 A new type of merchant aristocracy was formed in these towns, whose families had the financial and social advantage of access to higher education in medicine, law, and civic administration. It is from these newly established urban environments that Serbia’s first modern intellectuals were born and educated.23

Even the Serbian Orthodox Church experienced something akin to a rebirth and a new appreciation for education. As early as the first decades of the eighteenth century, the severity of the overall backwardness and illiteracy of the general Serb population became a glaring issue. Under the Metropolitan Mojsije Petrović (1726 – 30), the first efforts were made to encourage Serbian bishops to establish schools in their districts and

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22 Stoianovich (1960)  
23 The establishment of a potentially vibrant urban middle class in these towns might give one reason to equate early modern Serbian political economic development along patterns similar to those of England, France, and America in Moore’s study of the relationship between an upper landed class and the peasantry in the transformation from agrarian societies to modern industrial states. While it is difficult to classify early Serbian socio-political development along any of the continua provided by Moore, I feel, at the risk of appearing overly optimistic, Serbian urban development in the Hapsburg Empire most closely resembled that of England. A Serbian middle class emerged via close networks between town and country and relatively autonomous of the Haspbubg monarchy, even though Vienna’s facilitation of a feudal-free Military Border made the development of a merchant class possible. However, early modern Hapsburg Serbia differs from England in two critical issues. First, Serbia was not an independent country and to a certain degree, Serbian entrepreneurs consisted of a small percentage of the overall population. Communities remained relatively rural and without access to higher education until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Additionally, Hungarian landed elites who were wary of any ethnic community becoming too powerful frequently targeted the Serbian middle class. Secondly, the small role of the Serbian entrepreneurial class in relation to the larger multiethnic population of the Hapsburg lands limited the transformation of economic mobility into political power, and rural Serbia remained primarily a land of small independent family homesteads. Moore’s analysis does not consider the development of democracy or authoritarianism from social movements in smaller and less powerful nations. See Moore, Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy (1966), pp. xiii, 419 – 21.
find suitable teachers. During the Metropolitanate of Pavle Nenadović (1749 – 68), himself a product of earlier Serbian schooling, the establishment of a national schooling fund in 1748 helped to provide a firm financial base for the support of building new schools. Nenadović encouraged all Serbian families to send their children to school, stressing it as an act of religious piety. Without education, he stated, one could not expect to advance in the civil military services, nor could one be freed from the poverty of ignorance. Under his tenure as Metropolitan, the completion of grammar school became a precondition for admission in the priesthood and other civic vocations.24 By 1769, an agreement was reached between Vienna and Karlovci to cooperate on state-wide education reforms. Serbian schools were now financed by the state and all followed a single curriculum. These reforms were first introduced in Banat, where Vienna had direct control because of the Military Frontier, and were extended to all Serb regions by 1777. Under the Metropolitanate of Stefan Stratimirović (1790 – 1836) the first Serbian autonomous grammar school was founded in Sremski Karlovci in 1791.25 Three years later an official Orthodox seminary was opened right next to it. Secondary schools that facilitated more secular education and teacher training were founded in 1810 in Novi Sad, in 1812 in Szentendre, and in 1816 in Sombor.

*Early Intellectualism Among Hapsburg Serbs*

Whether it was an intended objective or an unavoidable by-product, the development of education outside the monastic walls quickly ensued with the growth of

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24 Kosta Petrović *Istorija srpske pravoslavne Velike Gimnazije Karlovačke (History of the Serbian Orthodox Great Gymnasium of Karlovci)*, (Matica Srpska, Novi Sad: 1951), pp. 8 – 25
schools and the rise of an affluent merchant class. By the mid to late eighteenth century, Serbs began attending universities in Vienna, Budapest, and Halle. On the eve of the First Serbian Uprising, advanced writings by Hapsburg Serbs in historiography, humanism, individualism, philology, philosophy, and medicine were being printed in Serbian publishing houses for distribution to a literate society. Even if new schools of thought challenged many of the teachings and understandings of the Serbian Church, a symbiotic balance between tradition and modernity was achieved for the most part. The lives of Dositej Obradović and Vuk Karadžić, two great leaders of early modern Serbia’s intellectual and literary renaissance are good examples of this balance.

While overshadowed by his more prolific student Karadžić, Dositej Obradović remains one of Serbia’s greatest intellectuals, not to mention one of its most progressive thinkers of his time. He was born in the Temesvár region of eastern Banat in 1743 and developed a passion for reading at an early age. But because Serbs at this time lacked newspapers or any other form of printed material in their own language save for liturgical texts in Old Church Slavonic, Obradović was only available to read about the lives of the saints. Enamored by the lives and experiences of many of the Church Fathers he read about, he ran away to Hopovo monastery in Fruška Gora and for three years was a tonsured monk. However, having saturated the monastic libraries and realizing there was more in life than monasticism, he left the monastery in 1760 and set forth on travels that led him throughout Europe and the Near East. While living in Germany for many years, he attended university at Halle in 1782. There he read the latest works and became an avid proponent of current trends in rationalism and enlightenment. He spent most of his professional life in Vienna where he worked extensively on promoting a modern Serbian
literary language and modern Serbian literature. His autobiography narrated his forty year “adventures” throughout Europe to “his fellow men and to tell them whatever good and sensible things I have heard and learned from others.”  

While never abandoning his Orthodox faith, nor losing any sense of connection between intellectualism and personal religious piety, he became particularly critical of the attempt by organized religion at stifling individual creativity, as well as its emphasis of ritual and custom over true belief and enlightenment. He was also equally passionate about standardizing a written Serbian language that reflected the vocabulary and grammar of contemporary society, instead of using the “old literary language” that is understandable to only a small number of learned people. While some may argue, he surmised, that teaching the vernacular over the traditional language will result in the disappearance of the latter, what is the value, he rationalized, in preserving a language that might as well be a completely foreign tongue to the vast majority of people? Since the majority of Serbs spoke a common tongue, the

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27 Obradović brings this problem to bare in a rather colorful description of what he regards as the hypocrisy of fasting in the contemporary Orthodox world. The lengthy passage is worth quoting. “You me why I have rebelled against fasts, long prayers, and the great number of holidays; and wherein they offend me and make me take up arms against them. Read the Holy Gospel and you will see that the same things offended our Savior, so that he cried out against them and on that account rebuked the Pharisees, saying: ‘Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, who by fasting make pale and sad your faces and pray in the streets and byways, that men may see you.’ The abuses that were committed in those times by those acts are committed also today; and whoever receives, recognizes, and loves the teaching of Christ must hate all that Christ hated and against which he cried out …No one fasts except such as are extremely poor, people who live on sterile soil and who during several months of the year would think that they sat at royal tables if they merely had bread or wheat or maize. These poor people fast the greater part of their lives, but by grim necessity. But those who have fasting foods, as we term them, including olive oil and wine, never fast at any time whatever. (You should know that I do not regard it as fasting when a man has no [lunch] but at supper eats enough for both [lunch] and supper, nor when a man eats no meat but stuffs himself with beans and sauerkraut till his belly rumbles and sweat comes out of his brow.) …You know well that an Albanian or a Montenegrin will kill a man like a wild goat and then atone for this act by fasting. Theft, lying, and every sort of injury and injustice he is confident of blowing away by peppered beans … There is no stench or impurity that he is not confident of washing away with sorrel and vinegar, or driving off with leeks and onions. If people only fasted as the divine Apostle Paul bids them, as a restraint on themselves, of their own free will, and not by compulsion, then who would be foolish enough to cry out against fasting?” Obradović (1914), p. 114, quoted in Noyes (1953), pp. 99 – 100.
easy thing to do would be to codify that language in written format, rather than making them learn a complex literary language. “A language derives its value from the good that it does. And what language can do more than the general language of the whole nation?”

Whereas Obradović was a rationalist and a cosmopolitan of the Age of Enlightenment, Vuk Stefanović Karadžić was a nationalist and Romanticist. If Obradović received inspiration and enlightenment in the universities of Germany and the academies in Vienna, Karadžić found the epic poetry of the rural guslar to be the purist form of human expression. If Obradović argued that “books are more important than [church] bells”, and placed rationalism over superstitious folk customs, which to him were little more than “dark magic and lack of intelligence”, Karadžić lauded the customs of the countryside from the kolo, to the vampire-hunter, to the burning of the badnjak, or oak log, for Christmas. And while Obradović initially proposed the codification of a modern Serbian vernacular language, it was Karadžić that is remembered as the “Father of Serbian Literature”, the creator of the modern Serbian language, and the provider of Serbian cultural history to European consciousness. With the encouragement and assistance of Jernej Kopitar, a Slovene scholar who worked as official censor for Slavic literature in Vienna, Vuk produced a grammar of Serbian vernacular in 1815, and a Serbian dictionary three years later. In these works, he greatly reduced the complexity of the Slavo-Serbian alphabet from forty letters to thirty, eliminating all unpronounced characters. Both works initially attracted the hostility of the Orthodox hierarchy in Karlovci, and were subsequently banned for many years.

His other great literary contribution was collecting various oral poems and epic songs from throughout the Balkans and compiling them in one unified printed work. Here, Vuk enjoyed some support from Karlovcici, particularly Lukijan Mušicki, his old teacher. But it was again through the influence of Kopitar, who showed his work to the renowned German scholar Jakob Grimm. Once published, Vuk’s work eagerly entered the larger field of folk poetry that was all the rage of European Romanticism. After this initial publication, Vuk traveled to Banat, where he met Filip Višnjić, a blind *guslar*, and Tešan Podgrugović, a Bosnian Serb *hajduk*, and transcribed no less than forty songs. Put to print for the first time, these epic poems formed the core of what would become his six-volume monumental *Srpske narodne pjesme* (*Songs of the Serbian People*), first published in Leipzig between 1824 and 1833, and again in a second and revised edition in Vienna between 1844 and 1866. While Vuk was not the first to transcribe oral tales of the Balkans, his efforts at standardizing, organizing, and codifying as many tales as he did in an anthology, not only turned an oral tradition into a literary phenomenon, but it radically universalized many tales and historical interpretations of specific regions, unifying divergent stories into one national narrative.

In addition to the contributions of these two major literary figures, Hapsburg Serbs had made significant strides in printed materials and, equally important, a standardized history. Epic poetry may have been the poor man’s history, but it provided little use in providing historical arguments to defend one’s national identity in official

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30 The Brothers Grimm translated nineteen of Vuk’s songs into German in 1818. After that, additional songs were translated by Theresa Alberina Luisa von Jacob, under the pseudonym “Talvj”, in the 1820s. The first English translation was undertaken by John Gibson Lockhart in 1826, titled *Translations from the Servian Minstrelsy: to which are added some specimens of Anglo-Norman Romances*. Another translation is Sir John Bowring’s *Servian Popular Poetry* in 1827, which were direct translations from Talvj’s German version, but contained references to Vuk’s original Serbian texts. See Holton and Mihailovich (1988), pp. 79 – 83.
Hapsburg circles, and so the Karlovci Metropolitanate formally sanctioned the project of creating a national history of the Serbian people. In 1765 Pavle Julinac wrote the first condensed history, *A Short Introduction to the History of the Slavo-Serbian People*. But it was between 1794 – 95 when the prominent Serbian historian Jovan Rajić (1726 – 1801) published the four-volume *The History of Different Slavic Peoples, especially the Bulgars, Croats, and Serbs*. Written in the style of contemporary historiography, Rajić linked the history of the Serbs with antiquity and the migration of peoples of the seventh century through the Byzantine period, Medieval Serbia, the Ottoman conquests, and the Hapsburg migrations. Until 1870, it was the definitive source of information on Serbian history.\(^{31}\) One year prior in 1793, Metropolitan Stefan Stratimirović commissioned Rajić to translate *A Brief History of the Kingdoms of Serbia, Raška, Bosnia, and Rama* from the German.

Beginning in the 1760s, mass printed calendar booklets containing entertaining anecdotes, practical lessons and general information were offered to the public, and can be somewhat compared with Benjamin Franklin’s *Poor Richard’s Almanack*. Periodicals offering practical everyday information as well as excerpts of short works of literature, poetry or scripture in the vernacular language were also offered at this time. *Slavno-serbskij magazine* (1768) was the first of such journals, and even though it was printed in distant Venice with only one issue, *Serbskija (povsednevnia) novini* (1791 – 92), and the weekly *Slaveno-serbskija vjedomosti* (1792 – 94) quickly followed in Vienna.\(^{32}\) With access to Serbian printing presses in Budapest, Vienna, Venice, Trieste, and Karlovci,

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32 Ibid p. 172
grammar books and foreign language dictionaries were printed. Books for leisure, novels, children’s stories, translations of foreign works and theatrical works all cultivated a growing literate society. Manuals for various professions were also printed in Slavo-Serbian (not to be confused with the standard Serbian codified by Vuk early next century): guidebooks for priests and teachers, lessons in speaking and writing, and even Serbia’s first printed cookbook, were all printed in the last two and a half decades of the eighteenth century.

In total, over 400 titles were printed, and in addition to adding to a growing Serbian library, these works by original authors and translators became increasingly influenced by current ideas of the time sweeping through the Hapsburg Empire. The greatest achievement in early Serbian literary endeavors was the establishment of Matica Srpska in Budapest in 1826, which functioned as a counterpart to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and served as the first real national institution of all the Hapsburg Slavs, the prototype for future foundations to emulate, and the most important cultural institution for all Hapsburg Serbs.33 This was followed by the founding of the Serbian Reading Club Čitaonica in 1844 in Novi Sad, a city that by the mid 19th century became the epicenter of Serbian literary, artistic, and cultural activity to the degree that it was popularly known as the “Serbian Athens” (Srpska Atina). Together, these authors, thinkers, intellectuals, and translators were the harbingers of the Enlightenment to the Serbs, stressing the world improvement through moral betterment and individual

33 The word matica is difficult to translate. Literally, it means “queen-bee”. However it has also come to be understood as “home”, “source”, “center” or “foundation”. In this case, a rough translation could be “Home of the Serbs”, or more appropriately “Serbian Foundation”. Studies on Matica Srpska, like most studies on Vojvodina and the Serbs of Austria-Hungary, remain largely unknown outside Serbia, or Vojvodina for that matter. The most definitive work is the centennial publication Matica Srpska, 1826 – 1926 by twenty-one contributing authors (Novi Sad, 1927). See also Živan Milisavac, Matica Srpska (Novi Sad, 1965).
education. Intellectuals like Dositej Obradović championed reason and virtue with a critical view of institutions, customs and superstitions. However at the same time, these new trends in thinking resembled not the French view of change through revolution, but the German variant of improvement from within. The monasteries and reactionary church officials were criticized, but faith was never questioned. In this way, theories of the Enlightenment could be promoted as much by progressive minds in Karlovci as they could by academics from Vienna and Novi Sad, and it is thus little surprise that many of the Metropolitans of Sremski Karlovci, though wary of secularism, were committed patrons of higher education and civic development throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century and up to the eve of the First World War.34

**Historical Memory Embodied in Epic Poetry**

Alongside the spiritual and institutional role of the church and an emerging social stratification of Hapsburg Serbs, a rich tradition in Serbian epic poetry provided a series of popular narratives of the past and functioned as a vessel of collective memory for an illiterate society in the centuries after the fall of Serbia’s medieval kingdoms. In similar manners and traditions of the bards and minstrels of Western Europe, the *guslar* kept alive memories of the greatness of medieval Serbia and its ultimate downfall by the Ottoman Turks, making St. Sava, Stefan Nemanja, Tsar Dušan, Prince Lazar, Miloš Obilić, and Vuk Branković household names. While the epic tales varied somewhat in emphasis and detail by geographic region, all poems center on two themes: the fall of

Medieval Serbia, and the struggle to preserve the memory of the sacrifices and heroism of Serbia’s fallen at the Battle of Kosovo through ongoing acts of rebellion and defiance against Serbia’s foreign occupiers.

The contribution of these poems to modern Serbian national identity has been thoroughly discussed in nearly every recent work on Serbian history. However, while most works seem to argue that present-day Serbian nationalism is a product of centuries-old chauvinism and xenophobia codified in epic poetry that is assumed to be both uniform and universal, more scholarly contributions have argued that oral folk poetry reflected various interpretations of history through contemporary socio-cultural circumstances in both the Ottoman and Hapsburg empires.35 Today, most of what Western and even Serbian sources regard as historical accounts of struggle under foreign domination are in fact early nineteenth century interpretations that were both sung by guslari with a direct exposure to Serbian insurrectionist activities against the Ottomans, and specifically selected by Serbian intellectuals, most notably Vuk Karadžić, who were just as conscious of an emerging Serbian national movement as they were disciples of Romantic nationalism that permeated much of Central and Eastern European political thought at the time.36

36 Two of Vuk’s most important singers were contemporaries of the First and Second Serbian Uprisings and were both Serbs from Bosnia that settled in the Hapsburg Empire. The first was Tešan Podrugović was a former hajduk who killed a Turk who had raped a girl in his family. The second was the renowned guslar Filip Višnjić, whose family had also hunted by Ottoman authorities for having killed another Turk who also raped a member of the family. Vuk collected twenty two songs from Podrugović and nearly forty songs from Višnjić, both of whom the most to his writings. Additionally, Vuk collected works from women, such as “the blind Živana” who sang “The Kosovo Maiden” (Kosovska Devojka) for him. Holton and Mihailovich note that Vuk collected many versions of a single song or theme, but regardless of the age in which a particular ballad or poem had been handed down through the generations, he was essentially collecting early nineteenth century folk songs, all of which “had passed through the minds and memories of their singers and had been reformed according to their tastes or experience and in the vocabulary of their
As already noted, the Serbian epic poetry that has come down to scholars is almost exclusively through the work of Vuk’s *Songs of the Serbian People*, which is generally regarded as the “classic anthology” of Serbian oral poetry.\(^{37}\) As a teenager during the First Serbian Uprising in 1804, Vuk both fought in the insurrection and later attended the new *velika škola* (Great School) in Belgrade. Leaving Belgrade for Vienna in 1810, he met the Slovene linguist and philologist Jernej Kopitar, who was a follower of Johann Gottfried Herder’s philosophies on the importance of “popular” (as opposed to literary) culture as the true expression of national character. Under Kopitar, Vuk received his first training in the development of a vernacular grammar, the writing of a dictionary, and a collection of oral songs from the people, which was regarded as a primary example of the living embodiment of popular culture. More than any other individual in his time or since, Vuk was responsible for the collection of popular oral poetry, which served as one of the most critical foundations of South Slavic literary culture. But in addition simply collecting songs throughout Southeastern Europe, Vuk was also responsible for selecting particular ballads about specific historic events for publication. These selections, among an even larger set of collected but unpublished works, formed the basis of Serbian historical memory of its medieval past including, most importantly, the Battle of Kosovo.\(^{38}\)

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\(^{38}\) The interpretation of these Serbian ballads for contemporary political use has been one of the most controversial subjects in studying Serbian political culture. Some like Malcolm (1998), argue that the bulk of the epic poems written down by Vuk, were no more than a generation old, and that what was published by Vuk was with the clear intention by its author of linking the stories and songs of a peasant people to a larger epic narrative, similar to other Romantic nationalists of the nineteenth century. Others like Miodrag Popović argue that critical elements of the Kosovo legend that were related to Serbian statehood were developed in Venetian and Hapsburg communities of the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Narratives such as the assassination of Sultan Murad I by Miloš Obilić, argues Popović, were only known in Venetian-
These oral poems transformed a set of historical events into a series of mythologized epics that interwove human choices and actions with Divine reward and punishment, similar to the epic poetry of Homer, the *Song of Roland*, the *Kalevala*, the Norse *Eddas*, the *Song of the Cid*, the Arthurian Legends, the *Aeneid*, and the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Themes of self-sacrifice, bravery amid overwhelming odds, heroism amid temptation, chivalry, betrayal, grief amid loss, and hopeful redemption are all weaved throughout a series of tales that tell of the fall and subsequent occupation of a medieval state by an external power. Additionally, these qualities were not ascribed to the individual but to the collective nation. Honor was accorded to the defense of the family’s integrity, of national customs, of the country’s ideals and territory, and of Orthodoxy, most importantly during periods of crisis. Heroism is described as the physical defense of the homeland, and of continuous rebellion and resistance after the Ottoman takeover. Throughout much of Serbian poetry, defense and resistance is almost always directed against Islam, the faith of the occupiers, either in the form of Turks, Islamicized Slavs, or more recently Albanians. Sacrifice almost always means death. But fused with honor and heroism, sacrifice for one’s family and one’s nation, the memory of the individual passes from the mundane to the sacred. Finally, “freedom” is a pursued goal of self-rule and deliverance from Serbia’s captors. Freedom was the reward given after sacrifice, honor and heroism, often at the expense of an individual who, like Christ, sacrifices Himself for held Dalmatia, which was still at war with the Ottoman Empire. Ironically, the legend of Miloš Obilić, who would come to be symbolized as one of the greatest Serbs in history, was relatively unknown in Ottoman Serbia, where civil policies of self-administration and autonomy never necessitated memories of anti-Ottoman sentiment. It was only when anti-Ottoman sentiment grew among Serb communities in the eighteenth century, particularly after the Great Migration into Austria, that the legend of Miloš Obilić became an integral part of the nation’s oral tradition. It is therefore not surprising that Vuk, though born in Ottoman Serbia, would receive his education in the Hapsburg Empire, and would become enamored with epic poetry that placed a particular emphasis on rebellion and independence, rather than ballads of mutual honor and co-existence. See Miodrag Popović, *Vidovdan i Časni krst: Ogled iz književne arheologije* (Belgrade: Slovo Ljube, 1976), pp. 13 – 48.
the freedom of humanity. While it is not directly implied that death itself equals freedom, it does not take much reasoning to deduce that if Serbia, as both nation and state, fights with honor and heroism for love of country, death invariably means Salvation in Heaven, and thus freedom from the grief and injustice of this world.39

The earliest Serbian epic poems focus on the Nemanjić dynasty from 1171 to 1371, the lives of individual kings centered on weddings and religious ceremonies, and the founding of Serbian royal and ecclesiastical centers of authority. In addition to retelling the stories of Serbia’s medieval greatness in all its Byzantine pomp and glory, it also serves to denote territorial landmarks of medieval Serbia. This served two purposes. The first was juxtaposing the current lot of Serbian peasantry with a memory of a once great medieval kingdom full of culture, learning, law, and thus a sense of past greatness that had fallen into darkness. The second was in denoting where these kingdoms were, and which present landmarks and locations were inherently “ours”, even to a people that might live far away.40 It is within these early poems that we hear about the life and times of the Nemanja dynasty, the founding of important early Serbian centers of learning and prayer, and the cycles of ritual and commemoration from crownings to burials. It is this cycle that we also hear of the legend of Dušan the Mighty (Dušan Silni), the greatest of Serbia’s medieval rulers. It was under Dušan’s reign that medieval Serbia achieved her greatest territorial extent, reaching the borders of Athens and threatening the very gates of Constantinople itself, as well as her cultural apex, with a royal court in its capital Skopje that mimicked the legendary splendor of Byzantium in its own heyday. Dušan’s Law Code (Dušanov zakonik), published after he proclaimed himself Emperor of All Serbs

39 Mylonas (2003), pp. 83 – 88
40 For a collection of these poems, see Holton and Mihailovich (1997), pp. 42 – 130.
and Greeks, gave evidence of the enlightenment and civil authority his empire achieved under his reign. Sung to an altogether poor and illiterate society living in the Ottoman system, images of the splendor and glory of Serbia’s Golden Age, not to mention the visible reminders of such a state in the form of monasteries and towns – ruined or not – formed the essential core of the historical and territorial borders of the Serbian nation.

The poems focusing on events immediately preceding and following the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 are generally regarded as some of the finest achievements of Serbian literature. It is this collection of poems in particular that Serbian poetry acquires its mythological standing alongside epic tales of other cultures. Much like the downfall of other historical civilizations, the so-called “Kosovo Cycle” marks the transition of a people from independence to bondage, from a united nation to a scattered diaspora, and from an alleged period of cultural flowering to an equally-alleged period of decay and barbaric depravity with only memories of a glorious past that become legend to a fallen people.

Kosovo in Serbian Collective and Historical Memory

Almost without exception, the legends and myths surrounding Kosovo and the fateful battle on June 28, 1389 hold a preeminent place in Serbian historical memory. The Battle of Kosovo is to the Serbs what the Fall of Constantinople in 1453 is to the Greeks, and the Destruction of the Second Temple in 70 A.D. is to the Jews: it is the commemorate end, even “death”, of their pre-modern civilization and the harbinger of

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centuries of foreign occupation and rule. The recent developments in Kosovo over the last decade or so has only solidified the symbolic meaning of a land more Serbs have only heard about than actually traveled to as the “cradle of Serbian civilization”, the “core” of Serbian identity, and the “heartland” of Serbia’s medieval kingdoms. Slogans such as Kosovo je srce Srbija (“Kosovo is Serbia’s heart”) and Ne damo Kosovo (“Do not give up Kosovo”) mark public gatherings from political rallies to soccer matches and are graffitied on countless walls and buildings throughout Serbia.

While Kosovo represents only a fraction of Serb-inhabited territory, while it comprised only a part of Serbia’s medieval kingdoms, and while it remains today one of the poorest and most undeveloped region not only in Serbia but in all Europe, is of little consequence. Kosovo has taken on the symbolism of Serbian defiance against outside encroachment, the rallying point around which all Serb rebellions have legitimized their cause, and the land that, more than any other region in Southeastern Europe, is, and should always be, “ours” from a collective Serbian point of view. Serbia’s state-planned policies for territorial expansion beginning in 1844 called for the liberation of all Serb-inhabited lands in Southeastern Europe, but no other region could be a greater goal than recapturing “Old Serbia”, the regions that today make up Sandžak (Raška) and Kosovo.43

When Serbia finally captured Kosovo from the Ottomans in the Balkan Wars of 1912 – 13, its victory was marked with as much religious solemnity for having erased five centuries of foreign domination as it was by noted brutality against the Muslim inhabitants, who were primarily ethnic Albanians.44 One of the Serbian soldiers that took

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43 The current regions of Raška (original historical name) or Sandžak (Ottoman designation) and Kosovo collectively constitute “Old Serbia”
44 Newspapers in Serbia marked the occasion with multiple references to medieval history and a fulfillment of the destiny of the nation. Serbian troops were reported to have knelt down to kiss the ground as they first
part in the military campaign that liberated Kosovo recalled the overwhelming sense of emotion that swept over the troops as they returned to the site of the medieval battle:

The single sound of that word – Kosovo – caused an indescribable excitement. This one word pointed to the black past – five centuries. In it exists the whole of our sad past – the tragedy of Prince Lazar and the entire Serbian people … Each of us created for himself a picture of Kosovo while we were still in the cradle. Our mothers lulled us to sleep with the songs of Kosovo, and in our schools our teachers never ceased in their stories of Lazar and Miloš [Obilić] … My God, what awaited us! To see a liberated Kosovo. The words of the commander were like music to us and soothed our souls like the miraculous balsam.

When we arrived on Kosovo [field] and the battalions were placed in order, our commander spoke: “Brothers, my children, my sons!” His voice breaks. “This place on which we stand is the graveyard of our glory. We bow to the shadows of fallen ancestors and pray God for the salvation of their souls.” His voice gives out and tears flow in streams down his cheeks and grey beard and fall to the ground. He actually shakes from some kind of inner pain and excitement. The spirits of Lazar, Miloš, and all the Kosovo martyrs gaze on us. We feel strong and proud, for we are the generation which will realize the centuries-old dream of the whole nation: that we with the sword will regain the freedom that was lost with the sword.”

A briefer, though no less poignant, reflection on Kosovo was Bishop Emilijan’s remark at the 550th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo in 1939, “beside the name of Christ, no other name is more beautiful or more sacred. In the grand scheme of history, the Battle of Kosovo marked neither a definitive turning point for the Ottoman advance, nor the climactic end of medieval Serbia. Both Byzantine and Ottoman historians note the battle with passing attention, only referencing

\[\text{(45 Thomas Emmert, } \textit{Serbian Golgotha: Kosovo, 1389} \text{(Columbia University Press, East European Monographs, 1990), p. 133)}\]

its heavy symbolism in Serbian memory. As far as the battle itself is concerned, Serbian historical memory regards it as a catastrophic defeat for Serbian forces, when in actuality Ottoman forces also suffered heavy losses, including the death of their sultan. Though they retained possession of the battlefield at the end of conflict, the outcome was inconclusive, and probably closer to a draw. If victory could be attributed to the Ottomans, it was a Pyrrhic victory indeed. Furthermore, the Battle of Kosovo took place after a series of key Ottoman victories in the Balkans that already cemented their presence. Having established a permanent settlement in Byzantine Gallipoli in 1354, and having secured strategic victories over the Balkan Christian powers first at the Battle of Marica in 1371, where both Bulgaria and parts of Serbia became vassals of the Turks, and again in 1386 with the fall of the strategic Serbian city of Niš in which the fabled Prince Lazar himself was forced into vassalage, the Battle of Kosovo for the Ottomans was more of a mopping up campaign to neutralize any last remaining Christian resistance in the Balkans and a consolidation of their already-conquered territories.

The battle that was actually fought differs somewhat from the popular accounts of how it is remembered in Serbian historical memory. What we do know, and what is unarguable, is that the battle was fought on St. Vitus Day (Vidovdan) June 15, 1389 by the Julian Calendar (June 28 by Gregorian). Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović, ruler of the largest Serbian principality, commanded the Serbian contingent though he was by no means the universal authority of all Serbs, as the medieval Serbian state fragmented into quarreling kingdoms and despotates soon after the death of Stefan Dušan in 1355. Also

47 For a review of various historical interpretations of the Battle, see Malcolm (1998), pp. 58 – 80
with Lazar was Vuk Branković, despot of most of Kosovo itself, and Vlatko Vuković, a duke in Bosnia. Sultan Murad I commanded the Ottoman side, along with his sons Bayezid and Jakub Celebi. The events of the actual battle itself remain vague, but all historians agree that both Lazar and Murad were killed in the battle. Lazar was killed on the battlefield, while a Serbian nobleman assassinated Murad either during or after the battle. Upon both leaders’ deaths, Bayezid succeeded his father to the throne, while Lazar’s son Stefan Lazarević inherited his father’s kingdom. In the immediate aftermath of the battle, the Serb forces lay scattered and leaderless, but were able to withdraw. The battle was certainly not a decisive defeat for Serbia. The Ottomans proceeded no further, opting to return the bulk of their forces to Anatolia, most likely to recoup their losses as well as formally coronate Bayezid Sultan.

The Battle of Kosovo was also composed of multiple ethnicities and alliances. Alongside the Serbian contingents fought Bosnian, Albanian, Hungarian, Czech, and Wallachian soldiers as well as various Western European mercenaries. Most of the contemporary historical accounts of the battle identify the Bosnian King Tvrtko I as the commander of the Christian forces, or at the very least the most powerful of all Christian lords in the region. On the Ottoman side, the Turks fought with conscripted Bulgarians, Greeks, and Albanians. In other words, the battle was not only multiethnic, but was fought on both sides by Christians. It was not strictly Christian Serbia fighting against Muslim Turkey. Finally, Serbian statehood lasted for another seventy years until the capture of Smederevo fortress in 1459. Stefan Lazarević became a vassal of Bayezid, and personally participated in the Battle of Nikopolis in 1396, which eliminated any further

attempts by European powers to remove the Ottomans from the Balkans, and the Battle of Ankara in 1402 where he led 20,000 Serbs alongside the Turks against the hordes of Timur. Though Bayezid was captured in the battle, Lazarević was able to return to Serbia where he moved his capital to Belgrade in 1403. Even after the fall of Smederevo as the last official independent Serbian kingdom, the Hungarian King Matthias Corvinus established a new Serbian despotate in Hungary in hopes of attracting Serbs to military service. During his reign, Serbs comprised a significant proportion of the King’s standing army, the Black Legion, as well as numerous border troops. It was only with the defeat of the Hungarians at the Battle of Mohács in 1526 that the last remnant of a Serbian state disappeared, nearly 140 years after the Battle of Kosovo.50

So why is Kosovo, of all battles in the fourteenth century, the event that is fused with such symbolic meaning? Despite the existence of a Serbian state until Smederevo in 1459, the Battle of Kosovo, at least for its medieval heartland, marked its final and definitive end as an independent state capable of large-scale resistance. Yet what transformed the event into the powerful symbol it has become, were official interpretations of the battle by the Serbian Church and remaining members of Lazar’s family in its aftermath under Ottoman occupation. In the century following the battle, two major thematic myths evolved that would form the core of the collective memory of Kosovo: the glory of medieval Serbia through the martyrdom of Prince Lazar, and the necessity of struggle against the tyranny of foreign occupiers. By early nineteenth century, a third myth focused on the essential link between the ethics of Kosovo and the principles of Christianity that was expressed most vividly in the Romantic ideal of self-

50 Pappas (1994), pp. 21 – 2
sacrifice for faith and for nation, the treachery of betrayal, and the inevitability of resurrection.\textsuperscript{51}

The transition of the battle from historical event to legendary epic was almost immediately undertaken by the Serbian Church and Queen Milica, Lazar’s widow. It has already been noted that a strong interrelationship between church and state existed by way of sanctification of Serbia’s royal family. But whereas earlier rulers were remembered as teachers and champions of Orthodoxy, Lazar was its first martyr. Almost immediately after his death, the Serbian Patriarch Danilo III commemorated the legacy of Lazar in the poem “Narration about Prince Lazar”:

\begin{quote}
Better a praiseworthy death  
than a life of scorn.  
Even if my face was ripped and the sword struck my head,  
I suffered in a righteous cause,  
I looked straight at their swords,  
I bore myself manly,  
and I joined the martyrs.\textsuperscript{52}
\end{quote}

Lazar, already one of the main historic figures of the battle, is commemorated as a martyr who willingly sacrificed his life and the lives of his soldiers for the defense of Serbia and its purity of faith. Historically, Lazar was one of many Serbian princes vying for control over Dušan’s fragmented empire. The old and venerated Nemanjić dynasty died out in 1371, and by 1389, Prince Lazar, whose lands constitute today’s central Serbia, was the only independent Serbian lord who could possibly withstand an Ottoman attack. But because he was not of the Nemanjić family, he was not regarded at the time as the

\textsuperscript{52} Milne Holton and Vasa D. Mihailovich, Serbian Poetry from the Beginnings to the Present (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1988), p. 25.
legitimate ruler of all of Serbia. His contemporary Vuk Branković, the Despot of Kosovo who survived the battle and briefly amassed a small fortune from silver mines in Novo Brdo, was considered the chief rival to the rule of Lazar’s son, Stefan Lazarević. Therefore, to legitimize the Hrebeljanović line as the rightful successor to the Nemanjić and overcome the sense of disorder that characterized the thirty-five year period between the death of Stefan Dušan and Kosovo, Lazar’s name needed to be elevated from ordinary prince to extraordinary leader.53

Within a short time, Lazar’s hagiographers interpreted his rule as a direct gift from God. His deification became a cult of worship centered at Ravanica, the votive monastery built by and dedicated to the fallen Prince. Lazar’s right to rule was not deigned by privilege of inheritance, but by Divine Blessing. This historical interpretation, chiefly by Patriarch Danilo, achieved two critical factors. The first was recognizing the authenticity of Lazar’s rule over other Serbian despots and continuing the line of kings from the Nemanjić family. The second factor was in recognizing Lazar’s family as a continuation of the “sanctified lineage” that defined medieval Serbia’s rulers. Shortly after the battle, Patriarch Danilo delivered a sermon claiming Lazar to be the rightful heir to the Serbian even before Stefan Dušan’s death. Dušan himself was reported to have known of Lazar’s Divine gifts and treated him as his own son, grooming him for his eventual ascendancy to power. The addition of Emperor Dušan into the narrative further affirms Lazar’s right to rule as being recognized by Serbia’s greatest ruler.54

The epic ballads of Serbia and the Serbian people adopted a history similar to the history of Biblical Christianity, while characters from the Battle of Kosovo became

54 Ibid. p. 63.
allegorical references to Christ and the Apostles. The stalemate at Kosovo was transformed not just into a decisive defeat for the Serbian people, but a veritable “crucifixion”: a death for salvation, While this should not be surprising considering the Serbian Church’s active role in mythologizing the event, it is equally important to remember that the Serbian Church provided the only formal social structure for the Serbian community throughout the Ottoman centuries. To a society already closely linked with a national church during the medieval period and possessing a ruling family of “sanctified lineage”, it was only natural that the history of Serbia in Captivity would continue the collectively understood Biblical allegories of the history of its fall as a death for salvation and an entombment that awaits an eventual resurrection.

The Battle of Kosovo as both event and location has been frequently understood to be Serbia’s “Golgotha”. More than any other location, it is the place that serves as the physical transition of Serbia from independent state to vassal, and the metaphysical transition between Heaven and Earth. Just as the Cross serves as the conduit for Salvation, so does Kosovo serve as the link to the “heavenly kingdom” by functioning as the national altar of martyrdom. The “heavenly kingdom” was the choice made by Lazar when asked to choose which kingdom to embrace by St. Elijah in the form of a falcon:

> From that high town, holy Jerusalem, there comes flying a grey bird, a falcon, and in his beak a small bird, a swallow. Yet this grey bird is not just a falcon, it is our saint, the holy Saint Elijah. And the swallow is not just a swallow, but a message from the Holy Virgin.

> The message falls in the lap of the Tsar; for Tsar Lazar is the message destined: “O Tsar Lazar, Prince of righteous lineage, which of the two kingdoms will you embrace?
Would you rather choose a heavenly kingdom,  
Or have you instead an earthly kingdom here?  
If, here and now, you choose the earthly kingdom,  
saddle horses, tighten the saddles’ girths,  
let all the knights put on their mighty swords,  
and launch you then assault against the Turks.  
Then their army, all the Turks, shall perish.  
But if, instead you choose the heavenly kingdom,  
then you must build a church at Kosovo.  
[...] and give your host orders to Holy Mass.  
For every man, all soldiers, will perish,  
and you, their prince, will perish with your host.”

When Tsar Lazar has heard the whole message,  
Lazar is vexed; he ponders, he thinks much:  
“O my Dear Lord, what shall I ever do?  
[...] if I do choose the earthly kingdom here,  
then what I choose is but a transient kingdom;  
the eternal one has that promised in heaven.”

Lazar chooses the promised heavenly kingdom;  
he refuses the earthly kingdom here.  
So he has built the church in Kosovo.  
[...] He calls to him, the Serbian patriarch;  
beside him stand twelve great Serbian bishops.  
The whole army comes to take communion.

No sooner have the orders been given  
than the Turks come and assault Kosovo.  

While making a clear reference to Lazar’s conscious decision to forsake all Earthly pleasures and riches for the Kingdom of Heaven, as had been chosen by Christ both in the Desert and on the Cross, the narrative also emphasizes that by choosing the “heavenly kingdom”, Serbia had to lose at Kosovo. It was a sacrifice made for greater gifts of virtue and valor, and as such, a defeat that was turned into a spiritual and moral victory. Just as the Cross, through the blood of the innocent, had transformed itself from an instrument of torture and death into a symbol of salvation, so too had the field of Kosovo Polje.

55 “The Fall of the Serbian Empire”, Holton and Mihailovich (1988), pp. 95 – 6
transformed itself from the scene of Serbia’s decisive defeat into a vessel of spiritual clarity and honorable martyrdom.  

But Lazar also makes the demand for loyalty in the form of a curse to be hexed upon any disloyal noble:

“

He who does not come to Kosovo field,  
may nothing grow from the toil of his hands,  
nor may there grow the white wheat in his field,  
nor on the hills the vine in the vineyard!”

In what would be popularly known as the Curse of Lazar, the oath that is made becomes the destiny of every Serb, both then and in the future. To fight for Kosovo is to fight for spiritual purity and Salvation. To abandon Kosovo is to abandon one’s morality, one’s honor, and ultimately, one’s Serbianness. In similar patterns, the spiritual-victory-out-of-earthly-defeat interpretation is repeated within Greek historical memory concerning the Fall of Constantinople in 1453, and more recent Jewish historical memories concerning the fall of the Masada in 72 AD. The Greek model in particular draws close parallels with the sacrificial character of Lazar in similar memories of Emperor Constantine XI Palaiologos. In addition, the curse also parallels Biblical declarations against “forgetting” one’s identity and destiny.

But Lazar is only one of the major characters mythologized into human qualities of virtue or vice. Two other major characters comprise the Serbian side: Vuk Branković

59 The “Kosovo Oath” bears striking similarity with Psalm 137, which laments the plight of the Hebrews as captives of Babylon, and which states “If I forget you, O Jerusalem, Let my right hand forget its skill! If I do not remember you, Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth – If I do not exalt Jerusalem above my chief joy” (Psalm 137:5-6)
and Miloš Obilić. Historically, Vuk Branković was despot over the lands that included Kosovo, and would thus have direct authority over the soldiers there at the battle. He was also the son-in-law to Lazar, and a potential heir to the Serbian throne. However, in Serbian historical memory, he has come to symbolize the great traitor whose abandonment of the battlefield directly contributed to Serbia’s defeat. He is remembered as the Judas Iscariot to the Christ-like Lazar. Whether his betrayal was spurred by Ottoman complicity, or more likely by personal ambition because of his possible rival for authority with Lazar, we can surmise that Branković earned the ignoble role of traitor not simply because of his abandonment of the Battle but also because the Branković family represented the greatest threat to the Hrebeljanović dynasty. Whatever the actual reason, Branković has come to represent the contagion of disunity and disloyalty that weakened Medieval Serbia for the Ottoman conquests.

The epic tales available to Vuk Karadžić by the 19th century had firmly placed him as the scheming traitor, erasing any historical accuracy of his true identity and character. His duplicity is probably best noted in Vuk’s “Fragments of Various Kosovo Songs” (Komadi od različnijeh Kosovskijeh pjesama). In the third fragment, Lazar holds

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60 Historical accounts of Branković’s alleged betrayal vary by both author and place. The first suggestion of any form of betrayal from within Serbian ranks was raised in the Serbian Chronicle of Peć in 1402: “I do not know what to say in truth about this, whether Lazar was betrayed by one of his own or whether God’s judgment was fulfilled.” See Emmert (1990), pp. 73 – 4. A few years later, a Catalan chronicler of the battle attributes Branković not for outward betrayal, but for abandoning the battle after Lazar had been killed: “he returned to his territory to be lord”. See Malcolm (1998), p. 65. The first written source to accuse Branković of betrayal was published in 1601 by Mavro Orbini, a monk from Ragusa (Dubrovnik), who accused him of previous dealings with the Ottomans. See Ibid., p. 66. However, accusations of Ottoman collaboration seem highly unlikely. If this were the case, it would only be natural to see him emerge as one of the most powerful and privileged vassals in the region. In reality, he resisted attempts at vassalage for as long as possible, losing territory around Skopje three years after Kosovo. Even though he finally became a vassal in 1392, he fought alongside the Hungarians at the Battle of Nikopolis in 1396, fighting against Lazar’s son, Stefan Lazarević, who was an active vassal for Sultan Bayezid. Following the battle, he was put in prison and died the following year after. See John Fine, The Late Medieval Balkans: A Critical Survey from the Late Twelfth Century to the Ottoman Conquest (University of Michigan Press, 1994), pp. 412, 425.
a meeting of his nobles that closely resembles that of the Last Supper. Lazar raises his cup of wine and asks to whom should he drink. Branković was singled out for having the highest noble rank, but Miloš Obilić, another noble but of lower rank, was noted for his “courage and bravery”. The rivalry between Branković and Obilić is revealed at the supper in which the latter is accused of betraying Lazar the next day at battle. Obilić’s angry response to Branković’s accusation juxtaposes the traits between his own sense of loyalty, and Branković’s alleged treachery:

The real traitor is sitting by your knee,
close by your side, drinking the cool red wine.
May you be damned, traitor Vuk Branković!
Tomorrow is a bright St. Vitus Day.
We shall then see on Kosovo field
who is faithful and who is the traitor.61

Branković’s fate as the eternal traitor for Serbia is sealed in two other ballads. The first is “Tsar Lazar and Tsaritsa Milica” (Car Lazar i carica Milica), in which Milica is informed of the battle aftermath.

You asked about the damned Vuk Branković.
May she be cursed, the mother that bore him!
Also be cursed all his clan and race!
He did betray his tsar at Kosovo
and took with him his twelve thousand soldiers
O my lady, all evil men at arms!62

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61 Karadžić (1997), p. 137. In the original Serbian, “traitor” is written as njevera, which can also mean unbeliever, unfaithful, or treasonous. “Faithful” is conversely written as vjera, or “believer”. The rivalry between Branković and Obilić is heightened further in “Song of the Battle of Kosovo” in which Branković, instructed by “bad fortune”, informed Lazar of Obilić’s impending treachery. See Anne Pennington and Peter Levi, trans., Marko the Prince: Serbo-Croat Heroic Songs (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1984), pp. 4 – 5.
62 Ibid. p. 146
The second ballad, “The Fall of the Serbian Empire” (Propast carstva Srpskoga), which is the same ballad that tells of Lazar’s choice between earthly and heavenly kingdoms, is even more direct at ascribing blame directly to Serbia’s defeat by Vuk Branković.

 Prince Lazar, then, bids his host to go forth. The Serbian host is numerous and mighty, some seventy and seven thousand men, and they scatter the Turks at Kosovo. The leave the Turks no time to look behind; there is no chance for Turks to stand and fight. Prince Lazar then, would overwhelm the Turks, but may God’s curse be on Vuk Branković! For he betrays his prince and his wife’s father, and Lazar’s host is overwhelmed by Turks. Now Lazar falls, the Serbian Prince Lazar, And with him falls the whole of his brave host, his seventy and seven thousand men.63

While the substance of the narrative lays blame squarely on Branković’s treachery, it seems to overlook the contradiction in Lazar previously choosing the “heavenly” kingdom, and embracing certain defeat while obtaining martyrdom and salvation. Whether Branković’s betrayal was necessary in order to ensure defeat is never examined. The lessons and meanings taken from these narratives are that Branković represents the embodiment of internal dissent and self-interest at the expense of the nation, and feeds directly into the universally recognized slogan: “Only Unity Saves Serbs” (Samo sloga Srbina spasava), a popular slogan used as a rallying cry against foreign domination and internal disunity.64

63 Ibid. p. 150
64 The history of this slogan dates back to the 14th century when both its phrase, as well as its symbolism displayed in the form of four C-shaped firesteels as an acronym of the four Cyrillic letters for “S” on a cross, was emblazoned on the shields and coats of arms of soldiers and despots. This image was patterned from an earlier Byzantine coat of arms, where stylized Greek letter B’s, stood for the imperial motto “King of Kings, Ruling over Kings” (Basileus Basileion Basileuon Basileusin).
Against the backdrop of the destruction of the medieval Serbian state by Ottoman aggression and internal disunity stands Miloš Obilić, possibly the greatest figure in Serbian collective memory. In addition to being credited with assassinating Sultan Murad I, Miloš Obilić represents the antitheses to disunity. He is the archetype of heroism and self-sacrifice, a charismatic warrior of faith and honor, whose fealty to Lazar, when questioned, provoked the feat of his chivalrous execution of the Ottoman sultan. Whereas Branković could, at best, be remembered for self-preservation, Obilić is the Lancelot-like hero who willingly embraces self-sacrifice and keeps the oaths of honor, loyalty, and bravery to the end.

For may my faith strike me down if I lie,  
I have never been unfaithful [njevera] to you, 
I’ve never been, nor will I ever be. 
For tomorrow I plan to give my life 
for Christian faith, there on Kosovo field. 
[…] And with God’s help and my great faith in Him, 
I will then go to Kosovo tomorrow, 
and I will kill the Turkish tsar, Murad, 
and I will stand with my foot on this throat.65

While Miloš is remembered for his heroism, his historical role has changed dramatically throughout the centuries of Ottoman rule. Probably most surprising is that the image of Miloš as the assassin of the sultan developed not in Serbia, but in Venetian and Hapsburg territory during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; lands that were still at war with the Ottoman Empire, and popular among more than just Serbian societies that saw the Turks as their chief rivals.66 It is this image of Miloš as a defender of

66 According to Emmert, the earliest known historical records of Sultan Murad dying at the Battle of Kosovo are found in the reflections of Florentine senators on the battle received from Bosnian King Tvrtko in October 1389: “Fortunate, most fortunate, and those hands of the twelve loyal lords who, having opened their way with the sword and having penetrated the enemy lines and the circle of chained camels, heroically
Orthodoxy, a champion for freedom, and a fighter against tyranny, that has survived to the present day and has been symbolized in both 19th century Romantic nationalism, as well as the national populism of Serbian politics under Milošević and after. However, an additional feature of Miloš’s fealty to Lazar and his humility towards Murad upon his death is also accounted; one which symbolizes the intertwining of fates between Serb and Ottoman with the deaths of Miloš and Murad.

In this account, a defeated and captured Lazar solemnly concedes his kingdom to a gravely wounded Murad, who in turn demands that Lazar’s people be treated “the same as the Prince treated them.” Murad is then told to have passed a proclamation forbidding his vizirs and generals from driving Serbs away from their lands, burning or destroying their churches, or forcibly converting them to Islam. The historical evidence of this account, collected in Vuk Karadžić’s works but never published, validates not only the continued existence of Serbs in the region after the Battle of Kosovo, but the continued use of their churches to the point where an independent patriarchate at Peć was reestablished in 1556. The events in the narratives that immediately follow concern the fate of both Lazar and Miloš, who are ordered to be decapitated upon the sultan’s death. In one version popular among Serbs in Venetian and Hapsburg territory, Murad commands that Miloš’s head be buried at the sultan’s right side with Lazar buried at their

reached the tent of Murat himself. Fortunate above all is the one who so forcibly killed such a strong warlord by stabbing him with a sword…” See Emmert, (1990), p. 46. Another text written by a Bulgarian chronicler between 1413 – 21 actually names the knight that killed Murad as “Miloš”, “a man of great courage … who drove his spear towards the unbeliever Murat, just as St. Demetrius did.” See Malcolm (1998), p. 72. By the end of the 15th century, the full name of Miloš Kobilić is given, and remained so until the 18th century when an editor changed, or “improved” the name to “Obilić”, most likely in order to suggest the word obilje, meaning “abundance” or “plenty”, as opposed to Kobilić, which means either “mare” or more directly “son of the mare” in Serbian, and is close to the Albanian “kopil”, meaning “bastard”. The name “Obilić” has stuck among scholarly and historical works, as well as popular memory to the degree that the use of “Kobilić” is viewed as a sign of inaccuracy and even disrespect. In his work, Malcolm makes a deliberate point of using “Kobilić”. Ibid., p. 73

Miloš protests against his lord being unjustly buried beneath him, and asks that his head be buried at Lazar’s feet, reinforcing the symbolic meaning of lord serving master even in death. In Vuk’s unpublished version however, the sultan first lauds Obilić for his bravery and duty to his master Lazar, and even though such fealty resulted in the death of Murad, the sultan chides his own vizirs and paşas, wondering whether they could ever have the courage to do for their lord what Obilić did for his. As a way of honoring his assassin, Murad offers Miloš to be buried side-by-side with him. Again, Miloš protests, but here it is because

> It would be a sin for me to lie next to an emperor.
> […] So put the two tsars next to each other, and my head beside their feet so that my head may serve the emperors.  

Miloš’s request is granted and the burial is meant to symbolize both an image of dual loyalty, but an agreement of co-existence and mutual respect. The sultan would inherit all rights and responsibilities to look after the Serbian people as their own kings and princes did before. But this rule came with a grave warning: a breach of the Kosovo promise of protection and fair treatment would be answered by future Miloš Obilićes, who in the spirit of Serbia’s greatest champion, would rise up and strike down any oppression and injustice.

Taken as a whole, the epic ballads that translate the historical events of the Battle of Kosovo into myth and legend do more than collectively gather a series of disparate stories and narratives into a single non-negotiable truth. While not necessarily “filtering” or “sanitizing” history, epic memory of Kosovo transformed an historical event into an

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68 Emmert (1990), p. 119
ethos of a nation. Gone were the extraneous variables such as non-Serbs fighting in the war. Gone was the actual historical figure of Vuk Branković. Gone was any mention of Serbia’s internal division and decay three decades prior at Stefan Dušan’s death. Gone were any references to the decisive defeats of earlier battles like Marica in 1371, or later ones like Nikopolis in 1396. Gone were the ambiguities surrounding the deaths of Lazar and Murad. None of these had any resonance and meaning past their historical occurrence.

The memory of Kosovo embodied in some of Serbia’s greatest poems and ballads blends Earthly and Divine, good and evil, virtue, valor, sacrifice, treachery, and honor that have conditioned the function of social life for a stateless people. Symbolic meaning associated with loyalty to the Serbian nation was measured not by political association or state borders, but by religious affinities, culture, and shared codes of communication. Placed within the authoritative framework of the Serbian Orthodox Church, it became a narrative that all Serbs, regardless of geography or social status associated with. It united a stateless people scattered throughout Southeastern Europe with a common identity rooted in the faith of Orthodoxy, the geographic importance of “Old Serbia”, and the common principles of loyalty and honor to both nation and extended family. Thus, long before the Kosovo Cycle became a primary tool of Romantic Nationalism for state-building in the 18th and 19th centuries, “Kosovo” had served as a filter of interpretation through which cultural values and social action were determined.

Mention must be made of two nineteenth century ballads in particular: “The Beginning of the Revolt Against the Dahijas” (Početak bune protiv dahija), sung to Vuk Karadžić by the famous guslar Filip Višnjić in 1815, and The Mountain Wreath (Gorski

Vjenac), the literary masterpiece of Montenegrin Bishop Prince Petar Njegoš II, and generally regarded *magnum opus* of Serbian literature. 71 Here, all symbolic elements of Serbian epic poetry are laid bare: what was once; what was lost; and what is the destiny of Serbs to regain. In Višnjić’s song, the period of Serbia’s Babylonian Captivity comes to a definitive end with the uprising against the Ottomans and the establishment of a new Serbian state by Black George Petrović, known universally as Karadjordje (“Black George” in regards to both his hair and his fierce, and often cruel, temperament). If the Kosovo Cycle marked the end of Serbia’s medieval period and the beginning of the Ottoman, “The Revolt” marked the transition from captivity to awakening and resurrection. It is rich in prophetic signs that often foretold a cataclysmic event. It speaks of the seven Ottoman *dahija*, or governors, who were distressed by these signs, looking into the future and seeing their own decapitated heads and their rule in Serbia overthrown. In response, they vowed a reign of terror against the rebellious Serb communities. What makes the tale closely linked to the events of Kosovo four centuries earlier is the appearance of Sultan Murad I, the Ottoman sultan killed at the Battle, imploring the *dahija* to do as he commanded upon his death:

- Do not be harsh and cruel to the *raja*,
- rather be kind, gentle to the *raja*;
- […] Do not lay hands on the Christian churches.
- Do not meddle in their laws or conduct.
- Don’t avenge me on the wretched *raja*;
- though my belly has been slit by Miloš
- …
- Treat the *raja* as if they were your sons,
- and then your rule will last for a long time.
- If you refuse, do not wish to heed me,
- but are violent, cruel to the *raja*,

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In what follows is a dialogue between the older and younger members of the seven *dahija*, with the elders arguing to take heed of Murad’s warnings. However the four younger *dahija*, impetuous with a desire to fight, dismiss their elders and begin a long litany of which Serbs will be killed in certain villages; a list that names all the Serbs that were killed in the actual slaughter. By this, Višnjić notes the brutality of actual Ottoman governors, as well as memorializing the names of those Serbs killed in the terror as martyrs.

That Murad appears as an apparition warning the corrupt Ottoman governors on the eve of the Serbian Uprising in the early 19th century not to break the oath he had made, both connects the fate of Kosovo with the fate of the Uprising, and justifies the Uprising by Serbs not because they are in opposition to Ottoman authority, but because that authority had been betrayed, and if a restoration of previous rights could not be met, rebellion and liberation could be the only answer. It is interesting to note that one of the main events that sparked the Uprising in 1804 was the assassination by the four *dahija* of the Ottoman governor of Belgrade Hadji Mustafa Paşa in 1801, a moderate and reformist so highly respected by his Serbian subjects, he was lovingly known as the “Mother of Serbs”. While no symbolic links have ever been made between Murad and Mustafa Paşa, the difference between his benevolent rule and the tyranny of the four *dahi* are clearly noted. The ballad ends with the initial rebellion led by Karadjordje, a man fused

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72 Karadžić (1997), p. 283
73 “We shall kill all the Serbian knezes, / all the knezes, all the Serbian chieftains. / We’ll also kill their most able leaders, / the Serbian priests, the Serbian schoolmasters. / And there’ll remain only inform children, / infirm children less than seven years old, / and there will be the proper raja then. / They will serve us, Turks, well and faithfully.” Ibid., (1997), pp. 285 – 6.
with the heroic qualities of Miloš Obilić, who begins the revolt against the Turks with twelve of his simple swineherders, makes his historic declaration of rebellion at Topola, and ends with the death and decapitation of the very Ottoman dahi who looked into the future and saw their own deaths.

While placing the events surrounding the First Uprising within the chronicles of Serbian historical myth, this particular epic serves two main purposes. The first is to link the justification of the Serbian rebellion squarely on the tyranny of the Ottomans, thus portraying the Serbs as righteous freedom fighters, rather than simple insurgents. The Turks are meant to bring about their own demise through their cruelty and barbarism. The depravity of the dahi in relishing the thought of wanton slaughter of Christian civilians is juxtaposed with the heroism and bravery of Karadjordje, resisting oppression, and fighting the in the name of freedom. The second is to explain the Uprising as a result of the centuries-long agreement of co-existence and respect between Serb Christian and Turkish Muslim as being breached by the dahi. The clear warning by Murad that violence against the Serbs would bring about the downfall of Turkish rule links the events of 1804 with those of 1389.

As already mentioned, Njegoš’s Mountain Wreath represents the pinnacle of Serbian epic poetry. Replete with individual characters, as well as a kolo, or folk dancers, that act as a revamped Greek chorus that speak on behalf of the Serbian people themselves, Njegoš’s tale concerns the efforts of the author’s own ancestor, the eighteenth century Bishop Danilo, to bring order to the region’s warring tribes and unite them in a common cause against their Ottoman rulers. According to the tale, the medieval Serbian kingdom fell because of the mortal sin of discord and disloyalty among its rulers
after the death of Emperor Dušan in 1355. Because of their lack of unity, they were punished at Kosovo with domination by an outside power, paralleling Humanity’s Fall from Grace by the Expulsion from Eden. But just as humanity found salvation and redemption through Christ, so too can Serbs find rebirth and redemption through the purity of Miloš Obilić:

Oh that accursed supper of Kosovo!
It would be good fortune had you poisoned all our chieftains and wiped out their traces, had only Miloš remained on the field, along with his true sworn brothers; then would the Serb have remained a true Serb!

[…] O you, Miloš, who does not envy you?
You are the victim of noble feelings, you, a mightly military genius, a terrific thunder that shatters crowns!
The greatness of your knightly soul surpasses the immortal and brave deeds of great Sparta and powerful Rome. All their brilliant courageous endeavors your knightly arm places in deep shadow. Leonidas and Scaevola, can they match Obilić on any battlefield? His powerful arm with a single blow toppled a throne and shook all Tartarus.

While disunity might have been the chief threat to medieval Serbia, the current threat during Danilo’s, and thus Njegoš’s, time is contagion within the Serbian people by way of conversion to Islam, leaving those who Christians who refused to bow their heads to seek refuge in the mountains. “Betrayal”, the ultimate antithesis to “bravery”, “honor”,

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75 “God is angry at the Serbian people / because of their many mortal sins. / Our kings and tsars trampled upon the Law … / Our own leaders, God’s curse be upon their souls, / carved the empire [of Dušan] into little pieces / and sapped the strength of the Serbs wantonly … / Our own leaders, miserable cowards, / thus became the traitors of our nation.” Njegoš (1986), p. 11.
76 Ibid. p. 12
77 “Everywhere the Serbian name has perished. / Mighty lions have become meek peasants. / Rash and greedy converted to Islam / - may their Serb milk be tainted with the plague! / Those who did not
and “sacrifice”, is, according to Njegoš, an act of the worst kind. The Turk can always be trusted to be vile, cruel, and barbaric because he is born Muslim. The Serb on the other hand who converts to Islam in order to receive benefits from the Ottomans, perpetuates the disunity and disloyalty that destroyed the medieval Serbian kingdom, carries the legacy of Branković’s symbolic betrayal at Kosovo, breaks the oath/curse of Lazar, and ultimately relinquishes the right to be called a Serb.

It is the betrayal of former Serbs now serving as local Ottoman rulers that has perpetuated the Ottoman presence in Serbia and enslaved its people up to the present day. As noted by Greenawalt, the contempt for converts to Islam in Njegoš’s work reflects a Herderian vision that appreciates the diversity of world cultures, but views each nation as an integral, unblendable whole. In the words of Knez Rade, brother to Bishop Danilo, “Birds of the same feather flock together. / Turks are always brothers to each other”, and by Vuk Mandušić, “if you were to cook [Christian and Muslim] in one pot, / their two soups would never mix together.” Through a series of vignettes demonstrating the cultural, ideological, and spiritual incompatibility of two faiths sharing the same land, it is finally decided by the Serbs of Montenegro proclaim an oath of unison and do what the kolo, the people, have cried for all along: to fight the Ottomans, offering those who converted to return to the Christian fold and atone for their sins of betrayal, but kill all who do not. Together, the Serb chieftains, led by Sirdar Vukota proclaim an oath similar to that of Prince Lazar before the Battle of Kosovo:

He who begins this fight will be the best!

blaspheme at the True Faith [Orthodoxy – Pravoslavlje], / those who refused to be thrown into chains, / took refuge here in these lofty mountains / to shed their blood together and to die, / heroically to keep their sacred oath, their lovely name and their holy freedom.” Njegoš (1986), pp. 12 – 13.

79 Njegoš, pp. 21, 67.
But who betrays those brave ones that begin,
may all he has turn to stone and ashes!
May the Great Lord with His awesome power
change all the seeds of his fields to pebbles
and the children in his wife’s womb to stone!
May his offspring all turn into lepers,
and may people point their finger at them!
May all traces of him be blotted out,
as had happened to those dappled horses!
May no rifle hang in this entire house.
May he not have a son to die in war!
For a male head may his house vainly yearn!

He who betrays, brothers, all these heroes
who will begin to fight our enemies,
may the shame of Branković fall on him,
and for the dogs be his holy Lenten!
May his grave reach all the way to deep hell!

Serbia’s resurrection, according to Njegoš, can only be achieved through baptism in fire, blood, and the sword. Recurring themes of honor and sacrifice to kith, kin, and nation hearken to oaths Serbs must take to avenge the honor, sacrifice, and bravery of their ancestors who died in the best spirit of Miloš Obilić’s character. Through his allegorical characters of the tale that are loosely connected to Serbian chieftains of his own time, Kosovo is no longer understood as a fixed historical event, but a perennial symbol of the sins of discord and disloyalty and the need for every generation to cleanse oneself in a baptism of blood against one’s foreign oppressors. Kosovo is not simply a battle to be avenged, but a pledge of loyalty to remember and an oath to freedom to fulfill.80 In fitting with the time of his writing, the Muslim Turk is no longer seen as the direct enemy, but rather the Slavic convert to Islam, who by joining the ranks of the oppressor commits the double sin of abandoning one’s own fold for the material benefits of collaboration with the enemy. One can only be a true Serb if one symbolically fights

for Kosovo by remaining true to one’s identity, one’s faith, and one’s people. Kosovo is less an historic defeat in battle than it is a sign of God’s anger with Serb Christians for continued disunity, disloyalty, and an abandonment of one’s solemn duties to their nation.

Taken as a whole, Serbian epic poetry is both the poor man’s history and the foundation of Serbian national consciousness. It matters little that these tales liberally blend both fact and fiction. What matters is that these tales provided an occupied, poor, illiterate, and patrimonial people a sense of cultural identity, and historical chronology. While it is true that the Kosovo legend did not fully emerge immediately after the battle, its evolution from various strands and ballads throughout the next four centuries within the Ottoman Serb communities produced a set of narratives that allowed nation-builders, influenced by prevailing Romantic ideologies of the nineteenth century, to transform them into a collective national ideology. But this is not to say that historical memories of Kosovo have been completely fabricated, nor is it to suggest that these ballads were the artificial product of carefully-planned statecraft. That Karadžić’s compilations accounted for numerous crossover narratives attests to both the familiarity and saliency of such tales by Serbs during the centuries of Ottoman rule, and lends plausible credence to the notion that history may be shaped by contemporary elites for current needs. But it must derive itself from somewhere, and it must have some form of public recognition and salience.

“Folk-democracy” of the Zadruga

Two other factors contributed to Serbia’s institutional and cultural capital on the eve of the First Uprising: a unique brand of “folk democracy” that developed in self-
governing communities in the Ottoman Empire, which was later transferred to and further
developed under, the Hapsburg Empire; and an unbroken tradition of military service and
armed resistance. As mentioned earlier, the Serbs, like all Christian subjects of the sultan,
were grouped within a separate religious millet, or community. They were free to govern
themselves through their own laws and customs, so long as the authority of the Porte was
never challenged. Christian millets were officially governed through the Ecumenical
Patriarchate in Constantinople, with power delegated through its metropolitans and
bishops to local communities. To be sure, the life of a Christian peasant under the
Ottomans was far from ideal, as deference to Muslim authorities and customs served as
constant reminders of their second-class status. However, at no point were these peasants
as bad off as the serfs of Western European feudalism who owned no land, nor of Russia,
where serfdom was little more than outright slavery. Balkan Christians had, to a certain
extent, rights as both individuals to own the land they tilled, and as members of an
officially recognized Christian Orthodox society.

The Serbian communities were organized around a series of territorial units
known as the knežina, or principality, even though there were no princes or other
aristocrats to speak of. Each knežina was comprised of villages, which in turn were based
around the zadruka, or extended family, with each unit headed by a “chieftain”. These
local rulers were often no different from the rest of the peasantry, save that they were
regarded as men of honor, or individuals who had achieved some form of notoriety
through piety, bravery, or in some cases, a well-respected elder. These village chieftains
in turn met periodically in rudimentary assemblies whenever the need arose, to elect a

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81 The role and function of the zadruka actually predates the Ottoman era, having its roots in medieval
Serbia, as being an legally recognized entity in Dušan’s Law Code. See Soulis (1984).
knez to serve as chief spokesman for the knežina, which is where the actual name was derived. Like the village leader, each knez was selected on the basis of merit and honor. The chief task of the knez was to serve as mediator between the Christian community and the Ottoman state authorities. They collected and apportioned the required taxes, looked after the maintenance of roads and churches, acted as arbiters in cases of territorial disputes between two or more knežine, as well as internal disputes between Christians.

Within these communities, a unique type of “folk democracy” developed that is characteristic of a patriarchal peasant society. Each village functioned as a self-sustaining entity, closely resembling socio-economic co-operatives. It was a tax unit, a religious and cultural center, a stronghold against external threats, and a local council in which elders of each zadruža acted as judge and juror. Along with a village elder, each zadruža had at least one priest that kept the community tied to the Serbian Church through prayer and annual feast days, and at least one guslar that preserved the oral narratives of Serbia’s distant histories with more contemporary heroic deeds of personally known hajduci. Almost all of these communities lived outside any urban centers such as Sarajevo, Novi Pazar or Prizren, and there was little opportunity, let alone interest, in Serbs forming any part of the merchant class that was largely dominated by Greeks, Armenians, and Jews. Yet this provided an additional advantage in that nearly all Serbs were of the same social class. No rural Serb lived off the labor of any other Serb. The absence of any distinction in social class helped foster a strong sense of inter-

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82 Vladimir Stojančević, “Karadjordje and Serbia in his Time”, in The First Serbian Uprising, 1804 – 1813 (1982), pp. 23 – 39; The term “folk democracy” is defined by Petrovich as a loose collection of unwritten, but well-known and recognized, traditional and customary laws. Society was designed on extended family networks that embodied strong spirits of independence from any external authority, even other Serbian clans. Within each zadruža, the will of the people was supreme and must be consulted on in all important matters through popular assemblies. See Petrovich (1978), pp. 16 – 19, 45, 178 – 96.
dependent egalitarianism within the *zadruga* as well as providing an early experience in self-government.\(^{83}\)

An additional factor that contributed to the cohesiveness of the *zadruga* and its link to a larger Serbian collective identity was the *Krsna Slava*, the celebration of the family patron saint. Unlike Catholics and most other Orthodox that celebrate the namedays of individuals or the feastday of a saint whose name was given at Baptism, the Serbian Orthodox Church celebrates the single patron saint of a family on the feastday. While there is little theological difference between regular namedays in other Churches and the *slava*, the meanings of the *slava* are meant to “sacralize” the bonds of family and extended family.\(^{84}\) The family celebrates *slava* together, collectively receives a blessing from the priest, and partakes in special foods and drink on the day of *slava*. Bonds of friendship and fraternity between families were often cemented by being invited as guests to a family’s house on their *slava*, as this was considered the highest form of honor and respect. Many of these communal religious traditions, survived long into the establishment of the Serbian Kingdom and through the Communist period. The *slava* continues to act as a major day for Serbian families throughout the world.\(^{85}\)

For most of the eighteenth century, the social order that existed between Serbian *knežine* and local Ottoman authorities was relatively peaceful and cooperative in the Belgrade *pašalik*. The reformist policies of Sultan Selim III (1789 – 1807) were effectively executed in Belgrade through the popular governor Haci Mustafa Paşa. With

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83 The communal nature of the *zadruga* was seen by early proponents of Serbian socialism, notable Svetozar Marković as a cultural and political precursor to collectivism. See Woodford D. McClellan, *Svetozar Marković and the Origins of Balkan Socialism* (Princeton University Press, 1964).

84 Mylonas (2003), pp. 56 – 7

his assassination in 1801 by reactionary janissaries, the autonomy of the Serbs came to a violent end. In the scramble for authority following Haci Mustafa’s death, four Janissary rebel leaders, or *dahi*, came to power. They stripped all local power from the *knežine* and villages. When these *dahi* attempted to stamp out all Christian Serbian autonomy by orchestrating the famous “slaughter of the *kneževi*” in 1804, open rebellion among the Serbs ensued. Though anywhere between 70 and 120 *kneževi* were assassinated along with hundreds of peasants, the close-knit system of mutual dependency and group loyalty was too strong and resilient to destroy. As a result, those *kneževi* that escaped the massacre were able to muster enough support among the peasantry to take up arms against the local Ottoman authorities.

**Serbian Military Tradition**

Along with the Serbian Orthodox Church, a notable military tradition has institutionally helped preserve a sense of unique Serbian collective identity. While Serbia could not boast of any aristocracy or landed elites at the time of the First Uprising, the most notable professions available aside from the priesthood were military leaders and professional soldiers that served in a number of foreign armies following the decline of medieval Serbia after 1389. Long before they formed the core of the Hapsburg Military Frontier, the Ottomans, Hungarians, and Venetians prized Serbs as soldiers. Continuous military service, while aiding a foreign power, nevertheless helped foster a sense of autonomy and cultural uniqueness.
Early Ottoman conquests following their victories at Marica and Kosovo incorporated entire Serbian vassal states within their empire. Many of these Serbian soldiers in the early fifteenth century served in the Ottoman military without having to convert to Islam as mandated in the devşirme. As already mentioned, Stefan Lazarević, son of Prince Lazar, made peace with the new sultan Bayezid following the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, became a vassal prince, and served alongside the sultan at the Battle of Ankara in 1402 against Timur. The death of Bayezid at the battle resulted in a few decades of internal strife over Ottoman succession, and allowed Lazarević to reclaim most of the independence lost after Kosovo, leading to the establishment of a semi-autonomous despotate around Belgrade. In 1408, Stefan allied with King Sigismund of Hungary and became one of the founding members of the Order of the Dragon, an order dedicated to defending Christian Europe from further Ottoman advances. Lazarević’s successor Djordje Branković, son of Vuk Branković of the Kosovo Cycle, established his capital at the fortress-city of Smederevo, just south of Belgrade, and amassed a small fortune from the gold and silver mines of Novo Brdo in Kosovo. The achievements of these two medieval rulers suggest that while medieval Serbia might have dwindled to semi-autonomous principalities and despotates after 1389, it was far from conquered Ottoman territory.

Future Serbian despots served under various Hungarian kings until the Ottoman victory at Mohács in 1526. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Serbian military contingents could be found in Ottoman, Hungarian and Hapsburg armies, often in order to maintain their freedom of action and rights through the most readily available institutional representation. As written by Pappas, “they chose to be soldiers rather than
serfs, because with arms in hand they were better able to preserve their religious and ethnic identity being wedged between Catholic and Muslim powers. Many Christian Serbs continued to serve in the Ottoman armies until the early seventeenth century. Unlike conscripted armies or armies of vassals, these auxiliary infantry were exempt from some taxes and received some irregular pay in return for their service. Once these irregular units were disbanded following the onset of internal Ottoman decay, they took to brigandage and joined existing hajduk bands in the mountains and forests of Serbia and Montenegro, or hired themselves out to Hapsburgs, Venetians, and other foreign powers.

The formation of the Hapsburg Military Frontier took use of the Serbian military tradition, but now offered land to settle and farm for the soldiers and their families. By the First Uprising in 1804, many who guarded the Frontier and were seasoned fighters of the Austro-Turkish wars of 1787 – 91, formed the rank and file of Karadjordje’s forces against the local Ottoman governors. These fighters were instrumental in securing military victory in 1804, and again in 1815. Because of greater access to military positions in the Hapsburg Empire than the Ottoman, many Serbs achieved officer rank and their families gained prominence as military aristocracies. Jovan Popović Tekelija, the founder of the Tekelija aristocratic family, was one of the most powerful Serbs in Hungary of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and distinguished himself in the Hapsburg victory over the Turks at Temesvár in 1716 for which he was conferred the highest military honors. His descendent, Sava Tekelija (1761 – 1842), was the first Serb doctor of law, and a great Serbian benefactor and philanthropist. He was also present at the Assembly of Temesvár in 1790, in which its Serbian and Romanian participants advocated the administrative autonomy of Banat, its formal separation from

the Hungarian Kingdom, and the recognition of equal rights and political privileges for Serbs and Romanians throughout the Empire. In addition to producing a major proponent of education reform in the Metropolitanate of Karlovci, the Stratimirović family boasted a number of notable military commanders that served in the Austrian army. Ivan Vučković Stratimirović and Bogić Vučković Stratimirović were two notable individuals who received Imperial Dignities for extraordinary military service. Finally, Sekula Vitković (1687 – 1754) advanced to the rank of colonel in the Austrian army, and, like the Serbian kings of the medieval age, was a great benefactor of Šišatovac monastery.87

In Venetian Dalmatia, Serbs were employed along with Greeks, Croats, and Albanians in light cavalry and infantry units. The Kingdom of Naples also recruited Serbs, Greeks, and Albanians in a light infantry formation known as the Royal Macedonian Regiment (Reggimento Real Macedone) in the eighteenth century.88 With the rise of Russia, most notably under Peter the Great, Serb mercenary units, particularly from Montenegro, were frequently employed during the Russo-Turkish Wars of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.89 Finally, Serbs fought with the United States in its first foreign war. During the Barbary wars of 1805, General William Eaton employed a mixed company of Serbs and Greeks under the command of Serbian Captain Luka Ulović in a campaign against the Barbary stronghold of Derna. Along with twelve U.S. Marines, the Serb-led Balkan troops distinguished themselves in the capture of the town.90

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In all these examples, a military presence was often the result of a population movement. When conditions in one area deteriorated, Serb communities packed up and moved elsewhere. Beginning with the Turkish conquests after Kosovo, a steady stream of Serb migrants moved out of their ancestral homes in “Old Serbia” to find safety, and employment, throughout Southeastern Europe. While some settled in Italy, Russia, Hungary, and Austria, others found relative safety along the loosely-held Ottoman frontiers. Many took refuge in the heavily forested areas of Šumadija, the region of central Serbia that was to serve as the nucleus of both Serbian uprisings, or in the mountainous regions of Montenegro, an area that was never fully subjugated by the Ottomans. It is within the lightly populated no-man’s lands that hajduk activity against Ottoman soldiers and merchants was the most active, and by the beginning of the eighteenth century, no Ottoman official ever left the safety of the fortress-towns without a fully armed escort.

Finally, as was mentioned above, migration and military service threw entire Serb communities into direct contact with the expanding cultures and commerce of Europe. It was through both the Church and military service that Serbs were able to fight for and retain their own communal identities wherever they settled. Particularly within the Hapsburg Empire, settlements that began as military garrisons for refugees developed into financial, political, and cultural centers. While many Serbian families continued a military tradition, others established themselves as notable civic leaders, founding churches, schools, publishing houses, and other institutions.
Serbia’s Balance Sheet on the Eve of the Uprising

For a society living under foreign rule for centuries, multiple sources of autonomy were available to maintain a sense of group awareness, collective identity and collective memory by the Uprisings. True they were second-class citizens in both Ottoman and Hapsburg empires, but the Serbs were not the occupied people living under a foreign “yolk” for over four centuries that many modern accounts claim. Not only did the medieval Serbian state survive after Kosovo in 1389, some organized political entity existed for an additional 137 years. Even after the defeat of the last Serbian despotate at Mohács, an autonomous Serbian church was reestablished thirty years later, and continued to function up to the present time. In many respects, it was only the three decades separating Mohács from the reestablishment of the Patriarchate of Peć that Serbs as a collective whole were an unrepresented people.

The institutional role of autonomous Serbian institutions, particularly the Church, the zadruge, and the Hapsburg Military Frontier cannot be overemphasized. However it is interesting to note that the preservation of these institutions were in part under the patronage of non-Serb actors: the return of an autonomous Serbian Church owes much to an Ottoman vizir of Serbian stock; the zadruge to Ottoman civil authority, and the Military Frontier to Emperor Josef. Serbian cultural and institutional autonomy was just as much the product of external cooperation and faith, as it was Serbian ingenuity and resourcefulness. Long before Ottoman decay set in, Serbs had the opportunity to develop new cultural and institutional structures to replace those that had vanished with the fall of their medieval state in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. New cultural forms
preserved the memory of pre-Ottoman times, but they also aided in redefining Serbia’s relationship *vis-à-vis* other Christian and Muslim societies by looking to new forms of collective identity. In this respect, Serbian identity was cultivated and developed within considerable multiethnic surroundings yet remained largely ethnocentric.

The creation of an administratively autonomous Serbian Orthodox Church in the sixteenth century that was centered in the heartland of Kosovo was significant in providing a direct link between the medieval and Ottoman periods as well as defining the role of a Serbian Christian apart from the powerful influence of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople. The fusion of Divine sainthood with Serbia’s medieval dynasties, coupled with the preservation of many of their monasteries, inculcated a collective sense of cultural uniqueness in a multiethnic and multiconfessional Ottoman state. The preservation of an autonomous Serbian Church after 1556 functioned as much as a counterweight to the Greek-dominated Orthodox hierarchy, as it did to the Muslim civil authorities.

The preservation and growth of the Serbian Church in Hapsburg centers of Sremski Karlovci, Temesvár, Trieste, and Fruška Gora moved the Church from a traditional and parochial role to a civil one that supported the growth of education and treated with political officials as equals. However because the Serbian Church was the only distinctive Serbian institution recognized by Vienna, and because it was the only organized Orthodox church in an empire that, particularly after the Reformation, characterized itself as a bastion of Catholicism, the multiethnic setting that Serbs found themselves in north of the Danube was hardly one of harmonious co-existence and interdependency. Any cooperation that might have existed between Serbs and Croats, and
more so Serbs and Romanians, fell within the common goals of resisting encroaching Hungarian authority rather than attempts at voluntarily forming official civic bonds of co-fraternity. Cooperation was visible between Serbs and Romanians in Banat, particularly in the joint-effort at declaring regional autonomy at the Temesvár Assembly against Hungarian feudal laws, but even Serb-Romanian cooperation was occasionally tested when Romanian Orthodox priests and bishops working within the Karlovci Metropolitanate attempted to establish greater autonomy for themselves and print material in their own language.⁹¹ In other words, the Serbs continued to function as a compact ethnic and ecclesiastic unit in order to preserve their identity despite living in and being influenced by multiethnic surroundings. Multiple attempts were made at diminishing the power of the Karlovci Metropolitanate, particularly under the reign of Maria Teresa, and both Serb clergy and laymen found it necessary to repeatedly defend what rights and privileges were given to them. Defending one’s own collective identity from the encroaching powers of outside parties only reinforces ethnocentricity.⁹²

The autonomy of the zadruga and the Military Frontier promoted a sense of political and civic responsibility, as well as providing the basic features of a pre-modern state with decentralized government. The creation of free townships in the Hapsburg Military Frontier such as the Kikinda Crown District (1774 – 1876) helped facilitate a new generation of Serbian entrepreneurs, merchants, civic administrators and

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⁹¹ Long after the events of 1848, various Romanian Orthodox prelates sought ecclesiastic emancipation from the Serbian Orthodox Church. Patriarch Rajačić was a fierce opponent of this, less because he saw the Orthodox Church as a Serbian institution, but viewed Orthodox Christianity as the unifying factor between the two ethnicities. The Romanian Church achieved independence in 1872, and was recognized by the Patriarchate of Constantinople as Autocephalous in 1885. For a history of the Transylvanian Romanians and their relations with the Metropolitanate of Karlovci, see Keith Hitchins, Orthodoxy and Nationality: Andrieu Șaguna and the Rumanians of Transylvania, 1846 – 1873 (Harvard University Press, 1977).
intellectuals who could benefit from access to some of the best schools and universities of Central Europe at the time of the Enlightenment. The beginnings of alliances between Serbs and Romanians in Banat, and Serbs and Croats in Dalmatia against the pressures of Hungarian landed aristocracy and, in the case of Serbs and Romanians, efforts in religious assimilation into Catholicism, foreshadowed potential efforts at inter-ethnic cooperation in the Balkans. Like the Church, because these administrative districts were frequently under threat of abolishment and assimilation into Hungarian territory, its inhabitants fiercely resisted any attempts at eroding local autonomy and self-government. This fighting spirit was further augmented by the rise of a new class of military officers that fought directly for the Hapsburg Crown in exchange for their own local self-management on the frontier. Many of these officers lent their assistance to the founding and maintenance of the new Serbian Principality after 1817, and also offered refuge for any Serbian official south of the Danube seeking asylum from either Ottoman, or after 1815 fellow Serb, reprisals.

Prior to 1804, all Serbian cultural institutions drew upon legacies of their past. The collective memory of the epic poems and songs provided narratives of past greatness that was lost, and a continued line of heroic rebels that fought, and often died, against foreign oppression. The symbolism of defiance against foreign domination provided the basis for struggles for autonomy and collective rights for Serbs by the Church, in the zadruge, and in the Military Frontier. Within the Ottoman Empire, these memories of resistance and rebellion became more acute with the increasing political decay from Constantinople and the excessive abuses of power by local Ottoman warlords. Within the Hapsburg Empire, these memories developed along patterns of the Enlightenment,
increasing levels of education and intellectualism, and the reactionary measures taken by Hungarian and Croatian landlords in attempting to stifle Serbian cultural uniqueness. In short, prior to 1804, all efforts at facilitating Serbian collective identity as a form of cultural distinction and as a means of social mobilization, drew upon symbols of Serbia’s medieval past and its struggle for identity under foreign domination since. Such symbolism became particularly potent within the mantle of Romantic Nationalism that emphasized social and cultural unity.

On the eve of the First Serbian Uprising, Serbian ethnic identity was highly developed, able to draw from a wealth of cultural and institutional resources. The benefits of Serbian socio-political development before the First Uprising were plentiful. What was an already organized collective identity in the Ottoman Empire fostered by considerable degrees of religious and administrative autonomy, was transplanted across the Danube and further developed under new conditions of religious and administrative self-government. Beginning in the mid eighteenth century, Serb intellectuals had the opportunity to tap into the modernizing resources of the European university and civic forms of government to further strengthen Serbian collective identity. To paraphrase Massimo d’Azeglio’s famous statement “having made Italy we must now make Italians”, having made Serbs, elites now needed to (re)make Serbia.
Chapter 5 – Pan-Serbism as Cultural Unifier: From Načertanije to the Yugoslav Kingdom

If there is one continuum that permeates all variants of pan-ethnic identity, it is the synthesis of political corporatism and cultural ethnocentrism. Through the former, a high culture is imposed upon a population through top-down educational mediums with the intention of providing a shared culture that links disparate groups within one discourse.¹ Through the latter, a “core nation” functions as both a nationalizing force of assimilation within one’s boundaries and a gathering force for members of their “own” ethnic nationality across boundaries of territory and citizenship who “belong” to an enlarged national “homeland”.² In short, pan-ethnic nationalisms gather and assimilate members who are perceived to share a common identity, and differentiate and marginalize, if necessary, those communities that are perceived to live outside the group.

But corporatism and ethnocentrism should not automatically be associated with patterns of fascism or exclusionary chauvinism.³ In many respects, a pan-ethnic movement risks its very raison d’être if social inclusion is overpowered by chauvinistic exclusion, and those movements that characterized the foundations of modern nation-

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¹ Ernest Gellner argues that what passes for “high culture” more often than not originates as “folk culture” that is transformed by socio-political elites into a national identity. Through nationalism, a “high culture” is imposed as a “school-mediated, academy-supervised idiom, codified for the requirements of reasonably precise bureaucratic and technological communication.” Nationalism culminates in “the establishment of an anonymous, impersonal society … held together by a shared culture of this kind, in place of a previous complex structure of local groups, sustained by folk cultures reproduced locally and idiosyncratically by the micro-groups themselves.” See Gellner, Nations and Nationalism, (Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 57.


³ This is the primary argument of Arendt, who argues that both Nazism and Bolshevism owe much of their ideological legitimacy to pan-ethnic movements in Germany and Russia. But the degree of exclusionary nationalism that resulted in the physical extermination of entire ethnic and social communities were more a product of the totalitarian ideologies that spurred such violence rather than the pan-ethnic identity itself. See Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism (San Diego, California: Harcourt, Inc., 1968), pp. 222 – 66.
states in the mid to late nineteenth century operated within a fine balance between a
territorial core directing and shaping a collective national identity on one end and
providing enough flexibility to recognize and accept various sub-national variants that
comprised an overall national group on the other. Moreover, pan-ethnic movements,
particularly those of Central and Eastern Europe, sought to establish a modern nation-
state in place of weakening multiethnic empires that were turning towards nationalizing
policies on their own. It is within this ideological context that Serbia must be placed
alongside Germany, Italy, Greece, and later Bulgaria.4

The origins of Pan-Serbism can be traced to the *Načertanije* (roughly translated as
“Outline”) of Ilija Garašanin in 1844, though conceptions of an enlarged Serbian state
existed earlier.5 However, it is erroneous to associate the Pan-Serbism of the nineteenth
century with the crude form of national populism that characterized the Milošević regime
in the 1990s. First, the earlier model understood Croats and Bosnians to be sub-ethnic
components of a larger Serbian nation and based such assumptions on linguistic unity,
rather than Serbian cultural or religious superiority. Numerous attempts were made to

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4 See Brubaker (1996), pp. 79 – 106. For a comparative analysis of conceptualizing Greater Serbia with
other pan-ethnic movements, see Milorad Ekmečić, “Greater Serbia Against the Background of World
Models”, in *Great Serbia: Truth, Misconceptions, Abuses*, Papers presented at the International Scientific
Meeting held in the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Belgrade, October 24 – 26, 2002 (Belgrade:
The Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 2004), pp. 11 – 36.

5 Metropolitan Stefan Stratimirović of Sremski Karlovci acted as intermediary between the Serbian
insurgents and the Austrian authorities, proposing the creation of a new Serbian state with Austrian
protection and ruled by either a Russian or Lutheran prince whose heir would accept Orthodoxy. Yet while
the Metropolitan of Karlovci could actively do little else, being the head of a Serbian Church in Austria that
was technically neutral, Jovan Jovanović, bishop of Novi Sad openly cooperated with Prince-Bishop Peter I
Petrović of Montenegro in sending arms, military supplies and money to the insurgents. After Vienna
refused Stratimirović’s proposal for an Austrian protectorate, Bishop Jovan encouraged direct Russian
involvement in freeing both Serbs and Bulgarians from Ottoman rule. Sava Tekelija of Temesvár wrote in
his autobiography that as early as 1803 had plans for a general Serbian uprising in the Ottoman state, and in
June 1804 when the Uprising was already four months active, he sent a memorandum to Napoleon asking
him to directly intervene in establishing a friendly “Slavic state”. See Slavko Gavrilović *Vojvodina I Srbija
u vreme Prvog ustanika* (Matica Srpska: Novi Sad, 1974), and Wayne S. Vucinich ed., *The First Serbian
demonstrate the common brotherhood shared between the three groups, particularly Bosnians who were seen as Muslim Serbs. The vision of an enlarged, or Greater, Serbia foresaw Serbs, Bosnians, Montenegrins, and Croats, living in one state united in one language, and enriched in three religious faiths. Second, the Pan-Serbism that defined Serbian national policy up to the First World War was characterized by narratives of past historical greatness that sought to include as many ethnic communities as possible. Like most pan-ethnic models, historical greatness legitimized a sense of destiny and entitlement to rule. Thus, Serbian national policy frequently drew parallels between the historical greatness of Dušan’s empire and the modern state that was essentially carrying on the legacy that had been disrupted by the Turkish invasion. Moreover, historical memories of Dušan’s empire among early supporters of Yugoslavism interpreted his rule as a flowering of medieval South Slavic cultural and institutional achievement, rather than simply Serbian. Finally, Pan-Serbism sought to place a strong united Serbian state within the concert of European nations. There was nothing inherently anti-European or authoritarian about Pan-Serbism, and though numerous groups placed national liberation above liberal democratic rights and freedoms, liberation movements primarily operated within larger contexts of political pragmatism rather than emotionally driven messianism. As the perceived center of a future independent state in the Balkans, Serbia

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6 A notable exception was the secret organization Ujedinjenje ili smrt (Unification or Death), more commonly known as Crna ruka (Black Hand) formed in 1911, which espoused a radical strain of Pan-Serbism that was heavily fused with Orthodox clericalism, and sought the unification of Serbian lands by any means possible. Like the Italian Carbonari who played an important role in the Risorgimento the century before, the organization favored violent revolutionary action to achieve its goals and considered the government in Belgrade to be just as guilty for failing to achieve national unity, particularly in the aftermath of Austria-Hungary’s annexation of Bosnia from the Ottoman Empire in 1908. Black Hand was heavily involved in aiding the anti-Austrian insurgency among Bosnia’s Serb population, and supplied the money and weapons to the members of Young Bosnia, an equally radical Serbian organization in Sarajevo, whose member Gavrilo Princip succeeded in assassinating Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914. Contemporary accounts of Serbian nationalism, particularly in the West, often attempt to link Pan-Serb
sought to be a regional power alongside Italy, Germany, Russia, France, and England. To its adherents and proponents, South Slavic unity was Pan-Serbism by another name.

The Pan-Serbism that defined the politics of Milošević in the 1990s, and arguably continues to shape much of Serbian political discourse in the post-Milošević years, particularly in light of the recent events in Kosovo, differs from the nineteenth century model in its greater emphasis on narratives of victimization and suffering and its deliberate attempt at extracting a distinctive Serbian identity from the South Slavism of the Yugoslav and pre-Yugoslav narratives. Memories of the horrors of the First and Second World Wars, especially the systematic killing of hundreds of thousands of Serbs under the pro-Nazi Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna Država Hrvatska, NDH), as well as the perceptions, both real and exaggerated, of anti-Serb discrimination by Albanian nationalists in Kosovo in the 1980s, dominated the discourse of renewed Serbian ethnocentrism in the years following Tito’s death, and culminated in a form of defensive national populism that sought to unify all Serbs in the crumbling Yugoslavia by religion and history. The events that followed the violent breakup of Yugoslavia, the displacement of nearly 250,000 Serbian refugees from Croatia and Bosnia, and the continued insistence among international officials in stigmatizing Serbs as being responsible for most, if not all, of the wars in the Balkans, have only served to further entrench these views, even among committed democrats. Unlike the earlier model, the
Pan-Serbism of Milošević specifically excluded Croats from the idealized Pan-Serb state, and was openly chauvanistic towards Bosnians and Albanians for their Islamic identity, however thin it might have been, and for their inhabiting of lands deemed proper Serbian territory.

In short, nineteenth century Pan-Serbism was characterized by ethnocentric inclusiveness via language, brotherhood via Romanitic nationalism, and a desire to place Serbia within Europe as a unifer of South Slavs. Late twentieth century Pan-Serbism was characterized by ethnocentric exclusiveness via religion, unity via historical victimization, and chauvanism at the expense of Europe and multiculturalism. In either its mid-nineteenth or late twentieth century forms, Pan-Serbism was reflective of a state that had the ability to exert strong central authority vis-à-vis its society but was either too weak or unwilling to establish effective institutions to promote the development of a self-sustaining and self-regulating society.8 Wracked by internal divisions, stymied with an influential yet small core of intellectuals that had little authority outside Belgrade academic circles, and driven to action by external forces challenging its own national interests, the Serbian government in the mid 1840s, the early 1920s, and the late 1980s promoted an ethnic form of nationalism that provided the necessary cultural tools for popular support while maintaining social control. A core component of modern Serbian political development was that nationalism took an ethnic form early on in statehood due to the weakness of civic institutions. But even as Serbian institutions matured and as constitutions increasingly embodied principles of western European democratic principles, so too did the principles of ethnocentric nationalism. By the turn of the

8 The ethnocentricity of nineteenth century Pan-Serbism was more indicative of the former, while the politics of national populism under Milošević purposefully sought to limit the effectiveness of democratic civic institutions. On the latter, see Thomas (1999), and Gagnon (2004).
century, even those parties that, at least in theory, espoused principles of liberal
democracy and advocated a strong Serbian state in Europe did so within the framework
of political and cultural ethnocentrism. Democratic development in Serbia was fused with
Romantic nationalism so that the writings of John Stuart Mill’s *On Liberty* were linked
with Herder’s concept of the *Volk*. Those Serbs who volunteered to fight alongside fellow
Serbs in Vojvodina in 1848, Bosnia in 1875 and 1908, and Croatia in 1992 had been
nurtured by an identity that blended democratic liberalism and national liberation with
cultural ethnocentrism and territorial expansion into one common narrative.9

**The Establishment of Central Authority in Serbia: 1804 – 1839**

The strength of Pan-Serbism has its roots in both the pre-national period and the
decades immediately following the establishment of the modern Serbian state in 1817.
The most significant accomplishment was the decisive transformation of society from a
loose network of patriarchal village units towards a unified centralized entity. This was
no simple achievement, as the very institutions that helped preserve Serbian society
during centuries of Ottoman rule had become an increasing hindrance to the
establishment of an independent modern nation state. Given the rootedness of peasant
folk democracy, not to mention the vital importance the *knezovi* had provided in uniting
the peasant masses into social units, the struggle for central authority, first under

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Backwardness in Eastern Europe* (University of California Press, 1989), pp. 236 – 37, and Jack Snyder,
Karadjordje and later under Miloš, would be long and bloody. It was not until the 1820s under the reign of Miloš Obrenović that central authority was definitively established, and even here, only after a series of assaults on local authority and a general reign of terror throughout the countryside that produced seven rebellions in the first fifteen years of his reign. His own charismatic authority, shrewd negotiating skills, and attempts at controlling all aspects of political life and economic activity in Serbia almost exclusively shaped structural change during his twenty-three year reign. His rule was absolute and his hold on a nascent Serbian economy was resembled that of a robber baron. With the wealth accumulated in his own province during the Ottoman restoration (1813 – 15),

10 Karadjordje had a number of rivals both before and long after the Uprising. The Nenadović family for instance, was the leading family in the district of Valjevo, in western Serbia. Aleka Nrenadović had been knez of Valjevo since before the Austro-Turkish War of 1788 – 91, and had served as a member of the Austrian Freikorps in that war alongside Karadjordje. While he was one of the leaders slain by the four rebellious dahi prior to 1804, his younger brother Jakov inherited all rights and privileges, and commanded the military forces of Valjevo in 1804. After major hostilities with the Ottomans subsided, Jakov personally negotiated peace with the Turks in his own region, and was regarded as its supreme leader. He even forbade Karadjordje to cross the Kolubara river into “his” territory without his leave. Other military leaders were just as charismatic. Hajduk Veljko Petrović for example owned little more than the clothes and weapons on his back, freely distributing money and other spoils of war equally among his men. See Petrovich (1976), pp, 46, 47.

11 By far the most serious single challenge to Miloš’s authority came, ironically, not from a knez, but from a peasant, Miloje Popović Djak (“djak” meaning “deacon” or “student”), in January 1825. Interestingly enough, the original aims of the uprising targeted the local misrule and abuse of power by Miloš’s hand-picked appointee in his own home district of Rudnik, similar to the reasons for both Serbian uprisings in 1804 and 1815. After two failed attempts at putting down the uprising, first by Knez Petar Vučićević of Smederevo, and later by Miloš’s own brother Jovan – both of whom narrowly escaped with their lives, the number of rebels grew to about five thousand men by February and included villages from districts in Smederevo, Požarevac, Kragujevac, and Belgrade itself. On February, a gathering was symbolically held at Topola near the site of the declaration of the First Uprising and a list of demands was drawn up. The document called for an end to Miloš’s misrule, using the Turkish world “zulüm” for “misrule”. This in itself was symbolic because it likened his reign to that of a pasha and for its vernacular understanding of simultaneously meaning “violence”, “terror”, and “injustice” all at once. It also demanded the expulsion of all of Miloš’s appointed knezovi, who were foreign to the people and were largely unqualified for their jobs because of their high levels of corruption, and the restoration of popularly elected knezovi. It called for the revocation of various taxes and duties that Serbs never had to previously pay, an end to forced labor without pay, and the return of local autonomy and political rights. Miloš responded by sending his agent Toma Vučić-Perišić at the head of an army to meet the rebels. Djak was caught and brought before Miloš on February 7. He ordered Djak to be placed on a horse and ride through two rows of troops, which had been ordered to shoot. Miloš said that he forgave him, but his fate was for the army to judge. If he succeeded in riding through both rows unscathed, he would be proclaimed innocent and set free that day. However, as he was riding through, a command was given to fire, but in a final display of protest, his own troops fired into the air. Enraged, Miloš’s brother Jevrem drew out his pistol and shot him dead. See Petrovich (1976), pp. 117 – 19.
coupled with the political concessions he gained from Constantinople in securing peace after 1817, he continued to buy further economic and political protection from the Ottomans, the Russians, and the Austrians. Within a decade he became the largest livestock exporter in Serbia. As Serbia established itself as a crossroads of trade and transit between the three larger powers, Miloš’s wealth intensified. He owned large estates in the Romanian Principalities, and controlled the salt trade from the Principalities to Ottoman territories. Though he was obliged to pay an annual tribute to the sultan in exchange for autonomy, this became a mere fraction of the money he personally earned. By 1830, Miloš had become one of the wealthiest men in Europe, and, with the arguable exception of the Metropolitan of Karlovci, the most powerful Serb.

Yet while Serbia gradually gained larger degrees of autonomy under Miloš, the biggest losers were the peasants. By accumulating such power and wealth, Miloš gradually eroded the traditional autonomy of the *zadruge* and the regional authority of the *knezovi*. What was once a matter of each of the twelve districts electing their own knez, became the policy of Miloš as *oborknez* to personally appoint them. Local assemblies that traditionally were policy-making bodies were reduced to little more than public gatherings that were convened to hear Miloš’s own orders and directives. As written by Petrovich, “as a ruler, he combined Oriental despotism with patriarchal authority to such a degree that he virtually saw no difference between his own needs and those of the state.” The breaking of the power of the *knezovi* and the traditional autonomy of the *zadruge* became the chief aims of Miloš’s long reign.

In hindsight, Miloš’s personal authority, adept negotiating skills and unapologetic brutality did produce a series of long-term gains that were necessary for central political

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12 Petrovich (1978), pp. 113 – 14
authority asserting itself in Serbia. While it was clear at the time his actions were done to augment his own power and wealth, it was also done to avoid any further uprisings against the Turks as well as Turkish reprisals against the Serbs. Serbia’s autonomy and gradual detachment from Ottoman dependence would be done on his own terms and under his own command. He personally opposed the return of many of the Serbian knezovi who fled to Austria at the collapse of the First Uprising in 1813, even ordering the execution of the legendary Karadjordje, his chief rival, in July 1817. While obviously being obstacles to his own authority, their presence would only complicate his own delicate relationship with Ottoman authorities in gaining piecemeal concessions. The time of Romanticized rebellions, as far as Miloš was concerned, was over. It was now time to consolidate the gains he personally earned and work to deepen Serbia’s autonomy.

More, importantly, the series of negotiations, compromises, and verbal agreements conducted by Miloš with the Ottomans paved the way for full autonomy in 1830 and established him as Serbia’s hereditary prince. In each of these agreements with Constantinople, additional territory came under his authority to where by 1833, all lands that had originally been liberated in the First Uprising by 1813 were returned, including the key towns of Kruševac and Negotin, as well as the historic Studenica monastery, one of the first monasteries of Medieval Serbia. With each concession won, Muslim landed estates were sold and passed into Serbian hands. This led to the virtual disappearance of all civilian Muslims from what would become central Serbia, eliminating the possibility of any ethnic or religious minority effecting or influencing future political development. This was not done through any state-orchestrated policies of ethnic expulsion, but
through negotiated agreements with the Porte, and until the First and Second Balkan wars in 1911 – 12 Serbia was one of the most ethnically homogenous regions in the Balkans. Furthermore, Serbia’s autonomy was guaranteed by Ottoman non-interference in Serbian administration or judiciary. Prince Miloš had the right to maintain his own army, as well as establish schools, hospitals, and printing houses. Central authority might have been obtained through various struggles between Miloš and the Serbian countryside, but his gains were recognized and made official by a series of Ottoman firmans.

The gradual dismantling of the zadruga system, though met with frequent resistance, eliminated the potential for a rise in a privileged landed aristocracy and a peasantry of serfs, sharecroppers, and landless proletariats, in that land was parceled into a network of small family homesteads. Some peasants migrated to the towns and replaced the departing Muslims as artisans and shopkeepers, working alongside arriving Hapsburg Serbs who opened new markets for Western clothing, shoes, jewelry, clocks, masonry, printing, and bookbinding. Other peasants remained on the land and carved out an independent life to the best of their abilities. But there was never any large-scale rural-urban migration primarily due to the significant lack of industrialization up to the turn of the twentieth century, but also due to a seeming effort by political elites in Belgrade to keep the peasantry as detached from political activity as possible. Indeed, a paradox of Serbia in the nineteenth century was that while the country reoriented itself away from Ottoman feudalism and toward European modernization, the peasantry gained independence at the expense of political participation, unable to act as a force for advocating, legitimizing, and defending liberal civic principles.13

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The other significant accomplishment made by the time of Miloš’s abdication in 1838 was the establishment of state institutions with a state bureaucracy. Granted, by the 1830s, they were anything but robust or effective, but continued efforts in reigning in the authority of Karadjordje and later Miloš made it increasingly necessary to establish instruments of government that would limit the power of monarchical absolutism and provide a voice for various sectors of society. Furthermore, as Serbia moved away from Ottoman vassalage and closer to the theater of European politics, the need for central government with foreign relations, as well as a central treasury with a developed system of taxation necessitated the need for men of greater caliber, talents, and honest dedication to government than the initial rubber-stamping “yes-men” that surrounded both Karadjordje and Miloš. Even though the vast majority of the peasantry found little to no use for a bureaucracy, it provided the necessary tools of government, and facilitated the quickest way for any educated Serb to earn a position of power. In fact, it was the rising authority of the state bureaucracy that forced Miloš to accept a series of particularly liberal constitutions that eventually led to his abdication in 1838.  

14 Petrovich notes that like the self-interested English barons who forced King John I to sign the Magna Charta at Runnymede in 1215, the unlikely combination of rural merchants and civil administrators united against Miloš’s absolutism unwittingly placed the first restraints on absolute monarchy. A plot against Miloš’s authority in Kruševac in 1834 was characterized by a group of thirty-five elected officials who demanded that Miloš accepts laws that provided rights of the individual and private property, trial by due process of law, and a constitution. The resulting Constitution of 1835 was incredibly democratic for its time, earning even the ire of Russian and Austrian officials who lamented the ratification of a “Franco-Swiss” constitution that placed the majority of power in the hands of a legislative body, recognized the rights of universal equality before the law, trial by due process, the rights of every arrested person to a list of charges against him as well as a speedy trial, the prohibition of forced labor, the rights of private property, and an independent judiciary. Not surprisingly, Miloš rejected it outright. But after 1834, a group of individuals formed the first political opposition to Miloš and came to be known as the Constitutionalist Party. With the support of Russia and Turkey, the so-called “Turkish” Constitution was issued in 1838 and remained the basis of Serbian government until 1869. The central sovereign was given limited powers by a legislative body, provided for an independent judiciary, but left out any specific provisions for the rights of ordinary citizens, something that many of the Great Powers, particularly Austria, feared giving too much power to. The Turkish Constitution was a defeat of monarchical absolutism and a decisive victory for oligarchism. Refusing the accept the conditions imposed on him, but realizing he had little left to negotiate
constitutions differed little from those of Central and Western Europe at the time, the fact
that Serbia had been little more than a diverse group of patriarchal *zadruge* two decades
earlier indicated the rapid progress the state had made in realizing the needed
mechanisms for a modern state and society.

As briefly mentioned above, it is interesting to note the limited role Hapsburg
Serbs had in directly shaping the early modern Serbian state. In many respects, the
cultured Serbs of Vojvodina found life in Belgrade a far cry from the cultured urban
centers of Austria. With the exception of notables like Dositej Obradović and Božo
Grujović, Hapsburg Serbs, literate as they might be, came to be seen by native Serbs as
haughty and elitist at best, and were regarded as little more than carpetbaggers by the
peasantry. These *prečani* (“men from across” the river), or *śvabos* (from the German
“Swabian”, but more derogatory, as in “Krauts”) as they came to be known, were viewed
as foreigners without any practical knowledge of the land. They might know how to read
and write, but knew nothing about distilling *rakija*, would probably shoot themselves in
the foot if given a pistol, and had the audacity to not only drink their coffee unfiltered,
but the propensity to contaminate it further with cream.

The possibility of establishing early forms of constitutional law was supported by
no more than the handful of Hapsburg Serb elites in Belgrade, and was always subject to

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with, he abdicated power in favor of his younger son Milan on June 15, 1839, and retired to his estates in
Walachia.

15 Not all Hapsburg Serbs that came to Serbia were well qualified for their posts. Petrovich notes that in
more than a few instances the ability to read and write was enough for any vagabond to find lucrative
employment in Miloš’s Serbia. Many of these immigrants, while considered learned men by the low
standards of Ottoman Serbia, were mediocre washouts in the Hapsburg Empire. Some were debtors fleeing
from creditors, while others were fugitives from justice for worse crimes. Those who weighed opportunism
above philanthropy found numerous ways of profiting from an illiterate peasantry; a vice that no one more
than Miloš was contemptuous for. Though Miloš’s illiteracy made him dependent on his secretaries and
clerks, he treated them as servants, often degrading and ridiculing them to the point of desertion, suicide, or
murder by Miloš himself. Vuk Karadžić was one of the few, if only, intellectuals learned enough and
respected enough to personally challenge Miloš’s demeanor, though even he referred to the less savory
overrule by either Karadjordje or Miloš who found little use in parliamentary procedure when the very existence of Serbia as an entity was under constant threat. A most poignant example of this divide between the politics of the pen by Hapsburg Serbs and the literal politics of the gun by Karadjordje and the knezovi is the lecture delivered by Božo Grujović, a Hapsburg Serb from Srem with a doctorate in jurisprudence from Budapest, to an assembly of illiterate chieftains in the village of Borak on September 13, 1805.

The law [he proclaimed] is the will of the land, which commands each and all to do good and which stands in the way of evil. Thus the first sovereign and judge in the land is the law. The rulers, leaders and governing council (general chancery), clergy and army, and all the people must be under the law and that under one and the same law … Where there is no reason and justice, there is no law … Where there is a good constitution, that is, where the law is well established, and where there is a well-organized government under the law, there is freedom, there is liberty, and wherever one or more command as they please, not heeding the law, but doing as they like, there the land is dead, there is no freedom, nor security, nor welfare, but oppression and brigandage, only under another name.”

Karadjordje apparently was reported to have listened quietly to the lecture, and then at its conclusion remarked “Well, now, it’s easy for this Sovereign Law of yours to rule in a warm room, behind a table, but let us see tomorrow, when the Turks strike, who will meet them and beat them! A hobbled horse can’t win a race!” Herein lay the central issue surrounding Serbia in the first decades of its existence: the disparity between the rule of law of a conceptual democracy, and the personal politics of a charismatic leader; and the reigning in of power and authority away from the knezovi, and the patterns of “folk democracy” of the zadruge. While Grujović’s ideas would no doubt have been warmly received in Karlovci, Temesvár, Novi Sad and Vienna, they largely fell on deaf ears in Belgrade, Kragujevac and Borak.

16 Petrovich (1978), pp. 50 – 1
Nevertheless, Hapsburg Serbs quickly found their talents and professions to be a much-needed asset in an overwhelmingly patriarchal and illiterate society. At first, these civil administrators were a small handful, and numbered no more than two-dozen by 1815. By the abdication of Miloš, the state bureaucracy became one of the most sought after professions. Dositej Obradović was appointed Serbia’s first Minister of Education in 1811. Having established himself throughout Europe as one of the most forward thinkers of his time, he brought a much-needed European middle-class education to Belgrade immediately following the Uprising. His anti-clerical attitudes paved the way for the autonomy of education away from the church, which had previously been the only institution capable of providing some form of schooling.  

Ivan Jugović was his appointed successor, and with the full support of Karadjordje organized the establishment of Serbia’s first High School, which opened on September 12, 1808. Like Grujović, Jugović was a Hapsburg Serb with a law degree from Budapest, and had been a professor at the Second Latin School in Sremski Karlovci before coming to Belgrade. Under his tutelage, the High School curriculum lasted for three years and consisted of general history, general geography, statistics, mathematics, composition, German language, state and criminal law, common prayers, and church singing, among other subjects and disciplines. 

18 Petar Despotović, Istoriska pedagogika (Belgrade, 1902), p. 389, cited in Karanovich (1995), p. 14. High School students were almost exclusively drawn from those who already graduated from elementary school, and it was specifically designed to prepare them for a career as civil administrators, teachers, and judges. The first students of these schools were the sons and relatives of distinguished knezovi, including Karadjordje’s own son Aleksandar, although records show that children of ordinary Serbs whose parents could afford to send them to school were also present. Others like Vuk Karadžić who already benefited from early education in Karlovci, came to Belgrade after the Uprising to pursue additional training with the support of Jakov Nenadović and the private tutelage of Jugović. See Wilson (1970), pp. 45 – 62. From the beginning of the Uprising in 1804 to the Turkish Reconquest in 1813, about 1,500 pupils went through
Though Karadjordje and Miloš Obrenović can be both considered cruel and corrupt tyrants by modern political standards, the nature of their rule, particularly Miloš, established the patterns of government for Serbia for the rest of the nineteenth century. Serbia in 1839 may not have been powerful or prosperous in relation to its Austrian neighbor, and might have required the help of Russia to pressure the Ottomans in granting various concessions, but it was something that was incredibly rare for an entity of its kind at the time: it was autonomous and self-sustaining. Never would Serbia be ruled by a foreign monarch, as would be the case with Greece, and later Romania and Bulgaria. Never again would the Ottomans directly interfere in the private matters of Serbian politics, and never again would Serbia’s very existence be questioned. In little over thirty years, the Serbian Principality transformed itself from a remote *terra incognita* along the Ottoman frontier into a developing state, and entered its next developmental phase with a constitutionally appointed legislature. The transformation of the peasantry into private landholders, the elimination of local authority from the *knezovi*, the establishment of central political authority in Belgrade, and the departure of virtually all non-Serbs from the countryside, created a state that throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century was characterized by politics that, though relatively democratic in outlook, was corporatist in nature, and a culture that was highly ethnocentric in identity due to the lack of any significant minority communities living within the state until the eve of the First World War.

The Constitutionalist Period, as the following two decades came to be known, laid the foundations for Serbia’s modern political development and political identity. The so-

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called Defenders of the Constitution were a group of elites that were as united in limiting the power of a central monarch as they were separated by levels of education and political outlook. From a political perspective, the Constitutionalist period created a new stratum of elites who viewed themselves as privileged professionals ruling over an illiterate and backward peasant society that they considered little more than wards of the state. By law, these elites were forbidden to engage in commerce or any other professional practice but were appointed to their office for life with a guaranteed pension that extended to their immediate families. In many respects, the goal of becoming a civil servant, more for the personal amenities than any considerations of civic duty, became the primary encouragement for thousands of peasant families to send their children to school. The setbacks however were numerous, chief of which was democratic implementation that was highly corporatist in character with little to no input from the people. What intellectual and economic capital there was in early modern Serbia was primarily located in Belgrade. Though an increasing number of native Serbs received their education and professionalism from universities and academies in Western and Central Europe by the 1840s and 1850s – indeed it was not uncommon where an older government minister had not even finished elementary school, but his young clerk held a doctoral degree from Paris – very few were interested in implementing political rights and civil liberties on the rationale that Serbia was too backward and undeveloped for the types of modern democratic systems of the West.¹⁹ The growing discrepancy between a modern life in Belgrade and the rural communities of the seljaci (literally “peasants” but

negatively implied as “bumpkins”) continues to divide politics in Serbia up to the present day.

Another setback was the growing alienation between administrators and citizenry. In the folk society of the peasant, where family and local connections of friendship and word of honor still counted for much of one’s daily interactions and businesses, it was inconceivable that the ultimate arbitrators of law and authority were nameless, faceless, bureaucrats ruling in distant Belgrade. That elites in Belgrade viewed their positions as civil administrators to be life-long careers created conditions where politics functioned as both a vocation and a separate social class entirely.20 A series of constitutions, all Western-oriented in law and ideology, guaranteed freedoms on print, religion, property, an independent judiciary, the rule of law, and increasingly limited the powers on the monarchy. However, as late as the turn of the century, laws were applied, particularly in the countryside and especially in newly acquired territories, “according to conscience and conviction and with regard for popular justice and customs.”21 As a result, concepts of social fraternity and democratic liberalism remained predominantly within a small circle of students, while successive governments functioned within a patriarchal orientation.

From a cultural perspective, the Constitutionalist Period was important for the establishment of an ethnocentric Pan-Serb ideology that understood the present boundaries of Serbia to be the core component, yet a mere fraction, of an enlarged Serbian state that would eventually comprise all Serb communities within Southeastern Europe. This outlook was just as much a product of the highly developed cultural capital familiar to Hapsburg-educated Serbian elites as it was a reflection of the political

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20 On the role of political life functioning as a veritable social class, see Gale Stokes, Politics and Development (1990).
corporatism already taking form in Belgrade. While the aforementioned cultural capital was the subject of the previous chapter, attempts at repositioning Belgrade as the primary political and authoritative hub of Serbian politics necessitated efforts at ensuring popular loyalty and finding common narratives of identity that non-elites could relate to. In a state where the educated class comprised a miniscule percentage of the overall population, and was almost exclusively located in Belgrade, civic institutions were unfeasible. Social bonds of loyalty via ethnic identity were the easiest, and arguably only, way to direct politics, especially if little to no input was provided by, or asked from, the public.

Though numerous sources written in the wake of Yugoslavia’s violent collapse are wont to blame the politics of exclusionary nationalism in both Serbia and Croatia as perennial symptoms of intolerance and multiethnic incompatibility, a culture of ethnocentrism pervading nineteenth century Serbian politics was more a reflection of demographic circumstance than deliberate choices of privilege or entitlement to domination. What is today regarded as Central Serbia, that is, territory acquired up to 1878, was almost completely Serbian by ethnicity, language, and religion. In 1833, a settlement between Belgrade and Constantinople called for the withdrawal of all Muslim civilians to leave the Serbian Principality within five years. In 1867, Ottoman garrisons finally withdrew from the last six fortress-towns making Serbia free of any Muslim presence for the first time in nearly 500 years. In addition, thousands of Serb families from Montenegro and Bosnia migrated to the newly liberated state in search of greater freedoms replacing the Muslim population whose lands were now parceled into small homesteads. Thus for the first one hundred years of its existence, Serbian political development was almost exclusively ethnocentric with little need to concern itself with
issues of minorities, nor to concern itself with the construction of a multi-ethnic, civic form of collective identity that could facilitate pluralistic identities and a shared sense of political community. All the same, Serbian policies of Balkan expansion by the 1900s had regarded both Macedonian and Muslim Slavs as ethnically part of the Serbian nation, and considered Albanians in Kosovo as little more than irrelevant Ottoman remnants that would, or at least should, migrate to Albania or Turkey upon annexation.

The combination of ethnic homogeneity, urban-based democratic corporatism, and a detached citizenry, facilitated a type of politics that fused democratic principles from the Enlightenment and the social revolutions of 1848, with elements of Romantic ethnic nationalism. This nationalism was specifically influenced by the philosophies of Johann Gottfried Herder, who viewed individuals in a society as part of a larger Volk, and believed a national spirit (Volkgeist) was manifested in every society through art, literature, music, poetry, laws and local customs. While Romantic nationalism did not categorize a hierarchy of superior and inferior nations, it certainly adhered to the principle that each nation was Divinely created and bound together by common tongue, religion, heritage, and history, and thus was destined to join together in one state. Herder was particularly supportive of Balkan identities, and held Serbian epic poetry, which encapsulated a collective memory of Serbia’s medieval heritage, as a clear example of Volkgeist in daily activity. Thus the intersection of political liberalism and Romantic ethnic nationalism in Serbia facilitated a statecraft that was paternalistic in outlook, populist in character, and overlooked the individual for the collective whole. Liberty and freedom meant less about the rights of the individual than it did about ethnic emancipation from foreign rule. The state became not the civic boundaries of present

Pan-Serbian Ethnocentrism as Collective Identity and National Policy

Nowhere was this sense of ethnocentrism more apparent in early modern Serbia than in the policies and objectives of the 1844 Načertanije of Ilija Garašanin, Serbia’s preeminent statesman between 1842 and 1867.²³ By the 1840s the Ottoman Empire had

²³ Modern historians, particularly those focusing on the collapse of Yugoslavia, have often overlooked the origins of the Načertanije in an attempt to establish a closer link between the 1844 document and its alleged ties to Greater Serbian hegemony of Slobodan Milošević in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Ilija Garašanin, who dominated Serbian political life throughout most of the mid-nineteenth century, has unfortunately been cast by Serbia’s political enemies and their historians as some sinister individual intent on conquest and subjugation of all non-Serbs in the Balkans. In actuality, Garašanin was approached by Polish and Czech émigrés, who had hopes that Serbia, as the only emerging Slavic state, would act as a model and a catalyst for the liberation of all other Slavic peoples of Europe and function as a counterbalance to growing Russian and Austrian influence in the Balkans. The main agent in this initiative was the Polish Prince Adam Czartorysky, who had been living in exile in Paris and had contacted Garašanin the year prior. Czartorysky has been Russia’s foreign minister under Tsar Alexander, and had previous dealings with Serbia as early as 1804. But after the failed Polish Uprising of 1830 – 31, he had quickly fallen out of favor with Moscow and began to view Russia as a rising hegemon over all other Slavic peoples of Central and Eastern Europe. Czartorysky instructed his Czech envoy František Zah to outline a document recommending future policy objectives for Serbia, which called for it to be the leading power within an independent South Slavic state comprising Serbs, Bosnians, and Croats and consisting of lands that reached the shores of the Adriatic. This would establish trading ports with the British and the French, two potential allies with little to no territorial interest in Southeastern Europe, and in turn shut out ambitious Austrian and Russian markets in the region. The primary paradox of the Načertanije, as noted by Petrovich (1976), pp. 230 – 35, was the difference in interpretation between Pan-Serbianism and South Slav union, as it hearkened a spirit of South Slav brotherhood while simultaneously emphasized Serbia’s role as unifier and dominant element in an enlarged state. However, even if, as most historians claim, Garašanin’s plans reflected a blueprint for a Greater Serbia rather than a fraternal South Slavic state, such an outline had more to do with mid-nineteenth century political practicality and limited ambition than any notions of ethnocentric chauvinistic expansionism. For a biography of Garašanin, see David MacKenzie, Ilija Garašanin, Balkan Bismarck (Boulder, Colo.: East European Monographs, 1995a), especially pp. 42 – 61. For a viewpoint arguing that the Načertanije was a plan for Serbian political and economic liberation, see Ljiljana Aleksić, “Šta je dovelo do stvaranja Načertanije” (“Creation of the Načertanije”), Historijski pregled, vol. 1 (1954), pp. 68 – 71. For a quick review of the origins and intent of the Načertanije, see Petrovich (1976), pp. 230 – 33. Critiques of Garašanin’s foreign policies that identify the Načertanije as an early sign of aggressive Serbian expansionism are numerous, but are of less scholarly quality. Many of these works carry agenda-setting arguments of their own, and often legitimate, whether knowingly or not, pan-ethnic movements of other nationalities, particularly Greater Croatianism and Greater Albanianism. For scholarly critiques, see Ivo Banac, The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics (Cornell University Press, 1984), especially chs. 1 – 2, pp. 21 – 225; Vaso Ćubrilović, Istorija političke
begun to show visible signs of decay, with full disintegration in Southeastern Europe now being a matter of time. With Ottoman decline, and both Austria and Russia eager to take advantage of the power vacuum, Garašanin saw an opportunity for Serbia to cast aside its limited powers and “place herself in the ranks of other European states.” This required the incorporation of all Serb-inhabited territory in Bosnia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and northern Albania, with access to the Adriatic. Such actions were necessary, Garašanin argued, to break Austria’s economic monopoly over the tiny Serbian state and to establish trade routes with other European and Mediterranean powers. Moreover, an enlarged Serbia was necessary for the next step in militarily engaging Austria and liberating additional lands inhabited by South Slavs, particularly Serbian Vojvodina, and Croatian Dalmatia. While an enlarged Serbia would include Croats, Bosnian Muslims, Albanians, and initially Bulgarians, these groups, though guaranteed cultural and religious freedoms, would be subordinate to Orthodox Serbs.


25 Historically, Zah’s “Plan” closely followed the ideals of Ljudevit Gaj, head of the so-called Illyrian Movement in Croatia that advocated the creation of a supranational South Slavic state under the premise that Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, and even Bulgarians comprised one ethno-linguistic community. The principle points of Zah’s “Plan” called for South Slavic unity within a constitutional monarchy under the Karadjordjević dynasty; the role of Serbia as the political core of this state; Bosnia to be joined with Serbia; joint Serbian-Croatian cooperation in achieving accord between Orthodox and Catholic communities, particularly in regards to the Slavic Muslim communities; and national action independent of Austria or Russia, while forming economic and diplomatic alliances with France and England. Though consensus was reached between Zah and Garašanin about the primary role of Serbia, disagreement arose of the alleged equality of other communities, namely Croats. What ultimately emerged as the Načertanije was a revised version of Zah’s “Plan” that was narrowed to conform with Serbia’s modest strength and own national interests. Garašanin’s version lessened the emphasis on Serbian-Bulgarian collaboration, and omitted any
Garašanin justified such a state along two rationales. The first was that Serbia historically once had a large and powerful empire in the 13th and 14th centuries. References alluding to the Golden Age of Tsar Stefan Dušan, who had “adopted the crest of the Greek [Byzantine] Empire”, had placed Serbia along the path of assuming total control of the Balkans. The only interruption was the arrival of the Turks, which, according to Garašanin’s historical memory, had prevented Serbia from assuming her rightful, and inevitable, role as the main Slavic power in the region. But now, “since the Turkish power is broken and destroyed, so to speak, this interrupted process must commence once more in the same spirit and again be undertaken in the knowledge of that right.”

Serbia’s destiny, according to Garašanin, was to continue the legacy of their medieval forefathers, no more, no less. All of this was legitimated by history:

Our present will not be without a link to the past and will comprise one dependent, integrated, and systematic whole. Thus, the Serbian Idea and its national mission and existence will stand under the sacred law of history. Our aspirations will not be reproached as something novel and untried, or that they signify revolution and rebellion; but all must acknowledge that this is politically necessary, grounded in past ages, and originating in the state and national life of the Serbian people whose roots continually send forth branches to blossom anew … for probably in so single European country is the memory of the historical past so vivid as among the Slavs of Turkey, for whom the recollection of the celebrated events of their history is especially cherished and fondly remembered.

references to Croatia. Examining the two documents side-by-side, one notes that in many areas Garašanin appeared to have replaced the word “Yugoslav” with “Serb”. In short, whatever components of Zah’s “Plan” noted Serbian expansion, particularly Serbia’s need to annex Bosnia and Macedonia, became state policy and what alluded to other communities were omitted from the Načertanije. Furthermore, political outlines of a Greater Serbian state were no different to other contemporary models that called for a Greater Bulgaria, a Greater Poland, a Greater Croatia, and a Greater Greece. See Victor Roudometof, “Invented Traditions, Symbolic Boundaries, and National Identity in Southeastern Europe: Greece and Serbia in Comparative-Historical Perspective (1830 – 1880)”, 


26 Hehn (1975), p. 159
By fusing modern political necessities with symbolic historical justification, Garašanin’s \textit{Načertanije} was to Serbia what Manifest Destiny was to the United States, what the “Window on the West” was to Russia, what \textit{Drang nach Osten} was to Germany, what the \textit{Megali Idea} was to Greece, what the \textit{Risorgimento} was to Italy, and what Pan-Arabism was in Iraq.

It is worth noting that along with the apparent sense of Serbian historical uniqueness among other South Slavic nations, Garašanin places such historicism within a conservative outlook. As would be seen a few years later in his relations with the Serbs of Vojvodina during the 1848 uprisings, he was no fan of revolution, nor any enthusiast for eroding the powers of the dominant bureaucratic, commercial and ecclesiastic ruling groups of his country, of which he was a member. Any assistance lent to the Hapsburg Serbs had to be done outside official state channels and under the framework of halting the encroaching influence of the Hungarians, not challenging the official authority of Vienna, which Serbia was in no position to do. Furthermore, Serbia was still technically an autonomous province within the Ottoman Empire, and like Miloš before him, Garašanin was not interested in rupturing the non-interventionist approach the Porte had taken with Belgrade. Therefore, while there were visible signs of student unrest in Belgrade with the conditions of their fellow Serbs north of the Sava and Danube and with the limited rights and freedoms at home, the Serbian government remained prudenty conservative in taking care in limiting the spread of what they regarded as the internal contagion of individual liberties to a society they felt was unprepared for.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{28} For example, a group of Belgrade citizens met in the city library in March 1848 to consider “reforms” to the state. Their demands were addressed by the city’s police commissioner who told them that “Serbia now
The second rationale for a Serb-dominated South Slavic state was based more on current historical circumstance than a sense of ethnic superiority and a right to dominate others. The Serbs, Garašanin argued, were the first group to fight for their freedom against the Ottomans and establish a state and a government with their own resources and strength. Therefore, they should be entitled to the rights of directing further development in Southeastern Europe. Additionally, other powers in Europe were looking to Serbia to be a leader in a post-Ottoman Balkans, functioning as a “Piedmont” to other areas, a direct reference to the region that formed the political and ideological springboard for the modern Italian state. The other Slavic groups, Garašanin argued, lacked either the political or cultural capital to stand up on their own. The Bulgarians were at the mercy of the Turks and Russians, and the Croats and Bosnians were at the mercy of the Austrians. As the leader in this imagined state, it was also Serbia’s job to act as a “natural protector of all the Slavs”, and this right could only be earned if Serbia led according to example. “If Serbia gives her neighbors the impression, by bad and unfortunate example, that she thinks only of herself and does not care to concern herself with the advancement and problems of others, but would rather be indifferent to them, enjoys all the freedoms for which Western Europe has arisen. Serbia has a parliament with its National Assembly. Every Serb is free to carry weapons in his belt and to own firearms. Serbia has its own popular home guard. And whoever knows how to write sensibly can find a free press.” This was as far as Serbian state officials were willing to allow. See Petrovich (1976), p. 240.

Bulgaria was cited as one of the most subservient peoples of the Ottoman Empire, and were at the complete mercy of Russia for help. Bulgaria became an area of possible contention with Russia in that Moscow was exploiting Bulgaria for her own interests, and was clearly looking to acquire Bulgarian territory as their first step in an effort to seize Constantinople itself, a centuries-long goal of the Russian tsars. It was therefore Serbia’s job to work at weaning the Bulgarians away from Russia and towards cooperation in a South Slavic state. The rationale was twofold: only by gaining Bulgaria could Serbia treat with Russian on equal terms, rather than a Great Power dominating a small one; and that brotherly Slavic love for the Bulgarian people would be reciprocated to Serbia. It therefore was recommended that Serbia send priests and teachers with books printed in Bulgarian, like Russia was doing, and also pay an annual tribute to the bishop-prince of Montenegro; a small tribute to pay, it was argued, in exchange for a small nation that could field 10,000 mountain troops at moment’s notice. In Croatia, Bosnia, and Albania, it was recommended that Belgrade establish good relations with the Franciscan friars who acted independently of the official Catholic hierarchy in Vienna. See Hehn (1975), pp. 161 – 67.
they would certainly follow the example set by Serbia and not obey her, thus replacing harmony and unity by distrust and envy.”

In short, a feeling of historic destiny, not chauvinism, was the driving force behind the ethnocentrism of the Načertanjije.

In addition to mapping out Serbia’s projected future as a state, Garašanin’s memorandum laid bare the political and diplomatic obstacles currently in Serbia’s way. Turkey in Europe was Serbia’s for the taking, and Bosnia was Serbia’s primary focus. Russia was Serbia’s main competitor for influence in the Balkans, but it was Austria that “must always be the eternal enemy of a Serbian state.” Unlike Russia, whose interests lay primarily on gaining Bulgaria, Constantinople, and the Straits, Austria had never ceased to seek incorporation of the Western Balkans, including Serbia, within her borders, and it was Austria over all other powers that stood to lose the most from the creation of a South Slavic state. Therefore, such a state could not be realized until the Ottoman and Austrian empires collapsed. First, Serbia would have to free herself from Austria’s economic influence. This could only be done by expanding her territory at the expense of a crumbling Ottoman Empire, acquiring new sources of wealth, and reaching the Adriatic to establish trade routes with Great Britain, France, and northern Africa. An enlarged Serbia would also be able to treat with Russia as an equal, and was seen as Serbia’s most likely partner in emancipating all Slavic peoples of Central and Eastern Europe, but only if Serbia had enough power to resist Russian influence over her destiny.

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31 Ibid, p. 159
32 Serbia’s relationship with Russia also differed from what was codified in Zah’s “Plan”, which originally called for Serbia to act as an active counterweight to Moscow. Considering its Polish and Czech origins, the anti-Russian rhetoric was understandable. But Garašanin held no particular animosity towards Russia and altered the objectives in the Načertanjije to refer to Russia as a potential competitor, but equal partner, in Southeastern Europe. An enlarged Serbia could certainly check Russian expansionism, but Garašanin was
Garašanin immediately set to task the creation of a network of agents in all South Slavic lands, whose goals were to determine the needs and desires of the people and to advise how Belgrade could address those needs. However, these agents also functioned as Garašanin’s covert eyes and ears, reporting on social and political movements, Austrian and Russian activities, and any potential cooperation local communities had with either Vienna or Moscow. While there is little evidence to show these agents continued to function after Garašanin’s departure from political life, Jovan Ristić, a disciple of Garašanin, and Nikola Pašić, the leading figure of the Radical Party, both enthusiastically continued Serbia’s policy of expansion throughout the nineteenth century and up to the end of the First World War. Throughout this time, Serbian schools were provided with a universal state-approved curriculum that provided history lessons of the Serbian nation dating back to the twelfth century, and included numerous references of kinship with Serbs in neighboring Bosnia, Montenegro, “Old Serbia” (Kosovo and Raška), and Macedonia. Readers for both primary and secondary schools were replete with information of the world, the place of the nation in it, and the role of the individual as a member of that nation from moralistic, romantic, and patriotic points of view. Most of these lessons were presented in readers, which served as exercises in literacy and an exposure to well-known native authors who wrote about history, patriotism, the nation, loyalty, geography, religion, morals, customs, folklore, proverbs, and historical fables, in dramatic styles.

Language was the primary medium through which national identity was promulgated. From a cultural as well as a scholastic point of view, the ability to read, perfectly fine to allow for Russian influence in Bulgaria and the eastern Balkans. Both states could provide a strong counterweight to Austria. See MacKenzie (1985), p. 55.
write, and speak a particular language made one a member of a nation and it was through
the use of standardized languages printed in school readers that the conceptual boundaries
of a nation were first drawn.\textsuperscript{33} Stojan Novaković’s highly used \textit{Serbian Grammar (Srpska
Gramatika)} noted on its first page that “language is the means by which individuals
convey their ideas to one another.”\textsuperscript{34} However, it is interesting to note that while he
identified the Serbian language as one of many languages of the Slavic family, Croatian,
Bosnian, and Macedonian were not listed, as they were regarded as regional dialects.
Croats were distinguished from Serbs by being referred to as “our Western writers”, and
were included in secondary education readers as a way of teaching the Latin alphabet
alongside the Cyrillic as the two alphabets of the Serbian language.

Bosnians were regarded as Muslim Serbs in all readers as well as geography and
history textbooks. But instead of being contemptuously viewed as Serbs who had
betrayed their identity by converting to the faith of the occupier, as depicted in Njegoš’s
\textit{Mountain Wreath}, school textbooks portrayed them as the most oppressed of all Serbs,
being deprived of both freedom of land and freedom of faith. Bosnia was regarded as that
region of Serbia most enslaved by the Ottomans, and crying to Serbia across the Drina to
liberate her.\textsuperscript{35} Its people were also argued to be Serb through the common language that
both communities spoke. In one reading lesson titled “Abroad One Came to Know His

\textsuperscript{33} For a study on the use of language as “print-capitalism”, see Benedict Anderson, \textit{Imagined Communities:}
\textsuperscript{34} Stojan Novaković, \textit{Srpska gramatika} (Belgrade: Država štamparija, 1894), p. 1; quoted in Charles
Jelavich, \textit{South Slav Nationalisms: Textbook and Yugoslav Union before 1914}, (Ohio State University
\textsuperscript{35} Images of Bosnia’s bondage were succinctly encapsulated in the poem “Wretched Bosnia” (\textit{Jadna
Bosna}), by the nationalist poet Stevan Vladislav Kačanski, published in a fourth grade elementary reader:
“Proud Bosnia has bowed her head / and sheds tears unto the murky Sava. / She sheds tears and bitterly
laments / from great misery and heavy pains. / Oh, the poor one wails louder and louder. / Listen, Serbia,
Bosnia is crying!” See Ljubomir M. Protić and Vladimir D. Stojanović, \textit{Srpska čitanka za IV razred
osnovnih škola u Kraljevini Srbiji} (\textit{Serbian Reader for 4th Grade Elementary School in the Kingdom of
Serbia} (Belgrade: Državna štamparija, 1907), III, 7\textsuperscript{th} revised edition, p. 157, quoted in Jelavich (1990), p.
90.
Brothers: Recollections from a Trip”, a young Serbs recounts his experiences with Bosnian Muslims, or “Serbs of the Muslim faith”. At a railroad station, he spotted two Muslims that he knew were Bosnians by the recognizable language they spoke. These two men noticed the Serb talking to a friend of his, and approached them in brotherly greeting.

“Greetings brothers. You are Serbs,” one of them said to us.
“Greetings! And who are you?” I asked.
“We too are Serbs from Bosnia.”
“Are you not Turks?”
“No, by God. We are Serbs like you. During our trip we saw some people dressed as we are. They told us they were Turks. We wanted to talk to them. We spoke to them but they did not understand us, nor we them. We do not know Turkish. We are not Turks. We are Serbs even if we are of Muslim faith. We recognize this now, traveling in foreign lands.”

Thus it was that brothers came to know one another in a foreign place.36

It is notable that within the context of Christian – Muslim brotherhood through language, Serbs can make an argument for having a multicultural, and multiconfessional, heritage. However, while Serbian readers made reference to the distinction between Serbs, Croats and Bosnians, and often referred to the Croats respectfully as “twin brothers” that were part of the same people, it was never in any doubt that the Serbs were the core of the nation, not an equally distinctive variant. Inclusive brotherhood existed because all were part of the Serbian nation, not a larger supranational South Slavic nation.37

37 Language was also closely associated with religion, though again the readers stressed that because all South Slavs were united in language, the differences in religion meant that Serbs themselves were divided by religion: “Of our people, the only ones who are called Serbs are those of the eastern Orthodox faith. The great majority of those of the western Orthodox Catholic faith are called Croats. The same is the case with the Serbian Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as those in Old Serbia and Macedonia, who are called Turks, even if they do not speak any other language except Serbian. These religious differences, which terribly torment our national organism, will be straightened out only with more education.” Vladimir Karić, Srbija – Opis zemlje, naroda i države (Serbia – A Description of the Land, People, and State) (Belgrade: Državna štamparija, 1887), p. 244, quoted in Jelavich (1990), p. 144. Such a religious divide however was rarely praised as a sign of Serbia’s diversity, but rather lamented as a sign of its internal
As both philologist and historian, Vuk Karadžić was given primary attention in these readers as “one of the most original and most powerful personalities in all of Serbian literature.” Through his efforts in collecting national folk literature and writing about national life in all Serbian lands, he was praised for giving the Serbs the idea that they were one large nation with one collective identity that spanned religious and political divisions to include Croats and Bosnians as part of the larger Serbian nation. Furthermore, for students reminded of their centuries-long captivity in foreign lands, Vuk appeared as a national savior who preserved the memory of Serbian heroes and the customs of Serbian tradition, and his personal views on the importance of language as a defining factor of national identity became veritable canon. As such, there was not a single reader in any Serbian school that did not draw from his collection of epic poetry or his scholarly works. Nearly all published readers echoed the earlier commentary by Stojan Novaković who had praised Vuk’s work.

Nations are recognized by their language. However, many thousands of families [there are] who speak one language and understand one another, they comprise one nation … Go north, west, east, and south, and wherever you travel, wherever you hear people speak as we do or you can easily understand them, that represents one nation. But there is also something else by which a nation is identified. For example, if you were to go far from here, you would see many people who not only do not speak our language, but also are not proud of Miloš Obilić and do not sing about Kraljević Marko, they do not celebrate our glories, they do not go to church meetings as we do, and they do not lament over Kosovo. Frequently, they do not even know about these things. Consequently, people who speak one language, who share one national pride and everywhere remember one another, who have one and the same customs are called a nation.

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38 Vojislav M. Jovanović and Miloš Ivković, Srpska čitanka za četvrti razred srednjih škola (Serbian Reader for 4th Grade Middle School) (Belgrade: Geca Kon, 1913), p. 113; quoted in Jelavich (1990), p. 79.
It was not a coincidence that a national language was associated with national history and that both needed to be safeguarded against foreign contamination. National histories were components of linguistic traditions, and while Serbs were a part of the larger community of Slavs, secondary school readers noted both its ancient lineage as well as its cultural faithfulness to what Slavdom had been a millennium ago. Histories of the nations of Southeastern Europe described the lands of each nation in detail, and while the lands of other communities were limited to lands where Serbs had never lived in large numbers, Serbian history denoted lands that usually encompassed the greatest territorial expanse, even including lands Croats, Bulgarians and Hungarians considered historically and ethnically theirs. It should be noted that these readers were published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries amid intense feelings of nationalism that

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40 In a series of selections dealing with the origins of the Serbian people, both Filip Hristić who had served as an official in the Serbian Ministry of Education, a diplomat in Constantinopple, Vienna, and London and as governor of the National Bank, and Miloš Ivković, a professor at the Belgrade gymnasium, wrote a series of articles that attested to “Serb” being the original name of the entire Slavic people. Hristić’s schoolbook writings on the subject were presented in the form of a dialogue between a grandfather teaching his grandson history. When asked about the Slavic peoples, the grandfather replied that they numbered around 80 million, but have been scattered and divided in language, religion, and geography. However, the grandfather notes that “there was a time when almost all the Christian Slavs belonged to Eastern Orthodox Christianity and they used the old Slavic language in the liturgy. But the Slavic tribes, which were under western religious authorities, were after a short time compelled to abandon the Slavic language and Eastern Orthodoxy and to accept the Latin language and Western Christianity.” Those that had remained Orthodox, notably the Russians, Serbs, and Bulgarians, were regarded as the most authentic Slav communities, divided only in language. While this narrative is a clear interpretation of the Byzantine missionary activities to the Slavs of Moravia by Cyril and Methodios of the 9th century, the primary purpose is not to give a history lesson as it is to note the primacy of the Serbs and their historic traditions among the Slavs. See Filip Hristić, Treca čitanka za osnovne srpske škole (Third Reader for Serbian Primary School) (Belgrade, Državna štamparija, 1872b), p. 89, Miloš Ivković, Srpska čitanka za prvi razred srednjih škola (Serbian Reader for 1st Grade Secondary School) (Belgrade, Država štamparija, 1911), pp. 63, 82 – 88; all quoted in Jelavich (1990), pp. 72 – 74.

41 In the years immediately preceding the Balkan Wars, Protić and Stojanović noted the “bad luck” the Serbian people have because only two lands – present day Serbia and Montenegro – were free. It was unfortunate that “in the beautiful Serbian lands of Bosnia, Hercegovina, Srem, Banat, Bačka, Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia, Istria, Old Serbia [Raška and Kosovo], Macedonia, and the Vidin and Sredac [Sofia] provinces, foreigners rule over the Serbian people … [and that] it was difficult for our brothers in these Serbian regions” because they were still subject to discrimination and even death. Worse still, was that in some places they were not allowed to say that “they were Serbian and that their language was Serbian.” See Protić and Stojanović (1907), p. 223, quoted in Jelavich (1990), pp. 74 – 75.
swept through the Balkans and would engulf the region in three bloody conflicts for territorial expansion at the expense of the Hapsburg and Ottoman empires. Thus in an effort to lay claim to territory that was intrinsically “theirs”, Serbian readers noted the historic presence of Serbs in the Middle Ages who became “the masters of the western half of the Balkan peninsula and settled it.” The lands in question almost entirely matched with the regions identified in the Načertanije as rightfully part of an enlarged Serbian state: Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Bosnia, Hercegovina, Dalmatia with Dubrovnik, Montenegro, and northern Albania. In addition, the Serbs had also preceded the Hungarians in settling Bačka, Banat, and Slavonia.42

In addition to learning about one’s history and language came lessons in honoring both land and tongue through devotion to the fatherland. Students were told to devote their lives to their country, sacrificing it if necessary:

Children! A Serb gave birth to you, as a result of which you are called Serbs. You will carry this name with you until you die. You will boast about it before the world. Should anyone seek to impose another name on you in place of it, you would sooner die than acquiesce to this … This idea henceforth must be constantly in your mind, if you wish to be worthy sons of your ancestors, who loved their country and people so much that many of them died in order that they free it of the enemy.43

Further lessons in national loyalty emphasized the dangers of internal contagion and strengthened the importance of what the state means to national identity:

If you ever see a person who scorns his fatherland, you know that such a person is no good, is a tyrant, or a servile slave. These individuals have not been given [the opportunity] the sweetness of that feeling which this word [fatherland] awakens in a noble and honorable soul … And what is the fatherland? Is it some piece of land

42 Milan Šević, Srpska čitanka za srednje škole za II razred (Serbian Reader for Middle School Second Grade) (Belgrade: Državna štamparija, 1907), pp. 83 – 84, quoted in Jelavich (1990), p. 75.
43 Filip Hristić, Druga čitanka za osnove škole (Second Reader for Primary School) (Belgrade: Državna štamparija, 1872a), pp. 66 – 67, quoted in Jelavich (1990), pp. 75 – 76.
between designated boundaries? Or a city? Or a region? Or a state? Or the place where one was born?

No, the fatherland is something more than all that. It is a part of mankind, a part of humanity tied by some special bonds; it is a society of men who live in one land, under the same laws, with more or less the same customs.44

The safeguarding of the fatherland also meant the preservation of one’s language in not only speaking correctly, but also introducing foreign words that were not understood by the majority of the people. Learning a foreign language was acceptable, but the Serbian language should remain pure. Failure to acknowledge this

… is a sign that you do not love our Serbian people; that you do not wish Serbian to be heard everywhere where Serbs live. It means that you do not want a Greater Serbia in which will be united all the Serbs, however many there are. That is what the foreigner and the enemy wish and desire, that is why they purposefully do not call out language in Bosnia the Serbian language, but “Bosnian” and why they intentionally say that in Montenegro they speak Montenegrin and not Serbian. Therefore, be aware that you do not give aid to the enemy’s wishes and the foreigner’s intentions.45

While not necessarily stemming directly from the Načertanije itself, Serbia’s national policy under Garašanin, defined by top-down political corporatism and ethnocentric cultural identity, provided the framework for Serbia’s political agenda throughout the rest of the nineteenth century, through the First World War, and arguably up to the Nazi invasion of Yugoslavia in 1941. Interpretation of motives aside, many Serb-inhabited regions of the Ottoman Empire had established networks with Belgrade by the 1850s and a feeling of collective identity based on shared memories of the medieval past, the legacy of Kosovo, and the Serbian Orthodox Church – in essence the memories that had been codified in the centuries-old epic poetry – was now shaping official Serbian policy.

44 Svetislav Vulović, Srpska čitanka za niže gimnazije i realke (Serbian Reader for Lower Gymnasium) (Belgrade: Državna štamparija, 1874), II, pp. 199 – 200, quoted in Jelavich (1990), 76.
Ethnic brotherhood via Pan-Serbism, not South Slavic equality, took official form in Belgrade, and while it breathed a spirit of inclusive co-existence, it placed such feelings within a larger collective scope of Serbia as the restorer of a medieval Serbian Kingdom that was destined, and entitled, to control the Balkans.

In many ways, Garašanin was just as much of a dynamic leader as Miloš Obrenović before him, but differed from the earlier leader in almost all respects. Both were critical in cementing an independent national policy that might have relied on external support but was internally self-sufficient. However, whereas Miloš was content to rule a small Serbian principality as his personal property, Garašanin, more than any of his contemporaries, sought to place Serbia on the international stage as a contender for regional power in Southeastern Europe. The personal ties and word-of-mouth agreements that characterized cooperation with Miloš gave way to sophisticated diplomacy and far-reaching programs of national awakenings and territorial emancipation under Garašanin. If international figures were already looking to Belgrade as a leader in the cause of self-determination for other Slavic communities, Serbia had indeed come a long way from being little more than a heavily forested backwater a few decades before.

But this ethnocentrism that characterized most of nineteenth century Serbian foreign policy did not carry any of the chauvinistic and expansionist narratives that would become so characteristic of the populism of Serbian politics of the 1980s and 1990s. Garašanin was far more rational than most of his later critics would like to acknowledge, and far more astute at negotiating the balance between national aspiration and political pragmatism than any of his chief rivals at the time.  

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46 Garašanin was certainly not the only prominent Constitutionalist, nor was he one of its most charismatic figures. By most accounts, the peasant leader Toma Vučić-Perišić was probably the most charismatic figure.
liberation and expansion could be linked to Greater Serbian nationalism, and while he was personally and politically eager to see Belgrade’s authority cross the Drina into Bosnia, his actual policies operated with strategic prudence. There would be no epic crusade prematurely marching into Kosovo, nor would there be a storming of Turkish fortresses in Niš, Sarajevo, Prizren, or Skopje. Serbia had neither the military strength, nor the economic clout to achieve its long-range goals in the immediate future. Political prudence aside, Serbian politics beginning with Garašanin and cultivated under Prince Michael Obrenović (1858 – 1868) developed a sense of national patriotism that swelled the ranks of Serbian soldiers and officers, and even educated Serbs often boasted of living in a modern Sparta, a “Piedmont” or even a “Prussia” of the Balkans.47

From Romantic to Realpolitik Pan-Serbism: 1858 – 1918

The uprising in Bosnia in 1875, an uprising that Belgrade had for so long hoped for, would alter the course of Pan-Serbism from that of Romantic inclusion to exclusionary policies of Realpolitik by the turn of the century. It did not take much to arouse general sympathy in Serbia in directly assisting the insurgents in Bosnia. But pressures from Russia to also have Serbia join her in a simultaneous attack on Ottoman

of them all, at least to the peasant. As a one-time strong-man under Miloš Obrenović, Vučić-Perišić remained an illiterate peasant and a popular champion of the common folk, whose ambitions and world outlook remained primarily within the existing borders of Serbia. Desiring neither foreign entanglements nor territorial expansion, he vigorously objected to Garašanin’s idea of an enlarged Serbian-South Slavic state, and most readily favored close ties with Russia. Opposite Vučić-Perišić in both outlook and temperament was Avram Petronijević, a diplomat raised in a family of privilege. Like Garašanin, Petronijević favored diplomacy and negotiation, but unlike the former possessed neither the charismatic leadership, nor the appreciation for national self-determination. His Austrophilism also placed him in an awkward position when popular sentiment in Serbia was supportive of intervening to help the Hapsburg Serb communities in their struggle for liberation. In many respects, Garašanin possessed the strengths of Vučić’s national appeal, and Petronijević’s world outlook. See Petrovich (1976), pp. 223 – 287, and MacKenzie (1985), pp. 24 – 41.

47 Petrovich (1976), pp. 312 – 16
Bulgaria in the name of Balkan liberation split Serbia’s comparatively meager resources and placed Serbian soldiers directly against better-equipped Ottoman forces in a region that was far more defensible than Bosnia. The resulting conflicts cost Serbia dearly in lives and money, with roughly 5,000 dead, 9,000 wounded, and 200,000 people left homeless from the devastation of war. The subsequent Congress of Berlin saw the direct involvement of Great Powers claiming former Ottoman territory. In the end, Austria was given a mandate to occupy Bosnia and to garrison the Sandžak of Novi-Pazar, or historic Raška to Serbia. Macedonia and Kosovo remained within Ottoman control, while Serbia, ironically through the support of Austria, gained a 200 square mile region that included the towns of Niš, Vranje, and Pirot as well as being formally recognized as an independent state. What might have began as a potentially major victory for Serbia annexing Bosnia ended in nominal gains. Its losses were blamed on Russian military and diplomatic interference and what it gained looked more like a charity handout from Austria. In other words, Serbia was completely dependent on the goodwill of larger powers, which claimed the lion’s share of the spoils.

Instead of a large South Slavic state formed on the ashes of a weak Ottoman Empire, the region was now divided into national states, independent of Turkey, but dependent on far more powerful entities. The coveted regions of Bosnia and parts of Old Serbia were now occupied by formidable Austria. Blocked by Austria to the north and now the west, and by Russian-backed Bulgaria to the east, Serbia’s only hope for future expansion lie to the south in Ottoman Kosovo and Macedonia, the latter being also the target of Bulgaria and Greece, making another war incredibly likely. The Romanticism of Pan-Serbism only a few decades ago, gave way to more exclusionary forms of Serb
ethnocentrism. This meant that if Serbia could not militarily challenge its neighbors in claiming territory it deemed rightfully its own, it could continue to wage clandestine cultural wars to weaken authority in the region and make it more receptive to Belgrade. But what this ended up doing was not only exacerbating already tense relations with Austria, but also straining relations with Serbia’s Slavic neighbors, particularly Bulgaria. Increasingly, Serbian-driven Pan-Slavic unity in the Balkans became less a program of brotherly inclusiveness and more a policy of domination by an aspiring regional power.

Serbia’s main rival continued to be Austria, which imposed a series of humiliating measures on the smaller state almost immediately following full independence in 1878. Largely through the naïve and inept leadership of the Austrophile Prince Milan Obrenović, a series of economic trade agreements signed between the two states in 1881 effectively placed Serbia within Austria’s economic sphere of interest, binding her to the larger power and forcing Serbia to purchase manufactured goods in exchange for exporting agricultural goods and livestock. This effectively discouraged the development of home-grown Serbian industries and placed most of its revenue on Austria’s acceptance of exported goods. The so-called “Secret Treaty” of 1881 between Austria, Germany and Russia paved the way for Austria’s eventual annexation of Bosnia, which occurred in 1908. In order to consolidate its hold over Bosnia, Austria first needed to economically handicap Serbia from taking any further measures in stirring up the population across the Drina and thus risking financial crippling from Austrian reprisals. When relations with Bulgaria were improved under the enlightened rule of King Petar Karadjordjević culminating in a separate trade agreement in 1905, a furious Austria suspended all trade agreements of its own resulting in the Tariff War of 1906 – 1911.
The immediate effects of the Tariff War brought severe disruption to Serbia’s economy by depriving it of its major trading partner. However countermeasures in finding new markets, particularly Britain, France, Belgium, and Germany, lessened the damage somewhat. More importantly, it allowed Serbia to develop a nascent industrial economy of its own. However in response to Serbia’s continued defiance, Austria formally annexed Bosnia in 1908, violating the Treaty of Berlin of 1878, and severely crippling Serbia’s longstanding program of Balkan unification. The national populist dominated government of Nikola Pašić’s Radical Party, Serbia’s first modern political party, links between local and national chapters and successful efforts in mobilizing the population at large urged immediate secret mobilization and preparation for war. But Austria’s political clout on the international stage easily overpowered little Serbia in securing support for its annexation as a fait accompli in manners eerily resembling international activities a century later concerning the fate of Kosovo’s independence and the forcing of Serbia to accept similar imposed realities. Tied down by their own internal problems, no other power, not even Russia, was willing to challenge Austria’s annexation of Bosnia, and even went so far as to pressure Serbia to not only recognize Bosnia’s loss as an irreversible fact, but to also make restitution to Austria in pledging it would not destabilize the region by continuing to ferment dissent among Bosnia’s Serbian population. Even after Serbia’s territorial gains in the Balkan Wars of 1912 – 1913, including its euphoric liberation of Kosovo, Austria continued to remain the primary obstacle in achieving full South Slavic unity.

A pattern in Serbian political life since Garašanin was that while incumbent governments might be ideologically disposed towards Romantic ideas of a Greater
Serbian/South Slavic state, political realities and meager resources, particularly in comparison to Austria-Hungary, limited such ideas to conform with more Serb-centered policies. Even the policies of Nikola Pašić, clearly no friend to Vienna and probably the most influential statesman since Garašanin, was forced to accept acquiescence of Austria’s annexation of Bosnia in the face of international diplomatic pressure. What this all meant by 1914 was that while Pan-Serbism might have justified itself with the understanding of an enlarged Serbian state dominating the western Balkans, reviving Dušan’s Emire, and taking its rightful place among other states in Europe, the Great Powers were more inclined to keep Serbia as a secondary power dependent on their own national interests. These restraints however were not extended to various secret paramilitary organizations that were established after 1908, culminating in the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo by Gavrilo Princip, a member of one of these paramilitary groups, symbolically and coincidentally on Vidovdan, June 28, 1914.

The Uncomfortable Co-Existence of Pan-Serbism and South Slavism: 1918 – 1945

As the Austro-Hungarian Empire was collapsing by 1917, debates reemerged in Balkan and Western European centers as to the future of the Southern Slavs; however, conceptions of a Pan-Serb state paralleled that of a truly multi-ethnic South Slavic, or Yugoslav, state without any clear-cut distinctions. The ultimate goal of annexing Bosnia and gaining access to the sea would eventually be realized, but only within the

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multiethnic Yugoslav state formed after 1918 where nationally-conscious Croatian and Slovene communities were not as eager to share Serbian ideas of political domination. Nikola Pašić remained a strong advocate of an enlarged Serbian state that included Bosnia, Vojvodina, and Montenegro, and a continuation of centralized policies of government. With the collapse of the Hapsburg Empire, Pašić viewed the acquisition of these lands as rightfully belonging to the Serbian nation, even if Serbia had to exist within some South Slavic confederation. But an idea for a co-fraternal Yugoslav state had been popular among the South Slavs, including Serbs, of the Hapsburg Empire due to a greater history of inter-ethnic co-habitation and socio-political cooperation against Imperial hegemony. As a collective voice of Hapsburg Slavs during the war, the Yugoslav Committee envisioned a postwar state as a union of Slavs based on equality, fraternity, and collective self-determination. But to Pašić and other members of the Serbian government, if a Yugoslav state were to form, it would be controlled by Belgrade, which viewed itself at the liberator of captive brethren and spokesmen before the nations of the world. In the words of the elder statesman, “Serbia does not want to drown in Yugoslavia, but to have Yugoslavia drown in her.”

The formal proclamation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes on December 1, 1918, by no means resolved the conflicting narratives. Rather, Belgrade continued to be dominated by members of Pašić’s Radical Party, and treated the new territorial acquisitions that were originally cited in the Pan-Serb model as its own property. While “national awakenings” of non-Serb communities, particularly the Albanians, had quickly developed since 1914, minority rights in Kosovo and Macedonia

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were largely ignored as Serbian politicians refused to acknowledge the distinctiveness of these communities. Subsequent programs of settling both areas with large numbers of Serb colonists sought to increase control by either reducing the percentage of non-Serb communities, or, in the case of Kosovo, encouraging emigration. Additionally, Montenegrins, though ethnically, linguistically, religiously, and culturally Serbian, had their own independent state for centuries. With the establishment of Yugoslavia in 1918, they were completely subsumed under Belgrade’s authority, and their king, Nikola I, was forced to abdicate in favor of the Serbian Karadjordjević dynasty, which now assumed monarchical authority over all of Yugoslavia. Additionally, attempts by the interior ministry to appoint provincial and county prefects generated more resentment against Belgrade centralism, even among the Serb communities of former Hapsburg territories.

Both Pašić and King Aleksandar Karadjordjević supported measures that promoted ethnic and economic links to populations on both sides of major rivers, or divided towns into several counties. In Kosovo, such measures gerrymandered districts to allow for the largest percentage of Serb representation at the expense of Albanian. Though districts in Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia were demarcated by historical boundaries, all four Bosnian districts were represented by Serbs, as were all three in Vojvodina, which still possessed large Hungarian and German populations.

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50 During the 1920s and 1930s, a Special Commission in Belgrade encouraged Serb and Montenegrin families to settle in Kosovo on land supposedly abandoned by Turkish and Albanian owners. In similar patterns of Muslim withdrawal and parceling of the land to small homesteads that characterized Serbian repopulation of Ottoman territories in the nineteenth century, the Commission also provided a small compensation to the 40,000 – 80,000 families who migrated. In the 1930s, a second wave of 12,000 families migrated. While Kosovo remained overwhelmingly poor and undeveloped, these Serb settlers struggled to survive economically and soon became politically active against the revival of any Albanian influence. See Lenard J. Cohen, *The Socialist Pyramid, Elites, and Power in Yugoslavia*, (Oakville, Ontario: Mosaic Press, 1989), pp. 337 – 41.

51 Rationales for the disproportionate percentage of Serbs was based on the requirement of prefects needing fifteen years experience and sub-prefects ten years, qualifications that favored Serbia’s prewar bureaucracy.
The two most enigmatic figures of interwar Yugoslav politics was the Croat Stjepan Radič, whose opposition to Serb-controlled Yugoslav centrism was fashioned around a combination of agrarian populism and Croatian nationalism, and King Aleksandar Kadjordjević, of the Serbian Royal House, but a genuine believer and champion of Yugoslav identity. By linking Croatian self determination as a fundamental right of the Croatian people (narod), Radič is largely remembered by Croats as a defender of national rights against Serb hegemony, but must also be blamed in part for the deterioration in relations between Serbs and Croats, particularly in former Hapsburg territory where mutual feelings of interdependency had been fostered since 1848. His insistence for a federal system of government might have earned him greater support from other non-Serb communities, particularly the Macedonians and the Slovenes, but his linking of federalism to Croatian autonomy merely contributed to the growing rifts in government, an invigorated response of centralism by Pašić, and eventually culminated in his assassination on the floor of the Parliament by a Montenegrin Radical on June 20, 1928.52 Radič’s assassination irreparably damaged interwar Serb-Croat relations. Following the crisis, King Aleksandar Karadjordjević, abolished the constitution, dissolved the parliament, and declared a State of Emergency one year later. Though he enacted a series of decrees that attempted to eliminate ethnic differences and promote a

These prefects also commandeered an army-appointed police force, many of which were made up of Serbia’s wartime army, hence making the police force at least 60% Serb. See John Lampe, Yugoslavia as History: Twice there was a Country, 2nd edition (Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 133.

52 In two enigmatic descriptions of Radič, Banac notes his ardent defense of Croatian self-determination in Yugoslava: “Gentlemen, you evidently do not care a whit that our peasant in general, and especially our Croat peasant, does not wish to hear one more thing about kings or emperors, nor about a state which you imposing on him by force … We Croats shall say openly and clearly: if the Serbs really want to have such a centralist state and government, may God bless them with it, be we Croats do not want any state organization except a confederated federal republic,” Speech by Radič given to the Central Committee of Zagreb’s National Council, 1918, cited in Banac (1984), p. 226. Banac also points out that while he was an ardent defender of Croatian culture and identity, he wrote whole letters in Serbian Cyrillic to his Czech wife, obliging her to learn the script medium of the Serbs! See Banac (1984), p. 227.
supranational Yugoslav character on the state such as officially changing the name of the state to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, restructuring the internal divisions of the 33 ethnically-gerrymandered oblasts (regions) into 9 large topographically neutral banovine (districts), and legalizing the equal use of the Latin alphabet with that of Cyrillic, he too met a violent end on October 9, 1934 while on a state visit to Paris. Ironically, his assassination was rather multiethnic in character: his assassin was Vlado Chernozemski, a member of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (VRMO) that in addition to resisting Serbian hegemony in Macedonia was actively seeking unification with Bulgaria. However, VRMO was working in alliance with the Ustaša, a Croatian fascist movement that was supported by fascist organizations in Italy and Hungary. While being transported back to Belgrade for the official funeral, he lay in state for a day in Zagreb and was mourned by more than 200,000 people. Anton Korošec, leader of the Slovene People’s Party (SLS) is reported to have said with his assassination, “we ought to live and work for Yugoslavia now, everything else is forgotten.”

Yugoslavia continued to suffer from internal divisions, governmental dysfunctionality, and questions surrounding collective identity until the Nazi invasion in April 1941. Although the idea of a Yugoslav state had gained greater acceptance by the mid 1930s, particularly among the urban elites of Belgrade and Zagreb, such an idea failed to translate into political consensus. The two narratives of Pan-Serbism and Yugoslavism seeped into all political debates and international crises, gravitating towards extremism on both sides. Because the majority of Serb parties continued to act as if the Kingdom of Serbia still existed and largely refused to cooperate with Croats, the second largest ethnic group in the state, and refused to even acknowledge the legitimate presence

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of entire ethnic groups, they had, in the words of Joseph Rothschild, “squandered the
moral capital that Serbia’s heroic performance in World War I had earned for
Yugoslavia.” Conversely, Croatian decisions to simply boycott any and all activity they
did not agree with resulted in Serb predominance in the officer corps, civil service
sectors, and cabinet positions, all of which contributed to increased Croatian displeasure
that they were being underrepresented in Yugoslav institutions. Between 1921 and 1939,
452 of 656 ministers were ethnic Serbs from all over Yugoslavia.

The politics of Pan-Serb centrism in the new Yugoslav state may be considered
one of the primary components of that state’s failure, notwithstanding the actual Nazi
invasion in 1941. However given the fact that the majority of Serbian political activity
continued to be dominated by its prewar elite and prewar bureaucracy, with Pašić as its
chief strongman, such conditions were a logical, if unfortunate, consequence. But those
elites that supported a more egalitarian South Slavic form of collective identity rarely
entered the political debate. Stjepan Radić, Pašić’s, and indeed Serbia’s, chief political
and ideological rival, was enigmatic for his fierce defense of Croatian autonomy, and
only supported South Slavic unity as a vague counterbalance to Serb centrism. Political
parties largely retained their prewar ethnic association and operated along their own
agendas. With the exception of the newly formed Yugoslav Communist Party (KPJ),
whose revolutionary character hardly appealed to a peacetime populace, and for which
earned it near-universal anathema by other parties, no interwar organization was truly
representative of Yugoslavia’s multiethnic composition. Furthermore, because no ethnic

55 Another exception might be the Democratic Party (Demokratska stranka, DS) led by former Hapsburg Serb Svetozar Pribićević, and practiced an uncompromising form of Yugoslav centrism. But while the DS,
group formed a clear majority of the overall population, no party was large enough to win a parliamentary majority, and few leaders were tolerant enough to trust other parties in working together to form a sustainable governing coalition.\textsuperscript{56} Blame for political stalemates was often placed on the opposing side, while each side’s own political objectives was translated into the “national will” of the ethnic whole. Civic forms of South Slavic unity may have existed among Serb, Croat, and Slovene intellectuals, but they remained largely outside the political sphere.

In retrospect, the formation of the first Yugoslavia, while appearing to be a culmination of both Serb and Croat aspirations of brotherhood, and seemingly affirming the 19\textsuperscript{th} century dreams of Garašanin and Gaj, was more out of socio-political convenience and necessity than mutual political interest. That Croatia and Slovenia joined what amounted to an enlarged Serbian state out defense against encroaching Italian and Austrian expansion respectively, was little more than an afterthought to Pan-Serbists like Pašić, who viewed its territorial attachment to the Serbian Kingdom as a small price to pay for what he believed was a realization of the Greater Serbian state envisioned the century before. While there is little indication to suggest he saw Croats as simply Catholic Serbs as earlier Romantic Pan-Serbists did, he did see these non-Serb communities as subordinate members to a Serb-centric state. Regardless, irreconcilable

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\textsuperscript{56} Serbs in 1918 formed the majority ethnicity, but less than 40\% of the entire population. Croats formed the second largest group with little under 25\%. See Banac (1984), p. 58
differences between Serb and Croat factions were more a sign of mutually reinforcing cultural ethnocentrism than Pan-Serb chauvinism on one side and egalitarian South Slavism on the other. A genuine sense of South Slavic nationalism would dominate Yugoslav politics in the first two decades of the reconstructed communist state. But the return of pan-ethnic identities, first in Croatia and later in Serbia, revealed that these narratives, replaced as they temporarily were by the supranational identity of Yugoslav socialism, remained viable options for political elites to quickly gather public support for socio-political policies. The major difference by the 1990s however, were the legitimization of ethnocentrisms based on historical memories of persecution and oppression by the other.
Chapter 6 – Pan-Serb Identity as Political and Cultural Divider: 1974 – 1989

The establishment of a Communist regime in 1945 was thought by its founders to finally put an end to the internal political divisions that plagued the first Yugoslav state and led to some of the worst inter-ethnic fighting anywhere in Europe during the Second World War. While many observers today write off the entire Yugoslav phenomenon as a colossal failure, evidence as late as the early 1970s revealed discernible progress in achieving both political and multiethnic balance.\(^1\) After 1945, the Communists constructed a top-down centrist state similar to the Soviet model that incorporated various ethnic identities within one supranational Yugoslav identity based on “brotherhood and unity” (bratstvo i jedinstvo) through strong centralizing politics in education, culture, and the media.\(^2\) This identity was largely fashioned around the collective efforts in Partisan wartime resistance against all forms of aggression: Nazi, Croat-Fascist, and Serb-monarchical. Indeed, according to Pavlowitch, “history was made to begin when the Communists Party went over to the resistance in 1941. All the rest was prehistory leading to that event.”\(^3\) Though the ruling party allowed certain studies such as Byzantine and Medieval history to continue relatively unchanged, modern history, most notably nineteenth century Serbian history, was strictly controlled. That which could be not easily


co-opted into official Communist historical memory was derided as monarchist, fascist, or nationalist.

Studies taken in the 1960s indicated that the majority of Yugoslavia’s citizens held some form of collective South Slavic identity and found little reason to mistrust other ethnic communities. By the death of longtime Communist leader Josip Tito in 1980, more people than ever identified themselves as “Yugoslavs”. By most accounts, Serbian acceptance of Yugoslavia as a state and as a collective identity was strong, even if few Serbs actually called themselves “Yugoslav”. Considering the fierce resistance from its prewar elites to anything that diluted the identity of the Serbian nation into a larger Yugoslav collective, and considering the cultural and historical capital available to a nation that existed for over a century as an independent state, this is truly a remarkable phenomenon. All things considered, Serbs formed a large contingent of Tito’s wartime Partisan anti-fascist resistance movement, and had largely accepted the ethnically neutral Yugoslav narrative as long as other ethnic groups were equally willing to adhere. Even as late as the 1980s survey data from Serb-inhabited regions in both Croatia and Bosnia revealed high levels of positive multiethnic coexistence, high levels of ethnic intermarriage, and little evidence of impending violence or ethnic mistrust. Indeed, the very Serb-inhabited regions of Croatia and Bosnia, in which Western analysts and

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journalists glibly considered as lands awash in nationalism, ethnic stigmas and so-called “ancient hatreds”, enjoyed some of the highest degrees of interethnic cooperation, tolerance, and collective identity.6

Nevertheless, similar patterns that led to the dysfunctionality of the first Yugoslav state continued to plague the second. First, following the Soviet-Yugoslav split and the latter’s subsequent expulsion from the Cominform in 1948, the Pan-Serb/South Slavic models were translated into a centrist/federalist debates that dominated Yugoslav political discourse up until the early 1990s. While debates over the structure of power remained focused on maintaining a unified state until the 1980s, economic conditions necessitated structural change as early as the 1960s. Centralized state planning resulted in Yugoslavia having one of the highest economic growth rates in the world in the 1950s, but the need to shift to more intensive use of resources became apparent in the following decade. Increased standards of living invariably altered socio-economic preferences of the population. Urban migration, industrialization, and an increased enrollment in universities of higher learning all led to a new generation of Yugoslavs with worldviews

6 In a survey conducted in Croatia in 1989, 72.1% of Serbs described interethnic relations in their own communities as very good or mainly good, 23.4% as average, and 3.5% as mainly bad or very bad. When asked about perceptions of threats to national rights, 87.3% of Serbs and 82.7% of Croats responded negatively. When asked whether mixed nationality marriages were more unstable than others, 86.6% of Serbs and 72% of Croats disagreed. Among Croats, 66% of respondents characterized interethnic relations in their own community as very good or mainly good, 25.5% as average, and only 8.7% as mainly bad or very bad. The survey concludes that “at the end of 1989 signs of tensions between nationalities in Croatia were hardly discernible … Croats, Serbs, and Yugoslavs were convinced of the possibility of a life together unburdened by considerations of national similarities or differences.” See “The Level of National Absorption”, in Croatian Society on the Eve of Transition, ed., Katarina Prpić, Bleženka Despot, and Nikola Dugandžija (Zagreb: Institute for Social Research, 1993), pp. 135 – 152, cited in Gagnon (2004), p. 36. In Bosnia, surveys measuring “ethnic distance” revealed the lowest levels in all Yugoslavia next to Serbian Vojvodina. In a survey taken in November 1989, 80% of the surveyed population considered interethnic relations in places where they lived to be a positive thing. When asked whether ethnicity should be taken into consideration for marriage, 80% of Serbs, 77% of Muslims, 66% of Croats, and 93.4% of “Yugoslavs” replied they should not. See “Gradani Bosne i Hercegovine o međunacionalnim odnosima,” Oslobodjenje, March 22, 1990 for a report on a survey undertaken by Ibrahim Bakić and Ratko Dunderović, Institute for the Study of National Relations in Bosnia-Hercegovina. In another poll taken in Bosnia in January 1990, 81.6% of all respondents agreed with the statement “I am Yugoslav and cannot give priority to feeling of some other belonging.” Cited in Gagnon, The Myths of Ethnic War (2004), pp. 40 – 41.
and interests that were far more modern than the wartime Partisan generation. In other words, by the 1960s, a growing middle class was clearly visible and sought structural changes to the state to accommodate new socio-economic needs. This meant less party control and greater degrees of worker’s self-management to determine the necessary needs of production.

With Tito’s backing, the new Constitution of 1963 was a watershed in Yugoslavia’s history in that the state structurally shifted towards federalism and increasingly delegated powers to each of the republics, with “socially-owned means of production” being one of the most important provisions. Economic decisions were no longer made by the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (SKJ), but according to market criteria. Tito himself discouraged the use ideological propaganda in favor of the need for technical knowledge and “detailed understanding” of economics and management. It was hoped that with the economic empowerment of reformist forces at the local level, a political reformist strategy would take form at the republic level. Many of these reforms were widely accepted by the population, and throughout the 1960s Yugoslav institutions gravitated closer to the European mainstream. Economic liberalization invariably facilitated the relaxation of political restrictions, and by the late 1960s, the republics

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8 Gagnon (2004), p. 55, fn5
9 Overall, student enrollment by the mid-1960s increased by nearly 25% in secondary schools and 5% in universities. Three new universities opened in Sarajevo, Skopje, and Novi Sad, while the older ones in Belgrade, Zagreb, and Ljubljana greatly expanded their academic programs and departments. Most importantly, the overall quality of education increased substantially due to improved relations with Western Europe and the United States. The Fulbright program began in Yugoslavia in 1964 and quickly became the second largest in Europe after West Germany. All of this produced a highly educated reservoir of human capital ready to work harder within the system than any of their Soviet-satellite counterparts. Yugoslav-U.S. relations in education also made English the most studied foreign language in both philology and literature. See Lampe, Yugoslavia as History (2000), pp. 292 – 93.
enjoyed significant freedoms of print and artistic expression. Movie theaters in all major Yugoslav cities showed American films and discothèques played Western music. While most journalists were party members, the leading dailies in Belgrade, Zagreb, and Ljubljana frequently published independent analyses, and radio and television newscasts were considered both informative and objective by Western standards. The only subjects that were still officially taboo were criticisms of Tito and the single-party system, or anything that challenged the official historical narratives of the state, particularly the Partisan struggle in the Second World War. All else considered, Yugoslav journalists and researchers enjoyed freedoms unprecedented in any other communist country.11

But in the long run, increased decentralization actually resulted in a greater sense of regionalism, where a rise in nationalism became an unintended consequence. As the next twenty-five years would reveal, a shift away from a centralized supranational Yugoslav state also marked a shift away from Yugoslav collective identity and an erosion of multiethnic communitarianism and social trust in favor of increasingly ethnocentric orientations and values.12 While decentralization facilitated greater independent planning in economic matters, it also facilitated the gradual development of separate, and oftentimes conflicting, identities. As in monarchical Serbia and the first Yugoslavia, increased democratization and greater degrees of Westernization did not necessarily imply that everything published was democratic in nature, nor collectively “Yugoslav” in outlook. In many respects, reductions in state-controlled censorship of what to print and

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10 Yugoslavia enjoyed some of the most widespread experiments in literary and artistic expression anywhere in Eastern Europe. For an extensive examination of the artistic schools, see Dubravka Djurić and Miško Šuvaković, eds., Impossible Histories: Historic Avant-Garde, Neo-Avant-Gardes, and Post-Avant-Gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918 – 1991 (MIT Press, 2006)
12 For one of the earliest works on the potential problem of the resurfacing of national identities to challenge the unity of Yugoslavia, see Wayne S. Vucinich, ed., Contemporary Yugoslavia: (1969)
what to research actually increased senses of ethnic nationalism. Continued economic
deterioration by the late 1970s and a growing economic disparity between the individual
republics invariably prompted economic solutions that fit the needs and capabilities of
each republic rather than the state. These debates ranged from greater degrees of
economic freedoms in the more developed regions of Slovenia, Croatia, and the Serbian
province of Vojvodina on one end, to greater economic assistance and allocation of
revenue from richer republics to poorer ones like Montenegro, Macedonia, and the
Serbian province of Kosovo on the other. 13 Disagreements over economic strategies took
on less of a centrist/federalist debate than a cacophony of eight separate self-interested
political units regarding their individual economies as separate “national” economies with
increasing recalcitrance to integration processes.

The Roots of Ethno-federalism in Yugoslavia

Beginning in 1966, reformists in the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (Savez
komunista Jugoslavije, SKJ) undertook a series of sweeping economic and political
reforms to meet the growing economic challenges to political, social, and demographic
development. Economic decisions were now made according to market criteria rather
than by criteria of party bureaucrats. The primary goal was to dismantle what was
perceived as a bloated and outdated bureaucracy that was too rigid for the changing
dynamics of the state, particularly at the local level, which henceforth was given greater

13 For an excellent study of the political, economic, and cultural consequences of this structural shift, see
Ramet, Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia: (1992). See also Woodward, Socialist Unemployment:
political and economic responsibilities. In addition to giving reformists within the government the needed leverage to enact these changes, it enjoyed widespread public support irrespective of the potential tensions it might cause between the ethnically defined republics. It was only after hardliners within the Party, including Serbia, realized they could no longer argue against reforms on pain of party expulsion that attempts were made to shift the debate from the economic to the ethnic, and that further reforms were harmful to the Serbian nation because they were being victimized by Serbia’s “historical enemies”.

Decentralization had in fact facilitated conditions where reformists in Croatia took the opportunity of greater degrees of liberalism to reexamine their own place within Yugoslavia, even going as far as rehabilitating a number of historical figures and symbols that had previously been taboo by official Yugoslav censorship. While there is nothing to suggest that this “Croatian Spring” was a resurgence of exclusionary nationalism and a resurrection of the fanatical intolerance that characterized Croatia during the Nazi occupation, hardliners in Serbia, and even in Croatia where some party conservatives feared for their political future, blamed the reformers for fermenting dissent that was both anti-Yugoslav and anti-Serb. By arguing that reforms, especially the loosening of party

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15 Closely associated with the economic reforms in Croatia were the socio-political debates of *Matica Hrvatska*, a Croatian intellectual organization, which like its counterpart *Matica Srpska* was founded in the nineteenth century as a pre-state intellectual think-tank, and formed the philosophical core of the so-called “Croatian Spring” movement. Like the Czech model it was named after, it too evolved from a small group of university thinkers to a movement of national euphoria. Originally, *Matica Hrvatska* focused on general questions of whether Croatia should be defined as a state of the Croatian nation, or as the “national state of the Croatian nation, the state of the Serbian nation in Croatia, and the state of nationalities inhabiting it.” See Judah, *The Serbs* (1997), p. 146. The Croatian reformists had two primary complaints. The first was that the Serbs were disproportionately represented in army, police, and Communist Party in Croatia. Demographically, the Serbs comprised anywhere between 12 – 15% of the population, but made up anywhere between 60 – 70% of the police force, and about 40% of the party membership. The second was that too much hard currency was being channeled away from Croatia and towards the federal center in
control, were dangerous and would unleash powerful nationalist elements in breaking up the state, forces in favor of greater centralization provided a new political and ideological framework that would characterize the remaining decades of Yugoslavia’s existence.

First, concepts of state centralization became increasingly coterminous with Serbian national interests. While this may have preserved an overrepresentation of Serbs in state and security sectors, it was increasingly perceived that through the presence of such strong representation, Serbs were the primary driving force behind continued centralization and resistance to reform. Second, by associating liberalization and reform with the unleashing of nationalism, hardliners in Serbia and elsewhere facilitated an understanding that reform was tantamount to counterrevolutionary activity. Serb centrists may not have necessarily thought of their strategies in ethnic terms, but that Serbs comprised sizeable minorities in Croatia, Bosnia, Montenegro, and Kosovo Province, the potential to exploit the link between state centralization and Pan-Serb solidarity became

Belgrade. Even with state enterprises being independent owned and operated, large percentages of annual revenues were distributed to poorer areas in Macedonia, Montenegro, and Kosovo Province. While the economic grievances might have been understood as a wealthier region’s initial reluctance to the overall collective well-being of the state, the specific mentioning of ethnic lopsidedness in Croatia’s state and security sectors were the primary cause of alarm. As Matica Hrvatska continued to voice its displeasure at what it increasingly saw as attempts by Serb bureaucrats to harness the Croatian people to its own communist-dominated state, hardliners in Belgrade, through the state police, distributed pamphlets stating that the Croatian reformers were in contact with exiled members of the wartime pro-fascist Ustaša party, and were planning on establishing a separate state. These issues of Croatian national identity also spilled into Bosnia where sizeable Croatian minorities lived. There too, Croatian nationalists highlighted the disproportionate percentage of Serbs in state jobs in relation to its overall demographic percentage. The Serbs countered that Croats in Bosnia were disproportionately represented in its intellectual and academic circles. The most severe sign of Croatian national agitation came in 1967 when leading intellectual organizations in Croatia signed a petition to reject the official declaration of Serbian and Croatian as one unified national language, and the repudiation of the use of the Cyrillic alphabet in all official Croatian documents. The final straw came when openly declared Croatian nationalists called for the creation of a Croatian seat at the UN, and the annexation of Bosnia to Croatia; a demand that provoked the Serbs to demand the annexation of Serb-inhabited regions of Bosnia to Serbia. When echoes of pan-ethnic nationalism were heard even among the League of Croatian Communists, Tito had had enough. After receiving word from Moscow that the Soviet Union would not object to Tito putting down what amounted to an uprising, both Croatian Spring and the reformist movement had come to an end. See Ramet (1992), pp. 98 – 135; Ante Ćuvalo, The Croatian National Movement, 1966 – 1972 (New York: East European Monographs, 1990), and Marcus Tanner, Croatia: A Nation Forged in War (Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 184 – 202.
increasingly likely. Third, the reframing of the dangers of reform as a threat to Serbs was not only a way for hardliners to shift focus away from inter-republic efforts of reform, a lost asset that might have saved Yugoslavia from eventual breakup, but also a strategic tool in demobilizing democratic-minded elements in Serbia from appropriating a form of collective identity that was congruent to economic liberalization and interethnic cooperation. Narratives of Serbian victimhood at the hands of Croats, Bosnians, and Albanians during the Second World War suddenly began to take shape as potential deterrents against future cross-ethnic cooperation. In other words, reframing political and economic problems around ethnic fears and interests eroded the genuine cooperation shared among almost all of Yugoslavia’s communities since 1945.

The resulting compromise by Tito was an end to reforms, but an increase in decentralization of power to the republics and two autonomous provinces of Serbia, Vojvodina and Kosovo. The result, which was codified in a new Constitution of 1974 was an unruly mishmash of eight unreformed autarkic units, where bureaucratic centralism was politically and economically replicated at the republic level, providing each unit, including Vojvodina and Kosovo, with powers of “proto-statehood”. 16 In effect, the republics possessed all the features of local government but none of the dynamics, and after Tito’s death in 1980, republic powers became so jealously guarded by a new generation of entrenched elites whose political vision rarely extended beyond republic borders that “proto-statehood” developed significant ethnic characteristics that reflected the society in each. An example of just how fragmented Yugoslavia became by the 1980s can be shown in the inability of the International Monetary Fund to calculate a

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total outstanding national debt because each subunit borrowed money without informing the Federal Executive Council. It was obvious that resolving the growing economic crisis would have to be accompanied by political reform.

While federalization itself was not directly responsible for the rise in ethnic nationalism, strong centralizing institutions that promoted an economically modern and culturally neutral pan-Yugoslav identity no longer existed beyond a mental conception by the 1980s. Since the 1960s, decentralization in the absence of liberalization resulted in increased economic mismanagement in each republic by the 1970s. It was no longer expedient to think state-wide in economic planning, but to localize economic enterprises in each republic. Thus “political factories”, or projects that economically made no sense but were undertaken for political reasons, such as an airport in every republic and province and the control and regulation over inter-republic roads and highways, adding a sense of local ethnic pride but contributed to the squandering of state-wide economic planning and added to the already cumbersome bureaucratic red tape. Even among post-1974 reformists and advocates of greater democratic freedoms was nationalism part of their cultural and literary discourse. Slovenia was undoubtedly Yugoslavia’s richest and most economically developed republic, but also one of its most nationally conscious. By the mid 1980s, new calls for greater economic freedoms went hand in hand with greater political freedoms in Slovenia, including the freedom to think of Slovenes as a distinct ethnic nationality apart from Yugoslavism, and to celebrate distinctively Slovenian, rather than Yugoslav, heritage. Organizations such as the Slovenian Writers’ Society openly called for bringing Slovenia “back into Europe”. A conceptual repositioning of

18 Ramet (1992), pp. 161 – 174
Slovenia as a Central European state that was closer in socio-political orientation to Austria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia became increasingly popular as juxtaposed to the pejorative “Balkan” identity to which it was held captive, and to which was rapidly seen by members of Slovenian cultural elites as “Asiatic” and an alien “Other”.19

Had statewide civic institutions remained strong, and had the emerging middle class in the early 1960s developed into a pan-Yugoslav social class, uncompromising ethnic identities might have been blunted and republic self-interests might never have grown to the intractable degrees they did by the 1980s.20 As it turned out, increased federalization redirected social mobilization away from national unity and towards republic interests. Instead of a truly multiethnic Yugoslav middle class, a defense of decentralization became defining features of Slovene, Croatian, and Albanian nationalism, while recentralization increasingly came to define Serbian identity.21

Debates over inter-ethnic power relations, inter-republic boundaries, economic slowdown, and waning memories of the Partisan struggle in World War II as the only unifying “Yugoslav” narrative, all gave rise to the return of individual “National Questions”. The limited control of the central state over the media, a primary requisite for democratic governance, actually served to exacerbate nationalist mythmaking, and transform reconstructed ethnocentric historic narratives into officially sanctioned non-

20 This is primary argument shared by Duško Sekulić, Garth Massey and Randy Hodson, who argued that as late as 1989, urban residents, the young, children of intermarriages, Communist Party members, and members of ethnic minorities in each republic, were the most likely to identify as “Yugoslav” before any other form of identitification. However, none of these forces proved sufficient to counter the growing rise of nationalism, and in the case of Communist Party members, many upper ranking members in Serbia found compatibility between supporting a particular nationalist ideal while remaining ideologically loyal to a Yugoslav state. See Sekulić et al, “Who were the Yugoslavs? Failed Surces of a Common Identity in the Former Yugoslavia”, American Sociological Review, vol. 59, no. 1 (February, 1994), pp. 83 – 97.
negotiable truths. It is with no exaggeration in saying that before his death, Tito remained the only publicly accepted symbol of Yugoslavism left in the country. Once the Yugoslav debate switched from the structural to the ethnic, all semblance of collective unity quickly lost legitimacy and reason for continuity.\textsuperscript{22} Without a collective belief in Yugoslavia and a shared sense of belonging by the various ethnic groups through mediums of civic patriotism, key democratic freedoms actually led to the state’s collapse.

\textit{Yugoslavia’s “Outburst of History” and the Reemergence of Pan-Serbism}

Despite the genuine support for a multiethnic Yugoslav state among ordinary Serb citizens and high levels of multiethnic coexistence in Croatia and Bosnia, severe socio-economic problems persisted, and by the late 1980s were once again pitting reformists and conservatives in a debate over the future of the state. As in the 1960s, Serbian reformists were among the most vocal proponents in calling for a total removal of party influence at local levels of the economy, and a complete reliance on individual entrepreneurship and private enterprise, multiple candidates in elections conducted via secret ballot, and an adoption of “all positive achievements of bourgeois civilization”. Additionally, Serbian reformists were even hinting at establishing multiparty elections and reducing the Yugoslav Army’s privileged political and financial positions, all of

\textsuperscript{22} As early as the 1960s, questions of Tito’s heir after his death were already being asked. The Slovene Edvard Kardelj and the Serb Aleksandar Ranković were two of the most likely successors, as they were Tito’s closest associates. But the main problem, argue Hoffman and Neal, is that “Tito is irreplaceable. Neither Kardelj nor Ranković – nor anyone else in Yugoslavia – has anything like Tito’s national popularity and renown or his dramatic qualities of leadership. Compared with Tito, both Kardelj, the former schoolteacher, and Ranković, the former policeman, are politically colorless … The question arises, therefore, as to how well a country of such diversity as Yugoslavia can maintain a dictatorship that tries to base itself on popular approval if it lacks the symbol of a dynamic leader.” Hoffman, and Neal (1962) p. 502. Such a drop in the overall trust in Yugoslav unity can be seen in the same surveys cited above. Whereas respondents characterized interethnic relations within their own communities as good, they perceived that relations between nationalities at the state level were mostly bad.
which, according to Gagnon, pointed towards Serbia developing into a liberal democracy on par with other states in Central Europe.\(^{23}\) But as in the late 1960s and early 1970s, reactionaries in Serbia’s League of Communists in the 1980s sought to counter the strength of the reformists by reemphasizing orthodox Marxist themes through recentralization and shifting the focus of the debate away from the economic and towards the ethnic, particularly in light of growing Albanian nationalism and threats of secession following Tito’s death in 1980.\(^{24}\) Once again, Serb preservation became coterminous with Yugoslav centrism and vigilance against increased autonomy of the republics and provinces. By the time of Milošević’s ascension to power, Serb hardliners had masterfully weaved a narrative in which the preservation of a multiethnic Yugoslavia was the only way to preserve Serbian interests to the detriment of other republics, which were perceived to be bent on their weakening and division.\(^{25}\)

While these elites attempted to secure their hold on power by once again “playing the ethnic card”, they could not successfully position themselves as prophetic “saviors of the nation” unless there were genuine fears and concerns felt among the populace. Those Serbs that most readily accepted quick-fix solutions to the problems were mainly Serbs beset by growing economic woes in Kosovo and Central Serbia where unemployment had spiked from 8 – 17% throughout the 1970s, and hovered between 15 – 20% 

throughout the 1980s. Growing resentment at the increasing fragmentation of the state and the Serbian republic in particular, the inability of neither the federal nor the republic authorities to successfully halt the rise in unemployment, the marginalization and increased harassment of Serb minority communities in other republics, and the general consensus that the entire Yugoslav project of “brotherhood and unity” was failing all provided elites like Slobodan Milošević with the consuming publics he needed to consolidate his own hold on power by being the first authoritative figure to acknowledge these problems and vow to do something about them by defending Serbia’s national, and cultural interests.

After Tito’s death in May 1980, a growing sense among Serb intellectuals that the basic civic principles of Yugoslav unity were being replaced with regional identities, ethnic nationalism, and hints at further decentralization by other ethnic groups dominated political and cultural discourse. A new type of Serbian ethnocentrism replaced the brotherhood and unity of Yugoslavism by centering on narratives of permanent victimization and a communist “stab in the back” through a state that, though fought for and defended by Serbs, was constructed as a mechanism for the division and weakening of the Serbian nation. Instead of professional historians and statesmen who might have directed Serbian identity towards democratization, Serbia’s intellectual opposition to the Yugoslav status quo was articulated by writers, philosophers and jurists intent on radicalizing public opinion and contributing to the rise in mistrust and animosity towards

28 For works critical, though not necessarily dismissive, of associating Pan-Serbism with Yugoslav centralism, see Wachtel (1998); Nebojša Popov, ed., *The Road to War in Serbia* (1996); Dragović-Soso, (2002); Gagnon, (2004).
non-Serb communities. At the critical moment when political transition shifted from preserving Yugoslavia to establishing new successor states, democratic principles of pluralism, political participation and cultural tolerance were sidelined in Serbia, as in other republics, by an ethnocentric “outburst of history”.  

As already stated, the 1974 Constitution granted significant rights to each Yugoslav republic but severely weakened the internal sovereignty of Serbia. While still legally a part of Serbia, the raising of its two post-1945 mandated autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo to the level of republics in all but name had effectively turned Serbia into mini-Yugoslav state itself. Hence, while other republics were becoming more internally unified and centralized, elites in Serbia felt an incredible sense of injustice at their own republic being irreversibly cut in three. Like official republics, Vojvodina and Kosovo received all the signs of “proto-statehood”: their own political, legal, and education systems, national symbols, a separate police force, the right to change their internal constitutions, conduct relations with foreign institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, and have veto power in federal decision-making bodies. The only right the actual republics had that the provinces lacked was the right to secession; something that was not lost on the vast majority of Kosovo Albanians, who in 1981 staged massive rallies throughout Kosovo calling for its elevation to full republic status.

Serbia’s increasing internal division became an administrative nightmare by the mid 1980s. While both provinces remained part of Serbia, consensus was required in both provinces and in Central Serbia for all matters pertaining to the republic as a whole. More out of stubborn affirmation of their own independence than any consideration of collective development, both provinces almost always voted against Serbia in both

29 The term was coined by NIV, a Belgrade weekly news magazine, July 10, 1983, pp. 28 – 30
federal and republic bodies and refused to consult with Serbian leadership in Belgrade. In the face of worsening economic conditions and growing political fragmentations, some sort of resolution would have to either definitively place the provinces back into a subordinate position within Serbia, eliminate its autonomy altogether, or recognize them as full-fledged republics of their own. The Albanian demonstrations in Kosovo in 1981 that called for a “Kosovo Republic” was enough for many Serbian communists to press for a reduction in autonomy of both provinces and a recentralization of power in Belgrade for the Serbian Republic. However, Belgrade’s calls for recentralization was opposed not just by the provinces, but also by Slovenia and Croatia, whose elites feared that recentralization in Serbia was a precursor to recentralization in Yugoslavia overall. By 1985, the Serbian republic was locked in a stalemate of paralysis. As each republic sought its own interests, further increases in autonomy meant greater divisions for Serbia. Conversely, attempts at halting and even reversing decentralization benefited Serbia but hurt most of the other republics and Kosovo. What all sides realized was that the current configuration of Yugoslavia was no longer tenable.

By the early 1980s, signs of fragmentation were becoming visible in the literary and cultural sphere, beginning with the ill-fated decision by the federal government to publish a second edition to the Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia. While the first edition

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30 The Slovene party leadership became unexpected and indirect allies of the Kosovo Albanians in arguing that by pushing for recentralization in Serbia, Belgrade was stifling the freedom of thought and expression of the Albanian majority in the province. In 1986, the Slovenian sociologist Dimitrij Rupel, who in 1990 would become the first foreign minister of an independent Slovenia and in 2008 President of the European Council, openly chided Serbian efforts at recentralization as a direct threat to Slovenia’s constitutional rights as a republic. Furthermore, he regarded Albanian nationalism in Kosovo as both a response to decades of immobility and political hamstringing by Belgrade and viewed their self-determination in the same manner as he viewed Slovenian, Croatian, and others. In regarding Serbian claims to Kosovo, Rupel, in his own logic, likened the situation to historic Slovenian claims to Klagenfurt and Trieste: both are no longer theirs, as Kosovo is no longer Serbia’s. Interview given to the Belgrade bi-monthly Duga (June 22 – July 11, 1986), pp. 39 – 40, cited in Dragović-Soso, (2002) pp. 150 – 51.
published in the 1950s focused on a clear supranational narrative of Yugoslav identity and described the positive value of Yugoslav unification as the end result of “historical strivings” of various Balkan communities, the second edition was derided for “dividing history along republic and province borders, instead of showing, in accordance with the facts, that three, five, or six centuries ago divisions were of a different nature.” As political decentralization fostered a new generation of republic-oriented scholars and academics, official Yugoslav narratives were often replaced with ethnocentric historiographies written by self-serving local Party intellectuals of dubious academic merits and qualifications. In the case of the *Encyclopedia*, many of the republic and provincial historical narratives competed for legitimate ownership of a particular past. Even the question of whether Vojvodina and Kosovo should have their own separate entries or be included as subsections within the Serbian chapter carried more political than scholarly importance due to the sensitivity of republic autonomy. The most contentious entries were those on Kosovo, Bosnia, and Montenegro. The latter two emphasized distinct national identities apart from Serbian, while the Kosovo entry, written by Kosovo Albanian historians, amounted to little more than historical revisionism.

Chief among the Kosovo debates was the claim that Albanians are direct descendents of the ancient Illyrians that inhabited the western Balkans long before the Slavic migrations of the 6th and 7th centuries. Such myths had been gaining popularity in Albanian academic circles since the 1970s, though many non-Albanians have criticized

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these theories for lack of conclusive archaeological, linguistic, and cultural evidence.\(^{32}\) Regardless, the “Illyrian myth” holds that Albanians are the true inhabitants of the lands comprising Albania, Kosovo, and western Macedonia. In response, Serbs interpreted this questionable historiography as an attempt at legitimizing Albanian claims to Kosovo as part of a larger Albanian state. Within Montenegrin and Bosnian intellectual circles, an emphasis of ethnogenesis also targeted longstanding tenets of Serbian historiography. As mentioned from earlier nineteenth century interpretations, a “Bosnian” identity was long regarded by both Serb and Croat circles to mean those Slavs that had converted to Islam in the wake of Ottoman conquests of the fifteenth century. Those Serb and Croat Christian communities that lived in Bosnia simply regarded themselves as part of a larger Serb and Croat nation respectively, while the “Muslim” was regarded as little more than members of each respective community that converted to Islam. However by the late 1970s, a new approach to Bosnian historiography emphasized its medieval beginnings as a patchwork of principalities that culminated in 1377 with the crowning of Tvrtko I as ruler of a unified Bosnian kingdom. While Serbian historiography had formally identified him as an ethnic Serb, having family connections with the medieval Serbian House of Nemanjić, and having ruled over the Serbian territory of Raška, a new appreciation in Bosnia for a strictly “Bosnian” history had re-cast him as an ethnic Bosnian, with Serbian elements either marginalized, or written out. Furthermore, Bosnian historiography included the Ottoman period of Islamic conversion as a continuous part of its history; an

event that both Serbs and Croats in Bosnia had long regarded as a period of foreign oppression and domination.33

The ongoing debates over historical ownership to the past was also evident among Montenegrin historians, who had long regarded Montenegro as the part of the medieval Serbian state that was never outwardly conquered by the Ottomans. Indeed, Montenegrins are nearly identical to Serbs in religion, language, culture, and history to a degree that any emphasis on separating the two into two distinct identities is done more for political than sociological or cultural regions. Nevertheless, the section on Montenegrin history in the Encyclopedia hailed certain individuals in Montenegro as “Montenegrin national heroes”. What were minor characters and events in larger Serbian historiography became major leaders and epics in “Montenegrin” history. One of the most contentious issues was whether to regard the 19th century Bishop-Prince Petar II Petrović-Njegoš of Montenegro as an ethnic Serb, which he was traditionally regarded as, or as an ethnic Montenegrin. As mentioned in chapter 5, Njegoš’s The Mountain Wreath (Gorski Vjenac) is considered one of the greatest masterpieces in Serbian and South Slavic literature. Though he writes about the struggle of Serbian Christians at the hands of Muslim warlords and dedicates his work to Karadjordje, placing him alongside Napoleon and the Duke of Wellington in leadership and charisma, republic-centered Montenegrin historiography recast Njegoš as a Montenegrin literary figure, and his epic work as not only the greatest piece of Montenegrin literature, but also as the rallying call for the independence of a Montenegrin state. These and other debates between Serbian and Montenegrin historiography not only led to cultural and historical disputes, but often

33 For an examination of Bosnia’s unique history, independent of Serb or Croat historiography, see John Fine, The Late Medieval Balkans: (1994).
the issues of including a few extra lines of information about an individual or an event with a “national” character led to months of publication delay and additional printing and editorial costs. In the end, the Encyclopedia became more a literary Tower of Babel than a celebration of multiethnicity and co-identity in Yugoslavia. The project began in 1975, dragged on into the late 1980s and was ultimately abandoned with the impending breakup of the state. Much of the abandoned material became projects of separate “national” encyclopedias either immediately before or after Yugoslavia’s breakup in 1991.

Historical fiction novels also examined the role each ethnic group played in the formation of Yugoslavia, and also touched upon how the state stifled one’s own cultural expressions and historical identities. Literary works such as the four-part series A Time of Death by eminent Serb writer Dobrica Ćosić examined the conflicting feelings of Serbs at the end of the First World War through a generational divide between the older Pan-Serbists of the Pašić era, and a younger generation of enthusiastic South Slavic integrationists. Ćosić writes about the younger generation having the zeal, enthusiasm, and optimism for South Slavic brotherhood, but it becomes clear that the author sides with the elders who regard their children as idealistic dreamers, unable to recognize the sobering fact that there can be no Yugoslav unity because the differences separating

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34 One such example in the dispute over the information regarding Vojislav of Zeta, an obscure tenth-century figure. The publishing board received two entries: one by Sima Čirković who provided the entry in the first edition of the Encyclopedia and simply amended the text to conform with the new publishing regulations, and another by Montenegrin historian Pavle Mijović, who wrote a far longer text and hailed Vojislav as an early Montenegrin national hero. The rationale of the Montenegrin scholars was that an expanded history on Vojislav, whose dominion encompassed much of present-day Montenegro “is the obligation and the right of the Montenegrin board” and that “renouncing Vojislav means renouncing the integrity and continuity of Montenegrin history and culture. See Dragović-Soso (2003), pp. 73 – 74. On the debates surrounding the Encyclopedia entry, see Srten Asanović and Ratko Djurović, members of the Montenegrin board, quoted in NIN, July 27, 1986, p. 22.
35 Wachtel (1998), pp. 197 – 226
Serbs and from other groups are too wide to bridge. In a particularly emotional exchange between a Serbian physician and priest, Dr. Radić the physician expresses his fear that Serbia will lose the war. But Father Božidar fears the opposite:

What I’m afraid of, my boy, is that we’ll win the war as planned by Pašić and our politicians, by professors and their students. Have you read in the newspapers about us uniting with the Croats and Slovenes? I mean that declaration of the Assembly about the creation of a large state consisting of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes? *Three separate faiths, estranged by fire and sword, and divided by blood – but now they’re to be combined in a single state!* What louse or reptile shot this poison – this death-dealing sickness – into Serbian heads? … What kind of union can we have with the Catholics? After all the crimes committed by those brothers of ours in Austrian uniform, can anyone in his right mind believe in unity and peace with them? Why are you silent? You educated people are heading straight for the precipice, but why push this unhappy nation over it too?

While officially a focus on the ethnic incompatibilities that led to the breakup of the first Yugoslavia, Ćosić’s work is an obvious allegory to the fragmentation of the second. Chief among the differences between Serbs and Croats were the latter’s apparent collaboration with Austro-Hungarian forces against Serbia as a parallel to later Croat collaboration with the Nazis in the Second World War. By noting the differences between Serbs and others, Ćosić sought to highlight an historical pattern of thankless Serbian self-sacrifice for the general good of others, and the ungratefulness by those for whom the sacrifices were made. The problems that led to the breakup of the first Yugoslav state and the seemingly similar patterns that were leading to the fragmentation of the second created an understanding that throughout history, the naturally good, kind-hearted, self-sacrificing, but naïve Serb had been victims of exploitation by other ethnic groups.

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36 Originally published in Yugoslavia as *Vreme Smrti (A Time of Death)* as a four-part epic. In the English translation, *A Time of Death* is the title of the second volume only, while the epic was entitled *This Land, This Time*. All were translated by Muriel Heppell, and published by Harcourt publishers.

37 Ćosić’s epic was published in Yugoslavia in the late 1970s. The four-part English translation has only the second part titled *A Time of Death*, and the epic as a whole was published as *This Land, This Time* between 1978 and 1983. The above text is taken from the third part, *Reach to Eternity* (New York: Harcourt, 1980), p. 344, quoted in Wachtel (1998), p. 201. Italics mine.
Equally at fault is the role of the educated class – the politicians and intellectuals – in pushing South Slavic unity on a group of people who neither need it nor want it. That the exchange took place between the educated, but ideally naïve Dr. Radić, and the simple, but more commonsensical Father Božidar, a member of the Serbian Orthodox Church no less, showed that the average simply man could see the impossible dream of Yugoslavism. This belief, coupled with a general understanding of the questionable loyalty non-Serb groups had for Yugoslav unity, and the eagerness they would have in switching sides and collaborating with the enemy if it benefited them, helped facilitate an intellectual and political climate that was less and less receptive to elite cooperation and negotiation.38

Other literary works such as A Book About Milutin (Knjiga o Milutinu) by Danko Popović, and Vuk Drašković’s Knife (Nož) continued the narratives of victimhood from Serbs sacrificing their own interests for the sake of others under the illusion of brotherly love.39 Self-conception of the Serbs as the perennial victims of Yugoslavia centered around a series of themes. First, as already mentioned, was the theme of genuine Serbian sacrifice for the collective benefit of all South Slavic peoples. While Serbia was a country of its own for over a century, it voluntarily decided to accept large non-Serb communities in brotherly co-existence, and to defend them against the encroachment of other powers, namely the Germans and Italians. This, according to these novels, show the genuine affection Serbs have for the welfare of others, even though it has every right to be only

38 As noted above however, survey data showed that it was in fact the common man that was most in favor of Yugoslavism, and that elites like Dobrica Cosić, Dimitrije Rupel, and others were the ones pushing for greater separation. Such information strengthens the arguments of Yugoslavia’s dissolution being the product of elite manipulation deliberately fostering social mistrust.
interested in its own national defense. Second, the kind-hearted Serb was always taken advantage of by the duplicity of other national groups. The primary target were the Croats, whose crimes committed during the Second World War as a Nazi collaborator, in which tens of thousands of Serbs were forcibly assimilated, expelled, or exterminated from their homelands in an enlarged Croatian state, were never completely brought to light by the Communists and were grouped with Četnik forces as fascist collaborators. The idea was the understanding that the Serbian people suffered the double injustice of being victims of a genocidal regime and victims of a state that attempted to cover up all crimes for the sake of collective unity. Third, and more indicative of Drašović’s work, was the idea that Serbs, as a perennially unavenged people, were weak in only responding to attacks by others instead of initiating them. The true naivety of Serbs was not in its good-natured belief that all sides are part of the same community, but that their trusting attitudes repeatedly made them the victims. In other words, by nobly thinking Bosnians and Croats were part of the same group, Serbs constantly allowed their enemies to have the upper hand.

All of these works were the first to raise questions of Croatian wartime guilt and the disproportionate Serbian sacrifice and suffering at the creation of both Yugoslavias, and over the course of the 1980s a good portion of the Serbian population began to abandon a multiethnic Yugoslav identity in favor of a more ethnocentric, if still limited and undefined, Serbian identity. Though Serbs of various social backgrounds read these novels, the primary audience was the mass of low- and middlebrow readers interested more in a good read than historical objectivity. Yet in order to transform these people

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41 See Lampe (2000), pp. 299 – 314
from passive readers to followers of Milošević, members of the Serbian elite would also have to take part. While literary giants such as Ćosić already seemed to be on board, most other intellectuals and academics would not be won over through pulp fiction novels. Milorad Pavić’s celebrated Dictionary of the Khazars (Hazarski rečnik) provided one of the necessary elements that showed the incongruency of grand narratives of cultural synthesis in Yugoslavia from an intellectual point of view. In the same allegorical fashion as Ćosić’s works, Pavić uses the history of the Khazars, a tribal community that flourished in ninth-century Central Asia as a parallel to current conditions in Yugoslavia. Historically, the Khazar high nobles changed their religion after receiving Jewish, Christian, and Muslim missionaries. What makes the Dictionary so poignant is that it is written in encyclopedic style in which each section is told from the point of view of each of the missionaries. Not only could each section be read in any order one wished, but each section noted a sense of historical justification for the views and beliefs each missionary carried, making three “correct” versions of one collective narrative available for the reader to decide which narrative was the most suitable.

The relativized version of history was meant to show parallels with the current situation in Yugoslavia, in which no agreement or mutual understanding could be reached among people who base their identities and values from different points of view and non-negotiable truths. Relativism, it was implied, formed the core and justification of particularist nationalism that prevented opposing sides from finding common ground. When compared with Ivo Andrić’s earlier celebrated novel The Bridge on the Drina (Na Drini Ćuprija), we find similar narratives of historical relativism that make up the folk

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tales and legends of each community living on opposite sides of the famous bridge. It becomes clear early on in Andrić’s novel that each side has contradictory, even conflicting, versions of historical events, locations, and individuals, for “the common people remember and tell of what they are able to grasp and what they are able to transform into legend.”\footnote{Ivo Andrić, \textit{The Bridge on the Drina}, trans. Lovett F. Edwards (University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 27} However, Andrić plays the role of both narrator and modern day makeshift historian, who separates fact from myth and shows that irreconcilable positions of the “common folk” can be overcome with proper historical objectivity while still appreciating the richness that is the collective multicultural heritage of Bosnia, and by extension Yugoslavia.\footnote{Ibid. pp. 16 – 19} Indeed, the bridge functions not just as a bridge over a river, but a conceptual bridge that links Serbs and Bosnians, Christians and Muslims, together in one community. Pavić’s novel on the other hand implies that divergent narratives are not only unbridgeable, but are mutually self-righteous and conflictual. His work is both an intellectual indictment of Andrić’s optimism and Yugoslavia’s multiethnic co-existence. The “Yugoslavs” were the modern day Khazars, and its missionaries the various sub-national ethnic groups each with a history of their own.

\textit{The Codification of Pan-Serb Victimhood}

Elite-based attacks on Yugoslavia in Serbia culminated in the writing of the so-called \textit{Memorandum of 1986} by a series of Serb academics and scholars at the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Art (SANU).\footnote{Since its publication, the \textit{Memorandum} has been one of the most oft cited documents attesting to Serbian nationalism. Though referred to by many in the West as the blueprint for a Greater Serbian state, Milošević’s \textit{Mein Kampf}, and an outline for ethnic cleansing, the \textit{Memorandum} remains one of the least understood documents of modern Serbian political development. Parts of the draft were leaked to the press and published in the Belgrade daily \textit{Večernje novosti} in September 1986. While a full version of the}
mentioned problems were apparent for years, this was the first time that these problems were voiced through such officially high channels. The Memorandum addressed three incredibly controversial themes: the correlation between Yugoslav decentralization and the rise in ethnic nationalism, particularly among Croats and Albanians; the increasingly rigid internal republic-borders that divided the Serbian nation, particularly in Serbia itself with regards to Kosovo and Vojvodina; and the emerging belief that the entire Yugoslav phenomenon was deliberately structured to weaken and divide the Serbian people.

The Memorandum began with a denunciation of resurgent nationalism by various ethnic groups in Yugoslavia, again largely by the Croats and Albanians, which was directly targeted against both groups’ perceived rivals and competitors, the Serb minority in Croatia, and the Serb “minority” in Kosovo, an additional travesty seen by SANU officials since Kosovo was deemed to be not only part of the territory of the Serbian Socialist Republic, but also an integral part of Serbia’s historic territory. By all measures, Kosovo remained the poorest, most undeveloped, and most backward region of Yugoslavia and Serbia since 1945. It had the highest levels of unemployment and among Albanians the highest birth rates, but had the lowest levels of literacy and education. Infrastructures such as roads, indoor plumbing and electricity were scarce. While Kosovo was a multiethnic region, it had the lowest levels of interethnic activity, and the Albanians remained the least integrated community in Yugoslavia. To this day, Serb-

Albanian relations are one of the poorest in the Balkans, with mutual hostility and mistrust defining much of that relationship.

Since 1945, Kosovo’s history has been one in which either Serbs or Albanians have used political power for self-advancement and demobilization of the other. Between 1945 and 1966, Serbian elites, under the leadership of Aleksandar Ranković, one of Tito’s closest confidantes, governed Kosovo as a colony, even though they comprised a significant minority in the overall population. According to the official 1953 Yugoslav census, Serbs comprised 27% of Kosovo’s population, but made up 50% of its Communist Party membership, 68% of all “administrative and leading” positions, and 50% of all factory workers.47 Conversely, Albanians had been hinting at secession and either independence or annexation with Albania since the mid 1960s, and with Ranković’s dismissal in 1966, power had begun to shift towards Albanian circles at the expense of Serbs. Calls by Albanians to raise Kosovo’s status to full republic began in 1968. By the following year, Albanians were permitted by the federal government to fly the Albanian flag as their “national” emblem, and cries of “Long live Enver Hoxha”, the longtime Communist leader of Albania, was no longer seen as a treasonable offence. That same year, academic institutions attached to the University of Belgrade in Kosovo were formed into the independent University of Priština, with teaching in Albanian. In 1970, the University of Priština signed an agreement with the University in Tirana, which brought in 200 teachers from the Albanian capital, established Albanian language courses, and used textbooks printed in Albania.48 While these measures may have been

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48 Ibid., p. 326
made to placate what Tito saw as an ethnic underepresentation of Albanians in Kosovo, it
naturally fed fears among Kosovo Serbs of Albanian “separatism” and “irredentism”.

Most Kosovo Serbs, if given the opportunity, emigrated from Kosovo for better
living conditions elsewhere. While many Serbs left Kosovo due to economic hardships,
stories of harassment, intimidation, and open discrimination against Serbs by ethnic
Albanians were abundant and often made sensationalist news stories by the 1980s.49
Within the Memorandum, Albanians were understood to be separatists and irredentists
who had never been loyal to Yugoslavia and were seeking the formation of a Greater
Albanian state. Much of the blame for this Albanian separatism was placed on the state
for perpetuating these sentiments in order to weaken Serbia’s own claim to Kosovo.
Chief among those responsible were Serb Communists who, like the Islamicized Serbs of
Njegoš’s time, had lost their own sense of duty to their own ethnic group and concern for
their own identity and collective well-being.

The physical, political, legal and cultural genocide perpetuated against the Serbian
population of Kosovo and Metohija is the greatest defeat suffered by Serbia in the
wars of liberation she waged between Orašac in 1804 [the First Serbian Uprising]
and the uprising of 1941 [against the Nazis]. Responsibility for this defeat falls
primarily on the still living Comintern heritage in the nationalities policy of the
Communist Party of Yugoslavia and on the acquiescence of Serbian communists
in this policy and on the exorbitant ideological and political delusion, ignorance,
immaturity, and chronic opportunism of an entire generation of post-war Serbian
politicians, always on the defensive and always more concerned with the opinions
others have of them and of their hesitant explanations of Serbia’s position than
with the true facts affecting the future of the nation they lead.50

49 See Malcolm, p. 331 for a discussion on the comparative nature of SANU surveying Serbs who left
Kosovo and official state statistic. List both. While SANU may have had a nationalist agenda in pushing
the case of Albanian “atrocities” in Kosovo, the state records, officially Communist, would have played
down the ethnic issue in favor of more benign reasons such as economic deterioration. Malcolm is
interested in pointing out the apparent biased agenda of SANU, but at the same time neglects to consider
the censorship of the official records, as well as overlooking the potency of emotional reasons given by
SANU for public consumption. Even if they were wrong, forced, or fudged, the SANU reasons carried far
more resonance.

50 Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences (SANU) Memorandum of 1986, p. 4
In addition to Kosovo, Croatia was also singled out in the Memorandum as a place of active discrimination of Serbs, whose communities had lived there for over three hundred years and had enjoyed cultural, linguistic, and religious freedoms since the mid-nineteenth century. The Memorandum stated that Serbs in Croatia, collectively known as “Krajina Serbs” to denote their historical communities in the old Hapsburg “borderland” or krajina, lived in the most underdeveloped regions and this forced either outright emigration from Croatia, or to more developed parts of Croatia where, as newcomers, the lack of political institutions placed them as an inferior group subject to assimilation. The policies of language assimilation, while certainly a more benign form of discrimination than outright harassment or segregation, was nevertheless understood by SANU as an attempt to linguistically detach Krajina Serbs from their mother tongue in Serbia. While the only significant difference between Serbian and Croatian is the use of the Cyrillic alphabet by the former, and even here Serbs freely switch between Latin and Cyrillic variants, the Memorandum was strong in its denunciation of efforts by Croatian officials to suppress Serbian cultural identity on all fronts. In unusually strong words, the Memorandum noted that

With the exception of the Independent State of Croatia from 1941 – 45, Serbs in Croatia have never been as persecuted in the past as they are now. The solution to their national position must be considered an urgent political question. In so much as a solution cannot be found, the results could be disastrous, not just in relation to Croatia, but to all of Yugoslavia.51

The root of the current misfortunes of Serbs was placed squarely on the 1974 Constitution and the transformation of each republic into a proto-state. Chief among the warning signs raised in the Memorandum were issues of sovereignty and the unjust

51 Ibid. p. 5
treatment of Serbian minorities as a result of these newly acquired republic powers. According to the *Memorandum*, the argument among Communist elites that each republic designated the ethnic boundaries of a particular nation was, with the exception of homogeneous Slovenia, highly problematic. Serbs made up sizeable minorities in various Yugoslav republics, as much as 15% in Croatia and 30% in Bosnia. When examining Serbia’s two autonomous republics, Serbs made up a majority of 55% in Vojvodina, and a minority of little over 10% in Kosovo. As such, ethnic Serbs were scattered across at least five different political units, with 40% of its total population living outside Central Serbia, and were subjected in some form or another to racial, institutional, or political discrimination, something no other Yugoslav group could claim.\(^52\)

It was concluded that the Yugoslav state structured by the Communists, and especially after the provisions of the 1974 Constitution, was purposefully designed to weaken and divide the Serbian ethnic community.

The guiding principle behind this policy has been ‘a weak Serbia, a strong Yugoslavia’ and this has evolved into an influential mind-set: if rapid economic growth were permitted the Serbs, who are the largest nation, it would pose a danger to the other nations of Yugoslavia … The Constitution of 1974, in fact, divided Serbia into three parts. The autonomous provinces within Serbia were made equal to the republics … [and are] able to interfere with the internal relations of Serbia proper through the republic’s common assembly (while their assemblies remain completely autonomous). The political and legal position of Serbia proper is quite vague – Serbia proper is neither a republic nor a province.\(^53\)

Serbia was the only Yugoslav republic to have pieces of its territory formally partitioned into autonomous regions. While an argument might be made in the case of Kosovo for

\(^{52}\) As written in the Memorandum, “According to the census of 1981, 24% of the Serbian people (1,958,000) live outside of the Socialist Republic of Serbia, which is considerably more than the number of Slovenians, Albanians, Macedonians, and taken individually, almost the same as the Muslims. Outside of Serbia proper, there are 3,285,000 Serbs or 40.3% of their total population.”, p. 5.

\(^{53}\) Ibid. p. 3
this to be done for the Albanian majority that inhabited the region, the same reasoning could not be applied to Serb-dominant Vojvodina. Additionally, considering Serbs made up more of a minority in Bosnia and Croatia than Hungarians and other ethnic groups did in Vojvodina but did not have autonomous republics of their own, the conclusions reached by SANU were that the present Yugoslav system was deliberately working to divide the Serbs as a potent ethnic group. In other words, why should Albanians in Kosovo and Hungarians in Vojvodina enjoy separate political units when Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia could not? These realities, coupled with the knowledge that Serbia was the first independent Balkan country, that Serbia had sacrificed so much of its own resources and manpower in three wars in the first half of the 20th century, and had contributed the most to the recreation of a Yugoslav state, made Serbia’s current conditions doubly humiliating.

The Memorandum also touched upon another incredibly sensitive subject: Communist Yugoslavia directly stifled Serbian cultural and historical achievements. Surprisingly, a major critique by SANU was the suppression of Serbia’s legacy of political liberalism from the nineteenth century.

The democratic bourgeois tradition for which Serbia had struggled successfully in the 19th century has remained in the shadow cast by the Serbian socialist and labor movement until quite recently because of narrow-mindedness and lack of objectivity on the part of official historiography. This so impoverished and restricted the true picture of the contribution made by Serbian bourgeois society to law, culture, and statesmanship that, deformed in this manner, it could not provide mental or moral support to anyone, nor could it serve as a foothold for preserving or reviving historical self-confidence.54

54 Ibid., p. 6. Again, it is interesting to note the paradox in which the Memorandum points to the suppression of rational thought by pro-Yugoslav Serbs when in fact efforts at stifling genuine democratic movements in Serbia in the 1960s and 1980s had been a primary policy by these ethnocentric elites.
Additionally, Communist Yugoslavia held an official view of history that claimed the Partisans were the only group that held the interests of all Balkans peoples at heart. Other movements, particularly those with a clear ethnic majority and purpose, were written off as either nationalist or imperialist. Still, the attempt to disregard any other historical contribution than those of the Communists relegated much of Serbia’s pre-Yugoslav political development to scholarly obscurity. Distinctive Serbian culture was also targeted by Communist Yugoslavia. Here, the Memorandum saw Yugoslav culture as inversely related to Serbian. A promotion of Yugoslavism was a direct attack on an already established and heavily enriched Serbian cultural heritage.

The language is being displaced and the Cyrillic script is gradually being lost … The cultural and spiritual integrity of no other Yugoslav nation is so roughly challenged as that of the Serbian nation. No other literary and artistic heritage is so disordered, ravaged, and confused as the Serbian heritage. The political criteria of the ruling ideology are imposed on Serbian culture as being more valuable and stronger than scientific or historical criteria. \(55\)

Finally, the Memorandum claimed that the Communist mantra of “Brotherhood and Unity” that originally was promoted in the years immediately following WWII had been replaced with a more debased objective of Yugoslavism as a defense against Greater Serbianism. Serbia was cast as the “exploiting” nation that had always desired to control the entire western Balkans. It therefore almost legitimated all other ethnic groups’ embrace of nationalism and self-awareness as a counterbalance to an always prevalent and barely contained Serb expansionism.

The Serbian nation has been encumbered with a feeling of historical guilt and has remained the only nation not to solve its national problem and not to receive its own state like the other nations. \(56\)

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\(55\) Ibid., p. 6
\(56\) Ibid.
In light of these lopsided realities and institutional discriminations, the *Memorandum* concluded with a series of recommendations for the preservation of both Yugoslavia and the Serbian community. The first was “to remove this burden of historical guilt from the Serbian nation, to categorically deny the contention that it enjoyed a privileged economic position between the two world wars, and to refrain from denigrating Serbia’s liberation-oriented history and contribution in creating Yugoslavia.” The second was to safeguard the “complete national and cultural integrity of the Serbian people” as an historic and democratic right. Third, such steps could only be achieved if the Serbian nation has “an opportunity to find itself again and become a historical agent, [and to] re-acquire an awareness of its historical and spiritual being.”\(^{57}\) In essence, the entire Yugoslav structure was questioned in terms of fairness and provisions for ethnic Serbs. When it became apparent that the state that they had sacrificed so much for, that they had not only given their lives in the last war for the security of other nationalities, but had also sacrificed their own historical and cultural identity for the sake of a collective brotherhood had ceased to exist, Serbian elites called for recentralization. This was especially acute in Kosovo where Albanian separatism was threatening to fragment Serbia’s own territory, let alone Yugoslav:

What kind of a state is the one that lacks authority within its own territory and lacks the means to protect the personal property of its citizens, to prevent genocide in Kosovo, and to prevent the emigration of Serbs from their ancient homeland? … The aggressive Albanian chauvinism in Kosovo cannot be contained until Serbia ceases to be the sole republic whose internal relations are ordered by others.\(^{58}\)

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\(^{57}\) Ibid., pp. 6–7 *passim*  
\(^{58}\) Ibid., pp. 7–8
Not surprisingly, initial reactions to the Memorandum were exponentially negative from all of Yugoslavia’s party officials, including Serbs. The writers of the Memorandum were branded as nationalists seeking to disrupt an already tenuous Yugoslav state. Yet the leaked excerpts that made it to Serbian language newspapers made for sensationalist reading. For many Serbs, this was the first time any of them had heard or understood the symbolic importance of Kosovo, the plight of Serb minorities in other republics, or that the state was somehow designed to specifically allow other ethnic groups to succeed as the expense of Serbs. Even more importantly, what might have been sizeable grumbling among the voiceless Serbian minorities, particularly in Kosovo, was now echoed by some of the highest channels in Serbian political and intellectual thought. While the main heads of Serbia’s communist party denounced the Memorandum as fanning the fires of nationalism, and also because they as party heads were directly criticized for their voluntary inactivity, other members of the Serbian League of Communists like Slobodan Milošević saw the Memorandum as an opportunity to achieve two goals at once: seize power in the name of addressing what he clearly understood as the cries of the masses, and appropriating the contents of the Memorandum as the new platform of the Communist party, thereby retaining power with new popular legitimacy.

*Serbia’s Illiberal Democratic Transition under Milošević*

The link between the personal politics of Slobodan Milošević and the exclusionary nationalism that defined his tenure in office largely remains a mystery. The is little evidence to suggest Milošević personally believed in any of these narratives of Serbian ethnocentrism, and most serious scholars agree that he was quite ready to
vacillate between a self-proclaimed defender of the Serbian nation and a self-interested apparatchik who would do anything to remain in power.\textsuperscript{59} Professionally, his contemporaries regarded Milošević as an orthodox Marxist whose earlier undistinguished career was marked by attempts at halting rising Serbian nationalism and a preservation of the Yugoslav state as a whole. As late as June 1987, he continued to regard the Memorandum as an element of “the darkest nationalism, which proposes the break-up of Yugoslavia.”\textsuperscript{60} Yet despite official cries of condemnation from other communists, Milošević remained relatively quiet on the subject, with some historians arguing he had already seen the potentiality for its political potency, as he had taken the plight of Serbs in Kosovo as his platform months before. If anything, Milošević was an opportunist who viewed Serbian nationalism as a tool for personal advancement.

Milošević had been elected to lead the Serbian League of Communists Central Committee in January 1986, which under increasing tensions in Kosovo had facilitated a resurgence in representation among conservative party members, orthodox Marxist intellectuals, and nationalist-oriented intellectuals, all of whom found common ground in supporting a recentralization of Yugoslavia and an elimination of the autonomous privileges of Serbia’s two provinces. The issue of Kosovo became the main tool against reformists in Serbia and the rest of the country. The rationale was to argue that reforms were directly contributing to the further deterioration of security in the region and promoting greater degrees of separatism by Albanians. Additionally, the strategy of focusing attention on Kosovo was to shift focus away from democratic reform and


discredit its proponents who appeared to be less concerned about the internal security of Serbia than with modernization. In other words, democratic reformists were being blamed for putting their own self-interest at the top of the agenda while Kosovo burned and Serbs continued to be persecuted. Albanians, who had never been entirely accepted as a minority within Serbia and who were never completely integrated as part of a larger multiethnic society, were now increasingly portrayed as uncivilized beings who raped Serbs, stole land, destroyed property, and actively engaged in “genocide”. Reformists were castigated for being “soft” on Albanians in seeking a compromise and decentralizing Serbia even further while altogether ignoring the alarming demographic shift from what was nearly a 50-50 Serb-Albanian presence in Kosovo at the end of the Second World War to a 10-90 Serb-Albanian percentage by the late 1980s.

Whatever the specific reasons that led Milošević to adopt the mantle of Serbia’s national savior, he had, like other national communists throughout the Balkans, realized that appeals to nationalism gave apparatchiks who were weighed down by political and economic failures a new lease on life and a new identity. By tapping into emotional feelings already stoked by years of intellectual debate and public discontent, elites like Milošević, Tudjman, Izetbogović, Berisha, and Iliescu found ready-made political platforms with which to give the appearance of political transition away from single-party rule but still control the reigns of power and halt any attempt at liberal democratic

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61 The issue of rape was a particularly potent subject in Serbian media to demonize the Albanian population as savage and without scruples. However, Malcolm writes that “the only serious study on this issue was carried out by an independent committee of Serbian lawyers and human rights experts in 1990. Analyzing all the statistics for rape and attempted rape in the 1980s they found first of all that the frequency of this crime was significantly lower in Kosovo than in other parts of Yugoslavia: while inner Serbia, on average, had 2.43 cases per year for every 10,000 men in the population, the figure in Kosovo was 0.96. They also found that in the great majority of cases in Kosovo (71%) the assailant and the victim were the same nationality. Altogether, the number of cases where an Albanian committed or attempted the rape of a Serbian woman was just thirty-one in the whole period from 1982 to 1989: an average of fewer than five per year. See Malcolm (1998), p. 339.
reform. Indeed, the ethnocentrism that catapulted Milošević to the forefront of Serbian politics had almost entirely reflected the pan-ethnic defensiveness of the Memorandum. But to this official ethnic reawakening was attached the rhetoric and practice of illiberal politics.

The primary feature in this uneasy hybrid of socio-political mobilization and illiberal nationalism were the so-called “truth rallies” that constituted Milošević’s “anti-bureaucratic revolutions” throughout Serbia and all Serb-inhabited regions of Yugoslavia.62 These rallies had numerous goals. The first was to draw on social dissatisfaction stemming from the continued poor economic situation but channel that discontent towards addressing the injustices and persecution of Serbs throughout Yugoslavia, and especially Kosovo, and by blaming the situation on top party leadership. While giving the illusion that the anger and frustration of the people was a call for democracy and reform, the anti-bureaucratic revolutions were anything but democratic. For one, the rallies never criticized Serbia’s ruling bureaucracy and were in fact organized by the regime. These rallies were also more similar to communist-era state-sponsored rallies than any spontaneous outpourings of anti-establishment sentiment that characterized Central Europe at the time.63 Workers were encouraged to attend these rallies, were given the day off, and provided free transportation and food for participating.

The second was to emphasize a specific sense of Serbian “brotherhood and unity” as opposed to South Slavic, and to call attention to the recentralization of the state in order to better address the needs of Serbian communities that were at a disadvantage due

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62 Nebojša Vladislavljević, Serbia’s Antibuercratic Revolution: Milošević, the Fall of Communism and Nationalist Mobilization (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
63 See for example Kubik (1994), pp. 31 – 74
to increased fragmentation of the state along ethno-federal lines. Whereas earlier models of Pan-Serbism sought to group communities by language, Milošević’s Pan-Serbism was primarily based on historical and religious links. In particular, historical commonalities were drawn through similarities in suffering and victimhood that extended from the Second World War to the present. Calls for recentralization also focused on taking over the leaderships of the communist parties of other republics and provinces and replacing them with Milošević loyalists. The rationale behind this reawakening of Serbian identity, at least under Milošević’s auspices, was less an effort in aggressively destroying the Yugoslav state than realizing Yugoslavia itself was “anti-Serbian”, and that safeguarding one’s culture, heritage, history, and identity, were necessary when other nationalities were aggressively seeking weaken and destroy them. As will be examined in the next chapter, other Serbian national movements in the early 1990s were openly aggressive and nationalistic. The politics of Milošević however attempted to placate both nationalists and conservatives that still believed in the Yugoslav Marxism by demonstrating that an appeal to national identity was a natural defense against ethnic persecution, whether real or imagined.

The third goal was to tap into collective discontentment of the overall situation and gather public support before more committed democratic parties could. By organizing these massive rallies in which tens of thousands of Serbs participated, the illusion was given that massive support for Milošević and safeguarding traditional Serbian values and identities appeared to be a spontaneous will of the people. The power of the people demanding change was, in the eyes of Milošević supported, the visual embodiment of democracy in action. By reorganizing the League of Communists of
Serbia into the Serbian Socialist Party (Socijalistička partija Srbije, SPS) and by calling for general elections as early as 1990, the establishment had provided all the trappings of a state transitioning to democracy while holding fast to defensive ethnocentrism, and political corporatism. But these rallies were meant to support one division of the system against both the reformist wing and the entrenched Yugoslavists. The main goal was to overthrow the party leadership rather than the party itself. In this manner, Milošević, like Tudjman and Iliescu, cast themselves as “reformers from within”, and were able to reorient the party away from ideological communism towards national populism.64 What was democratic was not any harkening to universal principles of liberal government or the rights of the individual but a reappreciation for a Serbian identity and culture that had been stifled under Yugoslavia and targeted by true nationalist movements in Croatia and Kosovo. Under Milošević, Pan-Serbism returned to political discourse, but as a clear defensive mechanism against enemies within the state. While clearly ethnocentric and oriented towards illiberal politics, it cast in narratives of defensive pragmatism and a need for stability amid rapid social change.

The fourth factor was not so much a practice of illiberal democratic politics as is a capitalization on the endemic uncertainty for the future of the country held by the majority of the Serbian electorate. Survey data taken in 1990 reveals two general trends. On one end, support for the SPS was naturally the strongest by citizens who identified themselves with a political party as it was the heir to the communist state. But on the other end, the largest percentage of respondents affirmed neither affiliation nor support for any political movement. The masses of undecided citizens were a major component in

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propelling Milošević to power as he could fashion himself to whatever popular opinions of the day were as well as positioning himself above the fray of politics, which the public overwhelmingly viewed with skepticism, distrust, and apathy. Around 60% of respondents were in favor of preserving a federal Yugoslavia, and about 50% were in favor of taking more stringent measures in solving the Kosovo problem. Already at an advantage from his democratic opponents for operating within the former apparatus of the Serbian League of Communists, Milošević, an individual largely unknown only a few years earlier, could easily reinvent himself as a charismatic savior of the nation and a defender of the national will that spoke to the people through formal political channels but operated outside the normal indifference of politics.

In the first Serbian multiparty elections in 1990, Milošević did not appeal to the Serb population in terms of conflict or violence with non-Serb communities, nor did his party appeal to any romantic notion of a glorious Serbian past. The SPS campaigned and won the first series of elections by focusing on economic interests and a desire for stability and security through a continuation of a socialist system. This movement could be classified as a populist initiative to establish a link between the state and the population that transcended institutional politics. The SPS portrayed itself as the “party of moderate change”, and appealed to the general fear that market reform would bring instability with the slogan “With us, there is no uncertainty.”

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65 Election Study Serbia (1990), H. D. Klingemann (Social Science Research Center Berlin), L. Bačević (Center for Political Studies and Public Opinion Research, Institute of Social Sciences, University of Belgrade, Yugoslavia), Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung an der Universität zu Köln, April 2004.
party to the Serbian League of Communists from the Tito era, the SPS campaigned on promises of continuing socialist welfare programs, focused on the dangers of unemployment and economic insecurity wrought by capitalism, and blamed the existing economic problems on the “anti-Serbian” policies of Yugoslav elites. Milošević criticized the Serbian reformist parties for wanting to turn Serbia into a “colony of the West”, declaring that

We want to belong to the modern world … but we must not allow ourselves to become dependent on anybody in Europe or the world under the pretext of so-called integration within Europe … Serbia can cooperate with anybody in the world in the sphere of politics, economics, and culture on an equal footing.68

Using this strategy of stability and strength from within, the SPS won 47% of the electorate vote, claiming an overwhelming 77.6% of the parliamentary vote, which amounted to 194 of the 250 seats in parliament in the first multiparty elections held in Serbia in 1990. In contrast, opposition parties such as the Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO), which attempted to revive memories of Serbia’s monarchical past, received only 16% of the electoral vote, and 7.6% of the parliamentary vote, while the far-right Serbian Radical Party (SRS), which openly called for the expulsion of all non-Serbs from Serbia and a war to create a Greater Serbian state, received a mere 2% of the vote and failed to even qualify for representation in parliament.69 By all accounts, the politics of nationalist extremism that dominated the region in the 1990s, and flooded newspaper and television coverage both within Yugoslavia and the West, had, and continues to hold, very little popular and electoral support among ordinary citizens.70

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70 A notable exception to SRS electoral performance is in the 1992 election, when it received 19% of the vote because it was allied with the SPS. Television coverage, dominated by Milošević’s SPS presented the
Though the SPS attempted to portray itself as a party of stability, moderation, and professional leadership, its main strengths were found in the emotional appeals to traditional Serbian authority and the charismatic personality of Milošević. Two speeches made by Milošević, both at Kosovo to a crowd of jubilant Serbs who felt they finally found a leader who recognized their grievances makes the case. The first was in April 1987, when he became the first major representative of the League of Communists to travel to Kosovo and speak about the ongoing problems and hardships of Serbs in the area. When a large crowd of Serbs were being forcibly kept out of the hall where he was speaking and the local police resorted to force to keep order, Milošević, in an almost spontaneous response, said “no one should dare beat you” in regard to the police. However, his statement was taken by the crowd to mean that no one should ever subjugate Kosovo Serbs again. Whatever the immediate interpretation, the crowd erupted in thunderous applause, catapulting Milošević from simple communist apparatchik into the new spokesman for the aggrieved Serbian people. This statement, claimed Kosovo Serb activist Miroslav Šolović, “enthroned his as a tsar” and probably more than any other moment in history, made Milošević realize he could become the most powerful man in Yugoslavia by playing on the discontent and fears of the Serbian population. Addressing the Serb crowd again, he claimed:

You should stay here. This is your land. These are your houses. Your meadows and gardens. Your memories. You shouldn’t abandon your land just because it’s difficult to live, because you are pressured by injustice and degradation … You should stay here for the sake of your ancestors and descendants … But I don’t

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SRS as a moderate, respectable party. When a parliamentary rift occurred between the two parties one year later, and the SRS was once again portrayed as a far-Right pro-fascist party, SRS support dropped to 10% of the vote. At the local level, the SRS did far worse, securing no more than 8% of the vote in any municipal election. In 1993, the notorious Serbian paramilitary commander Željko Ražnatović, more universally known as “Arkan”, formed the Serbian Unity Party (SSJ). His party has failed to gain more than 2% of the vote in any election. See Thomas, (1999).
suggest that you should stay, endure, and tolerate a situation you’re not satisfied with. On the contrary, you should change it with the rest of the progressive people here, in Serbia and in Yugoslavia.\footnote{Silber and Little, \textit{Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation}, (1995), p. 38}

By making clear reference to the sanctity of the land, and the history that existed between the land and the people, Milošević argued that it was not just a Serb’s right to live in Kosovo, but was their moral obligation and duty. The referencing of tradition by hearkening to Serbia’s collective ancestors who had lived there previously, as well as the future generations that would inherit the soil of their fathers, gave the SPS the ability to utilize traditional authority to home and hearth in order to gain public support. By saying that Kosovo was specifically Serbian, Milošević was not so much charting a new direction of Serbian politics, but was simply affirming what had always been assumed and believed by the people, but never properly recognized by the communist elites in Tito’s Yugoslavia.

His second speech at Kosovo was made in June 1989 at the 600\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, on the very field where the actual battle took place. His speeches were full of short, vernacular, and understandable phrases for the people, such as “Serbia will be united or there will be no Serbia!”\footnote{Malešević, p. 180}, repeated slogans of “No one should dare beat you!” and “My foot shall not touch the ground in Kosovo as long as Kosovo is not free.”\footnote{Silber and Little, \textit{Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation}, (1995), p. 38} The historical memories of Serbian bravery, sacrifice, and loyalty were also exemplified in clear form:

Serbs in their history have never conquered or exploited others. Through two world wars, they liberated themselves and, when they could, they also helped others to liberate themselves. The Kosovo heroism does not allow us to forget that at one time we were brave and dignified and among the few who went into battle
undefeated. Six centuries later, we are again in the midst of battles and quarrels. They are not armed battles, though such things should not be excluded yet.73

The popular appeal of Milošević gave him and the SPS all the legitimacy it needed to retain power and put forward the policies and strategies that fatefully determined Serbia’s political path in the 1990s. Broad symbols of identity: Kosovo, the Serbian Orthodox Church, the great statesman Nikola Pašić of Serbia’s pre-Communist past, and the collective suffering of the Serbian people during World War II at the hands of foreign invaders and fellow Yugoslavs, all attested to the deconstruction of a multiethnic “Yugoslav” identity, and the reconstruction of a distinctively mass “Serbian” society and culture. By drawing simplified parallels between the past and the present of a victorious and brave Serbia that never yielded to the authority of an outsider, Milošević empowered the people to stand up against bureaucratic elites and international agitators and reclaim what has been historically and thus rightfully theirs.

Like Tito who united all South Slavs under one common Yugoslav narrative, Milošević returned to a Pan-Serb narrative to unite all Serbs in one state. While this had been an ongoing goal since Garašanin’s Načertanije, Milošević’s success in revoking the autonomy of Vojvodina and Kosovo, thus bringing the two regions within the direct administrative control of Belgrade for the first time since 1941, was a visible sign that the goal of all Serbs in one state was finally at hand. Pictures and posters of his image proliferated throughout Serbia and Serb-dominant regions in Bosnia, Croatia and Montenegro in the early 1990s. Songs and poems were written in his honor and he was a virtual staple of the media in articles, photographs, and television coverage. Supporters saw his authority as familiarly personal and at times almost divinely inspired. Yet this

73 Silber and Little (1995), p. 72
strain of Pan-Serbism differed fundamentally from that under Garašanin and Pašić. Where Garašanin clearly viewed Serbs as the first among equals within an enlarged South Slavic state, this community would be defined by common links through language and mutual aspirations of self-determination against foreign powers. Where Pašić also viewed Serbs as first among equals in a South Slavic state, justification was based on Serbia being an established state for over a century, having fought numerous wars and engaged in multiple diplomatic initiatives. Pan–Serbism to both were justified by historical entitlement and a desire to participate as an equal power in Europe. Milošević’s Pan-Serbism was primarily driven by his personal interest in political preservation and, unlike his predecessors, frequently abandoned claims to Serb regions he could no longer control, including Kosovo.

Pan-Serbism under Milošević was also driven by religious and historical identity that was deliberately meant to differentiate Serbs from other South Slavs, particularly Croats. Even Bosnians, long regarded by orthodox Pan-Serbists as part of the Serbian nation, were now regarded as little more than Turks and had greater affinities with Islamic states of the Middle East than with their fellow Slavic communities. Historical memories of victimization that stemmed from unresolved issues from the Second World War and ongoing ethnic tensions in Kosovo were the primary driving forces behind this variant of Serbian collective identity. Under Milošević’s charismatic leadership, the Serbian population achieved self-realization as members of a wider imagined community organized around readily acceptable and accessible symbols of Kosovo, St. Sava, Prince Lazar, Miloš Obilić, the Orthodox Church, and common national heritage that had nothing to do with the Yugoslav state they had been living in. The concentration of
ethnocentric symbols, both in Serbia and Croatia, undermined multiethnic coexistence and, with the exception of the relatively homogenous Slovenian Republic, undermined all efforts at transitions to liberal democratic governance.

**Balance Sheet: Serbia’s Democratic and Cultural Capital in 1990**

The triumph of Milošević in Serbia’s first multiparty election is enough for most scholars to regard Serbia as a “failed transition” to democracy. Whether this failure in transition was a result of deep-seated predilections for political extremism among the populace or deliberate manipulations by entrenched elites in order to remain in power, the fact remains that what originated as economic and institutional crises of authority were shifted to the ethno-cultural realm by nearly all of Yugoslavia’s constituent groups. However, enough evidence suggests that despite strong elements of historical and cultural exclusivity among Serbs, not to mention over a century of political independence and multiple attempts at regional expansion, the Serbian population appeared to have accepted a multiethnic Yugoslav identity until the late 1980s. It was not until then when an interest in prewar Serbian historiography, Serbian Orthodoxy, and the symbolic meaning of Kosovo became potent vehicles for socio-political mobilization. The rise in Serbian nationalism and the destruction of any multicultural political alternatives was neither solely the result of deep-seated hatreds among Serbs for non-Serbs, nor solely the product of elite manipulation of gullible masses. It was a synthesis of cultural formlessness amid rapid social change, and the channeling of that formlessness by elites into a specific political discourse that appeared to reassert control at the state level while
simultaneously addressing popular grievances by the masses. The roots of the second Yugoslavia’s fragmentation and collapse were structural and economic, but it required a connection of these problems to particular ethnic and cultural issues by elites to make decentralization irreversible, political disagreements unbridgeable, and territorial fragmentation unavoidable.

That the general Serbian population seemed ready to accept a Yugoslav identity challenges those assumptions that argue that violence, chauvinism, and exclusionary nationalism are endemic to Serbian politics and society. It is true that Miloševič’s strongest supporters came from regions like Kosovo where ethnic co-existence had been severely strained, but if we are to believe the survey data of popular opinion among Serbs and other Yugoslavs throughout the 1960s and afterward, a large number of Serbs had no deep-seated attachments to collective memories of Serbian history or identity that placed other ethnicities in a subordinate position. Additionally, it is erroneous to conclude that there is an unbroken link between the ethnocentrism of nineteenth century Serbia and the national populism of Milošević. Historians have noted the gap between Belgrade elites and the large percentage of the Serbian peasantry that remained detached from most political activity. If anything, ethnocentrism was one of the few options available to elites like Garašanin and Pašić in a state defined by top-down corporatism and a general disregard for public input, and while there is validity behind the argument that politics in Serbia largely lacked the sophistication for cultivating civic participation and liberal democratic values among its citizens, the cultural elements that embodied Pan-Serbism remained a neutral ideology until embodied in the narratives of suffering and victimhood of post-Yugoslav Serbian intellectuals and political elites.
Prior to the formation of the second Yugoslavia, there is little to suggest that Pan-Serbism differed in any way from other pan-ethnic movements of Europe. Like its Italian and German counterparts, a strong sense of brotherly inclusiveness via Romantic nationalism and narratives of common centuries-old historical experiences originally defined Pan-Serb ideology. Collective memories of Serbia’s medieval past and linguistic links that united the many South Slavic groups into one perceived imagined community were all similar in orientation to memories of Roman and Renaissance Italy and Charlemagne’s Germany. But Pan-Serbism, like most national movements in Eastern Europe both in the nineteenth and late twentieth centuries, placed greater emphasis on ethnic ties than civic bonds of citizenship. Thus, earlier models that included Croats, Bosnians, and other Slavic communities under the basis of linguistic unity, were significantly modified over time to reflect new understandings of who belonged within the group and who did not. New narratives of suffering at the hands of Croats in the 1940s, the 1970s and the 1980s led Serbian intellectuals to exclude them from the community. But because Croats and Serbs spoke the same language, the tools of identity had to shift to more Serb-oriented categories of religion and history; a shift that was simultaneously taken by like-minded nationalists in Croatia. Exclusionary narratives of historical memory in each society became mutually reinforcing once each side portrayed the other as dangerous to one’s own group, and visual signs on the other group’s intensification of ethnic exclusivity generated a security dilemma inside their own.

When the only feasible model of civic co-fraternity began to break down with the decentralization of Yugoslavia and future political, economic, social, and even cultural identities reoriented themselves towards the republic level, ethnocentric politics among all of Yugoslavia’s groups became an inevitable default within an institutional vacuum. However even this alone could not explain the particular authoritarian leanings these identities took. Collective identity in post-Communist Serbia was no less ethnocentric than post-Communist Poland, Hungary, or Czechoslovakia. But as already mentioned, the demobilization of democratic reformers by hardline elites in the ruling regime co-opted national identity towards a specifically non-democratic variant. In this regard, Pan-Serbism under Milošević was more a product of elite construction than any sense of primordial feelings of superiority, domination, or chauvinism. That large percentages of Serbs as early as a decade before Milošević’s ascent to power were still eager to support the Yugoslav idea and held no proclivity towards any particular political movement or ideology gives credence to the belief that deep-seated understandings of Serbian identity remained fluid, ambiguous, and detached from the political center, and also a good degree of society was ready to support anyone with a sound idea.

That conservatives like Milošević felt it necessary to shift focus away from economic concerns and towards ethnic problems indicates the readiness most Serbs and other Yugoslav citizens might have given towards greater democratic freedoms and liberties if given the opportunity and the right political leaders. Problems definitely existed, but they could not be translated into the exclusionary nationalism it became without deliberate manipulation at the top. It is also important to note that such ideas persisted only as long as Milošević held authority. Once he lost his uncontested hold on
power and once his opponents were seen to represent a better defense of Serbian identity and national security in the wake of Yugoslavia’s disintegration, a series of secessionist wars, disastrous economic inflation, the 1999 NATO bombardment of Serbia, the subsequent loss of Kosovo, and finally the fraudulent electoral results of October 2000, both his legitimacy and vision of Pan-Serb identity evaporated very quickly.
Chapter 7 - Serbia’s Democratic Deficit Since 2000

After thirteen years in power, Slobodan Milošević was finally ousted by a popular uprising on October 5, 2000. The catalyst for popular uprising came when Milošević chose not to recognize the results of the presidential election that projected Vojislav Koštunica, his chief rival and leader of the Democratic Opposition of Serbia coalition (DOS), as the winner the previous month.¹ The Federal Election Commission, staffed with Milošević supporters, did not dispute Koštunica’s victory, but claimed that his margin of victory was much smaller at 48.22% to Milošević’s 40.23%. Both candidates were below the required 50% minimum for outright victory, and a second round of elections was thus necessary. Opposition leaders, including Koštunica and the more outspoken Zoran Đinđić immediately rejected the claims of the Commission and called for a general strike throughout the country. Other members of Serbia’s opposition, including Velimir Ilić, the mayor of Čačak, actively participated in marching on Belgrade with supporters who dismantled roadblocks and police checkpoints along the way. In what resembled the anti-Communist rallies throughout Eastern Europe a decade before, up to a million protestors converged in front of the Serbian Parliament and forced Milošević to step down from power.² The end of his rule was hailed as a rebirth of democracy in Serbia, and a return of normalized relations with Europe and the rest of the

¹ According to election monitors specifically trained via a U.S.-sponsored democratization project, Koštunica won 54.66% to Milošević’s 35.01% in the first round, making him the clear winner.
world. His arrest and extradition to the Hague the following year further demonstrated a new resolve by Serbian political elites to expunge the legacies of its authoritarian past and embark on a new democratic path to full European integration and modernity.

But it soon became clear to domestic and international observers that the removal of Milošević did not transform Serbia into the functioning democracy many expected. The democratic coalition that finally succeeded in unseating him inherited a state broken by ten years of international sanctions, demoralized by defeat in four wars, damaged by NATO air strikes in 1999, occupied by international forces in Kosovo with ethnic Albanians determined to break away, inundated with thousands of Serb refugees from Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo, infected by organized crime, plagued with corruption, and dominated by SPS remnants in key political, economic, and industrial sectors who in many cases simply switched political allegiances at the moment of transition. Additionally, many members of the Serbian opposition were hardly proponents of democracy, and supported Milošević’s overthrow more on the basis of him abandoning the principles of Pan-Serbism than on stifling political rights and civil liberties. All these factors have left indelible marks on society that since 2000 have served as burdensome distractions to, and provided considerably weak foundations for, the establishment of a successfully functioning liberal democratic political system in Serbia.

**Serbia’s Democratic Deficit**

As early as 1992, unemployment in Serbia and Montenegro, all that was left of Yugoslavia, reached 20%, with wages falling to one-seventh their previous levels. By
1993, inflation had plummeted to levels proportionate to Weimer Germany in the early 1930s of 200 million percent per month while the average monthly salary amounted to little more than US $10. The Serbian middle class was all but decimated, as 80% of the population was either living on the edge of poverty or below it. Simultaneously, a small clique of ultra-rich individuals largely consisting of inner members of the SPS, black marketers war profiteers, and leaders of organized crime syndicates controlled the flow of money and resources to such a degree that nearly all forms of legitimate business ceased to function. Amid such conditions, a culture of gangsterism prevailed in which the fast, and often short-lived, life of the nouveau riche was the quickest, and often only, way to wealth, fame, and power. Though collective feelings of defensive nationalism and the threat of war brought Milošević to power, the destruction of political, social, cultural, and informational alternatives sustained the regime throughout most of the 1990s. Opposition to Milošević soon became opposition to the Serbian nation and the Serbian people, whatever that meant, and the only options available for conscious dissenters was irrelevancy or emigration.³

From an institutional standpoint, the revolution that brought down Milošević in 2000 resembled the revolution that brought down Ceaușescu in Romania in 1989.⁴ Popular discontent stemming from falsified election results certainly served as a catalyst for action for student movements and various NGOs, but the actual transformation of power may have been more an internal agreement between opposition leaders, members

of the Interior Ministry, the army, and various elements of the criminal underworld.⁵

Though the degree of backroom negotiations is unknown, it is telling that key members of the regime avoided purges in the aftermath of Milošević’s fall for at least another two to three years, and it would not be until the assassination of Zoran Djindjić in July 2003, itself a consequence of efforts to weaken and dismantle these elements, that the new government formally acted in dismembering the internal apparatus of the Milošević-era regime. Within that time however, the opposition that was united in struggle against Milošević quickly turned on itself, revealing deep political, economic, and ideological divisions among its ranks. At a time when a collective effort at dismantling the apparatus of the previous regime and fulfilling all outstanding international obligations would have been paramount, years were squandered by internal bickering, political infighting, and an atmosphere of self-serving corruption.

In other words, Serbia finally transitioned to democracy, but failed, at least initially, at achieving political consensus for democratic consolation. As stated in chapter 1, various phases of transition from the collapse of the old order to the consolidation of a new democratic system are each met with unique challenges. A united struggle to remove the old regime from power either peacefully or through revolution, invariably produces internal jockeying for power during the transition stage. In Serbia’s case, united resistance against Milošević was, for many movements, the only common link between them and once Milošević was ousted from power, these groups quickly turned on themselves. Additionally, even if a democratic government is established, questions over the nature of democracy, the values it embodies and the goals it strives to achieve remain,

and in many instances persist for years in undermining political cohesion and a unified sense of collective identity.6

Dismantling the apparatus of the Milošević regime that had relied so much on discrediting any alternative forms of thought has indeed been a far more difficult task than observers, both in Serbia and out, originally thought. While many members of the democratic movement seemed happy to keep the structure as is and simply change heads of administration, others were keen on a complete top-down overhaul of the entire political system, coupled with a near-complete rejection of all forms of Serbian political culture that legitimized the old regime. What this has seemingly produced in both Serbia and throughout Europe is an understanding that true democracy cannot take root in Serbia unless the ethnocentric characteristics of Serbian political culture are thoroughly purged. This has led to the difficult, and largely controversial, dilemma of trying to find compatibility with universal values of democracy and the traditional values, collective identities, and historical legacies, both virtuous and heinous, of the Serbian people. Since 2000, there have been no serious attempts at undermining democratic government in Serbia, nor are there any political movements that are actively seeking to restore authoritarian power. For all structural and institutional purposes, Serbia is a democratic state. What remains unsolved however is the type of democracy that characterizes the orientation of the state in relation to the rest of Europe, the lingering feelings of distrust towards other ethnic groups, and the ethnocentric chauvinism brought on by over a decade of isolation, humiliation, and deterioration of quality of life. In the plainest sense of the meaning, a full consolidation of democracy, as stipulated by the international

community, has meant that Serbia must simultaneously reexamine and reorient its cultural identity.

“Two Serbs, Three Political Parties”

Despite all the rhetoric of the DOS coalition in seeking to return Serbia to the European community of nations, it was apparent to most observers that this political coalition only served as collective opposition to Milošević, as each party had its own agenda. Instead of a new democratic government acting in organized unison, politics in Serbia became what Obrad Kesić called an “airplane with eighteen pilots”. First, politics remained highly personalized. Parties were distinguished by the personalities of each leader, rather than by discernible ideology. No greater differences in leadership personalities were apparent than that between Zoran Djindjić, leader of the Democratic Party (DS) and Vojislav Koštunica, head of the smaller breakaway Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS). While Koštunica was more willing to blend modern politics with conservative Serbian nationalism than his counterpart, Djindjić was far more likely to resort to unorthodox methods in order to see political reform achieved, even at the risk of circumventing power delegated to others and abusing the powers given to himself.

Second, personality-driven politics meant that “tolerance and compromise were seen as signs of weakness, while ruthlessness and rigidity were worn like badges of honor.” Instead of power sharing and cooperation, spoils of the Milošević regime were divided up into virtual fiefdoms that were jealously guarded as personal property.
major source of inter-party contention was the disagreements over which groups were more active than others in removing Milošević from office and claiming who was more entitled to higher levels of authority. The nature of his downfall lent a revolutionary air to DOS, and many of its leaders were eager to exploit this atmosphere in order to dismantle as much of the old regime as possible and replace SPS remnants with their own loyalists, often in absence of approval from other coalition partners. However, the biggest opponent of rapid change was Koštunica himself, who advocated a more structured and controlled transfer of power within the existing set of laws. Other members of DOS, particularly in Djindjić’s DS, interpreted this as an abuse of power, especially since Koštunica’s DSS would never have achieved anything without the sacrifice and organization of larger parties. That Koštunica was at home the day Milošević was overthrown and took no part in the street demonstrations was an even greater insult to them. To his credit, Koštunica was eager to avoid the transfer of power to take on too revolutionary a character and alienate large groups in the countryside that might have been disillusioned with Milošević’s power in more recent years, but was not interested in seeing new demagogues inherit the throne. As a sign that at least he was more in favor of a negotiated transfer of power than a complete system overthrow, Koštunica accepted key sectors of the Milošević regime remaining in power that he was wary of alienating. But his virulent anticommunism contributed to his general disdain for any revolutionary activity, even those committed to democratic ends. As he explained in December 2001, “my family was a victim of [Partisan excess], but a victim who does not [seek] revenge and does not want to exchange one “Partisan excess” for another.” To someone like Koštunica, radicalism was radicalism regardless of political ideology.

9 Vreme, (Belgrade), no. 571 (December 13, 2001), p. 20. Quoted in Kesić, p. 105. The term “Partisan
On the other side, Zoran Djindjić, now generally regarded as one of modern Serbia’s martyrs for democracy following his assassination in 2003, represented the revolutionary wing of DOS that functioned just as much in opposition to Koštunica as it did in trying to achieve democratic consolidation on its own. As a student of Jürgen Habermas, Djindjić’s disciplines were more inspired by political activism, critical theory, and secular progressivism than traditional modes of Balkan politics. However, Djindjić was certainly not one to shy away from exerting his personal authority as spokesman for his party, and in many instances held the reigns of power no less tightly than Milošević and the SPS. While his commitment to democracy was never in question, his methods for achieving democratic parity with the rest of Europe remained dubious until his death. In many respects, Djindjić regarded the rule of law as more an obstacle than an incremental component of democratic governance, and in many cases, he and his party would not hesitate to stretch the hand of cooperation with the Serbian criminal underworld that benefited so much under Milošević.

Since his assassination, Djindjić’s legacy has become romanticized by his supporters, who have placed his outspoken commitment to a democratic and “European” excess”, or partizanstinom, combines the understandings of Partisan extremism with a lust for power and revenge. Its historic meaning is tied to the political extremism undertaken by Tito’s communists immediately following the end of the war and the consolidation of power in 1945, and here is directly implied to serve as a parallel to the perceived excesses of power and radicalism undertaken by more revolutionary elements of DOS.

See for example his work with Kosts Čavoski, Party Pluralism or Monism: Social Movements and the Political System in Yuogoslavia 1944 – 1949 (Columbia University Press, 1995)

Biographies on Djindjić in English sadly remain scarce to nonexistent. Works by Djindjić include Jugoslavija kao nedovršena država (Yugoslavia as an Unfinished State) (Književna zajednica Novi Sad: Anthropos, 1988); Srbija ni na istoku ni na zapadu (Serbia, Neither East nor West) (Belgrade: Cepelin, 1996)

Following Djindjić’s assassination, the Serbian media reported a number of connections between key members of DOS and organized crime syndicates. Čedomir Jovanović, current leader of the Liberal Democratic Party, and Nebojša Ćović had both been videotaped meeting with Dušan Spasojević “Šiptar” of the Zemun Clan syndicate, and it was argued that the liquidation of its leaders was just as much necessary in eliminating the papertrail back to Djindjić’s party as it was in eliminating a notorious criminal network. Pavlaković (2005), p. 39
Serbia over his ancillary support for a Pan-Serb state and his rather questionable activities in establishing a democratic rule of law. Prior to his death, his popularity had declined considerably, particularly among ordinary citizens outside Belgrade, over DOS’s lax approach to combating the entrenched powers of organized crime and in some cases, even working alongside it. But the mafia aside, high ranking officials in DOS, including Djindjić, operated with an air of self-righteous elitism that seemed more concerned with the attitudes of Western governments, notably Germany and the United States, over the opinions and needs of the Serbian population. That Djindjić also seemed more partial to delegative democracy than representative, widened the gap of association between Serbia’s new democratic elite and its ordinary citizens, who felt they were just as derided and dismissed as nonentities as under Milošević. All of this undermined any belief that true democratic reform under DOS was genuine, and made it highly unlikely that popular support for its policies would last long.

Throughout most of the post-Milošević period, public attitudes towards politics remained significantly negative. Dissatisfaction with the lack of improvement in standards of living, stagnation of wages in relation to rising costs, and sustained levels of unemployment all continued to accentuate public disillusionment that little had changed with the political transition in October 2000. Faith in political authorities of all types...
remained overwhelmingly low, while many continued to trust personal relations, the Serbian Orthodox Church, schools, and doctors.\textsuperscript{15} Overall assessments in standards of living continued to reveal the majority of the population viewed conditions as either bearable (24\%) or hardly bearable (53\%).\textsuperscript{16} In addition, an average of 28\% of Serbs believed their country was ruled by “criminals”.\textsuperscript{17} Serbs also continued to believe that international forces were more powerful than their own government and were forcing Serbia to conform to and accept terms of its own choosing. Nearly 50\% of Serbs felt the greatest obstruction to Serbia’s further integration with the EU due to a policy of constant conditioning and blackmailing by Brussels, as opposed to only 7\% who believed it was due to unmet objectives in reform and modernization, and an additional 76\% believed the status of Kosovo was a fundamental prerequisite for Serbia’s integration with the EU.\textsuperscript{18} However, despite the apparent public anomie, general faith in democracy remained strong, as roughly 70\% of Serbs seemed to be in favor of joining the EU, 52\% believe economic situation has either slightly improved or remained the same since a year prior, nearly 23\% indicated they were “somewhat dissatisfied” with the present economic situation and 29\% indicated they were “very dissatisfied”. Nearly 50\% of respondents indicated that “democracy is a value yet to be understood in our country.” Survey of Serbian Public Opinion, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) Stockholm, Sweden (January – February 2002). In November 2005, 44\% of Serbs indicated “everything is the same” in relation to events prior to October 2000. Political Divisions and Value Orientations of Citizens of Serbia, Center for Free Elections and Democracy (CeSID) (Belgrade, November 2005).\textsuperscript{15} 84\% of Serb citizens indicated they had trust in “good acquaintances”, 82\% trusted their relatives, 68\% trusted the Church, 66\% trusted schools and faculties, and doctors, while only 30\% trusted the government, 26\% trusted political parties, and only 20\% trusted politicians. CeSID (Belgrade, 2005). In another survey, 72\% of respondents trusted the Serbian Church and 63\% trusted schools as institutions of civil society and political and economic actors. Political Divisions in Serbia – Five Years Later, CeSID (Belgrade, May 2005).\textsuperscript{16} CeSID (May, 2005)\textsuperscript{17} CeSID (November, 2005)\textsuperscript{18} In regards to the question of Kosovo’s status as a potential EU prerequisite, 45\% responded that being forced to give up Kosovo was a prerequisite, while another 31\% responded that while the two issues are not officially related, it either appeared or could likely be that Kosovo could be a prerequisite. European Orientation of the Citizens of Serbia, Strategic Marketing Research (Belgrade, June 2007).
that “democracy may have its faults, but is better than other forms of rule,” and 70% do not feel that Serbia should go to war to defend sovereignty over Kosovo.\textsuperscript{19}

The biggest reason for Serbian dissatisfaction with life after Milošević stem from resentment towards its leaders. Political life since 2000 showed similar patterns to that of nineteenth and early twentieth century Serbia, where politics began and ended in Belgrade with little to no input from the population at large. Again, this disconnect with the populace had little to do with a desire for authoritative governance as it did with a general understanding by elites that the population was either too ignorant or too uninterested for the intricate features of participatory democracy. This top down approach to politics might have been necessary during Garašanin’s time, but as modernization enveloped the country by the turn of the previous century, the need for social control advocated collective mobilization through ethnocentric ideologies rather than encouraging political participation and parliamentary debate. By the time of Milošević’s fall, the general unfamiliarity with multiparty participation from decades of single-party communist rule, coupled with the absence of any viable alternative to the ethnocentric politics that characterized Serbian political life since the late 1980s, left most movements with few resources beyond a continuation of ethnocentric politics under new political management.

From an institutional perspective, the explosion of dozens of political parties and movements prior to and immediately following the Milošević period should indicate that Serbs were no longer interested in adhering to one political ideology or philosophy. However as already mentioned, these political parties largely function around a few charismatic individuals, rather than embracing any definitive philosophies and tenets.

\textsuperscript{19} CeSID (May, 2005), and Research of Public Opinion in Serbia, Early Summer 2007 (Belgrade, 2007)
Moreover, nearly all political parties that have any hope of receiving public support have all continued in some form or another the cultural narratives of Milošević’s Serbia that focused on a series of narratives of the perennial victimization and suffering of the Serbian people who have only sought to defend their lands like any other state would. Those political groups and NGOs that actively sought to distance themselves from the political ethnocentrism of the Milošević years have found themselves adrift with no alternative cultural narrative that might gain some form of popular following outside their own small academic and intellectual circles in Belgrade and abroad. In other words, in order to achieve any form of legitimacy, democratic parties in the post-Milošević era found it necessary, however unpleasant, to continue the politics of ethnocentric Serb identity, continue to push for Serb interests in other former Yugoslav republics, and uphold the collective understanding of Serbian victimhood and suffering at the hands of others; the very same rhetoric that sustained Milošević’s tenure in power throughout the 1990s.

The Persistence of Pan-Serb Victimization

Under Milošević, state control relied just as much on the appropriation of historical narratives of both monarchical and communist Serbia, as it required an extensive reliance on the secret police, monopolization of the media, and the domination of Serbia’s economic infrastructure. While Milošević never personally cared for nor really believed in, Serbia’s national myths, he found them expedient for the legitimization of power, as evidenced in the previous chapter by his experience with the Kosovo Serbs in 1987 and again in 1989. But what made his hold on power doubly secure was his
fusing of Serbian historical memory with the official narratives of Communist Yugoslavia, thereby achieving public acceptance from both a growing nationalist circle, as well as reassuring entrenched elites in the League of Communists and top officers in the JNA of his continuation of the status quo. In many respects, the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 and the Partisan struggle against Fascist occupation from abroad and collaboration at home in 1941 – 45 were equally emphasized by the regime as examples of Serbian resistance and resilience against external enemies and foreign occupation. Both narratives were also appropriated for their universal appeal to all Serbs in Yugoslavia as all-encompassing narratives of shared historical experiences.

The fusing of both narratives earned Milosevic the general support of two crucial institutions: the Yugoslav People’s Army (Jugoslavenska Narodna Armija, JNA) and the Serbian Orthodox Church. The JNA comprised one of the last organized institutions of Communist Yugoslavia with an officer corps that was dominated by Serbs who took a hardline stance against the further federalization of the state. However, much debate has been centered on whether these corps officers were committed Yugoslavs or merely using their positions of power to further the centralization of the state around Serbian authority. What is not debated is the fact that while Communist symbolism throughout Yugoslavia was rapidly diminishing, the Partisan struggle in the Second World War continued to resonate as an episode of Serbian heroism and bravery in much the same way as the Soviet defense of Stalingrad and Leningrad continues to occupy a hallowed space in post-Soviet Russian historical memory. As one of the main repositories of Serbian cultural symbols and historical narratives, the Serbian Orthodox Church enjoyed a rapid cultural revival amid the cultural formlessness left in the wake of Yugoslavia’s political and
ideological collapse. More than simply a religious institution, the Serbian Church resumed its historic role as a “voice of the people” in the form of popular historical myths and legends as a collective sense of Yugoslavism was being replaced with a more ethnocentric Serbian variant.

In what might have come to resemble a seemingly uneasy amalgamation of Christian and Communist symbolism, Milošević successfully fused both identities into one narrative that linked the medieval, monarchical, and communist periods through memories of struggle for an independent homeland, perseverance under foreign domination, a willingness to sacrifice for others, and victimization from being betrayed by external powers. This not only effectively eliminated any serious alternative political thought in Serbia, particularly when international forces seemed to confirm these ideas of aggression against the Serbian people, but it actually restrained the opposition to challenge Milošević even when his regime was on the verge of collapse, particularly the winter of 1996 – 97.20 A lasting legacy of the Milošević regime in Serbia was it became nearly difficult, in not outright impossible, to offer a credible political program without addressing the “national question” in some form. In fact, large parts of Milošević’s opposition, both in the SRS and among various democratic parties, were even more determined to carve out a Greater Serbian state from the carcass of Yugoslavia than he.

The lasting cultural legacy of the Milošević era was an explosion of nationalism and xenophobic sentiment among large segments of society that had previously never ascribed to such attitudes due to the catastrophic political and economic breakdown of daily life. According to opinion poll data collected by the Belgrade-based Institute of

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Political Science in 1992, nearly 79% of those polled believed that there was an “international conspiracy” against Serbs directed by Germany and the Vatican.21 The same poll showed that one-third of respondents supported paramilitary groups, on the belief that “they are welcome in Serbia since they help to defend our endangered brothers (in Croatia and Bosnia) as well as fight against traitors within Serbia itself.”22 Nearly two-thirds of those polled were in favor of the idea that Serbia is in need of “firm laws and a brave and strong leader to establish order and discipline, and whom everybody will obey without question.”23 Additionally, the vast majority of non-Serbs were described in extremely negative terms in editorials and school textbooks.24

22 Borba, April 16, 1993 (Belgrade), cited in Pribićević, p. 195.
23 Borba, April 19, 1993 (Belgrade), cited in Pribićević, p. 195.
24 Croats were the most heavily demonized ethnic group throughout the 1990s in Serbia. They were often portrayed as traitors, murderers, Serb-haters, and expansionists, who, with the aid of the Catholic Church, have been historically bent on converting them to Catholicism. The crimes committed by the pro-Nazi Ustaša regime in the Second World War are discussed in vivid detail, with descriptions of the types of torture, killings, rapes, and other atrocities committed against Serbs, and were openly linked to contemporary practices and beliefs of Franjo Tudjman’s regime. Albanians were also portrayed very negatively, with many references calling them not “Albanian”, but “Shiptars” which though used by Albanians to refer to themselves (Shqiptare), had a clear pejorative meaning in Serbian, akin to a slur. Albanians were frequently depicted as being separatists and terrorists: “With the aim of realizing the idea of a ‘Kosovo Republic’ and joining with Albania, Albanian separatists were pressuring Serbian and Montenegrin inhabitants to leave their property and to emigrate so to make Kosovo and Metohija ethnically clean.” (Nikola Gadjše, Ljiljana Mladenović, and Dušan Živković, Istorija za 8. razred osnovne škole (Belgrade: Zavod za udzbenike i nastavna sredstva, 1993), p. 153). Germans were seldom differentiated from Nazis, and under the Milošević regime, the Germans were still depicted as an aggressive people, operating under the guise of the EU, and supporting secession movements in all the other Yugoslav republics with the clear intention of controlling the breakaway regimes as it did in 1941. According to Dnevnik, one of the SPS controlled newspapers at the time, “those [Germans] who have blood-thirstily butchered us in two world wars for their empires and who now in the name of their new European and world order are threatening us with expulsion and force … should know that we will not be anybody’s servants and that we were never stronger, more experienced and ready to decide about our destiny than today.” (Dnevnik, May 1, 1992), p. 1. The same blending of identities is extended towards Turks, who are essentially the same aggressive people as the Ottomans. History textbooks depicted the Ottoman period as a time of unprecedented brutality, torture, slavery, rape, desecration of holy sites, and special emphasis on the blood tax (danak u krvi) in which Serbian children were forcibly taken from their parents, converted to Islam, became Janissaries, and turned them into enemies of their own people. Because of their Hapsburg legacy, Austrians and Hungarians were depicted as powers that deliberately interfered with the affairs of Serbs, keeping them from realizing their natural right of annexing lands in Bosnia, Montenegro, and Macedonia. The only people that were given positive descriptions are Russians because of common...
Many opposition leaders would have openly agreed with the 1986 Memorandum and felt that Yugoslavia was deliberately structured to weaken the Serbian nation. Četinik symbolism became the most visible feature of the Serbian national revival, and by the late 1980s it was no longer considered a taboo subject. By the 1990s it openly challenged the official narratives of the Partisan struggle, and parties such as the Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO), headed by Vuk Drašković, staged numerous political rallies at Ravna Gora, the wartime headquarters of Četinik leader Draža Mihailović.25 These rallies were more displays of Serbian national revival than calls for democratic freedoms. Officially labeled both a royalist competitor, and a fascist collaborator by Partisan historiography, Mihailović has not only been popularly exonerated from Serbian history in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but is now regarded as a Serbian resistance leader and freedom fighter who was unlawfully abandoned by the West, and martyred by the Communists in 1946. Even members of Djindjić’s DS strongly opposed Milošević abandoning efforts at holding on to territory in Croatia after 1994 and again in Bosnia after the signing of the Dayton Accords in 1995.26 It is also telling that the only person able to unseat Milošević in 2000, even with an eighteen party coalition, was Koštunica, another nationalist. While

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26 During the period of NATO bombing in Bosnia to repel Serbian forces besieging Sarajevo, Zoran Djindjić and the DS supported General Mladić’s forces as the only line of defense for the Bosnian Serb population. “If Serb forces withdraw from around Sarajevo,” he remarked, “then the 40,000 Muslim soldiers based around Sarajevo will appear on some other front producing drastic change in the balance of forces.” “U Vašingtonu je ključ rata i mira” (The Key of War and Peace is in Washington), Zoran Djindjić interviewed by Vojislava Vignjević, Naša borba (September 19, 1995). On September 8, 1995, a few days after NATO initiated attacks, the DS organized a demonstration of outside the American Cultural Center in central Belgrade, where several hundred Serbs carried signs in English saying “NATO Go Home”, and “Yesterday Vietnam, today Bosnia, tomorrow Russia.” Thomas (1999), p. 242
he is certainly less nationalistic than leaders of the Serbian Radical Party such as Vojislav Šešelj and his former protégé Tomislav Nikolić. Koštunica has been very vocal about his wish for an all-Serbs-in-one-state policy, and his frequent citing of double standards by international powers in advocating an independent Kosovo to address the self-determination of the Albanian population but not extending similar rights to Serbs in Bosnia have placed him at odds with many Western governments recently.

Furthermore, individuals responsible for perpetrating the various wars of the 1990s remain popular in many circles in Serbia. The arrest and extradition to the Hague of Radovan Karadžić in July 2008 sparked an outpouring of anger by many Serbs, with protest rallies organized in part by the SRS. Vojislav Šešelj, president of the SRS, has himself been on trial in the Hague for over four years, and while his party supporters see him as a martyr and a victim for defending Serbia’s interests, there is even an increasing number of ordinary Serbs who may not hold any personal love for the man but nevertheless regard him as clever enough to speak on his own defense and hold his own against the tribunal. Even before his sudden death in the Hague, opinion polls in Serbia indicated that most Serbs also saw Slobodan Milošević successfully defending himself in a kangaroo court that had little evidence to convict him of the charges laid against him. Even those who protested against his rule when in power and participated in the October 2000 uprising increasingly saw him as representing all of Serbia on trial by the international community.

27 The campaign “Stop Haškoj tiraniji” (Stop Hague Tyranny) by SRS members is a new movement in the wake of Šešelj’s recent hunger strike in late 2006. See Velika Srbija, vol. 18, no. 2975 (October, 2007)
The Specter of National Populism in Serbia

The greatest challenge to the consolidation of liberal democracy in Serbia today is the electoral strength of political parties espousing ideologies of national populism. Traditionally, national populism was the particular vocation of the SRS in the wake of Milošević’s fall. However, recent events, particularly those surrounding Kosovo’s status, have shifted many former coalition partners of DOS, including Koštunica’s DSS, and Ilić’s NS, towards populist ideology as well. While populism under the SRS was coupled with overt forms of exclusionary nationalism, internal divisions between true nationalists under Šešelj and more pragmatic populists under Nikolić resulted in an official party split in November 2008 with Nikolić and a majority of SRS members forming the Serbian Progressive Party, a party that is still mindful of Serbian nationalism, but clearly within a populist envelope. The greatest threat these parties present to liberal democracy in Serbia is that they represent, more than any of the pro-Western parties, a congruent link between political institutions and political culture in Serbia by drawing in the largest percentage of electoral support from the countryside and non-developed sectors of society. National populist parties serve as a reminder that Serbs may have rejected Milošević as their leader, but they have not completely rejected the nationalist policies that characterized his regime.29

29 Gordana Igrić has argued that a major force in overthrowing Milošević in 2000 was not the democratic faction, but the angry nationalist faction. Igrić writes, “it was the masses who empowered [Milošević], who got rid of him when he failed to conquer territories, and who found new heroes in the ranks of the ultranationalist Serbian Radical Party and in parts of the current government.” As such, the October 2000 uprising should not only be seen as a democratic revolution, but an uprising by nationalists ousting a failed leader in hopes of embracing another, either Šešelj, or DOS leader Vojislav Koštunica, who is currently the head of DSS. See Gordana Igrić, “The Dark Side of Serbia”, Balkan Insight (March 15, 2006).
The Illiberal Democratic Principles of Populism

Today, “populism” has become a veritable buzzword, especially in the media, to classify political or social movements that challenge the established norms, rules, values, and institutions of democratic orthodoxy. Yet while populism has been a widely applied term, scholars have acknowledged considerable difficulties in agreeing upon a universal definition beyond simply referring to it as any type of political style or practice that does not neatly fit into any established category.30 A common feature among these movements was a sociologically class-based distinction between the farmer and labor classes of the rural countryside and the industrial and intellectual classes of the urban sector. In this earlier model, “agrarian populism” represented some of the most vocal proponents for revolutionary change against the capitalist bourgeoisie of the city, the preservation of small family farms, and for self-governance. Far from being reactionary or “backward”, many of these agrarian movements sought the institutional preservation of the peasantry as the foundation of the state economy, and advocated greater investment in education and healthcare in the rural sectors.31

More recently, populism, particularly in Latin America, the United States, and Europe, has gained significant followings in the industrial sectors and even in some elements of the middle class. This newer type of populism, a type of national populism that the SRS is arguably a part of, still includes rural elements, but differentiates less by


class, and more by ethnicity. Oftentimes, national populism fits into the political ideology of the extreme right. While many of these parties were established in the 1960s and 1970s and functioned as little more than fringe movements, the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe, coupled with the rising influence of the European Union, and the pervasiveness of global capitalism have provided enough of an opportunity for these same parties to reinvent themselves as more appealing to greater percentages of the electorate. Many of the parties officially speak about “restoring” democracy by “returning” it to the people. Indeed, those parties that vociferously adhere to the basic principles of democracy have actually found it easier and more credible to their name and image to run as a legitimate party following the normal rules of the game. The successes of the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), the Swiss People’s Party (SVP), Flemish Block (Vlaams Blok, VB), the National Front of France (FN), the Greater Romania Party (PRM), the Slovak National Party (SNS), and the SRS, have all demonstrated that nationalism and populism can be a potent combination of politics and everyday rhetoric that can unite a disgruntled portion of the electorate into an effective opposition block against the ruling democratic majority.

By adopting many of the anti-establishment practices and appeals to the everyday man of earlier agrarian parties, far right wing parties have been able to adopt a nationalist form of populism as a defense of their respective national identities, and as an organized reaction against the perceived threats of secular multiculturalism, the encroachments of

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economic globalization, the influence of international institutions, and the threats of rising immigration. If agrarian populism views conflict as sociological between horizontally based class structures, national populism views conflict between vertically based ethnic communities. One of the major problems in defining populism is that it tends to lack any sense of long-term ideology and rather functions as a reactive response to current conditions. In this sense, populism may be easier to define by what it is against rather than what it proposes, and this has led many scholars to conclude that populism is ultimately a form of reactionary politics, or a symptom of dissatisfaction with political order by certain sectors of society. But even as a reactive force, populism garners large degrees of legitimacy among its followers, and more organized parties like the SRS have gained considerable public support for conceptualizing alternative forms of democracy that resonate with a people’s collective traditions.

Contemporary populist movements collectively share three distinct features: the primacy of the “people”; the moral, cultural, and political decadence of the ruling elite; and the need to restore power back to the “people”.

All three premises are based on a nostalgic remembering of the past, or more specifically a past that has been conceptualized as an ideal “golden age” when traditions, morals, community values, and a sense of social order had pervaded society in ways that currently are long gone, discarded, forgotten, or corrupted. By evoking a particular historical memory of the

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34 As argued by Canovan, the key concepts that lie at the center of populist ideology is first and foremost “the people”, followed by “democracy”, “sovereignty”, and “majority rule”, all of which are interdependent of each other. Democracy is understood to be government run by sovereign people, not a government by politicians, bureaucrats, judges, and elites. Democracy is also understood by populists to be “direct democracy” by the people, the true majority, not representative democracy by elected officials. Few populist movements actually advocate absolute direct democracy, but almost all believe that citizens should hold represented officials to greater accountability through referendums, collective protests, and grass-roots initiatives. See Canovan, “Taking Politics to the People: Populism as the Ideology of Democracy”, Mény and Surel (2002), p. 33
proverbial “good old days” and “the way things used to be” in order to juxtapose present conditions of political corruption, economic decay and social morass, populist parties seek to restore the dignity of a society, which they believe has been tainted with negative outside influences, by constantly referring to “the way things should be.”

Particularly within national populist movements, the “people” can also be synonymous with the “nation”, similar to understandings of *das Volk*. This terminology connotes two important distinctions. First, the “nation” may encompass a particular ethnic group that makes up only a fraction of the overall citizenry of a state. Non-group elements and movements are perceived to be potentially dangerous forces undermining of state security and power. Secondly and more poignantly, national populists see the “nation” as a community of people based on kinship through blood, culture, or race, irrespective of artificial political or social boundaries. This distinction is critical to our understanding in that the SRS, like the SPS before it, practices “nationalism of the external homeland”, claiming to speak on behalf of the Serbian people not just in Serbia, but also in Montenegro, Croatia, Macedonia, the Bosnian Serb Republic (*Republika Srpska*, RS), and anywhere else large Serbian communities reside. National identity is based on the broadest ethnic and social categories in order to include as many people within the national group as possible. By diminishing or even erasing as many intraethnic differences as possible, the “people” become a homogenized mass according to identity, belief, practice, taste, preference, and fears. National populism is therefore a particular strain of populism that believes that democracy and political power should be an exclusive privilege for one’s own collective group. Boundaries that define “the people”

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exist on an *intraethnic* level between the masses and the power elite, but more importantly on an *interethnic* level between those who are and those who are not included in notions of “the people”.

Second, populist movements follow similar practices of anti-intellectualism and anti-elitism, whereby specific elements of society are perceived to be disregarding and disrespecting the people’s history, cultures, and values. Elites and intellectuals are derided for their corruption, their privileged status, their immunity from the law, their sense of moral decadence, and most importantly their separation from the people. Their sense of self-proclaimed superiority in intelligence, lifestyle, and cultural refinement over the plebian masses is almost codified as a standard for which everyone else either should aspire towards, or at least shape their norms and values around but which the ordinary people have either no affiliation towards, or must give up a substantial part of their local identity – and thus abandon their community – in order to be a part of this higher community. According to populists, the true spirit and essence of the state lies in the everyday laborer, farmer, or manufacturer, not the liberal Left-wing intellectual who shuts himself in university ivory towers or urban coffeehouses, expounding on the need for greater tolerance and acceptance of multiculturalism, while despising and ridiculing the cultural backwardness and irrationality of one’s own community. By dichotomizing the “good” people versus the “decadent”, “out of touch”, and more recently “secular” elite, populist parties praise the common sense of the regular man coming from the state’s

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conceptual “heartland”.

Along the same lines of anti-intellectualism and more specifically anti-elitism, populist attitudes can also include strong sentiments of anti-internationalism. Because national populism often engages in extreme forms of hypernationalism, the glorification of the virtues of one’s own society can never accept that members of the nation can do anything wrong in the name of said nation. Both nationalism and xenophobia are frequently used to achieve a sense of “native” defense against international actors and rising numbers of non-national immigrants who take jobs away from native citizens, show no loyalty to their host country, and are frequent scapegoats for the rise in crime, rapes, drugs, robberies, and most recently, terrorism. Individuals, particularly George Soros, Jeffrey Sachs, George W. Bush, and the pope, are personally targeted by populist parties because they wield tremendous power and influence, politically, financially, and ideologically over the sovereignty of entire countries.

Third and finally, populist movements declare that the primacy of the people must be restored. The ultimate aim of populism is to “throw the bums out of office”, and replace them with leaders acting for the good of the community. While it is often unclear what “the good of the community” actually is, the primary objective of populism is to channel perceived resentment of the people’s powerlessness against the small and privileged groups of elites and intellectuals that monopolize that democratic process.

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39 Ironically, in order for populist parties to collectively counter the current establishment, they too must be led by a group of intellectual elites, in order to shape the collective identity of its followers and channel that identity towards political and ideological ends. See Yannis Papadopoulos, “Populism, the Democratic Question, and Contemporary Governance”, pp. 45 – 61 and Paul Taggart, “Populism and the Pathology of Representative Politics”, pp. 62 – 80, both in Mény and Surel (2002).
40 Margaret Canovan notes that the messages of populism are predominantly negative and critical in stating that “populists always attack the power elite of politicians and bureaucrats for their privileges, their corruption, and their lack of accountability to the people … They protest against the internationalist cultural
There is a sense of romanticism of the ordinary people that populism champions, and concerted efforts are made on behalf of populist pundits to juxtapose the moral simplicity of the everyday man with the immoral charlatanry of the status quo elites.\textsuperscript{41} It is largely through particular ways of remembering the past and comparing what once was, with what is now, seeing what was lost, and advocating what needs to return, that populist parties obtain large degrees of legitimacy with its supporters. By doing so, populism claims to be the party for the unarticulated opinions, demands, and sentiments of ordinary people. It seeks to give them a voice and, in the words of a National Front slogan, “return the word to the people.” By “returning” the power to the people, populism implicitly claims that ordinary people, despite their moral superiority and innate common sense, are denied the opportunity to make themselves heard, or do not dare to speak their minds even though they make up the vast majority of public opinion and sentiment. This was the message behind Jörg Haider’s FPÖ 1994 election slogan, “He says what we [only dare] think.”\textsuperscript{42}

In short, parties that support contemporary forms of national populism favor democracy that is exclusive to one’s own society, rather than the more multicultural liberal strands of democracy. They support protected markets for local industries and enterprises, and protected measures for certain traditions and values of their state. Populist groups gain strength from public anxiety over uncertainties of political stability and territorial integrity. They oppose further democratization of their state if it is

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\textsuperscript{41} One of the strengths of right-wing populist movements is their preservative backlash character as articulated by Lipset and Raab that is constantly fixated with the alleged “purity” of the collective group, and the need to safeguard these group boundaries from external influences, read as impurities. See Lipset and Raab, \textit{The Politics of Unreason} (1970).

\textsuperscript{42} Hans-Georg Betz, “Conditions Favouring the Success and Failure of Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties in Contemporary Democracies”, Mény and Surel (2002), p. 199
perceived as diluting the state’s unique cultural and ethnic character for the sake of foreign goods and influences. These parties claim to be the defenders of their nation’s independence, sovereignty, identity and history, and while they do not openly denounce democracy itself, populist parties are wary of accepting the type of liberal democracy pushed by external influences if its price is turning their state into an international dependency.

The National Populism of the Serbian Radical Party

A political party that began as an extreme nationalist and xenophobic movement in 1990 and enjoyed occasional support from Milošević’s SPS, the Serbian Radical Party is the only political party that has consistently made a centralized and enlarged Serbian state one of its primary objectives. The SRS has also been linked to supporting various paramilitary units involved in ethnic conflicts in other parts of the former Yugoslavia either through financial funding or direct military participation, and had direct ties to the organized criminal underworld, particularly the notorious Zemun Clan syndicate. Vojislav Šešelj, SRS party head, is currently on trial in the Hague for war crimes. The party’s official webpage even has his current mailing address at the ICTY! Though Šešelj remained the de facto leader who continued to give order from his cell in the Hague, Tomislav Nikolić, as acting president, has been widely credited with transforming the SRS into a modern national populist party. In the general parliamentary elections of 2003, Nikolić successfully led the SRS to receive the largest plurality of votes, gaining 59 seats in parliament, and nearly 30% of the popular vote. While this was not enough to secure a majority nor form any governing coalitions, the spike in popularity of a once

43 Zvanična internet prezentacija Srpske radikalne stranke http://www.srpskaradikalnastranka.org.rs/
marginal party was as much a testament to increased popular dissatisfaction with government after 2000, as it was to a growth of organization. Nikolić nearly claimed the presidential election in 2004 and again in 2008, and is currently rated one of the most popular and most trusted political figures in Serbia.\textsuperscript{44} While it is difficult to gauge the future of the SRS after his departure, the SRS became the largest political party in Serbia under his tenure. Unlike Western descriptions that have uncharacteristically labeled the SRS as “ultra-nationalist”, “far right”, or even “neo-fascist”, and thus concluding that most of its citizen support results from sentiments that are endemic to Serbian society, the SRS draws its strength primarily from popular frustration and impatience with the current democratic parties, wide gaps in economic income, considerable mistrust of international institutions, opposition to perceived kowtowing to foreign powers by the current government, and a marked decline in standards of living since the collapse of Yugoslavia.\textsuperscript{45}

Support for the SRS has considerably grown since 2000. It members generally include Serb refugees displaced by war from other Yugoslav republics, former SPS supporters who jumped ship to a more genuinely nationalist party after 2000, and a large majority of the “urban peasants” who have migrated to urban centers, but have little

\textsuperscript{44} Research of Public Opinion in Serbia, Early Autumn 2007, CeSID (Belgrade, September 2007). In a recent CeSID poll, Nikolić’s newly formed SNS enjoys the support of 29\% of the Serbian electorate, and has been gaining public support in relation to Tadić’s DS, currently the most popular party in Serbia. B92.net (June 10, 2009)

\textsuperscript{45} For instance, a New York Times article published shortly after the December 2003 General Elections reported a number of Serbs who had voted for DOS in 2000 were surprised to find themselves voting for the SRS in a protest vote. As reported, “the vote’s outcome reflected disappointment with an elected government that failed to live up to its promises to bring about economic and political change, and to crack down upon rampant cronism and racketeering.” In addition, many Serbs were frustrated at the continued presence of tens of thousands of refugees who have no job, live off government subsidies that are provided by struggling taxpayers and appear, four to five years later, of being no closer to returning to their homes. Above all, says the article, “it is Serbia’s fraught relationship with the international criminal tribunal in The Hague, which politicians blame most for bolstering the nationalists.” Nicholas Wood, “Fed by Anger, Undercurrent of Nationalism Flows in Serbia”, New York Times, (February 15, 2004).
access to the benefits of a free market and have resisted urban assimilation. 46 Like the SPS before it, these divergent groups are collectively united under a series of symbols and historical memories attesting to a mass culture: Kosovo, Serbian Orthodoxy, the Cyrillic alphabet, and collective suffering at the hands of other powers throughout the centuries. 47 This configuration of social composition reflects Lipset’s argument of working class and other low sectors can be just as swayed towards supporting right-wing extremist parties as Marxist movements, particularly under conditions of rapid impoverishment and a marked decline in the standard of living. 48 Indeed, many populist parties in Eastern Europe have attracted groups that otherwise might have supported the local Communist parties prior to 1989. Under communism, key sectors of industry and agriculture were protected from Western markets. In the wake of communism’s collapse, these sectors, and the workers and farmers that comprised them, are now vulnerable to stronger industrial and agricultural markets of Western Europe and the United States. Certain sectors that once guaranteed employment, pensions, and other forms of worker compensation are often not guaranteed in a privatized market economy, and many industries have gone out of business in light of newer, cheaper, and better quality goods

46 Mass migrations away from peasant villages that began in the 1950s accelerated in the 1970s and by 1981 increased the non-farm percentage of the population by 80%. The “urbanization” of Belgrade grew from an estimated 250,000 in 1944 to around 1 million in 1967, and reached 1.6 million by 1985. Rising Kosovo Serb populations on the peripheries of Skopje and Sarajevo are also worthy of mention. See John Lampe, Yugoslavia as History (2000), 334 – 341. See also Mirjana Prosić-Dvornić, “The Reurbanization of Belgrade after the Second World War”, Das Volkscher Südosteuropas in der Moderne., Klaus Roth, ed. (Munich: Südosteuropa Gesellschaft, 1992), pp. 75 – 100.


48 Lipset, Political Man: (1960), pp. 87 – 126. Herbert Kitschelt provides a counterpoint in suggesting that national populist parties also enjoy support from the old petit bourgeoisie, which has traditionally been hostile to the welfare state, and a newer generation of blue collar working class and low level white collar employees who are both unfamiliar with traditional associations with socialist politics. Kitschelt does agree with Pribićević (1999) in stating that highly educated professionals in both the public and private sector almost never support such parties or movements. See Herbert Kitschelt, “Popular Dissatisfaction with Democracy: Populism and Party Systems”, in Yves Mény and Yves Surel, (2002), p. 180.
from Germany, America, and Japan. Populist parties claim to speak on behalf of these
disenfranchised groups who do not benefit from greater degrees of democratic integration
with a globalized world, and essentially ask the population if they are better off now than
they were prior to the current government. Subsequently, many populist parties often
compare joining the European Union, or accepting loans from the World Bank or IMF, as
a form of economic feudalism.

Yet the SRS’s largest asset for popular support may be that it has never been part
of any ruling government coalition in the post-Milošević era, and it has never won
control of any government because of a series of smaller democratic parties that
outnumber it in parliament. As such, prior to its split in October 2008, the SRS was
Serbia’s largest party, but bears no political responsibility for the slow economic
recovery, frequent political deadlocks, and most importantly the international obligations
to fulfill in order to bring Serbia into conformity with EU standards. In this respect, the
SRS can claim to have a “clean hand” in politics and portray itself as the only honest
alternative to the democratic parties that are more interested in engaging in internal
political fights and pleasing international donors than meeting the needs of the people and
adhering to the problems of the state. Despite its original goals and beliefs, the popularity
and saliency the SRS draws its strength primarily from voter apathy, indifference,
distrust, and dissatisfaction with the current democratic government’s performance,

49 In July 2004, the Romanian automobile company Dacia ended production of its long produced car. See
In November 2008, The Serbian automobile company Zastava, known for the (in)famous Yugo, ceased
production after 37 years and was bought by Fiat. See “Yugo Prepares to be Consigned to History”,
B92.net (November 21, 2008)

50 For a look at the effects of IMF pressure on the strength of protest voting in Serbia, see Ivan Krastev,
one of his most strongly worded arguments, Krastev writes that “international players delegitimate Balkan
democracy by punishing elites who break their promises to the International Monetary Fund, while
excusing or even encouraging elites who break promises to voters”, p. 52.
rather than romantic notions of reviving a Greater Serbian state.\(^{51}\)

However, the SRS still proclaims unwavering patriotism to Serbian identity, and
claims to uphold the linguistic, cultural, historical, and political traditions of society. As a
self-proclaimed champion of the Serbian people, the SRS also supports the traditional
institutions and cultures of Serbian identity, particularly the Serbian language and Cyrillic
alphabet, the Serbian Orthodox Church, and the Serbian armed forces.\(^{52}\) Thus among its
followers, the SRS is an incredibly trusted party that is seen as more in touch with the
people than the more elitist democratic parties of cosmopolitan Belgrade.\(^{53}\) In a larger
context, the strength and allure of national populist rhetoric in a society, even in the
absence of charismatic authority, should serve as a warning signal about the perceived
limits and weaknesses of representative systems. In spite of its rather unpleasant

\(^{51}\) See William Montgomery, “Let’s Stop Talking about a Democratic Block in Serbia”, \textit{B92.net} (May 21,
2007) who argues that there is no more “democratic block" in Serbia since every acting political party
ascribes to the principles and laws of democracy. Montgomery responds to international critics reacting to
the nomination of Tomislav Nikolić as Parliament Speaker for the newly forming government and
commented that “in every way, [Nikolić] behaved according to democratic principles both in his election
and in the way stepped aside and did not put parliamentary obstacles in the way of formation of the now-
ruling coalition. He actually came across in a better light than many of the ‘democrats’ who elected him in
the first place.” It is actually by placing the SRS outside the so-called “democratic block" that add further
insult to those who democratically voted for the party.

\(^{52}\) As a rule, the SRS refuses to publish any official document or statement of its political party in the Latin
alphabet, which is seen as another Western influence on the Serbian language. All documents are written in
the Cyrillic script, and the SRS has made numerous attempts at making Cyrillic the official alphabet of the
Serbian language. See Званична Интернет презентација Српске радикалне странке / Званична Internet
Пrezентација Srpske Radikalne Stranke, \texttt{http://www.srs.org.yu/}

\(^{53}\) During his tenure as mayor of the Zemun district of Belgrade, Vojislav Šešelj was noted to devote every
Friday afternoon to receiving citizens who personally came to him for help. As cited by Ivan Čolović, an
article in the local newspaper \textit{Zemunske novine} (December 20, 1996), up to 150 people would come to the
SRS municipal office waiting to speak with Šešelj and would often address him in the diminutive informal
case, as if he were a personal friend. While he could not personally solve their problems, he was reported to
nevertheless “listen to them attentively, tirelessly, for hours. Till three in the morning.” Such actions, even
if purely symbolic, made life easier “when [problems] are shared with the leading man in the town.” The
purpose of such an exercise, Šešelj is reported to have said, was to show how SRS-run Zemun could be a
model in good management that would soon spread to the rest of Serbia of how government should operate
between officials and the people. It should be noted at the time of this report that the SRS already had a
major falling out with Milošević’s SPS over the latter’s acceptance of the Dayton Peace Agreements in
Bosnia, and the simultaneous student protests in Belgrade over electoral fraud concerning municipal
elections in other key local governments throughout Serbia. Apparently, Šešelj was already grooming
himself and his party as a clear alternative to Milošević and the SPS. See Čolović, (1997), pp. 236 – 239.
connotations, populist parties may also function as an effective reminder that democracy,
or more specifically free-market capitalist democracy, is not a given, and democratic
development does not have a terminal endpoint. Rather, democracy is a constant
enterprise of adjusting to and reflecting the changing needs and values of society. 54
Western reaction to the popularity of the SRS has been largely negative, and many
analysts have not hid their disdain for what they regard as a political party embodying the
continued specter of ultra-nationalism from the Milošević period. Organizations such as
the European Union and the World Bank have even gone as far as making further aid and
assistance for Serbia’s struggling economy hinge on the political orientation in
Belgrade. 55

Since 2000, the SRS has addressed four emotional issues that tug at the
heartstrings of a society scarred and demoralized by fifteen years of warfare and
international isolation. The first issue that the SRS plays on is that Serbians no longer

54 A number of studies have examined the possible relationship between the strength of nationalist political
parties and the response of more democratic parties to offset the popularity of such parties with an adoption
of a nationalist platform of their own. However effective this strategy may be to win and retain votes for
one’s own camp, the pressures of parties to “out-nationalize” each other effectively stifles democratic
development overall, and leads even the more mainstream parties to sacrifice more rational approaches to
political development and economic modernization for the sake of nationalist rhetoric and emotional knee-
jerky appeal. See Gagnon (2004); Thomas (1999); Snyder, (2000).

55 Tomislav Nikolić was briefly nominated and appointed Parliament Speaker in early May 2007. Even
though his tenure only lasted little over a week, ending with a final agreement on forming a new
government, the news of his appointment reverberated throughout Western media as a clear step backwards
for Serbia’s political development and a return of ultranationalism. The day after Nikolić’s appointment,
EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn called “the election of an ultra-nationalist as Serbia’s
parliamentary speaker” a “worrying sign”. He further added that Serbia was standing at a crossroads where
it should chose between “the return to a nationalist past or an approach toward a European future”, and
concluded that “the fragility of democratic development in Serbia is posing risks towards political
integration of the Western Balkans towards the EU”. Reuters was quick to report that the Radicals are
“Serbia's strongest party, [and] are heirs to the nationalist mantle of the late Slobodan Milošević, who led
the country into four wars”. The Associated Press tagged Nikolić as “a fierce nationalist known for his anti-
Western stands, including demanding that Serbia shelve its EU aspirations and focus on maintaining close
ties with Russia and China, and advocating for military intervention in Kosovo if the province becomes
independent.” No news agency failed to mention that the SRS’s founder, Vojislav Šešelj, is currently in the
have any control over their destinies, including their state’s own territorial integrity.\textsuperscript{56} The breakup of Yugoslavia, the loss of Montenegro, and the ongoing secession movements in Kosovo have led to a sense of fatalism that the state Serbs are living in, the state they have fought to defend in the twentieth century, has been abandoned and fragmented by disloyal elements and subversive opportunists. Second, the SRS depicts the international community, particularly the Western world, as hypocritically lending a sympathetic ear to the plight of everyone else in the Balkans, but turns a blind eye to Serbia’s woes. The overwhelming support for Slovenian, Croatian, Bosnian, and now Montenegrin and Albanian self-determination appears to completely ignore the problems of large Serbian minority communities now living in these independent countries, who are often subjected to harassment and losses in property and economic security. Third, the perceived indifference to Serbian grievances and injustices feeds into a conception that the West believes the Serbs to be too strong to either control or negotiate with. Therefore the only solution is to divide, conquer, and scatter the people, as demonstrated by the support for secessionist movements in Yugoslavia and now in Serbia itself. Fourth and final, this perception that subversive elements want to weaken and divide Serbia is often contrasted with an earlier period when Serbs, as Yugoslavs, were the envy of the socialist world, and could travel anywhere they wished. Now they are reduced to an impoverished, degraded, and isolated society etching out a meager existence while less-advanced, and less-deserving, countries are being welcomed into the European Union. In short, the SRS organizes collective frustration and dissatisfaction with current conditions around perceived feelings of helplessness, isolation, humiliation, and international

\textsuperscript{56} Nearly 78\% of Serbs polled in 2002 thought that “many things in my country are decided from the outside”. IntlIDEA (2002).
irrelevance that have all been thrown upon the Serbian people by foreign governments, fifth column elements within the state, and opportunistic elites within the Serbian government.

General support for the SRS rests of two conditions. The first is that it continues the legacy of Milošević’s “anti-bureaucratic revolution” of the late 1980s. Such a movement could be characterized as “apolitical in ideology [and] sees politics as bound up in a single apocalyptic and restorative need.”57 A party that claims to cut through the proverbial red tape, fight corruption and reduce economic inequalities, the SRS continues the tradition of a “movement of rage” that originates “among provincial elites: men and women filled with hate for the culture of the capital city. And at the same time angered by their exclusion from it.”58 The second condition is that the SRS has evolved from a far right fringe party, to a collective “no” party: “No” to an independent Kosovo; “no” to the Hague; “no” to the European Union; “no” to the United States; “no” to what it sees as capitulation after capitulation of the Serbian state, its people, and its pride, to international demands. While not actually advocating the revocation of democracy, the SRS nevertheless is wary of adopting any further democratic reforms if that essentially means tying Serbia to the reigns of the European and international communities, reducing the state to the status of what it sees as a “vassal” or a “colony” of the West. It has frequently proclaimed that “Serbia is not for sale”, and is against the privatization of many key Serbian industries. By opposing the sale of Serbian firms and businesses to international buyers, the SRS not only favors the re-nationalization of industries, it also

speaks on behalf of local job protection and a reduction in unemployment, which is currently between 20-25%. These affirmations of resolve against international stipulations are, given Serbia’s current conditions, one of the reasons why the SRS is one of the few, if not the only, political parties on the populist right in Eastern Europe that commanded both a sizable percentage of public support and a large percentage of seats in the national parliament.

The Serbian Radical Party has enjoyed being one of the largest and most united political parties in Serbia for two large reasons. First, the nationalist rhetoric used by Milošević and the SPS to collectively organize Serb citizens into one large movement against external aggression, whether real or imagined, had actually taken on a life of its own by 1995. After years of campaigning on promises of defending Serb communities and Serb interests wherever they are threatened, Milošević performed a *volte-face* first at the Dayton Peace Accords in 1995 relinquishing Serb-held territory in Bosnia, and then in 1999 acquiescing to UN occupation of Kosovo and its de facto separation from Belgrade. Large segments of Serb society, particularly refugee communities, felt betrayed by Milošević and believed he abandoned their plights simply because it was strategic for his own hold on power. By shaping Serb society in the late 1980s along macro-social historical narratives and legitimizing current political power on upholding such narratives, Milošević sowed the seeds of his own demise by effectively betraying his own culture and losing support in his own people.

The second explanation is that even during the 1990s when the SRS was openly hostile to the West and supported many of the paramilitary movements in Croatia and

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Bosnia, Vojislav Šešelj never questioned the legitimacy of parliamentary democracy. He never made any allusions to seizing power through a putsch, nor of leading any sort of revolutionary uprising against the government. Instead, he frequently made reference to establishing his party as a modern-day embodiment of the People’s Radical Party of Nikola Pašić. Since 2000, the SRS practiced no form of coercive threats to gain votes, it made no attempt at rigging local or national elections, held no monopoly over television or the printed media to make its views and agendas the only available options to the electorate, and it did not intimidate its political opponents with strikes, riots, or street brawls. By most accounts, the SRS has reoriented itself into a fully legitimate political party abiding by the rule of law and parliamentary procedure.

**Ongoing Challenges to Serbia’s Democratic Development**

As much as the term has become clichéd by foreign analysts, Serbia is once again at the crossroads of sociopolitical development. A referendum in Montenegro in 2006 gave independence to the country by the thinnest of margins, thus dissolving the lose union between Serbia and its smaller former Yugoslav republic. The referendum was also seen as a precursor to the impending independence of the UN-mandated Serbian province of Kosovo, which the ethnic Albanian community unilaterally declared on February 17,

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60 Pribićević (1999), p. 200
61 See William Montgomery, “Let’s Stop Talking about a Democratic Block in Serbia”, B92.net (May 21, 2007) who argues that there is no more “democratic block” in Serbia since every acting political party ascribes to the principles and laws of democracy. Montgomery Responds to international critics reacting to the possible nomination of Tomislav Nikolić as Parliament Speaker for the newly forming government and commented that “in every way, [Nikolić] behaved according to democratic principles both in his election and in the way stepped aside and did not put parliamentary obstacles in the way of formation of the now-ruling coalition. He actually came across in a better light than many of the ‘democrats’ who elected him in the first place.” It is actually by placing the SRS outside the so-called “democratic block” that add further insult to those who democratically voted for the party.
2008. Though Serbian officials finally located, arrested, and extradited Radovan Karadžić to the International Criminal Courts for Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague in July 2008, pressure from the international community has not subsided in making Serbia’s eventual EU ascension contingent on arresting the last two remaining indicted war criminals, which includes General Ratko Mladić for his role in orchestrating the ethnic cleansing campaigns in Bosnia between 1992 and 1995. Public support for these individuals has significantly dropped over the years, but there is a major contention in handing over indicted Serbs to the Hague because it is largely seen by even committed proponents of democracy as an institution with blatant anti-Serb biases in comparison to its apparently lax treatment of indicted Croats, Bosnians, or Kosovar Albanians who are either given light sentences, or acquitted, while being openly lauded by various Western leaders.62

Territorial dismemberment and international obligations, not to mention persistent internal problems of corruption, organized crime, unemployment, and ethnic nationalism, continue to test the strengths of the current democratic parties in power in Belgrade as well as the resolve of the Serbian people, in navigating through the final obstacles before democratic consolidation is achieved. Equally critical for all states in Southeastern Europe, EU membership has set conditions of democratic “standards” that must be met in order for applicants to be accepted. This places Serbia under very blunt conditions: democratize according to external criteria or be left out of the international community.

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62 Nasir Orić was a Bosnian Muslim military commander in the Srebrenica enclave during the 1992 – 1995 Bosnian War. In 2006 he was sentenced to two years’ imprisonment by the ICTY for failing to prevent the deaths of various Bosnian Serb detainees and also for alleged war crimes against Bosnian Serb civilians. He was acquitted on charges of destruction and damage to civilian infrastructure. On July 3, 2008, the Appeals Chamber of the ICTY reversed his conviction and dropped all charges against him. In a more infamous case, Kosovar Albanian and former KLA guerrilla leader Ramush Haradinaj was acquitted of all charges of war crimes and terrorism conducted during the 1999 war in Kosovo, despite evidence that witnesses called to testify against him were either intimidated to remain silent, or, according to Belgrade, disappeared altogether.
The most poignant example of this is Serbia’s obligation to fulfill all outstanding commitments to the ICTY. While Mladić has always enjoyed a type of hero status among a core group of nationalist supporters, his continued allusiveness has actually come to be seen by a larger percentage of Serbs as a symbol of defiance against international demands. Even though an arrest warrant for him has been in force since the mid 1990s, he was openly seen in Belgrade and throughout Serbia until Milošević’s fall, and as recent as November 2005, Mladić was protected by official military divisions, and received a full state pension and benefits. Pictures of Mladić are frequently on display at nationalist rallies alongside Šešelj, Radovan Karadžić, Milošević, and even Royalist wartime commander Draža Mihailović. What many observers fail to understand is that the prominent place Serbian nationalists give for Mladić have little to nothing to do with any sense of pride in the ethnic conflict waged by him in Serbia’s name, but rather in seeing him as a modern day Serbian freedom fighter who, like the hajduci of history, defended the Serbian people against external aggression and terror. In what has become an all too common feature among nationalist groups throughout the Balkans, individuals who have committed egregious ethnic crimes against other groups, are generally seen as heroes fighting in self-defense by one’s own group. In other words, someone else’s terrorist is one’s own freedom fighter. That Mladić has eluded capture for so long and frustrated efforts by Western officials to bring him to trial in a court they constructed, only adds to the mythical character of Mladić as a Serbian warrior who did what needed to be done for the betterment of the Serbian people.

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63 Balkan Watch, vol. 8, no. 1 (January 3, 2006)
64 In addition to Haradinaj being seen as a freedom fighter among Albanians, the arrest in late December 2008 of ten members of the former KLA in Preševo on suspicion of war crimes by Serb MUP Gendarmes prompted hundreds of Albanians to protest, calling for international forces, including NATO, to intervene. B92.net (December 28, 2008).
To further complicate matters concerning the arrest of war crimes fugitives, Dr. Carla Del Ponte, the former UN-appointed chief prosecutor for the ICTY, frequently made controversial, statements to the international press during her tenure as Chief Prosecutor, that not only is the Serbian government not cooperating with international demands, but is purposefully shielding war criminals and leaders of organized crime syndicates, turning Belgrade into a virtual safe haven for fugitives. The Serbian government warns that such statements only strengthens support for the SRS and other nationalist organizations that further the popular belief that Serbia has been singled out for punitive treatment by the international community.65

While many in Serbia would be glad to hand these men over, the majority of popular sentiment would prefer seeing Karadžić and Mladić arrested and tried in Serbian courts, rather than an international tribunal. Parties like the SRS, and more recently Koštunica’s DSS, exacerbate the general belief that the European Parliament is imposing its own laws and regulations on Serbian national sovereignty, and popular opinion in Serbia feels that members of the Hague tribunal represent the governments that were responsible for the NATO bombing campaigns against Serbs in Bosnia in 1995 and in Serbia in 1999. From a national populist perspective of the SRS and DSS, sending individuals to the ICTY only reinforces a sense of victor’s justice and furthers the argument that Serbia is a victim to larger states and international powers that can openly and arbitrarily determine the fate of smaller states in their own kangaroo courts. According to Misha Glenny, to collectively group the entire Serbian nation as equally culpable with the government’s inability of locating wanted fugitives, and for Del Ponte

to make it an almost quixotic quest for her to prosecute these men, is incredibly problematic. To not recognize that such actions have an enormous political impact throughout the former Yugoslavia is naïve to the point of irresponsibility. The question she [Del Ponte] should be asking herself is this: Does my public statement about Karadžić advance my goal in seeing him in The Hague? Or will it provoke a valuable fillip to the Radicals in their quest to enter government in Belgrade? If the latter is more likely than the former – and I would aver that it most definitely is – then both the region and the international community potentially has [sic] a very big problem on its hands.\(^{66}\)

Public dissatisfaction with The Hague was further increased with the suicide of Milan Babić, former president of the self-proclaimed Serbian Republic of Krajina in Croatia, on March 6, 2006 and the sudden death of Slobodan Milošević on March 11. While general public attitude in Serbia greeted the news of Milošević’s death with relative indifference, the more nationalist elements in Serbian politics concluded he was not granted serious medical attention, his medical conditions were deliberately ignored, or he was simply poisoned outright because of a lack of evidence to convict him. Regardless of the reasons, his death solidified two beliefs among his supporters. The first was that he died as an innocent man in captivity. His trial had lasted four years without any definitive end, and as already mentioned above, his ability to act as his own legal defense showed him to be shrewd enough to parlay with his accusers. The second general belief was that his sudden death was either deliberately executed by the Tribunal or that an order was given not to properly address his apparent sickness and let him succumb to his own ailments because they knew they could not convict him of anything but could not release him. His death also significantly weakened the ICTY’s ability to attribute any responsibility for much of the ethnic wars following the dissolution of Yugoslavia to Milošević or his government as the case immediately closed. By this, his image remains definitively clean for his supporters and his death turned him into a martyr.

\(^{66}\) Ibid
Milošević’s funeral in Serbia served as a rallying point for both his diminished SPS party and for the SRS to strengthen their resolve against sending any more fugitives to The Hague on account that their well-beings could not be guaranteed. SRS and SPS supporters attended the funeral wearing T-shirts with portraits of Mladić and Karadžić, and former communists carried photographs of Milošević and Šešelj. Because the Serbian government did not grant him an official state funeral, his supporters symbolically placed his coffin in front of the Serbian parliament building, the same place where demonstrators in 2000 rallied to overthrow his government. The funeral also demonstrated the differences between the current government that denied one of their own a respectable funeral, with all the rites and ceremonies a former state official deserved, and the true, loyal, Serb supporters who never forgot the sacrifices made during the war period against their enemies. The mass of people who attended were Serbian refugees from Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo, all of whom regarded Milošević, and still regard Mladić as a war hero fighting for their rights of survival and independence in hostile lands.67

The recent arrest of Radovan Karadžić, while praised by nearly all EU governments and seen as a significant step forward for Serbia’s EU integration by Belgrade’s pro-Western political bloc, was vocally condemned by key members of the SRS who lamented the government of Boris Tadić was making Serbia “disappear” because another “symbol of patriotism” had disappeared.68 The following week, the SRS led an “All-Serb Rally” in support for Karadžić, and to provide a show of solidarity for “all those free-thinking people in Serbia who have the bravery at this moment in time to openly oppose the dictatorship that has been led in recent days by dictator Tadić,”

68 “Politicians Comment on Karadžić Bust”, B92.net (July 22, 2008)
according to SRS official Nemanja Šarović.\(^{69}\) In a written message, Vojislav Šešelj accused the “the traitor regime of Boris Tadić” for arresting one of those who created the [Bosnian] Republic of Srpska and for extraditing him to those who “murdered Slobodan Milošević.” Šešelj also said that by authorizing Karadžić’s arrest, Tadić “committed an act of treason, attacked Serbia, jeopardized the existence of the Republic of Srpska and made a colony out of Serbia”.\(^{70}\)

### Territorial Dismemberment: Montenegro and Kosovo

On May 21, 2006, the population of Montenegro, by the narrowest of margins, voted to secede from its union with Serbia. With a requirement of 55% of the vote needed to claim victory, the pro-independence camp succeeded with a slim majority of 55.5%, official tallies report. Sentiment in the region leading up to the Referendum was evenly split between union with Serbia or independence. However, in many respects, Montenegro was already independent in all but name, as it has had its own autonomous parliament, and has used the Euro as a form of currency for its nascent economy since 1997. Within Serbia, public opinion has been divided between whether to keep Montenegro in the union, or let it go.\(^{71}\) Culturally and historically, the two republics are nearly identical. Like their larger Serbian partner, both republics are overwhelmingly Orthodox Christian, share nearly the same saints and national feast days, use the Cyrillic alphabet, and regard historical events such as the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, the autonomous Serbian Patriarchate of Peć (1557 – 1766), and the Golden Age of Stefan

\(^{69}\) "SRS to Stage “All-Serb Rally”, B92.net (July 26, 2008)

\(^{70}\) B92.net (July 29, 2008)

\(^{71}\) According to CeSID, 75% of SPS supporters, 66% of DSS supporters, and 62% of SRS supporters preferred to maintain a union between Serbia and Montenegro, while 51% of DS supporters were in favor of a formal separation. See CeSID (Belgrade, May 2005).
Dušan (1331-55), as integral parts of their historical identity. The similar identities of the two republics are so close that many in Montenegro identify themselves as part of the larger Serbian nation.

An independent Montenegro has nevertheless produced its own problems for further democratic consolidation in Belgrade. First, a 55.5% tally for the independence camp, is hardly a mandate for the establishment of a new country. With a majority that was reached by the narrowest of margins, and the opposition pro-union camp commanding nearly equal as large a percentage of supporters, 45.5% of Montenegro’s population lives in a country it didn’t want. Secondly, the Albanian and Bosniak minority communities, which make up 7% and 14.7% respectively, not surprisingly supported the pro-independence camp.72 This, coupled with unresolved issues in Kosovo, makes Muslim minority groups seem like key players in the dismemberment of Serbia and the old Yugoslav model. More importantly, it added considerable support to claims by Serbian nationalists that non-Serb groups are collaborating with international organizations that are bent on weakening Serbia and dividing its people.73 Finally, the pro-independence camp led by Montenegrin President Milo Đukanović is generally

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72 According to a survey conducted by the Centre for Democratic Transition (CDT) in December 2005 and published March 10, 2006, 70% of interviewed Bosniaks and 87% of interviewed Albanians said they planned to vote for independence. The sum of these votes alone, roughly 80,000 votes, were just enough votes to tip the referendum in favor of independence. See Sead Sadiković, “Minorities Flex their Political Muscles”, Balkan Insight, April 10, 2006, http://www.birn.eu.com/insight_29_4_eng.php

73 Headlines in both Serbian and Montenegrin newspapers played up the emphasis of the Albanian “swing” vote the day after the referendum. The Press noted, “In Montenegro the Albanians have won! 219,683 voted for independence, among whom there were around 25,000 ethnic Albanians and some 40,000 Muslims; the majority of Serbs and Montenegrins voted for SCG [Union of Serbia and Montenegro].” The Kurir stated “179 Montenegrins decided the referendum. Independence won in a ‘photo-finish’ when ethnic Albanians from Ulcinj, Plav and Rozaje [Albanian majority communities] rushed to the polling stations. Northern Montenegro in shock after vote for independence: A night of sadness.” Even American journalists were quick to liken Montenegro’s independence as a further loss to the fleeting dream of Greater Serbia, as reported in Newsday, “The hope of the United States, the European Union and the international community at large is that Serbia will accept its modest new status as a landlocked country of under 10 million people, give up its expansionist, nationalist impulses and embrace the West.” Matthew McAllester, “Serbia Loses Dream of Greatness”, Newsday, May 23, 2006.
viewed in Serbian popular opinion as a group of corrupt land barons who made their fortune through black market racketeering, money laundering, and other organized criminal activities, as well as shifting loyalties whenever it suited their private interests. Its opponents see independence as being more a result of bribery and extortion than an actual display of democratic will, and a “sellout” by certain opportunists to the West for quick cash and foreign investment that carve up one of the oldest and most historic regions of Serb lands into British and German timeshares. With unemployment currently around 30%, Montenegro traditionally being one of the poorest and most corrupt regions of Yugoslavia, and a population bitterly divided over the country’s narrowly-won independence, the newest state in the Balkans, while addressing short-term regional nationalist sentiment, will more likely be a European liability than an asset.

By far, the most contentious and sensitive issue currently facing Serbian democratic development is the future of Kosovo. The province had been governed as a UN mandate since June 1999 when the United States, under the auspices of NATO, led a 78-day bombing campaign to repel Serb security forces that who were engaged in guerrilla warfare with the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), an Albanian terrorist and paramilitary organization that had been seeking territorial secession from Serbia since the mid 1990s. After 1999 the ethnic Albanians assumed leadership of the province, and with the U.N. governed it as a virtual independent entity in all but name. With the support of the United States and other key Western European powers, the Albanian leadership unilaterally declared independence on February 17, 2008 and has been recognized by around 60 countries at the time of this writing, though it has established official

diplomatic relations with less than 20.

Yet sovereignty for Kosovo remains both highly ambiguous and heavily contested. The government in Priština, the capital of Kosovo, is almost entirely dependent on the international community in providing financial assistance, internal security, and political legitimacy. Kosovo has no representation in the UN due to opposition from Russia and China in the Security Council, as well as other states like Spain, India, Egypt, Argentina, Slovakia, and Serbia. Executive authority in Kosovo remains under a UN umbrella, as codified in United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244, which calls for the establishment of “substantial autonomy”, and reaffirming that Kosovo falls within the “principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia [Serbia].” However, a more recent proposal written by former Finnish president Martii Ahtisaari, though rejected by Belgrade but overwhelmingly passed in Priština, effectively provides Kosovo “supervised independence”.

Under the so-called Ahtisaari Plan, Kosovo is given all the trappings of an independent state: a flag, a national anthem, control of its own borders, membership in international organizations, a constitution and an independent judicial system. In addition, the Kosovo Serb minority is guaranteed unprecedented rights of self-government and the setting up of autonomous institutions that link their own locally controlled municipalities with Belgrade. Serbian would be an official language of Kosovo and Serbs would be guaranteed 10 seats in Kosovo’s parliament. Further, the Serbian Orthodox Church is given exclusive ownership of its lands and immediate

surroundings. While most Western powers support the plan and wish it to serve as a template for Kosovo’s rudimentary government, it is rejected by Belgrade and Russia, Serbia’s most vocal supporter. Members of the Kosovo Albanian government have decided, with the support of Washington and London, to implement portions of the plan after independence was declared. The nature of Kosovo’s declaration of independence, while operating outside the confines of international law, and not being officially recognized by either the UN or the EU, has largely been interpreted by officials in Belgrade as American imperialism working in conjunction with Albanian separatists. Numerous US officials from both the Bush and Clinton administrations have been very vocal about Washington’s willingness to recognize Kosovo’s independence despite Belgrade’s opposition. Former U.S. Ambassador to the UN Richard Holbrooke, an outspoken supporter of Kosovo’s self-determination and longtime sympathizer with the goals and objectives of the KLA has gone as far as suggesting that Serbian membership in the EU should be contingent on them recognizing Kosovo’s independence, and that any ethnic-related violence that results in the province between Serbs and Albanians is largely the fault of both Belgrade and Moscow for their stubborn recalcitrance.

But sovereignty continues to remain an open-ended issue in Kosovo a year after

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77 In playing to the well-used tune of Serbia constantly trying to “get past its own paralyzing historical myths,” Holbrooke accuses Serbia of not buying into the West’s proposal for peace in the Balkans and for refusing to acknowledge that Kosovo is no longer theirs. While apparently finding no fault with the eight years of political and administrative limbo the West has placed Kosovo in under UN Mandate, Holbrooke openly states that “if Russia blocks the Ahtisaari plan, the chaos that follows will be Moscow’s responsibility and will affect other aspects of Russia’s relationships with the West.” In the end, both Serbia and Russia’s relationship with the West are “on the line” should compliance not be followed. Richard Holbrooke, “Russia’s Test in Kosovo”, The Washington Post (March 13, 2007), p. A17.
it’s declaration of statehood. Despite the incredibly optimistic, and in many respects openly naïve, predictions many analysts in the West were making about Kosovo’s independence bringing long lasting peace to the Balkans, and marking the definitive end to what it regarded as the “national question” in the former Yugoslavia, incredibly difficult challenges remain. First and foremost, Kosovo’s sovereignty rests almost exclusively at the behest of a few powerful Western nations including the United States, Germany, and Great Britain. Legally, Kosovo remains a part of Serbia as stipulated in UN Resolution 1244, which serves as the legal framework for the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX), the civil administrative authority that was originally intended to serve as a transitional government towards full political sovereignty. But after a series of negotiations and compromises with Belgrade in order to have it function throughout Kosovo, EULEX is officially operating as “status neutral”. This means that no effort will be made by EULEX to implement the Ahtisaari Plan for Kosovo’s independence, nor does it formally recognize Kosovo as an independent state. Furthermore, the EULEX mandate is operating under an additional 6-point plan, which provides for a reconfiguration of authority in Serb-controlled areas concerning police, judiciary, customs, borders, protection of cultural and religious buildings, traffic and telecommunications. While it does not call for the return of Belgrade-based institutions to Serb sectors, it does keep the Serb municipalities under the direct authority of UNMIK, rather than EULEX, and raises the possibility of Belgrade significantly influencing its development, particularly in the Serb-dominant north.

79 The complete details of the 6-Point plan have yet to be published. For a brief description, see the Ministry for Kosovo and Metohija section of the Government of the Republic of Serbia website, http://www.kim.sr.gov.yu/cms/item/news/en.html?view=story&id=8143&sectionId=11
It is a further blow to authorities in Priština struggling to achieve political legitimacy that the very powers that supported Kosovo’s independence also support the EULEX compromise. While Priština never had any authority in the Serb sectors, this compromise effectively acknowledges the partition of Kosovo into Serb and Albanian administrative units and sets up the potential for a “functional separation” of Serb institutions that are not only closely linked with Belgrade, but could openly challenge the legitimacy of political authority in Priština. Kosovo Albanian leaders have adamantly rejected any provisions that give the Serb minority parallel structure outside their own political authority, and view such actions as a direct threat to the perceived sovereignty and laws of the Kosovan state. Yet there is very little the Albanians can do beyond protest, as their authority north of the Ibar is virtually nonexistent. Executive authority in Kosovo remains with the EU civilian administration, and it is widely seen by many observers that the 6-point compromise with Belgrade was a reward for Serbia’s cooperation with the international community for not interfering in Albanian sectors. Moreover, even EU authorities in Kosovo have admitted difficulty in exerting authority over Serb municipalities, especially in the north. Ironically, it is now former Albanian separatists that are pushing for greater control over the entire region, and Serbs who are now installing shadow governments and parallel institutions. In many respects, the dominant and subordinate roles between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo have completely reversed since 1999. As both communities continue to seek external support for their own agendas, not only does Kosovo resemble a Balkan chessboard of 19th century power politics, but the region remains little more than an international protectorate and a

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80 B92.net (November 27, 2008)
81 B92.net (November 30, 2008)
Kosovo Serbs are overwhelmingly opposed to independence and continue to look to Belgrade for authority and assistance. While two-thirds of Kosovo’s Serbs are living scattered in various towns and enclaves throughout the province and need to cooperate in some form with international forces in Priština, the northern part of Kosovo separated by the Ibar River is almost exclusively Serb, borders directly with Central Serbia, and has never come under Albanian control after 1999. Kosovo’s second largest city, Kosovska Mitrovica is itself divided by the Ibar River, with Albanians living in its southern half, and Serbs all but creating a separate urban center in the north. To date, northern Mitrovica remains the only Serb-majority urban center, and now serves as the center for the Assembly of the Community of Municipalities of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija, a governing body, symbolically established on June 28, 2008, the anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, of Serbs to maintain ties with Belgrade over Priština. Though the Assembly has yet to demonstrate any real legislative power and is not recognized as a legitimate political body by either the Albanian or international authorities, it serves as a rallying point for Kosovo Serbs as a parallel government directly linked to the rest of Serbia. Members of the Assembly were elected in Serbia’s general parliamentary elections in February 2008, despite opposition from the EU and UNMIK, and international fears that a possible “functional separation” of administrative powers in Kosovo, similar to that of Bosnia, is a definitive reality, if not a foregone

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83 Politika (June 29, 2008)
84 “Declaration on Establishing the Assembly of the Community of Municipalities of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija” http://www.kim.sr.gov.yu/cms/item/news/sr.html?view=story&id=3731&sectionId=1
On the other hand, the status of the Serb minority in enclaves south of the Ibar remains incredibly precarious, as extreme elements of the Albanian community have committed sporadic ethnic reprisals since 1999. With the exception of a few locations such as Gračanica in the municipality of Novo Brdo to the southeast of Priština and the southern municipality of Štrpce, Serbs form absolute minorities in all areas. Tens of thousands of Serbs have either voluntarily left or have been forced out of Kosovo since the NATO campaign. Over 100 Serbian Orthodox churches, many dating back to the 14th and 15th centuries have been destroyed. The international civilian authorities encouraged all displaced Serbs to return after 1999, but less than 10% of those who fled have done so. Absent the return of Serbian security forces to the region, most Kosovo Serbs fear for their personal security and rights, two of the most often cited concerns among their communities. A popular uprising by the Albanian community on March 17-19, 2004, with alleged support by the local government in Priština, resulted in a three day pogrom against Serb communities, villages, and churches which left nearly 4,000 Serbs homeless, 32 people killed, and nearly a dozen Serbian Orthodox churches destroyed, all based on rumors of three Albanian boys that drowned in a river, chased by Serbs. Though interethnic conflict between the two sides has remained largely quiet

85 Partial lists of all churches damaged, desecrated and destroyed in Kosovo since 1999 can be found at http://www.rastko.org.yu/kosovo/crucified/default.htm# catalog and at http://www.spc.rs/Vesti-2004/pogrom.html
86 Kosovo, the Challenge of Transition, International Crisis Group, February 17, 2006, pp. 7 – 8
87 According to Holly Cartner, Human Rights Watch’s executive director for Europe and Central Asia, “The criminal justice system is still disappointing the expectations of the victims in Kosovo, regardless of the almost seven-year presence of international administrations in the region. At this moment, responsibility for crimes committed in Kosovo’s past is not on its daily agenda.” The report states that there has been little to no progress made in cases of violence committed during the 2004 riots. More than four years after the fact, charges have been pressed against only 426 people and only slightly over half of them have been followed up with decisions.
since then, sporadic flare-ups, primarily in Kosovska Mitrovica serve as a reminder that the region could easily explode at the slightest provocation. Shortly after Kosovo’s unilateral declaration of independence, Kosovo Serbs rioted in Mitrovica by burning a series of checkpoints at the administrative border with Central Serbia. One month after Kosovo’s declaration, a group of about 100 Serbs occupied the northern Mitrovica courthouse demanding the jobs they had prior to 1999 to be reinstated. On March 17, UNMIK and KFOR troops stormed the courthouse and removed the protestors, leaving dozens of soldiers and civilians injured.

In addition to considerable weaknesses in sovereignty and legal authority, Kosovo continues to remain the poorest, most backward, and most undeveloped region of the former Yugoslavia despite the political and economic involvement of the international community since 1999. According to a World Bank study released in 2005, some 15% of Kosovo’s population lives on less than a euro a day. Only half of the province’s households are connected to a central water system, and just 28% to a sewage system. Unemployment rates have hovered anywhere between 50 – 70%, and according to Transparency International Kosovo ranks as the world’s fourth most corrupt economy, with 67% of all respondents indicating they needed to pay a bribe in order to receive basic social services. Kosovo’s economy is almost incredibly weak, and the largest

88 B92.net, February 19, 2008
89 B92.net, March 17, 2008
sources of income are derived from remittances of Albanians abroad. Other forms of income stem from the deeply entrenched organized criminal networks that have made Kosovo one of the central transit hubs of drug and sex trafficking from Asia into Europe. Most of Kosovo’s political elite are either a part of, or have direct ties to, Albanian organized crime syndicates, and are “internally protected by parliamentary immunity and abroad by international law”.\(^\text{92}\) Moreover, nearly a decade of administrative mismanagement of Kosovo by UNMIK has resulted in personal ties being formed between international civil authorities and the Albanian criminal elite, effectively legitimizing organized crime as Kosovo’s first generation of elected politicians.\(^\text{93}\)

The largest obstacles to economic improvement lie in Kosovo’s low education standards. The region has one of the largest percentages of young people in Europe, but graduates from Priština’s academically inbred university lack the qualities and skills necessary to work in functional state institutions. To date, there is very little interest on behalf of EU member states to either assist in educational development and modernization, or accept Kosovo students in European universities. While Kosovo Serb students have a slightly better situation with the ability to either travel to Belgrade or attend the Belgrade-funded University of Mitrovica, where all Serb faculty members from Priština University moved to after 1999, both groups exist within two parallel and highly dysfunctional systems.\(^\text{94}\)

No major political party in Belgrade will ever accept Kosovo’s independence, and Vuk Jeremić, Serbia’s current foreign minister, has publicly stated that Serbia would


\(^{93}\) Ibid.

reject EU membership if recognition of Kosovo were a requirement.\textsuperscript{95} The SRS has called for the immediate return of Serb military and police forces to the region, particularly after the 2004 riots, and Tomislav Nikolić threatened to regard the province as under “foreign occupation” if granted the status of a separate sovereign nation.\textsuperscript{96} Furthermore, much like the support the SRS receives from Serb refugees in Serbia Proper, the Kosovo Serb population has consistently supported SRS candidates in national elections, including the February 2008 elections that gave the Kosovo Serb Assembly in Mitrovica an SRS majority.\textsuperscript{97} However, despite opposition to Kosovo’s independence, parties such as the SRS, SNS and DSS stand to potentially gain the most from its loss. Repeated warnings from these parties claim that an independent Kosovo would destabilize the entire Balkan region further radicalize Serbian public feelings of powerlessness and would in turn channel support for the opposition parties against a pro-EU government in Belgrade that appears too weak on national security and more interested in pleasing bureaucrats in Brussels than looking after its own citizens. The validation for seemingly shaping politics around the self-determination of ethnic communities has even sharpened some nationalist sentiment in Belgrade for annexing Bosnia’s Republika Srpska, and the northern Serb-controlled region of Kosovo down to

\textsuperscript{95} BBC News (August 1, 2008)
\textsuperscript{96} “Srbiju braniti svim sredstvima”, B92.net, February 10, 2006. However rhetorical Nikolić’s remarks might have been about defending Serbia territorial integrity by all possible means, he also insisted he was not calling for war. “Vlada se oglasila”, B92.net, February 12, 2006. He has however compared Kosovo to occupied Palestinian territory on a number of occasions which ironically contrasts the traditional Serbian nationalist rhetoric of portraying Kosovo as Serbia’s “Jerusalem” and the historical suffering of the Serbs with that of the Diaspora Jews (“Ne damo Kosovo: Press intervju, Toma Nikolić, Srpska Radikalna Stranka,” Press February 15, 2006).
\textsuperscript{97} The SRS polled the highest in Kosovo, earning 45.96% of the vote, with DSS-NS coming in second with 25.92%. Within the Community Assembly of Kosovo and Metohija, the SRS won 17 out of 45 seats, with DSS placing second with 13 seats. See “Kosovo Serbs Convene Parliament; Priština, International Authorities Object”, Southeast European Times (June 30, 2008), \url{http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/features/setimes/features/2008/06/30/feature-01}
the Ibar River, including the divided city of Mitrovica.\(^9\) It is with this understanding that international organizations such as the European Union have found it necessary to tread carefully over Serbia’s reaction to Kosovo’s secession and offer conciliatory policies to the DS-led coalition currently in power. The knowledge that a hardline policy against Serbia in Kosovo will result in a nationalist backlash in Belgrade remains a mindful concern to the EU.

But nearly all of Belgrade’s political elite, including the pro-Western bloc, adhere to some theory of Pan-Albanian domination, arguing that an independent Kosovo would lead to the dissolution of other states in the region with Albanian minorities, including the Albanian inhabited regions of Preševo in southern Serbia and the northwestern regions of Macedonia. The SRS more specifically opposes an independent Kosovo not just on historical and religious grounds, but also because the international community is determining the fate of Serbia’s territory without respecting Serbia’s wishes and applying double standards to international law whereby Albanians in Kosovo are awarded with a state while Serbs in Bosnia are not. Nikolić has likened international support for an independent Kosovo as a 21st century Munich Conference, and former Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Draškovic (SPO) has repeatedly stated in numerous interviews that the territorial separation of Kosovo could also galvanize secessionist movements throughout the world, in the Bosnian Serb Republic, Chechnya, Kashmir, Corsica, Nagorno-Karabakh, Basque Country, and Trans-Dniester. Most recently in the Caucasus after a

\(^9\) Radio Television Serbia (RTS) reported Serbia’s Belgrade-based Kosovo coordinator Sanda Rašković-Ivić stating that if Kosovo gets independence, “it will be a signal to Albanians in neighboring countries to do the same, as well as a signal to Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia, by which we are returning to the 1990s, and we open Pandora’s box again.” RTS, December 5, 2005. Less than two weeks after the Montenegrin Referendum, EU officials rejected a Bosnian Serb proposal to hold its own independence referendum. The move was proposed by the hard-line Serb National Movement (SNP), and supported by more moderate politicians, including Republika Srpska Prime Minister Milorad Dodik. “EU Opposes Bosnian Referendum”, ISN, May 31, 2006.
brief skirmish with Georgia, Russia has occupied and recognized the independence of the two breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, claiming similar acts of humanitarian intervention and political unilateralism that characterized America’s activities in Kosovo.\textsuperscript{99} To date, negotiations for compromise between Serbs and Albanians have met with stubborn recalcitrance from both sides, making any further compromise extremely difficult to realize.\textsuperscript{100} According to the International Crisis Group,

> While agreement between Belgrade and Priština remains desirable in theory, it is extremely unlikely that any Serbian government will voluntarily acquiesce to the kind of independence, conditional or limited though it may be, which is necessary for stable long-term solutions. The international community, and in particular the UN Special Envoy charged with resolving the status process, Martii Ahtisaari, must accordingly prepare for the possibility of imposing an independence package for Kosovo, however diplomatically painful that may be in the short term.\textsuperscript{101}

As much as key Western leaders and its own Albanian majority have repeatedly proclaimed, Kosovo’s “independence” is a misnomer. For all intents and purposes, it remains an international protectorate under the auspices of the United Nations and the European Union, with considerable influence from Belgrade still present within Serb-dominant municipalities. Kosovo has neither UN membership, nor any prospects of joining the European Union. In fact, the issue of recognizing Kosovo as an independent state was never a unanimous position within the EU. Spain, Slovakia, Cyprus, Romania and Greece have all voiced their continued opposition to what they feel is a violation of the territorial sovereignty of another state, and Cyprus and Slovakia have both stated their governments would block any efforts by Kosovo to apply for EU membership. Granted

\textsuperscript{99} “South Ossetian Call For Recognition Cites ‘Kosovo Precedent’”, \textit{Radio Free Europe} (March 5, 2008); Robert Marquand, “Russia’s Case on Georgia Territories: Like Kosovo or Not?”, \textit{Christian Science Monitor} (August 28, 2008)
\textsuperscript{101} “Kosovo: The Challenge of Transition”, (2006), p. 1
this opposition has less to do with genuine support for Serbia as it does with fears of
抄cat separatist movements within their own states, but without EU unanimity,
recognition of Kosovo has become less of an international obligation and more of a
choice for each state. Most importantly, Serbia has not been pressured to recognize
Kosovo, nor has it ever been officially stated that recognition is contingent on Serbia’s
ascension to the EU. This, coupled with Russia and China’s steadfast refusal to pass a
resolution in the United Nations recognizing Kosovo’s sovereignty, has remained a major
barrier to Kosovo’s international standing. The expected peace and stability in the
western Balkans that an independent Kosovo was supposedly to have brought according
to key government officials in Washington and London, have turned out to be unrealistic.

Much to the surprise and consternation of many Western supporters of Kosovo,
Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremić has been incredibly active in securing the
guarantees of many states throughout Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and
Europe in supporting Serbia’s territorial integrity, and his negotiations with international
bodies have kept Serbia as a major player in Kosovo’s future. Most importantly, he has
secured enough votes in the United Nations to send the issue concerning Kosovo’s status
and the legality of its sovereignty to the International Court of Justice. Though there is
little expectation an ICJ ruling will clearly back one or the other side, there is good
possibility a ruling could give Serbia additional diplomatic leverage in forcing the West
to re-negotiate over Kosovo’s internal politics, particularly in regards to the Serb-
dominant municipalities and enclaves. Yet even if the ICJ produces a positive ruling in
Serbia’s favor, there is little doubt the Kosovar Albanian communities will continue to
ignore calls for renegotiation as long as it can rely on the support of the United States and
Great Britain. It is therefore the strong backing by the United States for an independent Kosovo that presents the greatest obstacle to a mutually beneficial solution, and American support for the Kosovar Albanian government in Priština is not lost on many of Serbia’s political officials who use that link to continue to radicalize public opinion that Serbia is once again at the mercy of a larger power’s self-serving interests.

Most troubling about Kosovo however has been the entrenched positions of each side and their backers. Kosovo Albanians, as well as the United States government, regard the region as free, sovereign, and independent. Statements made by officials in Priština on the one-year anniversary of its secession alluded to Kosovo’s statehood as a culmination of Albanian self-determination that had been denied to them since 1912, and many Albanians continue to voice their support for an enlarged Albanian state that not only includes Kosovo, but also large parts of northwestern Macedonia and the Preševo valley. In an interview with the media outlet B-92, U.S. Ambassador to Serbia Cameron Munter referred to Kosovo as a “functioning state”, despite its heavy reliance on international aid for political and economic legitimacy.\(^{102}\) Kosovo’s leaders have promised eventual entry into the EU and the UN, though Russia has stated it will block any application. On the Serbian side, Belgrade continues to regard the entire region as part of its own territory despite the overwhelming Albanian desire never to be governed by Serbia again. While there is little doubt over Serbia’s continued influence, if not outright control, over Kosovo Serb sectors, no politician in Belgrade will ever risk their career by acknowledging Kosovo’s independence. Serb MPs have made frequent trips to Kosovo meeting with local officials, and acting as if the Albanian-led government in Priština is led by a small group of secessionists. Conversely, Kosovar Albanian leaders

\(^{102}\) B92.net, (February 5, 2009)
have regarded Belgrade political elites as *persona non grata* who, ironically, “destabilize” the region with their own nationalist agendas, and seek to partition the region along ethnic lines. In the end, the unresolved status of Kosovo, coupled with divided positions of the international community over how to resolve what it quickly amounting to a frozen conflict, has kept the Kosovo question firmly within Serbian political discussion.

Though it remains unclear as to how to definitively break through the political and diplomatic deadlock, what is clear is that a year after Kosovo’s unilateral declaration of independence, it is the most “dependent” independent state in the world. An unresolved status, with Serbia determined to keep it within its own boundaries and Albanians determined to impose their authority over all Serb sectors, will only exacerbate tensions, deepen already entrenched positions, prolong a long-lasting solution, and transform the *de facto* partition of the region into a *de jure* reality. If after one year of overly optimistic predictions, the best Western officials can realistically say about Kosovo is that the ethnic conflicts have not exploded into open warfare, expectations have considerably been lowered for this volatile region of Southeastern Europe. Kosovo will remain an ongoing issue for Serbian democratic consolidation for the foreseeable future.

**Balance sheet: The Persistence of Victimhood in Serbian Historical Memory**

After Kosovo’s unilateral declaration of independence, Vojislav Koštunica dissolved the Serbian parliament and new elections were called. The already fragile
coalition between Koštunica’s DSS and the Democratic Party led by pro-Western reformist Boris Tadić, who is seen by many as Djindjić’s successor, fell apart over the question of whether to continue Serbia’s approach to EU candidacy if her territorial sovereignty was violated. While Tadić vowed to maintain Serbia’s claim to Kosovo by all legal and diplomatic means while simultaneously pursuing Serbia’s EU membership, Koštunica began to openly question the sincerity of the West, and joined with Nikolić and other Radicals in seeking closer ties with Russia. In the run-up to new elections, it seemed all but certain that DSS would ally for the first time with the SRS in a new right-wing coalition against further European integration. Not only would this halt further cooperation with the West, particularly in fulfilling any outstanding obligations to the ICTY, it would also, according to initial signs, signal a reemphasis of Serbian exclusionary nationalism in the wake of being “betrayed” and “deceived” once again by the West. At a mass rally held in Belgrade in front of the National Parliament building on February 21, 2008 to protest against Kosovo’s self-declared secession, Koštunica, among other Serbian political, academic, and intellectual elites, addressed a crowd of over 200,000 Serbs invoking the emotional symbolism Kosovo has for all Serbs as the core of their collective memory and heritage, and noting the dichotomy between the continued treachery of the West and the principled position of Russia.

Is there anyone among us who isn’t from Kosovo? Is there anyone among us who thinks that Kosovo isn’t his or hers? [...] Kosovo – that is the first name of Serbia. Kosovo belongs in Serbia. Kosovo belongs to the Serbian people. [That is how it has been forever. That is how it is going to be forever.] There is no power, no threat, and no punishment sufficiently large and terrible that any Serb, at any time, could say anything different but “Kosovo is Serbia” If we Serbs deny our Serbdom, our heritage, our Kosovo, our ancestors and history – how are we Serbs? Who are we? There are tyrants in the world, even among Serbs today, who are seeking to deny everything that is. If we recognized that we are not Serbs, they
promise we will be better off as a people without memory and without origin. They are asking that we abandon our brothers in Kosovo […]

As long as the Serbian state lasts, we will not recognize whatever transgression breaks loose of the principles on which the civility of the world rests. We are not alone in that struggle. The Serbian people will not forget the friendship and principled support in which President Putin, the head of Russia, extended to Serbia. We will also not forget the support from all states that are against the collapse of existing international order […] As long as we live, Kosovo is Serbia. As long as we live, our brothers in Kosovo are not alone and not forgotten. As long as we reject ultimatums and accept friendship, Serbia is free. That is a promise! [Serbia] is heard throughout the whole world. And everyone knows how much a Serbian promise is. Kosovo is Serbia!103

The weeks leading up to parliamentary elections were closely watched throughout the world, as many regarded the election as a litmus test of how Serbian voters would react in the wake of Kosovo’s loss. Would they re-embrace, as many Western analysts regarded, a return to ethnonationalism and be prisoners once again to their supposed intractable historical myths, or would they finally embrace a democratically united Europe and bury any thoughts of Greater Serbia? Though international analysis remained significantly rudimentary in oversimplifying the issues by creating a democracy/authoritarian dichotomy as directly related to a pro-West/anti-West platform, the internal dynamics of the Serbian election was both a referendum on Tadić’s DS-led coalition, and a question of whether or not further measures for meeting EU standards were beneficial for Serbia.

Kosovo’s status on meeting additional EU stipulations was certainly one of the major criteria in the election, as many in the SRS and DSS connected a continued pro-Western policy with tacitly recognizing its independence. Numerous pamphlets distributed on the streets and in daily newspapers by both the SRS and DSS prior to the elections likened defending Serbia’s territorial integrity to honoring commitments to state

103 Politika (February 22, 2008), p. 5
sovereignty that any other state in a similar situation would do, and that a rushed decision to join the European Union not only harmed Serbia’s collective identity, especially at a time when its southern province was breaking away, but also Serbia’s economic well-being where the poor, interpreted as Serbia’s everyday man, would suffer. Linked to a determination never to cooperate with the West over its support for an independent Kosovo, the SRS and DSS also questioned the motives for pro-Western parties such as the DS, the Liberal Democratic Party, and G17+ in continuing to cooperate with a group of nations that has “cast aside their historical alliances [with Serbia] and create another Albanian state based on terrorism, criminals of every kind, and barbaric destruction of Europe’s cultural monuments.” Therefore, in addition to near-unanimous support by all contending parties for a united Serbia, the SRS and DSS distinguished their platforms from pro-Western parties through an emphasis on combating corruption, bribery, and other forms of political criminalization that DS and other pro-Western parties have been accused of engaging in since 2000.

The issues of corruption and ongoing political cronyism are two features of Serbian politics that international observers rarely give notice to. As mentioned above, the primary strength of the SRS lies not in its hardline nationalism as many Western analysts seemingly conclude, but its position, at least in theory, of establishing

104 See for example, Zašto branim Kosovo (Why I Defend Kosovo), Specijalni dodatak Aktivnog centrar (Special Supplement of the Activity Center) (May 2008), pamphlet included in Politika, early May. The Activity Center is a Belgrade-based citizens’ association that launched a number of medial campaigns to raise awareness of Kosovo’s importance to all of Serbia since 1999. As part of its recent campaign “Solidarity and Responsibility – Kosovo is an integral part of Serbia”, the Active Center utilized billboard posters, internet video broadcasts, newspaper ads and brochures, and posters throughout public places to promote solidarity over Serbia’s support for Kosovo within its borders. The campaign also utilized a number of well known Serbian public figures and celebrities, included internationally celebrated film director Emir Koštrica. Each poster ended in the slogan “All Together, Kosovo is Serbia.”

http://aktivnicentar.org

105 Eutanazija: Kosovo iznad EU (Euthanasia: Kosovo over EU), Srpski sabor Dveri

106 Polazne tačke Programa Srpske radikalne stranke, pamphlet publicly distributed throughout Serbia
government transparency and putting political decisions back in the hands of the commonsensical everyday man and woman. It is true that political rallies headed by SRS and now even DSS officials include a radical nationalist element that continues to view individuals like Ratko Mladić as national heroes, but the media blitz that characterized Serbia’s election season in early 2008 relied more on the image of Tomislav Nikolić as a forward-thinking politician than Vojislav Šešelj as the firebrand nationalist held captive in the Hague, more on the issue of honest government and affordable living than vague notions of Greater Serbia, and more on an understanding of a stronger and healthier Serbia that is independent of the EU than a series of damnations against external enemies that were continuously bent on Serbia’s destruction. Pictures of Nikolić with children, with the elderly, and with average men and women in the street in both urban and rural settings were meant to an understanding that the SRS was not the far right party of Šešelj that once allied with Milošević, but a party that people could trust to lead Serbia out of the political, economic, and diplomatic morass that its leaders since 2000, which ironically included Koštunica and key members of the DSS, had placed it.

For its part, Tadić’s DS once again formed an electoral coalition with G17+, the SPO, the League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina, and the Sandžak Democratic Party collectively billed as For a European Serbia (Za Evropsku Srbiju, ZES). In addition to aggressively pushing for Serbia to fulfill all outstanding requirements for EU membership, ZES campaigned on a platform to clean up government, remove all elements of corruption from legislative and judicial branches, and invest in a multibillion euro project in improving the infrastructure of Serbia that included roads, highways, waterways, railways, and much needed additional bridges over the Sava and Danube
rivers in Belgrade as well as an entire metro system to reduce congestion.\textsuperscript{107} While promising never to give up on Serbia’s EU aspirations, Tadić also promised to aggressively defend Serbia’s territorial interests in Kosovo, though through more pragmatic approaches with the West than DSS or SRS would have chosen. This meant placing a greater emphasis on retaining control over Serb-dominant municipalities in Kosovo while recognizing more direct EU authority over Albanian sectors.

Prevailing attitudes in Serbia prior to the election feared another political deadlock as no one movement could claim a simple electoral majority and thus govern without a coalition. Previous elections resulted in repeated outcomes in which the SRS polls the highest percentage of any single party but fails to form a governing coalition because the second-highest party, DS, enters into negotiations with Koštunica’s DSS, which usually polls third. This has always placed the small DSS as the electoral kingpin in all coalitions, with Koštunica almost always being lobbied by both sides to lend his support. But in the aftermath of Kosovo’s secession and the irreconcilable differences between Koštunica and Tadić, the DSS had announced its willingness to ally with the SRS, making a right-wing anti-EU coalition a near certainty. However, the electoral result surprised nearly everyone, including Serb voters, when ZES won 38.42% of the vote, beating the SRS by nearly 9%, and was immediately hailed by Tadić and high ranking EU officials as a definitive acceptance that Serbia’s place belonged within the European community of nations.\textsuperscript{108} But ZES had neither the plurality to govern on its own, nor did it have any likely coalition partners aside from the LDP to achieve at a 51% majority. For nearly the next two months, political maneuvering by both ZES and the

\textsuperscript{107} Za Evropski Beograd – Boris Tadić (April 2008), publicly distributed pamphlet
\textsuperscript{108} B92.net, (May 12, 2008)
SRS dominated headlines in Serbia and in Europe, as a definitive outcome was still uncertain.

In what turned out to be two major upsets, Koštunica’s DSS lost the largest percentage in votes, which culminated in losing 13 seats in parliament. A DSS-SRS coalition was still likely, but the 126 seats needed for a majority coalition was untenable without a third party. The second major upset was the relatively good showing of the SPS, the former party of Slobodan Milošević, which had earned it three seats to bring it to 20 total, and making a likely partnership with the former communists the deal-maker in any coalition. In what became two immense negotiation efforts by both ZES and the SRS, the SPS, which prior to the election was regarded as a nonentity and even a relic of the past, was suddenly thrown once again into the spotlight as being the party that could establish Serbia’s next government. The SPS itself operated under a three-party coalition for the election, consisting of the SPS as the primary party, and two smaller parties: the Party of Union Pensioners of Serbia (PUPS) and the United Serbia (JS) party, a national conservative regional party based in the central Serbian city of Jagodina, and former coalition partner with DSS and Velimir Ilić’s NS. Interestingly enough, the key player in the SPS coalition became the head of JS, Dragan “Palma” Marković, a colorful character who at one point was a contemporary of and ally to Željko Ražnatović, more commonly known as Arkan, a career criminal and later paramilitary leader who had participated in ethnic conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo, and was later assassinated in 2000 on possible orders from Milošević himself. While there was little doubt that Marković’s efforts at showing interest in forming a partnership with ZES led back to his own efforts at self-gain as mayor of Jagodina, his personal opinions favoring increased European integration
was enough to bring the SPS, the former party of Milošević and the party most responsible for derailing Serbia’s transition to democracy nearly two decades earlier, to enter a coalition with ZES, which, along with 6 other ethnic minority parties, formed a new government on July 7, 2008.

While there is no single reason for the sizeable victory achieved by ZES, particularly in light of legitimate anger in Serbia over the loss of Kosovo, it has been noted that the signing of the long-awaited Stabilization and Association Act in late April 2008, a few weeks before the May 2008 election, was a form of enticement by EU officials that even greater benefits were available pending a pro-EU victory. Carrot and stick policies towards Serbia have certainly been used in the past, but full EU membership remains elusive until Ratko Mladić is captured. Still, a poll conducted by the Belgrade-based Strategic Marketing Agency revealed that 66% of all Serbs supported the SAA signing, and support among LDP, ZES, and SPS supporters was nearly unanimous. But there have been numerous instances where international praise follows Serbian elections as a proverbial “return to the West”, but only changes to disappointment once the same policies of national chauvinism and resistance to reform sets in. In the case of the SAA signing, no doubt a major victory for Serbia’s reformists, the agreement has yet to be formally ratified due to Holland’s steadfast refusal to accept Serbia’s EU ascension before Mladić is found. Hopes were exponentially raised when Karadžić was found three months later that Mladić was soon to follow. But a year has

109 B92.net (April 30, 2008)  
110 According to Strategic Marketing Research, support for the SAA signing was found in all LDP members, 94% of ZES members, and 81% of the SPS coalition. Conversely, only 45% of DSS members and 41% of SRS members supported the signing. In total, the largest group of people in favor of the signing were younger people, primarily for the possibility of scrapping all visa requirements for Serbian citizens to travel to EU countries and the United States. B92.net (April 30, 2008).
nearly passed and Mladić’s whereabouts continue to remain a mystery. Moreover, the ZES-led government in Belgrade has been no less willing to give up its claims to Kosovo, as witnessed by Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremić’s successful lobbying of Kosovo’s status to arbitration at the International Court of Justice. Additionally, the recent visit to Serbia by US Vice President Joseph Biden highlighted the fundamental disagreements the two states share over Kosovo, with Biden acknowledging that “the United States does not, I emphasize, does not expect Serbia to recognize the independence of Kosovo”. In short, despite Serbia’s genuine efforts to democratically consolidate and become an integrated member of the EU, cultural ethnocentrism and sustained feelings of collective victimization and exploitation continue to characterize nearly all segments of Serbian political and cultural life.

Many Western observers, particularly US officials, have openly displayed their frustration at what they regard as Serbia’s continued intransigence. Individuals like Richard Holbrook have never hid their impatience with Serbia, which was most notably marked in a statement in which he stated that “Serbia must choose Kosovo or Europe. If they choose Kosovo, they will loose both Kosovo and Europe. If they choose Europe, the whole of the Balkans will eventually get into the EU.” Members of the administration

111 B92.net (May 21, 2009)
112 Marcus Tanner, “The Serbs must Choose: Kosovo or Europe”, The Independent (March 22, 2004). Holbrook’s role in attempting to negotiate an end to crises in both Bosnia and Kosovo are highly controversial. He has publicly stated his belief in the inapplicability of the primordial and “ancient hatreds” approach most famously articulated by Robert Kaplan for not only its poor historiography, but also for its alleged “pro-Serbian” biases that rely too heavily on the writings of Rebecca West’s Black Lamb, Grey Falcon. However, Holbrook’s disdain for the primordial approach was also based on the belief that it gave policymakers like President Clinton an excuse to ignore the region on account of an inability to deal with the complexities of the problems, let alone understand the histories, of the region. Holbrook’s philosophy was that the region was not destined to collapse into ethnic violence, but that a series of “bad leaders” exacerbated fears of conflict and radicalized their audience to take up arms. In this regard, his beliefs agree more with the findings of Snyder and Gagnon, but he differs from them in how to engage these elites. According to Holbrook, these leaders needed to be either tamed or removed from office, but ultimately it was the job of the United States to become more pro-active in the region and either bring these leaders to
of George W. Bush, who overlooked the Balkans for more strategic interests in the Middle East and Central Asia but nevertheless spearheaded the hastily prepared independence package for Kosovo, have also noted their inability at understanding the connection between political activity and cultural values in Serbia. Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was not only an outspoken champion of Albanian self-determination in Kosovo, but repeatedly expressed incredulity at Serbia’s stubborn refusal to allow its own territory to be carved up by an outside power and not recognize that this was for the good of the entire region. Being part of a State Department that understands little about large parts of the world outside the writings of social character theorists like Robert Kaplan and Sam Huntington who write from Amerocentric viewpoints, Rice urged the Serbian people to “accept that Kosovo was no longer theirs” and to “leave behind centuries of grievance and sentimentality … We believe that the Kosovo decision will really, finally, help the Balkans leave its horrible history behind. Washington’s side or actively seek to undermine their authority. For Holbrook, a more convincing account of the region was found in the writings of Noel Malcolm, first on Bosnia, and later on Kosovo, which may explain his greater affinity for “bad leaders” among the Bosnian Muslim and Kosovar Albanian communities than the Belgrade elite. Though many regard Holbrook as a man consumed by egomania and a desire to forge a name for himself by selecting whatever historical elements suit his view of Washington’s objectives in Southeastern Europe, Malcolm viewed him as a seasoned diplomat with the political and diplomatic acumen for dealing with crises that few in Europe could match. Regardless of one’s interpretation of his personality and motives, Holbrook quickly became one of Washington’s most vocal proponents for the dissolution of Yugoslavia, arguing that such a multiethnic state was no longer feasible by the mid 1990s. He applied the same arguments in regards to Kosovo being a part of Serbia. Thus, while Holbrook many not adhere to primordialist principles of cultural determinism, his ahistorical optimism that entrenched beliefs can be simply overcome by blunt institutional readjustment, which ironically draws itself around ethnic boundaries as exemplified by the Dayton Accords that ended the fighting in Bosnia, is just as equally unrealistic as it is problematic. Other scholars like Mark Thompson note Holbrooke’s hypocrisy for rejecting the “ancient hatreds” argument, but noting the seeming irreconcilable differences between Yugoslavia’s former peoples. Holbrooke’s own memoirs describes a Yugoslav of Serbian and Croatian background as someone who lived “until the wars began … almost unaware of the enmity between the two peoples” and of religious leaders in the region “stirring up ancient but long submerged desires for revenge.” The entire structure of the Dayton Accords for Bosnia models the state around an ethno-federal structure that has served to politically and institutionally deepen ethnic differences over the last two decades. See Cohen (2001), pp. 377 – 82, and Mark Thompson, Forging War: The Media in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina (Bedfordshire, England: University of Lutton Press, 1999), p. 300.
After all, we are talking about something from 1389! It's time to move on.”

Likewise, Vice President Biden remarked in a recent visit to Sarajevo that Bosnia needed to unite in order to enter the EU, otherwise it would remain the poorest nation in the Balkans. “God, when will you tire of this nationalist rhetoric?” aptly summed up his own frustration.

While comments like these reflect the general opinion of Serbia by Western officials, they are hardly helpful and stem from knowledge of a region that is both incredibly oversimplistic and grossly naïve. While the international community may expect Serbia to cooperate, these either/or ultimatums have directly contributed to the persistent strength of illiberal democratic culture operating within a democratic structure. Meeting international demands set by countries that are perceived to practice double standards with other states in the region can compromise domestic stability and political order and galvanize political forces that are interested in disengagement. Enforcing international mandates over a state’s territorial sovereignty, withholding economic assistance because of unfulfilled commitments, and continued political isolation of a state after democratic transitions have started is not only counterproductive; it is irresponsible. With the possible exception of EU membership, Serbs of all political associations have consistently shown a strong desire for democracy, an improvement in the standards of living, economic stability, and an end to political corruption. Yet the persistent strength of national populism originally within the Serbian Radical Party but now within the Serbian Progressive Party and the Democratic Party of Serbia reveals the anxieties communities still have with equating democratic transition to international integration before territorial integrity, economic stability, and political order are fully realized.

113 B92.net (February 23, 2008)
114 “Biden Opens New Page with Serbia”, BBC News (May 20, 2009)
A solution for Serbia’s democratic deficit is not to throw additional institutional constraints on government and politics, nor to continue to demand that Serbia just “get over” its past. The key element that has eluded true liberal democratic consolidation in Serbia since the fall of Milošević in 2000 is the lack of any alternative historical narrative that emphasizes Serbia’s democratic heritage and its compatibility with the rest of Europe. While the lack of such a narrative, or narratives, has in no small part been the result of international forces perennially regarding the Serbia as the state primarily responsible for all the problems with the Balkans since the early 1990s, responsibility must also be placed with Serbia’s key democratic elites who have either felt it necessary to continue the policies of cultural ethnocentrism from the Milošević years or to disregard history and collective identity altogether on account of it being too constraining. A deconstruction of non-democratic symbols and myths of a nation and its replacement with more democratically oriented variants is never an easy task, and most often is challenged by entrenched elites who refuse to adapt values and identities to new circumstances, but it is the only way for a culture of democracy to truly function in any state. The search for a democratic alternative to Serbian collective identity is therefore the subject and focus of our final chapter.
In June 2006, the Serbian Foreign Economic Relations Ministry announced it was looking for an advisor to “help Serbia create a new image for itself.” As far as Serbia is concerned, the Ministry said, it is still most commonly associated with war and instability in the eyes of the majority of the international community. The primary role of this sought-for advisor would be to “find a way to break away from the negative connotations and place Serbia’s brand into international political, investment, cultural and tourism circles.”1 The initial aim of this endeavor was in response to foreign media only reporting about Serbia’s negative aspects. Positive events in Serbia stay hermetic, the Ministry continued, while sensationalist stories such as bombings, assassinations, Milošević, Mladić, and other stories that reinforce the perceived backwardness of the country continue to characterize Serbia in foreign circles. Positive aspects of Serbia needed to be pushed into the foreground, but it would be up to Serbian political and cultural leaders and ordinary citizens to make the initiative.

The potential problems however in seeking out a new image for Serbia are manifold. First, there is little doubt the calls by the Foreign Economic Relations Ministry for a new image meant a more pro-European image. This has been an elusive goal for pro-democratic forces since 2000 and even as early as the mid 1980s when a re-embrace of cultural ethnocentrism seemed the most natural response to a collapsing Yugoslavia and reemerging national movements all around Serbian communities. But the lack of an alternative collective identity to that appropriated by Milošević and preserved by the SRS does not mean there is a lack of will, nor does it mean that

1 B92.net (June 19, 2006)
democratic cultural capital is altogether absent. In almost all regards, the staying power of Pan-Serbism as a bulwark against international integration has been cultivated by consistent attempts by Western powers at eroding Serbian sovereignty, interfering in Serbian affairs for their own self-interest, and framing requisites for international standing as diplomatic ultimatums. The continued portrayal of Serbia as the primary agent responsible for the suffering and instability throughout the western Balkans, even long after the removal of Milošević from power, affirmed the belief among many Serbs, including proponents of Western democracy, that the West really was seeking Serbia’s weakening and dismemberment all along.² That many Western powers, particularly the United States, not only advocated an independent Kosovo but have lent their full support to an ethnic Albanian government that originated as a separatist organization that targeted Serb soldiers and civilians and is currently headed by individuals that were once paramilitary leaders and terrorists, has only strengthened the narrative of Serb suffering at the hands of the “rotten West”.³ To join Europe within this mindset is not to embrace democracy, but to reject it and submit to one’s conquerors.

² This belief was largely popular even with the student opposition movements against Milošević. Many students and former students that I have personally spoken with have almost unanimously voiced their frustration over what they view as the inability of Western Europe and particularly the United States to differentiate between a political clique bent of maintaining power and the general attitudes of ordinary Serbian citizens. That Serbs feel they are still collectively stereotyped as the nation guiltiest for the war and suffering throughout the 1990s, remains one of the greatest obstacles to a general acceptance of European-led democracy. The general cynicism and skepticism felt my many of Serbia’s youth for political leaders of all types, has been largely cultivated during the Milošević period, and maintained during the post-Milošević period by almost all democratic elites who are unable to address issues most poignant to their interests and immediate needs. For an excellent study of the general public disillusionment and every day response to life under Milošević and immediately after, see Aleksandar Zograf, Regards from Serbia: A Cartoonist’s Diary of a Crisis in Serbia (Atlanta: Top Shelf Publications, 2007).

³ The term “rotten West” is an often used phrase within Slavophilic writing. It is used as a juxtaposition to “Slavic”, which denotes purity and simplicity. While current trends in Serbian political nationalism does not implicitly seek to align itself with the beliefs of nineteenth century Slavophilism Ćolović notes the similarities in thinking and dichotomization between the “rotten West” embodied in the EU and global capitalism with the inner strength of orthodox Serbian identity. See Ćolović, The Politics of Symbol in Serbia (1997), pp. 89 – 97
Secondly, to even attempt to distance oneself from the primary symbols of the Pan-Serb narrative – Kosovo, Orthodoxy, national unity – is to jeopardize oneself as a Serb, both politically and socially. As originally codified in epic poetry as the Kosovo pledge, and most recently put forth by Vojislav Koštunica, Tomislav Nikolić, Archbishop Amfilohije, and others, a Serb who forgets Kosovo abandons Serbdom. Kosovo means far more than a geographic location or a medieval battle. It is a frame of mind that unifies all one can offer to land, religion, family, identity, and freedom. It is steadfastness against temptations of the West and resoluteness never to submit to foreign occupation. Thus, one who keeps the Kosovo oath in his or her heart lives up to what it means to be a good Serb. Conversely, those who embrace values and ideas of the West for the sake of those values and ideas alone, are not only damaging Serbia, but are altogether “anti-Serbian”. Collin notes the vibrant and cosmopolitan character of Belgrade even under the darkest days of the Milošević regime, where a wide variety of music, art, literature, and critical thinking derived from the West were used as counterbalances to the cultural power monopoly of the state. Even today, Belgrade can boast an array of popular culture that ranges from Yugo-nostalgic rock to an extensive Gothic underground. Yet all of this is still regarded as avant-garde, counterculture, or in short, un-Serbian. In short, the price for departing from the Kosovo narrative, regardless of the seriousness and dedication to liberal democratic values, is political and cultural irrelevancy.

Third, those individuals and groups that do want to embrace other values and cultures outside of Serbia realize, more often than not, that they can only embrace Europe by rejecting Serbia. In other words, to want to be part of a larger Europe, they

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must actively, and in many instances openly, disassociate themselves from as much Serbian symbolism as possible. A fundamental reason for this type of social disengagement is the lack of institutional support in official political channels. To be sure, there are social organizations present in Belgrade and Novi Sad that advocate alternative understandings of Serbian collective identity, but they are so small and so politically insignificant that they rarely attract any attention outside their own academic circles. Because one cannot question entrenched identities without being anathematized, these organizations break with it altogether, and in many cases, breaking with the past is far easier than trying to exert time and effort in repairing it or replacing it.5

But this only exacerbates the problem in finding a cultural medium between cosmopolitan Europe and Orthodox Kosovo. In the eyes of the dissenters, Serbian identity represents nationalistic backwardness, the darkest periods of the Milošević regime, the ignorance of the seljaci who support the Radicals and Koštunica, and the irrationality of Serbian Orthodoxy. Kosovo is understood not as the cradle of Serbian civilization, but as a land that few Serbs have been to, and even fewer would be willing to travel to, and continues to dominate the political mindscape over all other matters that are far more pressing to the average citizen. In other words, Kosovo might have some symbolic value for the nation as a whole, but doesn’t do anything for the individual struggling to find a job, particularly one that pays well and on time. The lack of a clearly

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5 A good example of such detached organizations is the Center for Cultural Decontamination (Centar za kulturnu dekontaminaciju, CZKd), a Belgrade based avant-garde cultural institution that since the mid 1990s had aimed to revive the spirit of arts and liberal public discourse against what it perceives to be state-orchestrated nationalism and xenophobia. Its director, Dr. Borka Pavičević, is an internationally known civic activist who has sponsored over 2,000 exhibitions, performances, and public events, including community projects involving Serb and Albanian students in Orahovac, Kosovo Province. However, while the Center is well known by former Yugoslav and European scholars, and while it has received extensive funding from both the George Soros’ Fund for an Open Society and the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, it is relatively unknown to the vast majority of Serbian citizens, who would find little to no connection with its works and academic objectives.
defined alternative narrative to that of the ethnocentric discourse therefore leads to disengagement and civic apathy among those with a dissenting opinion because there seems little else one can do.

On the other hand, those that continue to adhere to the prevailing cultural narratives of the state view dissenters as the primary agents of Serbia’s current weakness. It is one thing for Serbia’s ethnic minority communities to neither buy into nor understand the myths and symbols of the state, but for a fellow Serb to refuse is the worst form of blasphemy. Notwithstanding Gothic club-goers and Herbalife sellers as anti-Serbian sektama (sects), pro-EU politicians such as Boris Tadić, Dragan Djilas, and Čedomir Jovanović are frequently viewed by Serbia’s more nationalist sectors as puppets of the West, who would just as soon as sign away Serbia’s sovereignty in Kosovo in exchange for political and financial support. By seeking acceptance from the “rotten West” that placed Serbia in her current state of affairs, they insult the memory of those Serbs who fought and died for their country and reject principles of collective justice for individual gain. In this case, the uncontested prevalence of the nationalistic discourse makes it relatively easy to identify dissenters, traitors, or, to speak in the symbolic language of the narrative, “Vuk Branković”.

6 Gordy argues that it was the “solid peasant” from rural areas that came to embody the very essence of Serbian national identity among national populists. Urban life and urban culture was altogether dismissed as unnatural and dishonest. In one nationalist view, “Belgrade is Tito’s whore. It sees itself as Yugoslav, cosmopolitan, democratic. The only thing it doesn’t want to be is: Serbian.” See Gordy, The Culture of Power in Serbia (1999), p. 14

7 Labeling someone a “Vuk Branković” in Serbia is similar to calling someone a “Benedict Arnold” in the United States. It refers to someone not being just a traitor to one’s country, but a traitor to the ideals of the nation, because of an unforgivable and irredeemable action. During the anti-Milošević street protests in 1999, the winter of 1996 – 97, and in the aftermath of the NATO bombing in 1999, the regime often attempted to portray the opposition groups and student movements as traitors from within who, like Branković at Kosovo, were seeking to erode Serbia’s strength in unity from within. However many opposition leaders were even more nationalistic than Milošević, and relied on the same allegories to castigate the SPS. After the collapse of the Republic of Serbian Krajina in Croatia in 1995 and the willingness of Milošević to agree to an international settlement with the West, Vladan Batić, then Vice
In short, there are two narratives in Serbia today. One is the well-developed and almost universally understood narrative of Serbia that stands and fights alone for what is right. The other however is an unorganized mishmash of countercultural ideas and self-serving interests that are more certain of what they are not than what they stand for, and mostly continue to encompass small pockets of individual non-conformity. Whatever its description, and whatever its orientation, it remains unorganized to function as any viable alternative political discourse or cultural narrative. Serbia’s troubled path towards liberal democratic consolidation has not been due to an overabundance of culture, but by national elites who have either continued to appropriate an incongruent cultural narrative, or have brushed aside Serbian history and culture altogether. The failure in constructing a post-Milošević narrative capable of easing the difficulties of transition and reintegrating Serbia into Europe remains the greatest challenge to the state.\(^8\)

What then is to be done? If the years since the fall of Milošević have proven anything, it is that cultural beliefs encapsulated in political narratives are not only capable of surviving the transition from authoritarian rule, but also can become further

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entrenched through democratic structure because they now operate within a degree of electoral legitimacy. As stated in the previous chapter, it is erroneous to not classify Serbia as a functioning democracy. Elections are fair, parliament operates, laws are passed, power flows through a series of checks and balances, and politicians seek citizen support. However, functioning democracies may not be consolidated democracies in the sense that a collective democratic identity has yet to be agreed upon. Additionally, functioning democracies may not be consolidated democracies if large percentages of the people do not trust their government and remain largely removed from civic activity. If the most successful way of gathering public support remains using nationalist slogans and dichotomizing one’s own country with the untrustworthiness of outsiders, democracy can in theory operate, but it is a very weak democracy.

The prospects in crafting a culture of democracy lay within a nation’s culture, not outside of it. As Serbian politics have demonstrated, people’s core beliefs are undermined during periods of social turmoil and will readily turn towards familiar cultural traditions in order to restore stability. By constantly comparing the stability and strength of a past age with the uncertainty and instability of transition, reactionaries in Serbia, first under Milošević and later within national populist circles, successfully appropriated cultural symbols to legitimize anti-reform policies. Embracing political myths rooted in Serbia’s past and placing them within narratives of resistance to change, defiance of external pressures, and affirmation of ethnocentric cultural values eased the shock of cultural discontinuity, but also blunted further steps towards political reform and legitimized quasi authoritarian practices that have since 2000 evolved into illiberal democratic political platforms. The key for liberal democratic proponents is to operate
within the same strategies of historical appropriation that link key cultural symbols of the nation with reform initiatives. By making liberal democracy seem “home grown”, rather than relying on a series of cultural “imports”, Serbia’s pro-Western democratic proponents can broaden social acceptance of reforms, increase levels of confidence in local government, and provide an alternative collective identity to the ethnocentrism that has diminished the syncretistic relationship between Serbia and Europe.

**Recommendations for the Crafting a Serbian Democratic Narrative**

At the conclusion of this writing, Serbian political culture remains highly stratified and contested. The prevalence of a pro-Western government has, despite the pessimism of many political observers, managed to weather a series of crises, including the administrative loss of Kosovo, and remain in power. However, its control of government cannot last forever, and with the establishment of a more mainstream, yet altogether populist, political movement in the Serbian Progressive Party, the election of a center-right coalition of Nikolić’s and Koštunica’s constituents seems highly likely in the event of stalled European integration, a deterioration of security in Kosovo, or continued levels of crime and corruption. Such an outcome, while undoubtedly resulting from procedural democratic elections, would reinforce an already pervasive Serbian political culture of ethnocentrism and anti-Europeanism. Having assessed the necessary steps for pro-Western leaders in crafting an alternative political culture that praises Serbia’s democratic heritage, I now offer a series of narratives that have yet to be appropriated by political and social actors, but would nevertheless serve as strong
cultural and symbolic capital for such narratives. It may seem inappropriate to recommend policy for a country under empirical study, but if the rest of this chapter provides anything, it is that it provides a series of potentially “usable” pasts for a democratic national character.

The first step in crafting a more democratic narrative for Serbian identity is accepting that the Kosovo narrative can never be discarded, nor can it ever be demystified. Kosovo, Serbian Orthodoxy, and the medieval kingdoms, a tradition of rebellion against foreign domination, are all non-negotiable truths of Serbia’s collection of myths, have formed the basis of nearly every government since the Constitutionalist Period, and will form the core of all successive democratic governments in Serbia, as well as the Bosnian Serb Republic and, if given the opportunity at self-government, the Serbian Assembly of Kosovo. However, as myths form the basis of narratives, and narratives provide the framework for national history and historical memory, myths can be reinterpreted for modified narratives that preserve a distinctive Serbian traditional culture while simultaneously finding compatibility and commonality with the rest of Europe. In short, the values that have defined the perennial sacrifice of the Serbian people at Kosovo can be translated into new democratic narratives, as they had been in the early twentieth century and the interwar period.

The second step in crafting a more democratic Serbian identity is understanding that while Kosovo as a territorial unit and as an historical era has contributed much to Serbia’s cultural heritage, it is not the only component. Granted that Kosovo’s importance has been particularly emphasized over the last two decades due to its contested sovereignty with the Albanian community, a constant emphasis on Kosovo as
the “heart of Serbia” in popular media significantly overshadows other regions and historical eras that have lent what I believe to be greater contributions to the establishment and maintenance of the Serbian state. To argue that Kosovo has been Serbia’s only source of cultural, religious, political, and artistic inspiration, as often seems the case, is highly erroneous. As I argued in chapter 4, the establishment of successful Serbian communities in Vojvodina in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries provided far more social, political, and cultural capital for the establishment of modern Serbia than anything that directly stemmed from Kosovo six centuries ago. The establishment of Belgrade as the center of the new Serbian state after 1804 and its subsequent growth into a major cosmopolitan urban center in Southeastern Europe by the turn of the nineteenth century also provided significant democratic cultural capital. These and other examples are fully documented as part of Serbia’s history, but they have never been codified into narratives of historical memory as Kosovo and medieval Serbia have. While I am not calling for the mythologizing of late nineteenth century Belgrade, nor the romanticizing of the monasteries of Fruška Gora as is done to the medieval monasteries of Old Serbia, I am suggesting that other parts of Serbian history be appropriated by pro-democratic and pro-European elites as symbolic capital for an alternative historical memory to that which only focuses on Kosovo as a symbol of defiance.

The third step is constructing a series of narratives that give people an opportunity to envision a Serbian political culture that is mindful of its past and comfortable with its future progress, instead of a narrative that constantly forces Serbs to choose between tradition and modernity. One significant difference between
democratic and non-democratic narratives is the emphasis of the former on regional and local histories alongside national. 9 Alone, national historical memories attempt to find common links for the entire group, and this more often than not both limits collective identity to a small handful of symbols and simplifies identity to such a degree that cultural dynamics of regional and local development are lost for the sake of pan-ethnic unity. The prevailing national narratives of Serbia can only place emphasis on universally shared historical memories from the medieval period and the Serbian Orthodox Church, as well as the collective suffering of the Serbian people during the Second World War and the years immediately preceding the disintegration of Yugoslavia. By focusing cultural qualities on local narratives however, democratic elites can construct a “home grown” democratic narrative, and also further its dynamics to account for specific regional nuance. Two broad examples that will be explained below are the historical narratives of the city of Belgrade, and the region of Vojvodina, two narratives that may not have broad appeal throughout all of Serbia, but nevertheless have intrinsic value to its particular region.

Fourth and final, the construction of a democratic narrative, while offering a new approach to Serbian cultural identity, should nevertheless attempt to remain as close to traditional culture as possible. The primary objective for elites is to combat formlessness with continuity, not establish a *Calendrier Republicain*. The key to successful democratic consolidation therefore is the ability of elites to provide symbols that allow people to transfer as much cultural capital as possible from old institutions to new ones and this provide a seamless link between old symbols and new policies. As with the post-communist regime of Milošević, this can range from transferring something to

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9 See Petro (2004)
mainstream discourse that was widely recognizable but previously taboo under the authoritarian regime, to recoding entire historical narratives for political relevancy. For democratic elites, this requires reactivating a series of dormant symbols that emphasize European compatibility, individual initiative, and civic co-fraternity. The Milošević regime stressed ethnocentric unity at the expense of civic diversity, but there are earlier periods of Serbian history that stressed the opposite. It is the histories of these periods that elites in Serbia today need to draw upon for democratic and cultural capital if it wishes to transform social consciousness from being passive observers to active participants in democracy.

The Neglected Democratic Narratives of Vojvodina

Because it was not formally a part of Serbia until after the First World War, the history of Vojvodina has remained relatively marginalized in Serbian national history. Outside of schools in Vojvodina, school textbooks devote maybe one chapter, or even a part of a chapter, to Serbian communities outside of Serbia before and after the Uprising of 1804. Mention is made of the Metropolitan of Karlovci established after the Great Migration of 1640, and a few general references are given to the Temešvar Assembly of 1790 and the declaration of the autonomy of Vojvodina by the Serbian National Assembly in 1848 in Karlovci, but it is a generally accepted understanding among Serb historians that Vojvodina remains an altogether regional phenomenon that played little to no role in the national history of modern Serbia other than providing the majority of intellectuals and administrative clerical workers in the first decades of Serbian
statehood. Bookstore in Belgrade generally neglect to carry history books of Vojvodina, and the history of the Hapsburg Serbs is something that is more the focus of study of *Matica Srpska* in Novi Sad, than of SANU in Belgrade. Like Bavaria, Vojvodina is a part of Serbia, but remains apart from the rest of the state in terms of history, culture, global outlook, and political thinking.

Yet is in Vojvodina that the first signs of a modern and democratic Serbian state were born. As stated in Chapter 5, Serbia’s first publishing houses, gymnasiums, lyceums, and civic organizations were established in Vojvodina. A generation of gifted intellectuals like Dositej Obradović and Božo Grujević were born and received the primary education in the Serbian schools of Vojvodina. This generation of educated elites were also privileged with the ability of attending higher learning at some of the most prestigious universities of Central Europe. The establishment of free towns along the Military Frontier, much to the consternation of an increasingly authoritative Hungarian landed elite, also provided a fertile environment for the establishment of an active middle class consisting of merchants, civil servants, doctors, lawyers, and teachers.

At a time when the Serbian principality south of the Sava remained overwhelmingly illiterate and rural, the Serbs of the Hapsburg Empire enjoyed similar degrees of urban sophistication as Czechs, Poles, and Slovaks. Probably the most important to Serbia’s national development was the sustained independence and administrative growth of the Serbian Orthodox Church that not only enjoyed ecclesiastical autonomy at Karlovci, but also operated through a network of monasteries that stretched from the Trieste, through its heartland in Fruška Gora, popularly known as
the “Kosovo of the north”, to the mountains of Transylvania, where the roots of an independent Romanian Orthodox Church was cultivated. In addition, the little town of Karlovci served as a location for a series of other “firsts” in Serbian history: the first modern theater performance in 1734, the first school in 1726, and the Treaty of Karlovci (Karlowitz) in 1699 that marked the beginning of the Ottoman Empire’s long decline, where roundtable negotiations were used for the first time in history. Karlovci can even boast that one of its vintage wines, Bermet, was included on the wine list for the *Titanic*’s maiden voyage. While Vojvodina played only a limited role in post-1804 Serbia, and by 1867 began to be overshadowed and ultimately dependents on its neighbor to the immediate south, the role of Hapsburg Serb communities as the forerunner of the modern Serbian state is irrefutable. Thus, to continuously relegate the history of Vojvodina to merely a regional role, while elements from Serbia’s medieval period receive far more attention and importance to the modern state, is indeed unfortunate and significantly overlooks the contributions this region has made to the development of the Serbian nation as a whole.

To date, Vojvodina remains one of the most multiethnic regions in all of Eastern Europe. Serbs, Hungarians, Croats, Slovaks, Ruthenes (Rusyns), and Romanians have lived together for centuries in relative peace, and the multiethnic composition of the land is frequently promoted by Serbs to counter external assumptions that they are a nationalistic people determined to establish an ethnically pure Serbian state. Indeed, it is interesting to note that, like the multiethnicity of Kosovo, the history of Vojvodina is a shared history among multiple ethnic groups. But unlike Kosovo, Vojvodina’s multiethnic character has contributed to the richness of a cosmopolitan Serbian political
culture, rather than reinforce a defensive ethnocentric mentality. Though there is a danger in romanticizing Vojvodina’s multiethnic character to a degree where actual interethnic problems are ignored, it is noteworthy to observe that despite the existence of hardline Serb nationalist groups targeting the long-established Hungarian communities as potential agents of secession, and the flight of several hundred Croats from the region during the mid-1990s, the region has retained its multiethnic character more so than any other region of the former Yugoslavia. A primary example of multiethnic cooperation is the events surrounding Serb and Croat communities during the revolutions of 1848.

*Vojvodina’s Multiethnic Character and Serb-Croat Unity in the 1848 Revolutions*

In the early 1840s, the Hungarians had successfully gained a series of political and national rights in the Hapsburg Empire. However, in attempting to use these newly won rights in consolidating power in lands under their authority, they effectively prevented the extension of the same rights and privileges to non-Hungarian communities, and actually used their newly acquired political capital in stifling any further attempts as autonomy and cultural awareness of Serbs or any other ethnic minority community. Subsequent efforts to “Magyarize” the countryside by mandating Hungarian as the only official language, and Hungarian history as the national history of the region, forced the Slavic communities to respond, which nearly tore the Hapsburg Empire apart.

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The Serb revolts against the Hungarians began in the free town of Kikinda in April 1848, and soon spread throughout much of the eastern Military Frontier and Banat. On May 12 – 14 (May 1 – 3 Julian Calendar), a Serbian National Assembly was held in Sremski Karlovci. There, Metropolitan Josif Rajačić addressed a crowd for nearly 15,000 Serbs, Croats, Czechs, Poles, and Romanians, proclaiming the autonomy of Vojvodina in the territory of Srem, Baranja, Bačka, Banat, and parts of the Military Frontier in regions where the aforementioned districts were included, as a “political union … based on liberty and perfect equality with the Triune Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia, and Dalmatia.”

A People’s Committee was established as an assembly body, cultural and linguistic rights were extended to the Romanian communities, Rajačić was elevated from Metropolitan to Patriarch – the first Serbian Patriarch since the abolishment of Peć in 1766 – and Stevan Šupljikac, a Serbian colonel in the Austrian Border Guard was elected as voivode, or duke, of the region. The “Vojvodina Assembly”, as it came to be known, was the first of its kind since the Assembly of Temešvar in 1790. Serbs attended from both sides of the Danube, as well as many surviving members of the First Uprising living in Austria, including the venerated Dean Matija Nenadović. Other attendees included a young Jovan Ristić, a student of the Belgrade Lycée and future protégé of Ilija Garašanin who would succeed him as one of Serbia’s most prominent statesmen of the mid to late nineteenth century.

By the end of May, the Hapsburg Serbs openly declared their rebellion against Hungary, and even Vienna provided limited support to the Slavs of the region by appointing the pro-Hapsburg and popular Croat leader Josip Jelačić as ban, or viceroy, of Croatia. Very quickly, a joint Serbo-Croatian struggle was established under the

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combined leadership of Patriarch Rajačić and Ban Jelačić in the name of unity and common struggle for freedoms and rights. Ideas of mutually enjoyed freedoms of liberty and religious tolerance quickly broke down numerous social and ethnic barriers between the two Slavic peoples. Both Serbs and Croats wrote dozens of patriotic songs and poems praising Serbo-Croat solidarity. In one song, *Vojnica* (War Lament), commemorated the Croatian spirit in helping their fellow Serbs resist Hungarian aggression:

The fire was lit in Kikinda,
The wild Magyars are hanging my sons.
Vukovar and Petrovaradin
Are in their hands; a knife is in our back.
And Hrabovsky, the man of the hornbeam head:
The fiend, the plague of the Slav people
Has led the charge on Karlovci.
The Serbs responded in kind.
I handed weapons to our children,
For our people is soaking in blood
We cannot resist alone.
Help from the Croats in needed forthwith.¹²

Serbian churches in Zagreb proudly flew the Croatian tricolor flag in a sign of solidarity with the Croatian people, while Croatian leaders in the city attended Serbian Orthodox liturgies. Even more symbolically, Orthodox and Catholic Easter fell on the same day in 1848 (April 23 Gregorian Calendar, April 10 Julian Calendar). Through a joint-arrangement, Croat and Serb communities in Zagreb and Karlovac agreed to send delegates to symbolically guard Christ’s Tomb in the others’ churches on Good Friday.¹³ On Easter Sunday, Serbs and Croats walked together in a combined Easter

¹³ Karlovac is a town in northwestern Croatia, near Zagreb, and is not to be confused with the town of Sremski Karlovci, the seat of the Serbian Metropolitanate in Hapsburg lands. However, the name
Procession throughout the city as church bells from both Catholic and Orthodox churches pealed throughout the day. Combined liturgical Easter services were held in the main cathedrals of both churches, conducted in Church Slavonic, rather than Latin. Ljudevit Gaj, an early Croatian supporter of Serbo-Croatian ethnic and linguistic unity, and founder of the “Illyrian” Movement, which aimed to unite the South Slavs of Dalmatia, reflected in his newspaper Novine that such camaraderie between Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs was something not seen since the Great Schism of 1054. A few weeks later, Gaj noted another joint Catholic-Orthodox religious procession in the ethnically mixed town of Osijek in central Slavonia, praising this newly discovered, or even rediscovered, brotherhood as having

... no other purpose than to show that we, followers of either confession, enjoying full equality, each adhering to his own religion, wish to live in peace and love as brothers of the same blood, each keeping to his own creed, without any hatred or reproach. We should therefore not from now on ask one another what church you belong to but what race you belong to, so that as blood brothers of one mother Slavia we should come to accord and all together defend our language and nationality against our well-known enemy, who is trying with every available means make us quarrel, so that he can all the more easily subjugate us and thereby destroy our freedom and national independence!

Expressions of brotherly love between Serbs and Croats reached an emotional climax on June 5, 1848 when in the presence of Patriarch Rajačić, Josip Jelačić was inaugurated Ban of Croatia. Eyewitness accounts tell of a day of jubilation as Serbs and

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Sremski Karlovcı is derived from Karlovac as roughly meaning “Karlovac in Srem”, similar to Frankfurt am Main and Frankfurt an der Oder, and Kosovska Mitrovica and Sremska Mitrovica.


15 Cited in Viktor Novak, “Kako su Hrvati i Srbi u Karlovcu 1848 zajednički proslavili Uskrs” (How Croats and Serbs in Karlovac Celebrated Easter Together in 1848), Politika, April 8, 9, 10, 11, 1939, cited in Krestić, p. 41. As a sidenote, while I have not seen the Politika articles in their entirety, it would be interesting to note the tone of these articles, considering when they were written, as Yugoslavia was already under the strain of Croatian separatism and Serb centralism. Where these articles written to emphasize a continuous Serb-Croat harmony, or were they written to lament about a moment in brotherhood and unity that had sadly passed?
Croats embraced one another and danced in the streets. Priests from both churches held joint prayers for the health and well being of both leaders and both peoples. The Croatian poet Ivan Trnski wrote a poem welcoming the new Serbian Patriarch to Zagreb:

Just as a freezing man longs for the sun,  
So we long for Serbian solidarity.  
May the brotherly peoples  
By the Serbian Patriarch be blessed.

I thank thee, O Lord,  
For having granted to me today,  
To see the glory, to weep tears of joy,  
When the Croat is embraced by his Serbian brother!

And for having allowed me to see  
Heroic Ban Jelačić  
Standing before the Serbian Patriarch  
Swearing his oath to God Almighty.16

Both Jelačić and Rajačić were equally active within their own communities in promoting Serb-Croat unity and assuaging fears of one side attempting to use this opportunity to dominate the other politically, religiously, or economically. On September 7, 1848, Jelačić called upon the Croatian bishops to instruct their clergy on how to reassure their parishes that the Serbian Orthodox Church had no aims of proselytizing, and that the spiritual foundations of both the Croatian Catholic and Serbian Orthodox churches were based on the same principles and teachings of brotherly love by Jesus Christ. Two days earlier, Rajačić issued a proclamation condemning all Serbian actions of discord, dishonesty, and unbrotherly love to the Croats as anathema to both God and the Serbian nation. Both proclamations were

16 Radoslav M. Grujić, Istorijski značaj Srba u Hrvatskoj (The Historical Significance of Serbs in Croatia), (Belgrade, 1940), p. 4, cited in Krestić, pp. 43 – 4.
printed and distributed to their respective societies in both the Latin and Cyrillic alphabets.

There is little reason to doubt the sincerity of brotherhood and a common struggle between the Serbian and Croatian communities of the Hapsburg Empire. The Croats lauded the Serbs for their steadfast defense of national purity throughout the centuries, while the Croats “were groaning under the aristocracy, Latinism, and Germanism.”\(^1\)\(^7\) The high degree of co-fraternity shared between Serbs and Croats during the 1848 revolutions was further enumerated in the “Fundamental Rules of Public Education for Croatia and Slavonia”. Elementary schools were instructed to teach all their students in the “mother tongue” and that “in observance of the principles of equality, both the Latin and Cyrillic script are to be taken into consideration”. Furthermore, only in matters of religious teaching would Croat and Serb instructors respectively lead class. In all other instances of curriculum, teaching appointments were based on merit rather than meeting ethnic quotas. Appointments to the general civil service also reflected high degrees of integration as Serbs were duly represented in political bodies throughout the region, printed their own newspapers, proposed legislation and comprised some of the most dedicated soldiers in Jelačić’s armies.\(^1\)\(^8\) The common struggle shared between Serbs and Croats against Hungarian authorities

\(^1\)\(^7\) Statement made by Ivan Kukuljević-Sakcinski at the Croatian Sabor June 6, 1848. Reported in *Novine Hrvatsko-slavonske-dalmatinske*, no. 58, 1848, cited in Krestić, (1997), p. 44.

\(^1\)\(^8\) Ognjeslav Utješnović was one such politically influential Serb in Croatia. As an active politician in the Croatian Sabor, he disputed the conception of historical rights of Hapsburg authority, and instead called for the principle of natural rights. In an article titled “Guidelines for the Federal Reordering of the Austrian Empire on the Principle of Constitutional Liberty and National Equality” published in the *Slavenski jug*, he proposed the formation of a federated Austria, which would be comprised of seven nationally-designated regions: German, Czecho-Slovak, Hungarian, South Slavic, Polish-Ruthenian, Romanian, and Italian. The federation was to have a common parliament, with an equal number of representatives from all regions, a common foreign policy, common finances, trade, and war affairs. While obviously nothing came of this proposal, it is interesting to note this model had structural parallels with the later Yugoslav state. See Krestić (1997), pp. 52 – 53.
represented in political cooperation, ecclesiastical brotherhood, and the voluntary membership of each side fighting and dying for the liberation of each others’ homelands throughout the southern Hapsburg Empire, all provide excellent examples of Serbian co-fraternity with an ethnic group that has more recently been portrayed as thoroughly anti-Serbian.

The 1848 Revolution ended in failure for most of Austria’s Slavic communities. Though Jelačić won a series of victories against the Hungarians, and was even poised to march on Budapest, financial support ultimately ran thin from Belgrade and Serbo-Croatian districts, and was ultimately pulled by Vienna, but not before Hapsburg troops moved in to secure his holds. Additionally, Vienna reached a separate agreement with Patriarch Rajačić by reaffirming Serbian autonomy in the Military Frontier with the establishment of the Crown-controlled Duchy of Serbia and Banat of Temešvar. However, the entire historical experience carries a number of potential democratic narratives for use. The most apparent is the close relationship between Serbian and Croatian communities from political, social, ecclesiastic, and culture vantage points. The cooperation between Jelečić and Rajačić, but even more importantly the symbolic rituals of joint religious commemoration in Orthodox and Catholic churches, demonstrate the ease in which apparently longstanding cultural antagonisms can be quickly bridged under the right circumstances by elites from both sides. Another possible narrative from this period is the significant development of Serbia’s image as the Piedmont of the South Slavs. Due to shared concerns over Hungarian antagonisms, the Serbia of Garašanin’s time improved its diplomatic relations with both Austria and
Russia, and transformed Serbia from a small dependent Ottoman vassal to an active participant in European political and cultural integration.

Novi Sad: The “Serbian Athens”

As the provincial capital of Vojvodina, Novi Sad functions as Serbia’s second most important urban center, and has long been regarded as Serbia’s oldest and most prominent Central European city. As a major location for economic and academic development, Novi Sad has also historically functioned as the secular counterpart to the center for Serbian Orthodoxy in Karlovci, the “Serbian Zion”. Throughout most of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Novi Sad was also the most culturally advanced Serbian city, and was aptly referred to as the “Serbian Athens”. Together, Karlovci and Novi Sad comprise the link between the medieval Serbian kingdoms and the modern Serbian state. Sremski Karlovci is referred to as the place “where the Phoenix of our national genius, that has been burnt over and over again, once built its nest; the childhood of a happy and unhappy nation that has not found its peace and rest, a symbol of our revival after the battle of Kosovo.”

Likewise, Novi Sad is coupled with Karlovci as “two candles in the night that … burned and glowed and showed the way to the people in the dark night, in our hard past,” but it was first Karlovci, as Serbia’s Zion, that “taught Serbian Athens the first lessons about the organization of church and common life, about spirituality, about art and letters.”

As one of the primary locations within the Military Frontier, Novi Sad quickly became home to a number of Serbian communities, and was granted the status of Free

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20 Ibid.
City by Empress Maria Theresa in 1748. Karlovci was granted the status of Free City five years later. As with most Free Cities within the Military Frontier and Banat regions, a “progressive middle class” of emerging merchants and clerics developed a civic consciousness and class self-awareness to both advocate greater civil rights for Serb communities from Austrian and Hungarian authorities, and consistently encourage the Serbian Orthodox episcopate to provide more social and academic services for its people. As previously noted, early modern Serbia was greatly assisted by merchants, clerks, and clerics from Vojvodina in helping establish a modern state bureaucracy. But this help could not have manifested if Hapsburg Serbs had not first won these rights and privileges themselves. These fledgling communities formed an intricate network of traders and craftsmen that worked on both sides of the Danube and Sava, served the crown in military and administrative sectors, formed a thin layer of the aristocracy, operated as clerics and teachers for the Serbian Orthodox Church, participated in a wide range of literary and artistic initiatives, and toiled the land as day laborers, lease-holders, and independent peasants.\(^\text{21}\)

In addition to serving as the chief center of Serbian cultural learning, Novi Sad also functioned as a center for all South Slavdom. Most leading Serbian intellectuals moved there during the 1848 revolutions, and even a number of elites in Belgrade from political activists like Svetozar Marković, considered to be the ideological founder of Serbian socialism, to members of both the Karadjordjević and Obrenović families found safe haven in the Military Frontier from enemies at home. By 1850, Novi Sad boasted

nine political and literary journals that were published and printed on Cyrillic presses. Its first čitaonica (reading room), opened in 1842, and a National Theater was founded in 1861.22

Among the Hapsburg Serbs, advances in cultural development made steady albeit muted progress on account of Hungarian efforts to stifle most efforts at self-determination by Slavic communities. The literary foundation Matica Srpska was founded in Budapest in 1826 and served as the first real national institution of all the Hapsburg Slavs, the prototype for future foundations to emulate, and the most important cultural institution for all Hapsburg Serbs.23 Matica Srpska was an entirely self-funded organization that relied on the contributions of its members, which was mostly the aforementioned progressive middle classes of Novi Sad, Budapest, and Temešvar. Wealthy benefactors also contributed to the upkeep of Matica Srpska, chief of whom was Sava Tekelija of Temešvar, one of the richest and most influential Serbs in Austria, who provided funds to not only keep the foundation alive, but through the Tekelija Fund provided scholarships for young Serbs seeking education in universities throughout the Hapsburg empire. Its chief literary journal was Ljetopis (Chronicle), a publication which

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22 The first Serbian Reading Room was founded in 1841 in Irig, a town a few kilometers from Novi Sad. By 1870, there were twenty-one Serbian Reading Rooms throughout Vojvodina, all of whose primary aims were to preserve Serbian language and literature amid increasingly oppressive Magyarization. See Stanley B. Kimball, “The Serbian Matica – Prototype of Austro-Slav Literary Foundations: The First Fifty Years 1926 – 76”, East European Quarterly, vol. 3, no. 3 (1964), p. 364

23 The word matica is difficult to translate. Literally, it means “queen-bee”. However it has also come to be understood as “home”, “source”, or “headquarters”. In this case, a rough translation could be “Home of the Serbs”, or even “Serbian Source”. Studies on Matica Srpska, like most studies on Vojvodina and the Serbs of Austria-Hungary, remain largely unknown outside Serbia, or Vojvodina for that matter. The most definitive work is the centennial publication Matica Srpska, 1826 – 1926 by twenty-one contributing authors (Novi Sad, 1927). See also Živan Milisavac, Matica Srpska (Novi Sad, 1965).
began a year before by three Serbs from Novi Sad and became the primary vehicle for literary, historical, and cultural expression.²⁴

However, unlike its emerging counterparts in Belgrade at the time, Ljetopis was rather conservative in outlook, and its intellectuals were certainly not representative of the masses. Whereas Vuk’s reformed Serbian language and grammar, had been already accepted in Belgrade, Ljetopis still used the older Slavo-Serb language that was favored by the Karlovci Metropolitanate, and fastidiously guarded as a symbol of Serbian identity. Unfortunately, it was not an easily readable language in grammar or in pronunciation, and remained essentially a language of the elite. What Matica published however was some of the first scholarly works of Serbian history and literature.²⁵

Ironically, many of these works focused on the achievements of Dositej Obradović, who was an ardent proponent of language reform and modernization to allow all Serbs to read. Nevertheless, its editors displayed a keen interest in making Ljetopis not just a literary journal for Serbs, but a medium of communication for other Slavic communities. Numerous articles focused on the literatures and literary activity of Czech, Polish and Russian writers. Frequent writing contests were given for the best contributions in new drama, poetry, prose, and translation. Works by notable European

²⁴ Kimball (1964), p. 360. Tekeliya served as president of Matica from 1837 – 42. The Tekeliya Fund, as his contribution of 100,000 florins established, provided 20 annual stipendiums for students. He also provided the salaries of the secretary and the editor of Ljetopis, and purchased property in Budapest for the Matica to operate.

²⁵ The two inaugural publications by Matica Srpska was Kassia carica (Empress Kassia) by Milovan Vidaković, which was a novel of historical fiction based on Medieval Serbia, a love for Serbia’s distant past, and hatred of Serbia’s enemies, specifically Turks. The accompanying publication was the drama Svetislav i Mileva (Svetislav and Mileva) by Jovan Popović, which was also loosely based on Serbian history. The following year, Matica published Voj na Kosovu (Battle of Kosovo). In 1835, the poet and playwright Isidor Nikolić published the verse tragedy Car Lazar (Tsar Lazar), based on the life of the fourteenth century Serbian leader, his war against the Turks, and his death at the Battle of Kosovo in 1389. A series of works by Georgije Magarašević, one of Matica’s founders, focused on the works and contributions of Dositej Obradović: Pisma Dositea (The Writings of Dositej), Duch spisanija Dositejva (The Spirit of the Writings of Dositej). See Kimball (1965), pp. 356 – 59.
scholars and thinkers such as Voltaire were translated into Serbian. In 1839, *Matica* dedicated a series of publications, lectures, and writing contests to the 450th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo.\(^{26}\)

But the failures of the 1848 revolutions and the subsequent reestablishment of authority first by Vienna, and later by Budapest, began the slow decline in the significance of Hapsburg Serbs. While there were no overt efforts by the Hungarians in stamping out Serbian cultural and linguistic identity, considerable efforts were made to financially and administratively cripple those outlets that promoted a sense of collective group consciousness. *Ljetopis* was a frequent target of Hungarian reactionaries, despite its limited circulation conservative character, yet as late as the mid 1860s was able to publish a series of new Serbian works.\(^{27}\) By the early 1870s, the Hungarian reactionaries in Budapest had closed the Serbian gymnasium in Novi Sad and confiscated the Tekelija Fund, *Matica Srpska*'s chief source of income, even though *Ljetopis* had about 1,000 subscribers by 1874. Though *Matica Srpska* survives to the present day, as does *Ljetopis*, its chief publication, the prestige of Novi Sad as the chief cultural center for Serbs and all South Slavs had already been overshadowed by the emergence of Belgrade as the new cosmopolitan, and independent, South Slavic capital. Whatever additional achievements were made, they were done either as an embattled society attempting to resist Magyarization, or as individuals who contributed to the social, cultural, and economic life south of the Danube in Serbia.

\(^{26}\) Ibid, pp. 361
Novi Sad remained overshadowed by its larger and more prominent Serbian city to the south for the remainder of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, the twilight of the Milošević years would place Novi Sad once again on Europe’s map as a focal point of counterhegemonic organization in Serbia with what would come to be known as the EXIT Festival. In the summer of 2000, students from the Faculty of Technical Sciences and the University of Novi Sad gathered at the student park along the Danube for concerts, parties, and art performances organized by three students, Bojan Bošković, Dušan Kovačević, and Ivan Milivojev. But because of the upcoming elections between Milošević and DOS, the event quickly turned to one of discussions on how to resist state-sponsored programs of xenophobia, nationalism, and media censorship. The musical events now blended with political activism and lasted for 100 days, ending with a huge “Get Out the Vote” Party, inspired by initiatives spearheaded by MTV in the United States in 1996, one day before the monumental 2000 elections that saw the defeat of Milošević. The event became known as “EXIT” to denote both the political exit of Milošević, and the symbolic exit of Serbia from self-imposed isolation over the past decade and back into Europe.28

The EXIT festival held the following year was moved to the fortress of Petrovaradin across the Danube, and attended by more than 200,000 people from across the former Yugoslavia and Europe. It was Serbia’s first experience at including, and being included with, communities from all over Europe since the collapse of Yugoslavia, and the first time former Yugoslav communities gathered together in

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28 According to the EXIT website, the festival is proclaimed as a “State of EXIT”, which means “a state for those who share values, environmental awareness, and tolerance and are open to the different cultures and also want to make the world around them a better place.” EXIT – Exit History, http://eng.exitfest.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=553&Itemid=197
Serbia. Drama performances from different regional theaters accompanied workshops and roundtable discussions that aimed to promote reconciliation between the nations of the former Yugoslavia. News of the festival’s success quickly spread throughout Europe and was billed by many as Serbia’s comeback party. For the first time in years, the public image of Serbia was of youth, music, and internationalism, instead of war, nationalism, and Milošević. The EXIT festivals soon became one of the biggest music festivals in Southeastern Europe, and one of the most popular throughout the entire European Continent. In addition to hundreds of thousands of attendees throughout Europe, the festival also attracts internationally acclaimed music artists like Pet Shop Boys, Underworld, Cypress Hill, Beastie Boys, and Laibach. But in addition to billing top musical performers, EXIT Festival continues its role of raising social awareness over political issues such as trafficking and sexual exploitation in the region, gender equality, economic issues, environmentalism, unemployment, and substance abuse. In 2004, informational literature on these subjects was handed out to the public, and workshops were organized with journalists, police, civil activists and intellectual figures. Though the cooperation with MTV, a one-hour documentary on the subject of drug and sex trafficking was filmed and aired in 20 countries throughout Eastern Europe.29

Recent issues concerning the potential scrapping of all travel visas for Serbs and other citizens of the Balkans to the rest of Europe were the focus of EXIT 2006, which was dubbed the “Visa Abolishment Campaign”. Prior to the festival, EXIT coordinators held a “NOT60EUROS!” campaign, in protest of the high fees Serbs and others had to pay just to get a visa to travel. People from throughout Europe were encouraged to

29 B92.net (June 29, 2004)
record the phrase “NOT60EUROS” in their own language and send it to EU parliamentary members. During the festival, a large billboard with a picture of the Eiffel Tower with the heading “Greetings from Europe” was set up for visitors to have their picture taken in front of it. The picture would then be sent to them as an e-card with e-mail addresses of EU institutions, Balkan governments, and media outlets to show that these people are the same as tourists in front of the real Eiffel Tower, except that they are not allowed to travel there. By 2007, not only was EXIT a phenomenal success, but nearly one-third of its visitors were foreigners.\textsuperscript{30} Despite the many fears that it has lost its original intention of being a symbol of democratic openness and has given way to large corporate sponsors and advertising media, EXIT represents a strong affirmation of the multiethnic character that has always described Vojvodina and Novi Sad, its chief city. It remains the largest, and quite possibly most effective, exposure shared between Serbia and the rest of the world, and probably is one of the greatest symbols that challenge the image of Serbian ethnocentric chauvinism.

**The Democratic Narrative of Belgrade**

Though it would remain in the shadow of more established Serbian urban centers at Novi Sad, Sremski Karlovci, and Temešvar until at least the late 1860s, the effects of Miloš Obrenović’s centrism and the continued work of various Constitutionalists following his abdication in 1839 would ensure that Belgrade remain the focal point of all subsequent political and cultural development in Serbia and would gradually, but noticeably, transform itself from a muddy Ottoman fortress town into a the most

\textsuperscript{30} B92.net (August 1, 2007)
cosmopolitan city in Southeastern Europe on the eve of the Second World War. Most notably, the period of Serbian history marked by the reign of King Petar Karadjordjević (1903 – 1914), grandson of Karadjordje, is often referred to in Serbian historiography as “the golden age of Serbian democracy”, and a time when Serbia was considered equal to the most developed Western European countries. While more recent works are more cautious in avoiding over-romanticizing the period as the apex of political achievement, Serbian historiographers have noted the difference in political culture in accordance to a theory of democracy between political elites and cultural, literary, artistic, and academic figures. Though King Petar’s Serbia could be considered a constitutional monarchy, the day to day politics were heavily influenced by Pašić’s Radical Party that still adhered to strict traditional ways of governing the state as one large zadruja and viewed one’s political opponents as one’s enemies. In many respects, the Belgrade of Pašić’s era resembled Chicago under Richard J. Daley: structurally democratic, but politically illiberal.

However, beneath and alongside the political structure was a vibrant cultural phenomena now collectively, and nostalgically, referred to as stari gradski (Old City) culture that is represented in art, music, literature, and critical thinking. Particularly in the post-Communist and post-Yugoslav period as Belgrade seeks to reclaim and uncover a prewar culture that very few Serbs can directly remember, an appreciation for the wide Parisian boulevards and narrow Turkish alleyways, the Bohemian salons and rustic kafane, the Viennese cafes and Balkan coffeehouses all present a vivid juxtaposition between what was once, and could be again, the most cosmopolitan city in Southeastern Europe with the crowded, congested, and dilapidated infrastructures of a
Balkan urban center isolated by war, sanctions, and organized crime. Particularly by the turn of the last century, Belgrade served as one of the primary centers for South Slavic thinking where cultural borrowing blended with traditional Serbian customs to form an entirely new political culture.

The emergence of Belgrade as both a political and cultural center of Serbs and other South Slavs began to take form as early as the 1848 revolutions, though the revolutions only indirectly affected Serbia. While there were nascent signs of class struggle, Serbia remained too economically undeveloped to be swept up with the social movements that swept across France, Germany and Austria. By 1858, over 200 Serbs were able to travel throughout Europe, and many received schooling, like their Hapsburg Serb brethren before them, in the universities in Paris, Heidelberg, Halle, Freiburg, Prague, Vienna, and Budapest, where they were imbued with the spirit of Romantic liberal nationalism. Upon returning to Belgrade, these “Young Serbs”, for lack better terminology, took jobs at the Belgrade Lyceum transferring their knowledge to high school students, or became founding editors of a series of new newspapers and journals. Whatever the profession, these young intellectuals set about the task of establishing a series of civic groups dedicated to the enhancement of higher education.

As early as 1840 talk of opening a reading society, “where a large number of newspapers, without which every man in the world is fatal to political life, and various books would be available,” permeated the conversations of Serbia’s nascent intellectual elite. On November 7, 1845, members of a secret Panslavic club in Belgrade opened the city’s first reading club in the Zdanije kod Jelena (Building by the Deer – a statue),

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which at the time was Belgrade’s most beautiful building, and named “Kasina” (“Casino”). It kept domestic and foreign newspapers and was visited primarily by members of its own Panslavic society. Moreover, it offered free instruction in French and provided tutoring in Slavic languages and grammar. Kasina only operated for a short time due to the suspicion it created not only among the Constitutionalists, but also among other educated Serbs, due to its “Illyrianist” ideas.32 While it left no long-lasting effects on Serbian political or democratic development, it did provide enough of an incentive for other intellectuals to establish reading places, which were more universal in appeal to the cultural needs of the country.

The Srpsko čitalište u Beogradu (Serbian Reading Club in Belgrade) was opened on March 8, 1846 amid joyous celebrations and several speeches. “We have made one more step towards European education”, proclaimed Maksim Simonović, Lyceum professor and editor of the bi-lingual Serbian-German newspaper Srbskij ulak – Serbischen Courrier.33 The Reading Club was a completely self-sustaining organization, as all its expenses were paid from membership fees and donations, the latter of which

32 The “Illyrian Movement” was a South Slavic movement in Hapsburg Croatia. The use of the word “Illyrian” rather than Slavic, was both an attempt by its adherents to promote a more ancient heritage of the various Slavic peoples of the region, as well as create a name in which Croats, Slovenes, Serbs, Bosnians, and even Albanians could collectively identify with. The Illyrian Movement received considerable criticism in the Serbian Principality because of its perceived Croatian nationalist undercurrents that appeared to assimilate Serbs and other non-Croats into a Croatian-dominant identity. While there is enough evidence to suggest that the Illyrian Movement was one of the first signs of South Slavic, or Yugoslav, unity, like Garašanin’s Načertanije, it was seen by its critics as a latent attempt at cultural assimilation and expansionism. For the historical significance of the Illyrian Movement, see Elinor Murray Despalatović, Ljudevit Gaj and the Illyrian Movement (Columbia University Press, 1975); Gordana Uzelac, The Development of the Croatian Nation: An Historical and Sociological Analysis (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006).

33 Svetislav Šumarević, Citalište (Belgrade, 1938), p. 25, cited in Karanovich (1995), p. 179. The push for a public reading club in Belgrade was initiated by Jelisej Vukajlovíc, an administration secretary, and financially supported by some of Belgrade’s most influential citizens. Chief among these benefactors was Mioša Anastasijevíc, one of Serbia’s richest men, Radovan P. Damjanović, Assistant Minister of the Interior, Maksim Simonović, Lyceum professor, Petar Radovanović, elementary school director, and others. Together, they formed the Committee for the Opening of a Reading Club at the end of 1845. Within three weeks, they organized the statues, bi-laws, and organization of the Reading Club.
came from individuals ranging from wealthy merchants to Metropolitan of Belgrade. Students at the Lyceum were exempt from any fees and could visit the Reading Club upon approval of their professors, and guests were welcome to visit for free up to a month. The goals of the Reading Club stipulated that “every Serb regardless of whether he is an ecclesiastic, a military man, or an ordinary citizen can become a member of the society [club].” At its height in 1856, the Reading Club had close to 350 members, a collection of 138 foreign newspapers, and its own lending library that in its first year of operation held 329 books of which 194 were in Serbian, Russian, and other Slavic languages, and another 135 in German and other Western European languages. Milovan Spasić, its first curator, may have been thinking too grandly when he hoped that the Reading Club’s library might one day become “one of the best known South Slavic libraries and it will be for our young fatherland what the Alexandrian Library would have been for the whole world if inhuman barbarians had not burnt it”, but for a library that was self-sustaining, not to mention dependent on what small percentage of Serbian urban and intellectual elite there was at the time for membership, its modest gains were impressive. In addition to purchasing its own books, many writers donated copies of their own works to the library, including Vuk Karadžić, and Petar Petrović Njegoš. The Reading Club also received one copy of every book published in State Printing Office. While the increase in the number of books to the library varied by year, 

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34 Srbske Novine, no. 43 (May 31, 1846), cited in Karanovich, p. 180
35 According to Srbske Novine, in 1856 Serbia received 138 different foreign newspapers: 5 in Serbian (Vojvodina), 1 in Bulgarian, 2 in Croatian, 4 in Russian, 1 in Czech, 3 in Polish, 3 in Modern Greek, 84 in German, 7 in English, 21 in French, 4 in Italian, 2 in Hungarian, and 1 in Turkish. Serbia received more foreign newspapers than newspapers published at home. The only two newspapers in Serbia were Srbske Novine (Serbian News), and Šumadinka (Šumadijan Woman). See Karanovich, p. 181.
36 Novine Čitališta Beogradskog (Belgrade Reading Club News), no. 5 (Jan 31, 1847), cited in Karanovich, p. 182
the overall library inventory increased from a meager 329 in 1847 to 2,855 titles by 1854.37

The Belgrade Reading Club also expanded its services in being one of the first civic institutions in Serbia to offer public lectures, foreign language tutoring, translations of newspapers and documents, and an informal location for political, social, economic, and cultural discussion and debate. It even printed its own newspaper, \textit{Novine Čitališta Beogradskog} (Belgrade Reading Club Newspaper), which from its inception aimed to be a foreign affairs newspaper reporting events from around the world. The initiative was bold to the point of being impractical at the time. One critical Serbian citizen wrote in \textit{Srbske Novine} that Serbian newspapers were more concerned with events outside Serbia than domestic issues and wondered why the small amount of Serbs that could read should cut themselves off from concern for their own country.38

This criticism reflected a general feeling that the small core of intellectuals had no connection with the rest of the country. Nevertheless, between 1838 and 1858 the number of schools in Serbia increased from 72 to 343, and by 1855, Serbia had a lyceum, a gymnasium, a seminary, a military academy, an agricultural school, three junior high schools, 300 elementary schools and an additional 13 elementary schools for girls. Though two-thirds of Serbian communities remained without any schools, the gains made, when placed within the context of the relative absence of any formal education in Serbia a few decades prior, such gains are remarkable.39

37 \textit{Postanak i razvitak Beogradske čitaonice} (Belgrade, 1872), p. 18, cited in Karanovich, Ibid.
39 Petrovich (1976), p. 283
By the end of the reign of Michael Obrenović in 1868, Belgrade showed clear signs of transforming into full-fledged European city. The Law on the Establishment of a Great School was established on October 6, 1863. The Veliki Škola (Great School) was founded as Serbia’s highest institution of learning at the time, and in 1905 was transformed into the University of Belgrade. By 1868, Serbia had close to 400 schools, nearly 500 teachers, and over 18,000 enrolled students. The quantity and quality of education significantly improved under Michael’s reign, and education reform laws in 1863 facilitated building a high school for girls, largely to train them to become teachers. The percentage in literacy also made great strides under Michael. In 1866, 4.2% of the population was literate, with 26.7% literacy in towns and 1.6% literacy in the villages. By 1874, overall literacy increased to 6.7%, with 33.6% literacy in the towns and 3.7% in the villages. While this may seem small, even trivial, in comparison to more advanced countries in Europe, one must remember that nearly all of Serbia was illiterate just one generation ago.\(^{40}\) The 1870s also witnessed a noticeable increase in the number of students enrolled in liberal arts programs, reflecting the ideological mood of students who had taken to the writings of the charismatic Serbian socialist Svetozar Marković. By the 1890s and the turn of the century, the Great School was able to sponsor a series of scholarships with leading European universities for Serbian students seeking advanced skills in the technical and natural sciences, as well as accumulating a budget large enough to recruit a distinguished staff of scholars with degrees from universities throughout Europe. In 1905, the Great School was proclaimed an official university, with separate faculties for law, philosophy, and applied sciences.

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\(^{40}\) Ibid, p. 349
The *Društvo Srpske Slovenosti* (Society of Serbian Letters) was the first learned society formed in Serbia in 1842 during Michael’s first reign. The society’s aims was to develop and spread knowledge in the Serbian language, and further the translating of works classical literature, as well as Western textbooks on astronomy, philosophy, geography, physics, and other subjects. Some of Serbia’s greatest thinkers, writers, and intellectuals became members of the Society in the mid 19th century. Djuro Daničić (1825 – 1882) was a close colleague of Vuk Karadžić and worked on a second edition to Karadžić’s dictionary. Additionally, he held a professorship in medieval Serbian literature in 1859, and published a dictionary of the “Croato-Serbian” language in Zagreb after 1865. He also worked on a translation of the New Testament from Church Slavonic to modern Serbian, and translated the Russian scholar A. Maikov’s work *History of the Serbian People*. Throughout his time in Serbia, he vigorously fought for the adoption of Vuk’s simplified alphabet and grammar. In 1859, the official ban on Vuk’s Serbian was removed, was generally accepted by Serbian authors in 1865, and was officially implemented in 1868 by the Great School. Other scholars in the society included Josip Pančić (1814 – 1888), who was widely regarded as Serbia’s greatest natural scientist in his day. In 1853, he was appointed professor of natural history and agronomy first at the Lyceum, and later at the Great School. In addition to translating modern textbooks on zoology mineralogy, geology, and botany into Serbian, he was a pioneer in the research of the flora and fauna of Serbia. His academic work and scientific achievements were pioneering works in Belgrade, and was elected the first president of the Serbian Royal Academy of Sciences.
Like *Matica Srpska* in Novi Sad, the Society of Serbian Letters was a leading Serbian cultural institution. In addition to working with its Hapsburg counterpart, it established academic links with St. Petersburg and Zagreb in 1851, and with academies in Vienna, Berlin, Munich, and Budapest in 1855. Between 1857 and 1861 the society maintained ties with no less than 17 institutions. Corresponding members included the German scholars Leopold Ranke and Jakob Grimm; the French geologist Ami Boué; the Russian scholars A. Vostokov, M. Bodianskii, V. Lamanskii; the Czech and Slovak cultural leaders Pavel Jozef Šafařík, L. Štur, and Jan Kollar; the Croats Ljudevit Gaj and Medo Pucić, and the Slovenes B. Kopitar and Stanko Vraz. It was actually the Society’s enthusiastic interest in Western and Russian liberalism and revolutionary nationalism that forced Michael’s government to finally shut it down in 1864. However, the society was reborn as the *Srpsko Učeno Društvo* (Serbian Learned Society) in August of that same year, and reorganized again in 1887 as the *Srpska Kraljevska Akademija Nauka* (Serbian Royal Academy of Sciences), an academic institution that facilitated the founding of the Serbian National Library and National Museum in 1853, as well as serving as the progenitor to the modern-day SANU. Through its various incarnations, the Society provided one the most critical links in the rapid Westernization of Serbia over the next few decades.

Janko Šafařík, nephew of the renowned Czech scholar Pavel Jozef Šafařík, who himself served as professor and headmaster at the Serbian Gymnasium in Novi Sad between 1819 – 1833, became one of the National Library’s most distinguished directors. When he was appointed director in 1861, the library’s holdings consisted of 88 manuscripts, 16 rare printed books, 10,383 volumes with 1,305 duplicates, 100
newspapers and journals in 352 volumes with 41 duplicates, and 124 maps, charts, and pictures. When Šafarik turned over his duties to his successors in 1869, the library had more than doubled its holdings to 9,566 titles in 23,309 volumes. The expansion of the National Library alone was considered an incredible achievement, considering that the library was founded in 1832 with only 800 volumes in an overwhelmingly illiterate country. Šafarik also gave the National Library a modern professional system of organization and classification. His successes were enough to encourage the government in opening community public libraries, and reading rooms (čitanice) throughout the Principality. Kragujevac founded a new library in 1854, and libraries in Knjaževac, Šabac, Čačak, and Požarevac opened by 1860. By 1870, there were 37 public libraries in Serbia. In 1899, a separate museum of natural history opened, and in 1904 the Serbian Ethnographic Museum was founded.

It was not until the early 1870s when Belgrade began to replace Novi Sad as a center for literature. However, noteworthy literary figures had already made their mark on Serbia’s cultural development by the mid 1850s. Ljubomir Nenadović (1826 – 1895) was one of the first Serbian natives to gain reputation as a writer, and one of the first to write in the Slavic vernacular rather than the old Slaveno-Serbian language. While his primary duties were within the state ministry of education, he did have time to translate Mignet’s History of the French Revolution (1860 – 1863), and edited the memoirs of his well-known father, Dean Matija Nenadović, a veteran of the First and Second Serbian uprisings, and a contemporary of Karadjordje. These memoirs have since served as a primary historical account of Serbia from the First Uprising to the establishment of a new government under Miloš in 1817. Djura Jakšić (1832 – 1878) is remembered as one
of the great poets of Serbian Romanticism. He wrote numerous poems dealing with romantic love, social injustice, satires against political regimes and its effects in the countryside, but he was best loved for his patriotic poetry. These patriotic poems were nothing short of historical drama in verse. Among his three most famous were *Seoba Srbalja* (The Migration of the Serbs), *Jelisaveta, knjeginja crnogorska* (Elizabeth, Princess of Montenegro), and *Stanoje Glavaš*, which was a biography of the heroic warrior during the First Serbian Uprising. Jovan Ilić (1824 – 1901) was another Romantic nationalist heavily influenced by Serbian epic poetry. He adapted much of his work to reflect the oral songs of the *guslars*, wore corresponding clothing, and even purposefully developed a unique rough peasant speech. However devoted he was to the songs and poems of the Serbian peasant, he was equally interested in the Ottoman lyricism of Bosnian love songs, and wove elements of Serbian and Turkish styles into his own unique work. His epic *Pastiri* (The Shepherds) remains one of the masterpieces of Serbian romanticism. His son Vojislav Ilić broke with the nationalist poetry of his celebrated father Jovan, and injected standards of modern European prose that made him one of Serbia’s most celebrated poets in history.

By the 1890s, Serbian literature reflected a new reactionary attitude against romanticism and an embrace of realism in the arts and positivism in the sciences. Like Russia, Serbia also looked to the Western thinkers like Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill, Charles Darwin, Ludwig Feuerbach, and Karl Vogt. Interestingly enough, it was Russia’s embrace of the West that introduced these works to aspiring Serbian scholars, chief of whom was the young Svetozar Markovic, the

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ideological founder of Serbian democratic socialism. A series of theoretical, scientific and literary works from the West that reflected these new ways of thinking beyond romanticism and sentimentalism dramatically altered Serbian political culture. Instead of works focusing on the Romantic links between Pan-Slavism and the recreation of Tsar Dušan’s medieval empire, this new generation of Serbian literati wrote on the increased need for civil liberties and better standards of living for the masses. The advent of realism and academic pragmatism in Serbian writing naturally politicized Serbian literature. Milovan Glišić wrote some of Serbia’s first social satires that vividly depicted the life in the countryside of the wily peasant, the crafty tradesman, the dishonest official, and the rogue priest. Though his use of humor and satirical wit, Glišić was known as the “Serbian Gogol”. In addition to translating most of Gogol’s works into Serbian, Glišić also translated works by Balzac, Poe, and Mark Twain.

Literary journals also began showing visible effects on Serbian political culture. Journals such as Delo (Labor) (1894) and Srpski Pregled (Serbian Review) (1895) respectively reflected radical and conservative thinking. The leading literary journal, Otadžbina (Fatherland) (1875) was more academically professional, consciously modeling itself on the reputable French journal Revue des deux mondes, and contained

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42 Some of Marković’s earliest writing were actually published in Ljetopis by Matica Srpska in Novi Sad, primarily because of the strict censures he received from the conservative government of Milan Obrenović. His articles “Realni pravac u nauci i životu” (The Realistic Trend in Science and Life), and “Realnost u poeziji” (Realism in Poetry) both stand as landmarks in the history of Serbian culture. In the first article, Marković wrote “In all of Europe one may observe a clearly drawn struggle against the old and the antiquated. This is not only a matter of a political transformation – whether to have a republic or a monarchy, but a social transformation is brewing – a transformation of society from its very base … This struggle, which is already in full swing in the West, has not yet reached us, but it must reach us as well, for this is required by the law of human progress.” See Petrovich (1976), p. 512.

43 Among the works translated into Serbia were Nikolai Chernyshevskii’s What Is to Be Done? (1869), Borzoi Turgenev’s Smoke, On the Eve, and Fathers and Sons (1869), Nikolai Gogol’s Inspector General, and Taras Bulba (1870), and Dead Souls (1872), Rousseau’s Emile (1872), Ernest Renan’s Life of Jesus (1872), Victor Hugo’s Les Misérables, and Quatrevinght-treize (1872), Alphonse de Lamartine’s History of the Girondists (1875), Ernst Haeckel’s Natural History of Creation (1875), and Charles Darwin’s On the Origin of Species (1879).
high quality articles and essays by some of Serbia’s most prestigious academics in literature, history, and political science. In 1892, the Serbian Literary Cooperative was established and soon became the most preeminent publishing house in Belgrade. The society published Serbian works from the medieval works of Archbishop Danilo to the modern period, as well as foreign classics. These works also provided a cheap supply of good literature for all literate citizens. By the turn of the century, its easily recognizable blue covered journals could be found in nearly every literate household, and one’s academic reputation was guaranteed when the Cooperative selected their work for publication.44

Newspapers also began to serve as a continuous source of information on politics and culture. Though the Law on the Press of 1870 established some form of censorship, article 32 of the Constitution of 1869 declared that “every Serb has the right to express his thinking verbally or orally, by means of the press of in the form of art…”45 Under the patronage of Svetozar Marković and his associates, Radenik (Workers) appeared on June 1, 1871 (OS) as the first socialist newspaper in Southeastern Europe.46 By 1881, fifteen new periodicals appeared in Belgrade that included political, satirical, and literary viewpoints. There was even a newspaper for children, and a newspaper for entertainment and gossip. Most nineteenth century Serbian newspapers were attached to political parties, as it was the quickest and easiest way for ideas to disseminate to a consuming audience. Pašić’s Radicals had

44 Petrovich (1976), p. 517
45 Petrovich (1976), pp. 517 – 18
46 Radenik was banned however in 1872, but Marković founded another newspaper in Kragujevac called Javnost (The Public) the following year, which was less theoretically preachy than its predecessor and more practical in applied democratic thinking. It too was banned, only to be followed by Glas javnosti (The Voice of the Public) by Marković’s supporters in 1834.
Samouprava (Self-Determination), the Liberals had Srpski Nezavisnost (Serbian Independence), the Progressives had Videlo (Open View), and the Socialists eventually established themselves with Borba (Struggle). Prior to the founding of Politika, Serbia’s longest running and most professional newspaper 1904, Pera Todorović pioneered the first all-purpose newspaper Male Novine (Small News), which appeared in Belgrade between 1878 and 1903. Though it claimed no political attachment, it enjoyed the highest circulation (30,000) of any newspaper of its time.

Belgrade’s first theater was established in 1869. The National Theater, as it would be called, was considerably financed by Prince Michael, and its founding at the ruins of the now torn-down Ottoman Stamboul Gate was symbolically meant to show the transformation of Belgrade from a Turkish garrison town into a modern European city. In fact, some of the actual stonework that formed the gate and outer barricades were used in the construction of the Theater in a symbolic attempt to transform the very stones of tyranny and repression into the masonry of culture, modernization, and civilization. Its first performance in late 1869 was Djordje Maletić’s allegorical The Posthumous Glory of Michael Obrenović III. The play was opened with a speech by historian Jovan Djordjević who stated “the theater is in all nations the guardian of the national tongue, the awakener of national conscience, national pride, and all the national virtues … a sure measure of the people’s capacity for civilization, a living sign and token of the national future and greatness.”\(^{47}\) The Serbian Youth (Omladina) became a very successful and respected acting troupe, having performed Prince Marko and the Arab and Prince Marko’s Dream, both based on the popular Serbian character of epic poetry.

\(^{47}\) Petrovich (1976), p. 356
The theater formed another crucial link between Serbia and the West. Most theatrical performances at the time had clear national overtones with performances of *The Marriage of Tsar Dušan*, *The Death of King Stefan of Dečani*, *The Battle of Kosovo*, and *Prince Marko and the Arab*. But theaters also performed Western plays too and introduced many Serbs to Western culture. Through the theater, many masterpieces of French, German, English, and other European literature came to Serbia, and along with them, greater ideas of human freedoms and personal liberties. The Serbian Youth were particularly known for performing the works of Shakespeare, such as *Romeo and Juliet* (first performed July 18, 1857), *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Richard III*. Other performances included the dramas of Voltaire, Schiller (*William Tell*), Goldoni, and Hugo. As a French visitor to Belgrade reported in *La Revue bleue*, he was astonished to find “in this outpost between East and West, in a building surrounded by Turkish-style hovels and primitive cobblestone streets an actress (Vela Nigrinova) playing Dumas’ *La Dame aux Camélias* with a skill worth of Paris.” 48 The vast majority of theater attendees were lesser government clerks, students, and middle class merchants and artisans who would go on to become the next generation of Serbian elites, thinkers, and intellectuals.

The First Belgrade Choral Society was formed in 1853 and became one of Serbia’s most distinguished and long-lasting musical organizations. Its first director, Milan Milovuk (1826 – 1883) was a self-taught musician who conducted foreign works, as there were no Serbian choral compositions outside of folk music and church chanting. His interest in the music of other societies facilitated a large influx of Western styles and influences into Belgrade. Milovuk also opened the first private music school in

48 Ibid
Serbia, where he taught music theory, violin and cello. Though the music school was short lived, it lasted long enough for a handful of students to organize the first group of performing musicians in Serbia. Kornelije Stanković was a Serb from Budapest who studied piano and violin and is credited with the significant development of a national school of music in Belgrade. While in Vienna, Stanković met Vuk Karadžić and became incredibly enamored with his work and the Romantic-nationalist style in general. As a result, he began a serious study of Serbian folk music and church chant, and for the first time brought Serbian music to the attention of Western audiences through original arrangements that drew heavily on the styles of traditional Serbian singing. In 1861 he gave a concert at Vienna’s famed Musikverein, with a choir mainly of members of the Vienna Opera. His arrangements of the tunes “Rado ide Srbin u Vojnike” (Gladly the Serb Goes to War) and “Sunce Jarko” (Thou Brilliant Sun) for piano and voice became known to the whole Western world after an attending Pyotr Tchaikovsky was enamored enough to enshrine them in his Marche Slave.

Stanković created a “marriage between modern Western music and Serbian folk and church music”, and successfully wrote Serbian Orthodox liturgical music for Western four-part harmony, the first time Serbian chant was rendered in anything other than monastic tone. Like Karadžić with his modernization of the Serbian language, Stanković’s radical ideas shocked many traditionalists and conservatives, not least the Serbian clergy. However nearly all church music sung in parish churches in Serbia today use four-part harmony.49 Stanković succeeded Milovuk as director of the First Belgrade Choral Society and in turn was succeeded by Davorin Jenko (1835 – 1914) in 1865. An ethnic Slovene, Jenko was a South Slav enthusiast, and took to Serbian folk

49 Ibid, pp. 357 – 8
music with vigor equal to that of a native. With the choral society, Jenko composed the future Slovenian national anthem, “Naprej zastavo slave” (Forward Flag of Glory) and the future Serbian national anthem “Bože pravde” (God of Justice).

In addition to literature, music, performing arts, and poetry, Belgrade also enjoyed the advent of native painters and visual artists. Djura Jakšić the poet, also painted scenes that dealt with Serbia’s modern history adding a sense of visual imagery to Serbia’s past that had previously only been seen in monastic frescoes. Works such as *Torchlight Procession at Stambul Gate* (1859), *The Death of Karadjordje* (1862), *The Takovo Uprising* (1864), and *Prince Michael on His Deathbed* (1868) depicted recent Serbian history, rather than medieval, and encased recent past, indeed a past that many could personally remember, in visual collective memory. Another artist, Stevan Todorović was a Vojvodina Serb who settled in Belgrade. In 1860, he was the first to organize a public exhibition of his contemporary art in Belgrade that depicted individual portraits, street scenes, historical locations, and genre paintings.

Two of Serbia’s most renowned nineteenth century painters, Uroš Predić and Paja Jovanović, were also Vojvodina Serbs, both left indelible marks on Serbia’s artistic heritage with their large-scale paintings of epic moments in Serbian history. Ironically as Serbia’s literary and academic circles were turning away from romanticism, Predić and Jovanović seemingly embraced it in ways no one else could. Predić’s *Kosovo Maiden*, is his most famous work and one of the most recognizable Serbian paintings depicting the immediate aftermath of the Battle of Kosovo. Jovanović’s equally epic paintings of *Saint Sava Crowning King Stefan the First Crowned*, *Tsar Dušan’s Wedding*, *The Declaration of Dušan’s Law Code*, *The Migration of the Serbs*, and *The
Burning of St. Sava’s Relics, have provided Serbian culture and historical memory with some of its most vivid visual imagery. Both Predić’s and Jovanović’s styles were heavily influenced by Western themes and art forms, and for visually imagining Serbia’s medieval heritage, it represented a radical departure from the Byzantine iconography that characterizes the Orthodox Church. Jovanović’s paintings of the life of Stefan Dušan have an almost Camelot feel to them as its painted figures would seem more at home in King Arthur’s court than a Slavo-Byzantine kingdom. It is probably also not a coincidence that these paintings were presented at the International Art Exhibit in Paris in 1900 in the hopes of showing audiences that Serbia’s early history was no different than other great European civilizations.

Serbia’s “Golden Age of Democracy”

Belgrade’s blending of Serbian and European cultures culminated under the constitutional monarchy of King Petar I Karadjordjević in the decade preceding the First World War, in what has commonly come to be known as Serbia’s “Golden Age of Democracy” (1903 – 1915). While culture continued to develop as it had in the preceding decades, this period is regarded as particularly monumental for Serbian political development in that it marked a definitive break from the unpopular and politically repressive regime of Aleksandar Obrenović. It is this period in which Serbian historians regard as a as a “European liberal-bourgeois state”, a “liberal monarchy”,

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50 Western sources on Serbia under Petar I remain scarce, and this lack of information to non-Serb readers has kept most of this history relatively unknown. For a recent study of the period in terms of political, cultural, social, and economic developments, see Dubrakva Stojanović, Kaldrma i Asfalt: Urbanizacija i evropenzacija Beograda 1890 – 1914 (Cobblestone and Asphalt: Urbanization and Europeanization of Belgrade) (Belgrade, 2008)
and a “modern parliamentary state”,53 in which a flowering cultural achievement and political liberalism marked the “brightest days in the history of modern Serbia.”54 Though much of this history, particularly in retrospect when compared with later periods under Communism and Milošević, risks romanticism, its champions are bold enough to refer to Serbia in this period as the “most democratic state in the world.”55

But what also marks this period as an exceptional display of democratic cosmopolitanism was the apparent triumph of South Slavic unity among Serbia’s leading cultural intelligentsia. Serbia’s new king reflected this mood that transferred well-established historical memories of Serbian identity reflect core narratives of all of Southeastern Europe’s Slavic communities. When viewed in the context of his long years in exile as the rival Obrenović family controlled the throne, Petar’s vision of Serbia was idealistic enough to transcend its current borders and cosmopolitan enough to view other South Slavic communities as separate but equal members of a post-imperial age. Having received his education in Geneva and Paris, Petar was deeply imbued with the ideas of Western liberalism and parliamentary democracy, and personally translated John Stuart Mill’s essay “On Liberty” into Serbian. Even as Yugoslavia was collapsing amid ethnocentric nationalism, Belgrade at the turn of the century was vividly remembered as a multiethic city:

Those were the days of the sudden flowering of the Yugoslav idea, and Belgrade was, through a series of royal celebrations, transformed into a true South Slavic stage of fiery patriots. In the city, one could find many literari, journalists, and politicians of Yugoslav orientation. At the same time the first Yugoslav student

52 D. Živojnović, Kralj Petar I Karadjordjević, vol. II (Belgrade, 1990), p. 115
53 M. Popović, Borbe za parlamentarni režim u Srbiji (The Struggle for a Parliamentary Regime in Serbia) (Belgrade, 1939), p. 89
54 M. Protić, Radikali u Srbiji: Ideje u pokret 1881 – 1903 (Radicals in Serbia: From Idea to Movement) (Belgrade, 1990), p. 17
congress was held. Ideas of reciprocity permeated the loud declarations that issued from both the excitable youth and the stable adults who flocked to Belgrade from all Yugoslav regions, from Slovenia all the way to Bulgaria.⁵⁶

More recent works dispute the lofty claims of Serb democracy equaling that of established parliamentary systems of Europe.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, political pluralism was active in Belgrade and smaller provincial towns. This development, argues Petrovich, “flourished because of Serbia’s receptivity to Western European culture and its ability to absorb that culture without being absorbed by it, to assimilate it while yet preserving its own national cultural identity.”⁵⁸

One of the key features of this political and cultural flowering was a strong embrace of South Slavic unity by its leading intelligentsia. As the narrative of Serbia being the Piedmont of the Balkans became more salient, Belgrade attracted artists, writers and thinkers from all over Southeastern Europe, both before the First World War and afterwards. In 1904, the First Congress of Southern Slav Youth was held in Belgrade to commemorate the centennial anniversary of the First Serbian Uprising. Those Serbs, Croats, Slovenes and Bulgarians in attendance agreed on a joint-resolution to lend aid to all South Slavic communities still living under foreign occupation and

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⁵⁷ See Olga Popović-Obradović, *Parlamentarizam u Srbiji 1903 – 1914* (Parliamentarianism in Serbia) (Belgrade, 1998), and Dubravka Stojanović, *Srbija i Demokratija 1903 – 1914* (Serbia and Democracy) (Belgrade 2003). Popović-Obradović argues that the historiographical praise given to this period by earlier Serbian historians was because they only examined the legal and institutional structure of the Serbian government, and came to the conclusions they did without researching the political and parliamentary practices of its members. Stojanović stems her work from Popović-Obradović and notes that democratic government was secondary to the objectives of many political elites who continued to place liberation and unification of Serb-inhabited regions of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires as the main focus of political discourse. Political pluralization, argues Stojanović was more of a by-product of the internal conflicts of the various political parties, particularly offshoots of the Radical Party, in defining a national character and orienting political culture to account for Pan-Slav unity through Serbian leadership.
⁵⁸ Petrovich (1976), p. 577
stressed the importance of educational development as a means for liberation.\textsuperscript{59} Alongside the Youth Congress was the First Yugoslav Artistic Exhibit. It too was a commemoration of the First Serbian Uprising a century before, but like the Youth Congress, used the centenary anniversary as a means of emphasizing the shared cultural and historical heritage of Southern Slavs, displaying over 450 works of art from throughout Southeastern Europe. Prominent art critics including the young Serbian female painter Nadežda Petrović and the Croatian sculptor Ivan Mestrović as the crowning achievement of Serbian pictorial art especially praised the works of Paja Jovanović. His paintings on the life of Tsar Dušan, particularly \textit{The Proclamation of Dušan’s Law Code}, were lauded for its realistic imagery as well as visualizing the political and social achievements of a South Slavic empire. The Artistic Exhibit functioned as a veritable World’s Fair for South Slavic artists who found common interests that spanned national and religious divisions.

These artists also functioned as veritable ambassadors with like-minded thinkers in Western Europe, particularly in the wake of Austria-Hungary’s annexation of Bosnia in 1908. Nadežda Petrović strove to raise awareness of the need for South Slavic self-determination by organizing various women’s movements such as \textit{Odbor Srpkinja} (The Council of Serbian Women). In addition to declaring solidarity with Bosnia’s population, she was also in contact with the Federation of Women’s Clubs of America and its honorary president Helen Taft, wife of American President William Taft. Musical artists like Stevan Mokranjac who directed the Belgrade Choral Society from 1887, was also an avid supporter of Yugoslavism, and added folk songs from various ethnic regions throughout Southeastern Europe into the repertoire of the Serbian choir.

\textsuperscript{59} Miljoković-Djurić, \textit{ Tradition and Avant-Garde} (1988), p. 2
In the early twentieth century, the Choral Society traveled throughout the region with him, and Mokranjac was often compared with Vuk Karadžić for codifying various folk songs into published works for wider audiences to appreciate. While on tour in 1910 for the celebration of King Nikola’s ascension to the Montenegrin throne was warmly greeted in the Croatian city of Split, whose inhabitants “always thought that the Croats and Serbs are one people since the language that is heard in your beautiful Beograd … is also spoken in our coastal region.” They were welcomed to a city “that is equally yours and ours, where no difference exists between Croats and Serbs and where the flag of brotherhood is flying high.”

Perhaps the greatest testament to the artistic and cultural fusion synthesis of Serbian, South Slavic, and European culture came not from a Serb, but Ivan Mestrović, an ethnic Croat who fully embraced the South Slavic idea that placed Serbian culture as the first among equals that lent inspiration to the emergence of all South Slavic communities in seeking self-determination. In the wake of Serbia’s dazzling victories in the Balkan Wars which liberated Macedonia and Kosovo from Ottoman control, patriotism for all things Serbian was at an all-time high. As the harbinger of emerging Yugoslav state built on civic co-fraternity between its various ethnic communities, Serbia’s medieval heritage was viewed by its cultural elites as the lynchpin in which Serbs and non-Serbs could find common bonds. When the Council for the Organization of Artistic Affairs was founded in Belgrade in 1913, its prominent members sought to further the enrichment of Serbian and Yugoslav art and artistic culture as one united

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heritage through the establishment of a Fine Arts College in Belgrade.\textsuperscript{61} The Council also supported the building of the Vidovdan Temple designed by Mestrović to be built in newly liberated Kosovo at the site of the medieval battle. In addition to serving as an obvious testament to Serbia’s fulfillment of an historical destiny almost as old as the Serbian nation itself, it was also understood to serve as the first of many monuments to the unity of the South of Slavs.

Vidovdan Temple is Serbian and Yugoslav national art and represents the historical and legendary essence of Serbia and Yugoslavia … observed spiritually though myths of Serbian tradition. The Vidovdan Temple shall present a monument that shall last until Slavic thought is present in the civilization of the Balkan Peninsula since it presents the organization and harmony of all that is the highest and best, that is closest to the Yugoslav entity in architecture and plastic arts, and recreates in addition the greatest architectural and plastic works of art. The art of Mestrović represents Serbian national religion and the highest art of the Balkans, as well as the Vidovdan Temple, the synthesis of all Yugoslav efforts.\textsuperscript{62}

When Mestrović presented his work at the Rome Exposition in 1911, he had been expected to be at the Hapsburg Empire pavilion. But when his offer to present at a separate pavilion for South Slavic artists was denied, he and other colleagues presented their works at the Serbian pavilion instead. His model of the Vidovdan Temple combined both Orthodox and Catholic styles of architecture, being built on the pattern of a Roman Catholic cross, but having a clearly Byzantine dome. Additional works by him continued the synthesis of Western and Eastern styles of art in sculptures of Miloš

\textsuperscript{61} As written by Kosta Stajnić in \textit{Srpski Književni Glasnik}, “Yugoslav fine arts, as one of the highest manifestations of the culture of the Serb, Croats, Slovenes, and Bulgarians, ought to be a harmonious organization of the best spiritual treasures of all Yugoslav clans, the building of a new and great civilization of Slavs in the Balkans. After the heroism and victories of the Serbian Army, Yugoslav cultural nationalism should continue to work worthy of the primeval Serbian state and national powers. Only the highest artistic achievements and a high level of culture shall enable the Yugoslav union to govern in the cultural aspect of the Balkans and to uphold the Slav idea in the Balkans.” Kosta Stanjić, “Za našu umjetničku kulturu” (For Our Artistic Culture), \textit{Srpski Književni Glasnik}, vol. 31, no. 11/12 (1913), p. 904, quoted in Miljoković-Djurić (1988), p. 130.

Obilić, Marko Kraljević, and the guslar, but it was the temple that took his artistic contemporaries by storm.

Mestrović’s temple has deep national significance. In this sense it towers above all previously existing artistic monuments from ancient times until today. What the pyramids were for the Egyptians, pagodas for the Indians, the Parthenon for the Greeks, the Colosseum for the Romans, what the Gothic cathedrals were for the Middle Ages, the luxurious palaces for the Renaissance, what the National Gallery is for today’s Englishmen and the Louvre is for the French, that is what Mestrović’s temple is for the Southern Slavs. But it must be pointed out: not a single one of the monuments mentioned above is in as close touch with the national soul as the Temple is with our soul, the Yugoslav soul.63

Literary contributions also made concerted efforts at embracing Western Europe and were most visible in the works of Bogdan Popović and his student Jovan Skerlić. In his History of Modern Serbian Literature, Skerlić is credited for separating Serbian patriotism from overly emotional embraces of traditionalism. He was opposed to extreme forms of both Westernization at the expense of Serbian identity, but even more so Pan-Slavism at the complete rejection of all Western values and ideas.64 The strength of the individual, be believed, lay in the ability of finding one’s destiny through personal experiences in one’s own environment. While ideas could be borrowed from the outside, foreign models were not to be aped, nor should daily life be neglected for a romantic past that never actually existed. Still, Skerlić was convinced that Serbia’s future lay in its acceptance of Western values within its own cultural matrix. In this regard, he may be considered a student of “Neoslavism”, which rejects the classic Slavophilic conceptions of a romanticized past based on kinship and blood in order to feel morally superior to the West, and emphasizes the application of Western ideas of citizenship as a

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64 Čolović, (1997), pp. 89 – 111
basis for social equality of all Slavic communities. The past in the form of political myths, he believed, was a tool to navigate one’s own path to a modern European democracy, not to be jealously guarded and safeguarded as a barrier to modernity. In this, Skerlić drew inspiration from Svetozar Marković and particularly Dositej Obradović.

It was in the writings of Obradović that Skerlić and other likeminded Serbian Yugoslavists found the link between Western political thought and Serbian patriotism.65 As preparations for the commemoration of the centennial anniversary of Obradović’s death began in 1910, his memory was resurrected from relative obscurity from the previous decades and lauded as the greatest Serbian educator since St. Sava. In the *Serbian Literary Review*, Obradović was hailed as a

… great spiritual father, a man who introduced the Serbian people to the ideas of the times and to contemporary culture. He was the first critical thinker among the Serbs who taught throughout his lifetime about the ‘educated, rational, and a love for the truth.’ More than anyone else, he saw to it that the Serbs were a great intellectual and spiritual whole despite their religious and state differences.

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65 The similar ways of thinking between Skerlić and Obradović is clear in the following two passages. In 1902, Skerlić wrote “there are many people in our country who disclaim against the ‘rotten West’, and who talk with exaltation about some ‘Serbian’ and ‘Slav’ culture. They have taken from the ‘rotten West’ their clothes and habits, and institutions and appetites, but not that which makes the West so great, in which it really is a great teacher: a sense of individual dignity, liberty, initiative, that serene, enterprising, sober spirit which has built all civilization … and for us there is only one cure: to open wide our doors to the West and its ideas, the West which thinks, which acts, which creates, which lives a full and intensive life, the only one worthy of being called human life.” Skerlić, *Feljtoni, skice i govori* (Feuilletons, sketches and speeches) (Belgrade: 1964), pp. 66 – 7, quoted in Šolović (1997), p. 101. Likewise, Obradović makes a clear testament to the value of Western political thought in writing “I would have my fellow countrymen venture to think freely in all matters, reflecting and passing judgment on all they hear. You know well, my dear friend, that all nations which merely cling to old opinion and customs must needs lie in eternal and hopeless darkness and stupidity … Not thinking, not reflecting, and making no use of the reason and intellect that God has given them, not taking example from the learned and enlightened nations, they remain forever in an endless and lamentable torpor.” Andrija Stojković, *Životni put Dositeja Obradovića. Od šegrta i kaludjera do filozofa i prosvetitelja i Karadjordjevog ministra prosvete* (The Life Story of Dositej Obradović. From Apprenticeship as Monk to Philosopher and Educator and Karadjordje’s Minister of Education) (Belgrade, 1989), p. 211, quoted in Vladimír Fischer, “The Role of Dositej Obradović in the Construction of Serbian Identities During the 19th Century”, *Spaces of Identity*, vol. 3 (2001), p. 74
He placed Serbian folk thought on a modern base, and he was the first to proclaim the principles of intellectual unity.66

In the year leading up to the actual centenary event, plans were made in Belgrade to erect a monumental statue of Dositej, republication of his collected works as well as publications on critical analyses of Dositej’s philosophies in a commemorative book Spomenica (Memorial). Plans were also made for the construction of a so-called Dositejev dom (The Home of Dositej) which was to serve as a Serbian and South Slav cultural center, which would include libraries, reading rooms, auditoriums for lectures, concert halls, and space for exhibits. The celebration of the life and works of Dositej actually continued until nearly the outbreak of the First World War. Though the lofty aspirations for the creation of Dositejev dom never came to fruition, a memorial statue of his was unveiled in 1914, appropriately in the park immediately opposite the University of Belgrade. Along with the highest ranking academic leaders throughout Southeastern Europe gathered at the unveiling, the National Theater presented the play Mladost Dositeja Obradovića (The Youth of Dositej Obradović) The Metropolitan of Belgrade led the Moleben (Liturgy commemorating the dead) at the Cathedral Church of St. Michael. In reviewing the entire series of commemorations, Skerlić noted that it represented one of the greatest manifestations of Serbian and South Slavic unity.67

But even the champions of Dositej’s progressive nationalism could not always contain their sense of romanticism in a bright future for a unified South Slavic state cemented in the cosmopolitanism of Serbian Belgrade. While the following passage was written in 1911 for the actual 100th anniversary of Dositej’s death with an air of hopeful

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optimism, there is a sense of sadness that the predicted future, being less than a year and a half away at the time of this writing, will not be realized:

A Hundred Years Later

Belgrade, May 15, 2011

A typical morning in May in the year 2011 A.D. is dawning, bright with sunshine, over quiet Belgrade…

We have just arrived by train from Zagreb and are looking for accommodation, and then we will go and look for the Dositej Building. Tonight there is a lecture and a discussion, which we were invited to from Zagreb, on the erstwhile cultural situation of the Serbian and Croatian people.

The Dositej Building is a magnificent place, situated in the most beautiful spot in the city center. From the terrace, you have a splendid view, over the rooftops, of the surroundings, which are stunning by nature and which man has made even more stunning by means of modern culture. All Serbian cultural societies have been united in the Dositej Building. There are several conference halls, many working sections, and an excellently equipped reading room, which holds journals and newspapers from the entire Slavonic South. Ladies and gentlemen go in and out of this cultural meeting place. All the signs are in Latin and Cyrillic letters. The largest of the conference halls, splendidly decorated, is being prepared for this evening’s lecture … A new topical subject has been chosen for the lectures tonight: the unification of Bulgarian and Serbo-Croat literature, which merged with Slovenian literature ages ago (excluding purely popular literature) … [O]f particular interest is the lecture on the erstwhile, i.e. separate, state of the Serbian and Croatian people, which has been a compact indivisible unit for a long time now, wielded together by a series of severe crises and experiences...

After that we took the train to Skopje to travel to Prizren and to the Adriatic; finally, we returned to Zagreb via Dubrovnik and Sarajevo. Everywhere we felt at home, and everywhere we encountered the trend towards unity and national concord in full bloom, deeply rooted in public opinion and everyday life, and inspiring the vigorous and passionate life of the people. We remembered the lecture of Mr. Vidović in the Dositej Building and wondered how one could ever have lived under conditions so different from our days! How primitive and barbaric those times were! But history is their living witness and there is nothing we can do but hope that its memory will always prevent the return – God forbid! – of the bad times we have safely left behind us.68

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It is indeed unfortunate irony that nearly a century after the commemorative statue of Dositej was erected in Belgrade, ethnic Albanians pulled down a monument to him in Priština in effort to expunge Kosovo of as much Serbian cultural landmarks as possible in retaliation for Milošević’s violent crackdown of political rights and the ethnic war that followed in the name of the Serbian nation.

_Belgrade in Yugoslavia_

After the First World War and the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, Belgrade continued in its role as the most cosmopolitan city in Southeastern Europe, as a variety of immigrants from across the region and Europe swelled the ranks of professionals, businessmen, and intellectuals. Some 30,000 Russian émigrés fleeing the 1917 Revolution and subsequent civil war made Belgrade and its environs their home, and significantly contributed to raising the quality of universities and cultural centers of opera, dance and theater. Hollywood films starring Charlie Chaplin and Rudy Valentino dominated the entertainment venues. Newspapers and publishing houses grew to such a degree that no one political party could dominate the media anymore. Founded in 1904, Politika emerged in the interwar period as the preeminent newspaper in Serbian lands and was its most widely circulated. The Serbian Literary Journal continued to operate as the most sophisticated academic journal in Belgrade, and published more works by the Croatian writer Miroslav Krleža than in his native Zagreb. Geca Kon, a prominent Jewish immigrant from Zemun across the Sava ran the most popular bookstore in Belgrade by reprinting cheap editions of translated European works for a new generation of literate middle class and starving academics. By the 1930s, his
bookstore was a first-stop for any librophile; a notoriety that cost him his life with the Nazi invasion in 1941.69

Central to Belgrade’s cosmopolitan atmosphere were the hundreds of cafes, coffeeshops, salons, and kafane where authors and artists gathered almost nightly.70 Of the nearly 700 locations in the city, the Hotel Moskva along the Parisian-like Boulevard Terazije, was arguable the most famous and most prestigious, where regulars like the Dalmatian Croat post Augustin (Tin) Ujević, the Vojvodina Serb poet and novelist Miloš Crnjanski and the Serbian playwright and satirist Branislav Nušić could be found. Nušić organized a volunteer effort in opening the Cvijeta Zuzorić Pavilion in 1927. Named after a 16th century Dalmatian patron of the arts, the Pavilion operated as a free performance center for arts, exhibits, concerts, and literary evenings for those who could not afford a hall. One of Belgrade’s most respected intellectual leaders, theater critic Milan Grol and lawyer/historian Slobodan Jovanović were even ready to support the abandonment of political unitarism that dominated the Serbian political landscape in order to preserve a state whose survival they saw more threatened by the Serbian side


70 A kafana is a unique eating establishment in the former Ottoman territories of the Balkans, particularly in Serbia and Bosnia. Its name is derived from Turkish and Persian origins to denote a coffeehouse, but had taken to also selling alcohol with Christian ownership. By the turn of the previous century, kafana also served food, particularly rustic dishes from the countryside. During its heyday, kafana were the primary meeting places in the cities, and each kafana attracted its own political and social clientele. The kafana also served as one of the few places in the city where social class and prestige was on an equal basis, and even during the Communist period, ordinary citizens could speak freer in a kafana than on the street. By the late 1970s and 1980s, the kafana had acquired more negative stereotypes as being run-down shabby establishments where only pensioners and the poor gathered. As a result, most of the kafane in Belgrade closed to make room for newer, trendier, and more gentrified restaurants. However, a number of kafane continue to exist and have experienced a recent comeback in popularity as being a place to enjoy the “national cuisine” of the state. In many respects, the kafana is to Serbia, what the pub is to England and Ireland, what the coffeehouse is to Iraq and Egypt, and what the diner is to New Jersey. For a social history of Belgrade at the turn of the previous century, see Branislav Nušić, Stari Beograd (Old Belgrade) (Belgrade, 1984), and Vidoje Golubović, Stari Beograd: Topografski Rečnik (Old Belgrade: Topographical Dictionary) (Belgrade, 2006).. For a review of the kafane, see Nušić (1984) pp. 55 – 97.
than by Croatian calls for confederation. Contrary to many accounts that attempt to simplify Serbian political culture to one of perennial ethnocentric chauvinism and incompatibility with its neighboring ethnic communities, Belgrade as late as 1930 was a place where “one is hard pressed to find major Serbian intellectuals or writers who showed a strong preference for a unitary culture, much less one based on the nineteenth-century romantic vision of synthesis on Serbian terms.”

As already noted in chapter 7, Belgrade continued to function as one of Yugoslavia’s most cosmopolitan urban center throughout the communist period, and enjoyed somewhat of a unique privilege among capitals of the Eastern bloc. Whereas other cities had been reduced to cultural backwaters by decades of Soviet-dominated communism, Belgrade remained at the cutting edge of the art scenes. “In any other Eastern European country”, remaked Dragan Ambrozić, editor of rock magazine Ritam (Rhythm), “it’s as if pop culture started in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall. In Hungary they really could not tell the difference between the Rolling Stones, the Sex Pistols and Jethro Tull – it was all rock’n’roll to them. But in Belgrade it was not only important which group you liked, but which records by that group.” Indeed, one of the prevailing attitudes among Serbs, and most other former Yugoslavs, was that they were superior to their fellow communist neighbors in nearly all aspects. Being “Yugoslav” meant not backwardness and tribalistic, but cosmopolitan, worldly, and “Western”. As noted by Collin,

Yugoslavs felt they were never like them, those badly-dressed, ill-fed, wan-faced children of Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany in their enforced timewarp. Yugoslavs had money (although much of it was borrowed from the West), they could take holidays abroad … they watched

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71 Wachtel (1998), p. 82
72 Collin (2001), p. 11
the latest Western films and bought new rock records. Yes, their country was no paradise, but at the same time it was no prison … They viewed the other Eastern Bloc states as poor relations: sad, grey and dull. They looked down upon them.\textsuperscript{73}

Throughout most of the Milošević period, various elements of Belgrade’s youth culture functioned as barriers of counterculture to the hegemonic narratives of the state. In May 1989 Youth Radio B92 was founded and quickly became one of the most preeminent media outlets in the city for democratic proponents and political dissidents. Blending elements of professional reporting like BBC with the “shock jock” attitudes of small college radio stations, B92 emerged as a radio station that exercised free speech and critical thinking from on the spot reporting to phone pranks. Veran Matić, one of B92’s principle founders, noted that in order for Serbia to establish a genuinely alternative social movement, politics and culture had to be synthesized in a kind of feedback loop,mutally reinforcing the other. In this regard, the use of music as a form of political culture served to both reinforce one’s own political message and challenge messages of nationalism.

The national politicians had created this perpetual cycle in which their culture helped them and supported them, and they in turn supported it, and both perpetuated the other’s existence. Populist songs supported bad politicians, they eventually began to support the killers. It turned into a business relationship. So we had to oppose not only their nationalist agenda but their populist culture. That’s what gave us our strength – if our station had been founded on some political ideology, it would have been long gone by now. But because we used this idea of liberation through culture, we were able to survive.\textsuperscript{74}

B92 would also lead the way in pioneering the use of the Internet as an alternate source of information after the state had made several attempts at shutting down the station, as

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., pp. 28 – 29
well as being a primary source for dissident voices organizing a series of anti-regime rallies in the late 1990s.

The Democratic Character of the Serbian Orthodox Church

As already argued, the Serbian Orthodox Church, more than any other institution, has historically served as the main repository of Serbian identity, history, culture, and collective memory, and has frequently functioned as an official socio-political organization in the absence of formal state institutions. Needless to say, any political initiative, democratic or otherwise, that neglects to include the Serbian church as a component of its symbolic linkage between politics and culture, does so at its own risk.

Despite the overwhelming importance the Serbian Church plays in preserving the fundamental identities of Serbian collective memory, it may be unconventional to consider an institution that has often served as a force against greater democratization and liberalization as force for democracy. In recent memory, the Church has functioned as one of the main bulwarks for Serbian nationalism, and one of the greatest proponents in extending political authority from Belgrade to Serb-majority regions in Croatia and Bosnia.75 Furthermore, many high-ranking bishops, metropolitans, and archbishops have openly sided with the regimes of Slobodan Milošević in Serbia, and promulgated positive views of Radovan Karadžić Ratko Mladić. While the Serbian Church is certainly not a unique case as a religious institution using political organizations to extend and promote its own goals and objectives, the Serbian Church, at least at first

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glance, can hardly be said to be a major proponent of interfaith dialogue, multiethnic coexistence, and principles of secular thinking that are crucial to liberal democratic values. However, to avoid, or even disregard the Serbian Orthodox Church as reactionary, anti-democratic, or simply irrelevant to democratic growth, is incredibly dangerous and more often than not alienates large segments of Serbian society. Since 2000, the Church has increasingly permeated aspects of social and daily life, and even though many Serbs do not regard themselves as overly religious, and even less are regular churchgoers, the Serbian Orthodox Church is consistently seen as one the most respected, trusted, and influential institutions in Serbia.⁷⁶ Therefore, a search for a relationship between the Church and principles of democracy is both prudent and necessary, especially if forces advocating exclusionary nationalism continue to rely on the Church for historical and symbolic legitimacy.

The importance of the Serbian Orthodox Church as a congruent link between political activism and cultural familiarity functions along three previously stated axioms. The first is that it provides a sort of “moral boundary” of Serbian values and principles by being a source of “non-negotiable truth claims”.⁷⁷ In this, the Church has been one of the greatest providers of shared historical references over the centuries and encapsulates a shared sense of community and kinship, bound together through these collective memories. These memories are specifically fixed on geographical territory that in itself functions as symbolic memory through monasteries, cultural manifestations, and various episodes of history marked by Serbian heroes and saints. Secondly, the Serbian Church “sacralizes” Serbian national identity. Through feast days;

⁷⁷ Mylonas (2003), p. 55
rites of baptism, marriage, and death; and the ritual celebration and veneration of a family’s patron saint known as the *Krsna Slava*, the Serbian Church lends a sense of divinely ordained legitimacy and belonging to everyday action. Third, the Serbian Orthodox Church is a national church that encapsulates myths, teachings, rituals, morals, and ideals of their respective nations. Again, while this shying away from universalism may be interpreted as an impediment to universal principles of democracy, this study has emphasized the importance of local culture, local knowledge, and local identities in the crafting of legitimate democracy in any state. With this in mind, the Serbian Orthodox Church can be said to be the most “Serbian” of any institution, and thus a potentially crucial partner in the forging of a particularly Serbian democratic identity.

The Church, as it always has, functions as both a religious and a social institution, but it is the latter that the Church has historically been noted for, particularly in the absence of formal state institutions. In this regard it is a fundamental component of Serbian civil society, and regardless of whether policymakers view it as a liability for democratic growth, it is actively engaged in all levels of community organization. For the vast majority of Serbs, the parish priest is their most visible, accessible, and trusted official. The problem however in equating religion with democracy is not that Orthodox Christianity is more authoritarian than other Western Christian beliefs. If anything, Orthodox Christianity, far from being classified as the caesaropapist entity that it is, has more often than not been a most visible, and most vocal, challenger against unjust authority. Individual prelates may collaborate with authoritarian state organs, but the Church as a whole has been thoroughly successful in organizing popular discontent
against authority when needed, preserved a sense of collective identity in the face of forced assimilation, and spoken out against abuses against one’s own community. With regards to current situations in Kosovo, the effective loss of formal government from Belgrade particularly in Serbian enclaves south of the Ibar River, and the continued mismanagement of Kosovo Albanian institutions towards Serb minorities, the Serbian Orthodox Church has, once again, assumed its role as spiritual, cultural, and political spokesman for its flock. Serbian politicians in Belgrade have found their mobility in Kosovo increasingly limited; however, Archbishop Artemije, whose archdiocese encompasses all of Kosovo and Raška, is probably the most prominent Serb official in Kosovo who can move about unfettered, and can speak with a degree of authority for Serb communities without any political or ideological attachment.

The problem therefore, is finding compatibility between the Church as an instrument of civil society and a vessel of democratic practice. A solution would be to separate those Serbs who view the Church as a symbol of nationalism and little else, with those Serbs who adhere to the teachings of the Church in a democratically Christian manner. This is no easy task, but it is something that can neither be avoided, nor can the Church simply be, as many in the West might hope, demobilized. The first step is to realize that the process of “de-Christianization” and state-sponsored secularization in Yugoslavia may not have destroyed the Serbian Orthodox Church as an institution, but it certainly weakened its position on moral teachings. In the wake of communist collapse, the authoritarian structure of society was largely transplanted from state organs to religious. In other words, religion did not so much make a comeback as

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did the ecclesiastical institutions. Much like the dangers of incorporating a democratic structure over a non-democratic culture risks the electoral legitimacy of non-democratic elites, the incorporation of a religious hierarchical organization over a society afflicted with mistrust of non-group members further complicates the creation of a democratic culture because God now seemingly sanctifies prevailing beliefs. The greatest problems for Orthodox Christianity in contemporary politics is that they continue to adhere to authoritarian practices of encompassing whole masses of people as a “nation” who have lived for decades without any real understanding of Christian values. Those Serbs that are devout believers in Orthodoxy rarely find themselves among nationalist circles but have yet to find a united voice of their own. In other words, the reemerging churches of both Orthodoxy and Catholicism in the Balkans replaced the communist state as a universal authority, but had now taken on an additional role of a cultural marker and, where significant percentages of newly conscious religious groups found themselves living in, a divider.

There are numerous examples within the Church that demonstrate Serbia’s exposure to and compatibility with Western democratic values. The most visible historical example is the Metropolitanate of Sremski Karlovci mentioned in chapter 5. Its Metropolitans, and after 1848 Patriarchs, functioned as both ecclesiastical and civil leaders of the Serbs in the Hapsburg Empire, and either directly spearheaded or significantly supported many initiatives that enhanced the socio-political well-being of

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80 Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople, interview in Time (May 5, 1997)
Serbs. Because they functioned as *de facto* political leaders of the Serbian community, the metropolitans bishops continuously worked in maintaining multi-ethnic coexistence, however tenuous it might have been at times, with their German, Hungarian, Croat, and Romanian neighbors.

In more recent history, high-ranking members of the Serbian Orthodox Church sided with the 1996-97 and 2000 demonstrations against Milošević. Patriarch Pavle openly called for the resignation of Milošević numerous times in the 1990s, and personally met with Archbishop Josip Bozanić of Zagreb in 1998, calling for renewed efforts for peaceful co-existence between Serbs and Croats. Other church leaders continue to serve as primary defenders of Serbian interests and needs in Kosovo. The young and charismatic Father Sava Janjić of Visoki Dečani monastery advocates reconciliation between Serbs and Albanians. The monks of Dečani have also been credited for sheltering Albanian families fleeing from Serb paramilitary forces during the 1999 crackdown on KLA insurgency. Beyond individual activities, there has been a significant rise in popularity of the Church, particularly among Serbia’s youth and young adults, as an institution for social needs in the last decade. In addition to providing spiritual guidance, the Serbian Orthodox Church provides refuge for drug addicts, alcoholics, the homeless, and people disillusioned with conditions in a deteriorating state and are looking for a refuge within the Spartan life of Orthodox monasticism. A veritable “flight to the monasteries” has produced a significant rise in

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82 Father Sava was a frequent blogger during the 1999 NATO campaign against Slobodan Milošević and has given numerous interviews to international and Kosovo Albanian media outlets since then. As a leading spokesman for the Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo, Father Sava has gone on record to express “his regret for [the] violence perpetrated by Serbs against the province’s ethnic Albanian community” in 1999. While speaking to UN Radio in Priština, he expressed his “greatest regret for everything which was done by members of the Serbian people and special forces against Albanian civilians, which is a very serious crime.” Agence France-Presse, November 9, 1999. Quoted in Ramet (2005), p. 262.
the number of monks and nuns, but has also produced a considerable amount of lay people who view life within monastic structures to be a noted break from the corruption, hedonism, and disillusionment of life since the breakup of Yugoslavia.

**From Historical Examples to Active Historical Narratives**

The preceding examples of Serbia’s historic compatibility with Western democratic values challenge many of the prevailing assumptions made on Serbian political culture. Additionally, a deeper look into Serbia’s more recent history, as opposed to its medieval, reveals a democratic character that most policymakers, particularly Serbian proponents of European integration, have neglected to take seriously. The primary reason I feel for this almost universal oversight in Serbian politics is not because culture is not taken seriously, but it is only identified when connected with political life. The culture of the “Other Serbia”, a phrase originally used as a collective self-description of Milošević’s democratic opponents but can just as easily extend to all socio-political activity outside the formal channels of politics as far back as the turn of the previous century, has been disregarded. “Serbian culture” is the culture of Milošević, not Radio B92. Serbian political thought is an ethnocentric Greater Serbia, not South Slavic brotherhood. The voice of the Serbian people to international audiences is more likely to Vojislav Šešelj stating, “we're not fascists. We're just chauvinists who hate Croats”, than Dositej Obradović saying, “I will write for the mind, the heart, and the temperament of humanity, for my Serbian brothers whatever law or religion the may be.”
Yet responsibility for “activating” a democratic narrative rests primarily with Serbia’s own democratic leaders who, with few exceptions, have largely squandered the last decade following Milošević’s fall by continuing to give some legitimate credence to Milošević’s culture. If some democratic elites have not outwardly used the same rhetoric and symbolism, they have done little to delegitimize the national populist narratives, or at the very least provide a viable alternative to them. The strategy for simply doing what the West says has not helped consolidate democracy in Serbia at all. It has primarily lent greater credibility to national populist movements that criticize pro-Western leaders as being puppets of outside forces and strengthening the “Fortress Serbia” syndrome. It has also greatly reduced public faith that the leaders elected to oust Milošević and end Serbia’s isolation are both incapable and uninterested in doing so. While institutional impediments outside the confines of cultural (re)interpretation are certainly still there, the lack of any type of citizen-based initiative to build democratic societies from the bottom-up are to a considerable degree the result of any congruent cultural symbols and historical narratives to provide inspiration and direction. Serbian democratic capital is there, but it has not been properly applied. Rather than mimicking the paths taken by Western countries, Serbia can use its own traditions of communitarianism, collective action, and cultural syncretism to develop a series of democratic narratives that custom tailor democracy to fit with cultural patterns and non-negotiable truths. Only by relying on traditional cultural values can Serbia find parity between accepting universal democratic values and preserving its core identity.

To avoid any misconception, I have not argued that Serbia has vast reserves of untapped democratic capital waiting to pour forth. There is little Serbia can find in its
recent history that would suggest a mature democratic culture existed as early as the seventeenth century. But only an extremely small handful of states can boast of this. Even the democratic social capital of the United States more closely resembled a system of apartheid than that of equal citizenship less than fifty years ago. Serbian history is no less different than many of its European neighbors. Yet in achieving democratic consolidation and formulating a culture of democracy that seems so commonsensical to its citizens that one could not imagine a time when those values were not self-evident, certain states have been far more successful in establishing elite consensus over interpreting old symbols and myths to legitimize a reformist agenda that allowed leaders to implement democratization and achieve democratic consolidation.

The key to liberal democratic consolidation in Serbia is therefore not a rejection of culture, but a rejection of old historical memories that interpret the past and appropriate symbols for authoritarian ends. It must also be accompanied by an active pursuit of cultural reinterpretation, a de-emphasis of certain historical events, and a rediscovery, a resurrection, of additional narratives that validate a democratic, inclusive, and cosmopolitan character of the Serbian people.
Conclusion: From Practicing Democracy to Being Democratic

What are the necessary steps that need to be taken in order to ensure democratic transition progresses towards full consolidation? What factors must be present during the second phase of transition that facilitates the election of liberal democratic parties over illiberal, or even non-democratic, movements? Current politics in Serbia since the fall of Milošević demonstrate the limits of democratic government that is both disengaged from society and unsure of its own identity when challenged by more openly nationalistic parties. This study has argued how historical memory can be utilized to appropriate past events to legitimize political ideologies and prioritize strategic choice for the present. Regardless of whether or not the appropriated past is correctly interpreted, grossly exaggerated, or simply sanitized, the importance of historical memory shows that scholars cannot discount the importance of the past in shaping the present, nor can they disregard the pervasiveness history has in shaping collective identity and culture. Culture matters, history matters, and the past matters in terms of present-day social justice, and unless democratic values can find congruency with them, they will matter more than liberal democratic consolidation by a wide swath of people. This study has concluded that as long as prevailing cultural narratives continue to promote a sense of defensive ethnocentrism, liberal democratic consolidation, even in the hands of openly pro-Western parties, remains elusive in Serbia.

Democratic transition is, therefore, a dual transition of both institutions and culture towards an expansion of participation, political rights and social equality. It is a transition that requires the establishment of constitutional government as well as attitudes
that openly and actively channels collective thought through a prism of democratic values that are as omnipresent as they are commonsensical. A transformation of institutions alone without an accompanying change in culture risks the establishment of illiberal democracies, the entrenchment of corruption, and widespread apathy from a disengaged society. We cannot simply expect a democratic culture to emerge out of institutions, nor can we rightly assume that a democratic past, whether recent or distant, is still active enough in the minds of current citizens to automatically use when rapid social change occurs. A usable “culture of democracy” must be actively pursued and constantly cultivated in the same manner other historical memories are fashioned for social acceptance of political discourse.

Serbian political culture is still largely characterized by an unstable combination of national populism of the Milošević period and an ambiguous pro-European identity. But even those pro-European parties, with the possible exception of the small and nationally insignificant Liberal Democratic Party, make frequent references to Serbia “never giving up” on Kosovo, and benignly criticize Western double standards for punishing and isolating Serbs more than any other group in Southeastern Europe. In other words, many Serbs, despite their varied political orientation, continue to adhere to a political culture that embraces a sense of victimhood and suffering by external forces and a need to safeguard traditions and norms for the sake of maintaining collective identity. Though elites like Boris Tadić (DS) have chosen a dual track objective of Kosovo in Serbia and Serbia in Europe, the pro-European parties have yet to formalize a narrative of national and cultural identity that differs in any significant way from the national populists. Indeed, the SRS and its SNS offshoot continue to draw its greatest strength
from a dichotomization between the perceived purity and righteousness of the Serbian nation and its people on one end and the decadence, greed, and immorality of the European Union and its supporters.

At the conclusion of this writing, the prospects for Serbia’s further democratic (re)integration with Europe continue to look positive. Though the Netherlands has been staunchly opposed in allowing Serbia to begin the formal process of entry into the EU as long as Mladić remains at large, there is a growing consensus in Brussels to lift all visa regimes for Serbian citizens by the end of the year.¹ This would mean that Serbs could now travel freely throughout the EU without having to apply for the costly, and humiliating, visas that require one to leave the region. Additionally, doomsday scenarios over Kosovo have largely proven to be unfounded, though its sovereignty continues to remain ambiguous and a definitive settlement on its status, despite statements from Priština and Washington to the contrary, remains uncertain. Nevertheless, Kosovo appears to once again be receding into the background in lieu of more pressing issues that directly affect citizens in the rest of the country. Still, it is a subject that can serve as a potentially powerful wedge issue during election seasons and may yet derail, or at the very least prolong, Serbia’s road to European integration. In considering options for how to craft a set of democratic narratives for Serbia in relation to its neighbors, a few general themes could prove vital to strengthening the hand of the pro-European parties.

The first is a general understanding by both Serbia and the international community that Kosovo is, and will remain, an integral part of Serbia’s history and identity, but it is not the only component of Serbian history. International powers, particularly the European Union, have made a catastrophic mistake in failing to

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¹ B92.net, June 11, 2009
comprehend the former, while simultaneously doing nothing to cultivate the latter. The West has found itself with little maneuverability: to deny Serbia any access to Kosovo risks a nationalistic backlash at the polls and possible derailment of Belgrade’s EU ascension. But to allow Serbia unfettered access to its enclaves negates the very legitimacy of Kosovo’s alleged sovereignty and risks the ire of the Kosovar Albanian community, which is far more likely to radicalize if forced to concede further rights to a Serbian minority that comprises less than 10% of the overall population. A possible way forward is through significant decentralization of the region that gives the greatest degree of power to local municipalities. As codified in the Ahtisaari Plan for Kosovo, Serb-dominant municipalities are provided with extraordinary degrees of local self-government and can maintain close ties with Belgrade. This may reduce the degree of control Priština has over the Serb minority, but decentralization, particularly in the three Serb-majority enclaves north of the Ibar, may very well decentralize the Serb municipalities back into Serbia proper, completely ignoring any authority from Priština. As already witnessed in the final years of Yugoslavia, decentralization risks undermining the very legitimacy of the state.

The second is an elevation of Vojvodina’s history from regional to national. While no politician or historian has stated it, I feel that socio-political developments in Vojvodina and Belgrade in the late 18th and early 19th centuries have had more of an impact on the present state of affairs in Serbia than any medieval battle or medieval dynasty. Both Vojvodina and Belgrade provide enough historical narratives to show that Serbia has had a tradition of synthesizing European democratic and republican ideas of

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statehood and community with non-negotiable truths of Serbian identity. In lieu of Tadić’s strategy of trying to embrace Europe without letting go of Kosovo, such narratives may provide fruitful for greater public participation and cultural legitimacy. The longer the national populists continue to provide the framework for a “besieged” Serbian identity, the longer the pro-Western parties will have in finding a cultural framework for their own policies and goals to be placed within. In other words, as long as the EU continues to represent the latest manifestation of the “rotten West”, acceptance of a democratic narrative that places Serbia and Europe on equal parity will remain elusive.

A primary mechanism for facilitating alternative political cultures is through education, both in grade schools and in universities. This does not mean rewriting history, nor does it imply that what is provided is still residue from the Milošević period. Rather, additional emphasis can be placed on early Serb intellectuals and thinkers such as Dositej Obradović, Sava Tekelić, and Svetozar Marković, all of whom are currently known, but largely remain footnotes. Placing greater emphasis on additional historical narratives advances the understanding that there is more to Serbia’s history than medieval battles, subjugation at the hands of others and treacherous backstabblings by groups originally thought loyal to the state. The information provided in the previous chapters on Serb-Croat relations throughout most of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries indicates that there is more to the relationship than the Ustaša and Franjo Tudjman. The lives of Obradović, Tekelić, and early proponents of South Slavic unity such as Nadežda Petrović and Jovan Skerlić reveal that one can remain patriotic while embracing the cultures and values of other societies. As shown in Petro’s work on local identities in

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3 See for instance the newly printed schoolbook by Branka Bubanj et al, *Demokratija i ljudska prava* (*Democracy and Human Rights*) (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike, 2007)
Novgorod in the early 1990s, simple emphasis on local histories and symbols can inculcate a sense of pride in one’s heritage that is fully compatible with multiethnic cooperation and coexistence. Furthermore, educational curricula that prepare Serbian students for European integration can provide much in establishing similarities of interests, values, and identities with other students in the region.

The importance of the past in Serbia is revealed not just in the persistence of authoritarian narratives in the post-Milošević period but in the absence of democratic narratives that could have charted Serbia’s road to the EU much earlier. Contrary to the overused adage that Serbia is at the “crossroads” of East and West, Serbia’s political and cultural problems stem from the incongruency between illiberal historical narratives and a liberal democratic framework. Large numbers of Serbs continue to support national populist parties because these parties address issues and concerns that more pro-Western parties cannot, or do not. It has little to do with Serbia’s overall culture being incompatible with democracy as it does with large segments of that culture still being interpreted for illiberal political movements. The popularity of Tomislav Nikolić may be due to large segments of Serbs still convinced that the West is determined to destroy Serbia, but I suspect that a considerable degree of support comes from anger and frustration at current democratic parties that have either failed to live up to their promises, have sullied their name and purpose through corruption, and have failed to provide alternative images of Serbia as a member of Europe’s concert of nations.

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5 Ongoing work from organizations such as Tempus, an EU sponsored program supporting investment in modernization of higher education and curriculum development, have worked extensively with universities throughout Serbia in providing academic exchange programs, collaborative projects with other European universities, and the preparation for educational standards for Serbia’s eventual EU membership. See Stefan Dukiandjiević and Sofija Dukić, Tempus Programme and Reform of Higher Education in Serbia and Montenegro (European Commission, 2006). I am grateful to Ms. Jelena Branković, Tempus National Coordinator, for providing me with this information.
The Way Ahead for Historical Memory and Political Culture

Liberal culture itself does not provide liberal democracy. Erecting another statue of Dositej Obradović will not suddenly get Serbia into the EU, nor will appreciating the rich history of Sremski Karlovci reduce unemployment levels. Listening to B92 will not make someone suddenly understand the intricacies of civil society, and appreciating Serbia’s “golden age of democracy” at the beginning of the twentieth century will not suddenly produce effective parliamentary government at the beginning of the twenty-first. However, positive historical memories of a democratic past significantly aid proponents of democracy in opening up a number of paths of transition that would otherwise be unavailable.

First, cultural symbols can either legitimize or delegitimize of rapid social change. When life that is taken for granted is suddenly ruptured, individuals almost instinctually search for meaning and explanation in whatever is familiar, comforting, and/or reassuring to them. It is during periods of transition that the non-negotiable truths that define oneself are most relied on. The inclination to find meaning for the present through events of the past, either personally experienced or collectively remembered, is a way of seeking answers to complex challenges. Consequently, those values and truths that adhere most to our own self-image are almost always accepted while those deemed “foreign” are rejected, and, depending on the nature of transition, even safeguarded against. When placed within a political context, the search for meaning and understanding can focus on a variety of symbols and historical narratives. Furthermore, elites often advocate new
interpretations for old symbols, and can even provide competing interpretations for those symbols.

What distinguishes countries like Poland or Spain from Serbia is not that they had better symbols, better histories, or better social capital. Unless attached to political movements that emphasize their importance for the present, they simply remain in the past. What distinguished them is that they benefited from early elite consensus around how a symbolic center helped to usher in a liberal democratic government. Particularly with Spain where fears that ethnic and political minorities might capitalize on the withdrawal of the Franco regime existed well into the early 1980s, the consensus on the meaning of Spanish symbols of identity were appropriated to build social trust, not exacerbate social tensions. The fact that Yugoslavia plunged into civil war whereas Spain did not, has less to do with one state having greater cultural legacies of democratic freedoms over the other, than it did with how elites in appropriated understandings of their past for the present. In Poland where symbolic imagery made frequent use of the country’s past, these symbols were consciously interpreted through democratic philosophies and practices. In the absence of culture, Solidarity might have remained little more than the isolated protest of a workers’ union. Legitimated through culture, it became a socio-political phenomenon.6

6 A recent discussion with Jan Kubik has revealed that Polish history is also characterized by both an ethnocentric and multicultural heritage. From its founding in 966 to roughly the early 1400’s, medieval Poland under the Piast dynasty was an ethnically and culturally homogeneous community, roughly encompassing the same geographical area as Poland after 1945. However, beginning in the fifteenth century, Polish expansion in the East resulted in a series of alliances with Lithuania that resulted in a multiethnic commonwealth. Under the Jagellonian Dynasty, the so-called Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth extended deep into Russia and almost reached the borders of the Black Sea. Yet while this remains Poland’s largest territorial extent, it is simultaneously remembered in Polish collective memory as a multiethnic and multinational state that bested its two chief rivals: Germany and Russia. These two narratives, “Piast Poland” representing a smaller and more homogenous Poland, and “Jagellonian Poland” representing a larger, multiethnic, and multiconfessional Poland, bears similar patterns to both versions of
Second, democratic historical memories channel public sentiment towards democracy and civic participation. It is certainly true that the populace can embrace or dispose elite interpretations of key symbols, and it is equally true that elites cannot simply make stuff up when framing a national identity. But as seen with Serbia, the public has shown itself to be rather fickle in accepting a common version of history and symbols. That Serbs displayed a strong willingness to accept other ethnicities as part of their community in Yugoslavia, a strong receptiveness to Western pop culture that bordered on feelings of superiority to their Eastern European neighbors, and that Milošević needed to actively seek the demobilization of democratic political movements throughout his rule, all indicate Serbs are not the card-carrying ethnocentric nationalists that many in the West assume them to be. In other words, with the right political leaders to counter the rhetoric of Milošević, Serbia might have found some form of multiethnic powersharing with the Albanians of Kosovo and a refederalization of its provinces. Even in light of growing Albanian restlessness in Kosovo and the presence of large Serb communities outside Serbia, there is nothing to suggest that Serbia’s road to authoritarianism was predestined. Serbia’s legacy of being part of an Ottoman Empire that had no Renaissance or Reformation, and thus having little to no democratic cultural capital, is meaningless when one considers the modernity and cosmopolitan receptiveness its elites cultivated in the decades following its independence. While hindsight may yield a clearer picture than what lies ahead, a Serbian transition to democracy like that of Spain’s was neither impossible, nor improbable.

Pan-Serbism, although the Piast narrative was the preferred narrative of the Polish People’s Republic for geographic, demographic, and political reasons. See Kubik (1994), pp. 64 – 5.
The “failure of democratic transition” the Balkans in the late 1980s was less a
result of it being “the Balkans” than the failure of democratic movements in breaking the
monopoly of the interpretations of the past by the communist-turned-populist authorities,
so that alternative voices could speak on behalf of the nation. Those elites that did reject
the narratives of the nationalists found themselves increasingly marginalized because
they did not provide suitable alternative understandings of identity for public
consumption and acceptance. A monopoly on historical memory propelled Milosevic,
Tudjman, and Berisha to power. By disregarding a liberal democratic variant of Serbian
identity, Milošević was free to use Serbian nationalism as a barrier to reform rather than a
filter. That the public accepted the narratives of identity used by Milošević and the SPS
meant not that Serbs were any more nationalistic, chauvinistic, or ethnocentric than other
groups. Rather, the use of identity and historical memory as a means of addressing the
social and political problems of a decaying state, provided meaning and explanation to an
uncertain public, which in turn lent an air of legitimacy to the policies and agendas of the
Milošević regime. Since 2000, the strength of national populist parties continues to rest
on this degree of social support for their agendas and their positions against international
integration.

Third, democratic historical narratives need not be universally recognized at first,
but can be quickly accepted if properly placed within political and educational
frameworks. Edles’ and Petro’s studies of Spain and Novgorod respectively have shown
that political culture can undergo a complete reorientation in a relatively short period of
time. While many studies of democratic transition laud the Spanish case for its example
of elite bargaining and negotiation, an even more remarkable feature is the near volte-face
in cultural identity. A state that under Franco prided itself on remaining outside of Europe came to view itself as a fundamental component of Europe. A political apparatus that understood any attempts at regionalization as treasonous and initiated draconian policies of centralization, became a state that not only took federalism for granted, but has let Catalonia and Basque country function as near-separate entities. Likewise, Petro has noted the transformation of a region of Russia that transitioned from a single-party state apparatus controlled by Moscow to an economically self-sufficient region that received higher percentages of foreign investment and development than nearly any other region of Russia. Novgorod’s history was no different than the histories of other regions of Russia that functioned as fortress towns during the Middle Ages, but whereas political leaders in Pskov and Orenburg viewed their histories through a lens of national defense against the West, Novgorod’s elites specifically chose its relationship with the Hanseatic League as a golden age to emulate in the present. Local histories that emphasized memories of local Russian rulers and an actively engaged Russian Orthodox Church provided enough familiar symbolic imagery to find compatibility.

In both cases, democratic narratives were a strong departure from the narratives and identities used by the previous authoritarian regimes. Both cases also demonstrate that even though the public might not have readily identified the democratic collective memories used, the proper use of symbolic interpretation by elites successfully transformed an element of the past into a recognizable and acceptable framework for identity. Most importantly, both cases relied on their own culture instead of making an effort to break from it. There is little reason to doubt similar practices cannot work in Serbia either at the national or local level. More than anything else, these cases reveal
that positive symbolic interpretation of one’s past reinforces social communion, while negative interpretations reinforces solidarity against common threats. It is not the past itself that constrains one’s receptivity to democracy; it is the interpretation of the past for a specific political program. In terms of Serbia, it is ironic that the multiethnic character of Kosovo has been sighted as reason for intractable positions, while the multiethnic character of Vojvodina, itself a challenge to the perception of Serbs as an ethnocentric people, has been lauded as an asset to Serbian multiethnic coexistence.

Fourth, democratic historical memories help foster “strong democracy” by facilitating citizenship and participation.\(^7\) Granted, no state is completely democratic and one needs only to be selected for jury duty in order to understand how far enthusiasm for one’s government goes. But “strong democracies” denote citizen initiative to improve one’s standard of living without relying, or expecting, the state to provide it. It rests on the idea of a self-governing community united through civic education and mobilized through interdependency. It envisions politics not as a way of life but as a way of living. It embraces divergent views but operates within the knowledge that the majority of such views are conducive to the community as a whole. In other words, the state no longer functions as the ward of the people, but the mechanism through which public policy is transformed from collective thought to collective action. Nationalist narratives of Serbian historical memory have often portrayed the individual as being at the mercy of uncontrollable forces and that the best solution for security is safeguarding through group solidarity. Yet as numerous examples have explained, a Serbian culture of democracy and citizenship outside politics from the pre-modern \textit{zadruga} to the Belgrade Reading Club to the Free Towns of Vojvodina, to EXIT, to even citizen-based initiatives of Serb

communities in Kosovo, have existed almost in spite of political situations and have often run counter to the corporatist nature of political parties. As numerous works on the effectiveness of “strong democracies” have argued, the congruence between formal political structure and the primary structures of community are vital. As Almond and Verba state,

> only though this engagement of family and community by the polity can the impulses, needs, complaints, and aspirations of the average man flow into the polity and affect the form and content of political controversy and policy making … Where for one reason or another the political system fails to integrate with the intimate community structures, then the demands and feelings do not flow readily into the political system and the polity may lose touch with the intimate moods and needs of its members.8

By themselves, these various strands of national history can provide counternarratives to those appropriated for illiberal or non-democratic ends. But when placed within a political framework to purposefully foster democratic practice, they become part of the nation’s culture of democracy.

**The Way Ahead for Historical Memory and Democracy**

What can we learn about theories of democratic transition and historical memory from our examination of Serbia? If anything, historical memory directly challenges prevailing assumptions of certain cultures being incompatible with democracy. By itself, culture is neither democratic nor authoritarian. It is whatever policymakers fashion it to be for political discourse. The same myths that center on a handful of ideas, beliefs, individuals, and events in the past, can be fashioned and refashioned for multiple

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interpretations that can promote interethnic cooperation or justify ethnic cleansing. In this sense, historical memory is a tool for both policymakers and social scientists that provide culture with a sense of human agency and historical subjectivity. Serbia and other countries of Southeastern Europe are not “prisoners” of their own pasts any more than countries of Western Europe or North America. Various legacies that are identified as retardants on modern political growth and maturity simply do not add up. Serbia’s lack of democracy in the 1990s had less to do with five centuries of Ottoman domination as it did with three decades of political mismanagement in Yugoslavia that still managed to produce a highly cosmopolitan political culture.

Second, the Serbian case reminds us that culture cannot be ignored during transition. Particularly during periods of rapid social change when the very state itself is in question, culture is often out last line of defense and identification. Serbs did not choose Milošević because of any particular authoritarian personality. Rather, Milošević was savvy enough to understand that politics of any ideological orientation is legitimized and most easily explained through culture; or rather an interpretation of culture that seems to most readily address social problems and crises of authority. Invoking the Kosovo narrative that emphasized strength through unity, honor through suffering, and morality though Orthodoxy, Milošević was able to gather popular support for his measures of recentralization and preservation for as much of Yugoslavia as possible wherever Serbs lived. Likening the Croatian and Albanian national movements of the 1980s to the fascist movements of the 1940s was enough to invoke emotional memories of previous suffering and vicitimization and erode and social trust or political cooperation that might have existed between these communities.
Third, effective democracy is almost always home grown, never externally imposed. The greatest obstacle to the consolidation of liberal democracy in Serbia today is the inability of the pro-Western movement to find a comparable democratic narrative that promotes Serbian identity alongside that of European. The strength of national populist movements lies in their ability to continue to monopolize the framework of national identity as a force of resistance to international influence. Conversely, the continued use by the Democratic Party of similar narratives of nationalism shows that they must adhere to these principles in order to gather electoral support. Ignoring these narratives portrays parties as supplicants of foreign interests. Until a pro-European democratic narrative is constructed for Serbia, the ethnocentric narratives of the Milošević era will continue to dominate Serbian political culture. Programs in the United States and elsewhere that seek to aid fledgling democratic movements abroad can only go so far in helping to cultivate a civil society, but no amount of foreign aid is going to produce a working democratic government unless it constructed and maintained by its own citizens.9

Fourth, democratic transition is not a one-way process. We do not simply negotiate our way from authoritarian withdrawal to the setting up to parliamentary government. Social forces are constantly at work pushing for various shades of liberal and illiberal democratic government. Furthermore, the increase in social mobility in the wake of authoritarian collapse may not all necessarily be in favor of establishing democratic government. As first Yugoslavia and then Serbia demonstrated, the proliferation of media reflected a wide array of ideas and beliefs and in the absence of a

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universally accepted democratic frame of reference, identities and values, particularly amid rapid social change, spans the spectrum of discourse. Within the institutional framework of democratic elections, nondemocratic movements have just as much potential of being elected to office as others if they are perceived to be defending the national interest. Both culture and history matter because both help us understand the limits and constraints democratic forces are challenged with when constructing a new political framework. They help us identify what historical narratives are compatible and incompatible with constructing a democratic culture. They also help explain why external pressures to democratize can in many instances not only fail to yield positive results, but also facilitate countervailing, even non-democratic forces in winning elections.

Finally, taking history and culture seriously in theories of democratic transition means moving beyond the macrosocial variables of both social capital and social character that dominate cultural studies in political science. Historical memory involves a “thick description” of history and a deep knowledge of the region under study. It necessitates the researcher’s understanding of why people make the choices and follow the political programs they do. It involves work in other fields such as history, anthropology, cultural studies, and sociology. It involves resurrecting certain elements of the past, while burying others. This certainly complicates our models and intensifies our research, but no one ever said crafting democracy was going to be easy.
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