

The Kosovo Battle: Media's Recontextualization of the Serbian Nationalistic Discourses

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In 2006, the international community started to finalize the political status of Kosovo, the Serbian province, inhabited mostly by the Muslim Albanian majority. At the end of October 2006, a referendum was held in Serbia, where a new constitution was passed that claims Kosovo as an integral part of Serbia. What has taken place in the so-called “last media battle for Kosovo”? This article investigates discourses of the two most popular Serbian newspapers and their coverage of the October 2006 events. The analysis of recontextualization shows that the newspapers continuously reproduce the dominant Serbian nationalism that focuses on a myth of a Greater Serbia. With an appropriation of different discourses, the dominant Serbian nationalism becomes legitimized and justified. In particular, the newspapers reproduce distinctive religious discourses from the political past, and furthermore, they borrow so-called European, “war on terrorism” and “crime” discourses from the international mainstream public spheres and appropriate them to the contemporary Serbian political context. Generally, the newspapers reappropriate different discourses by framing the Serbs as the victims of their own local “perpetrators,” the Kosovo Albanians.

Keywords: *Serbia; Kosovo; nationalism; nationalistic journalism; recontextualization*

The year 2006 was full of political turmoil in Serbia. In February, the U.N.–mediated talks between the Serbian and the ethnic Albanian teams in Vienna started. U.N. special envoy Martti Ahtisaari was leading discussions on the future status of Kosovo, where ethnic Albanians have continued to push for Kosovo’s independence, while Serbs argue that Kosovo should remain an integral part of Serbia. In March, former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic died in Hague, while being on trial at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. His funeral, performed as a nationalistic ritual, has reproduced Milosevic’s myth of a leader while recycling and reshaping nationalistic practices

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and discourses in Serbian official political spheres (Erjavec and Volčič 2007).¹ Moreover, the European Union increased its pressure on Serbia to extradite war criminals Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic to the Hague court of justice with a threat of a discontinuation of the integration process or even of re-establishment of the isolation of Serbian state. Serbian nationalism was on the rise from June on, when Montenegro declared its independence from Serbia, and escalated in the fall, when the Serbs held a referendum on a new constitution stating that Kosovo is an integral part of the country. Serbia is now, after the 1990s wars, and after the referendum on Montenegro independence, an independent, autonomous, *only* Serbian state. However, regardless of current official EU, U.S., or U.N. statements, there is some consensus that the most appropriate scenario is that Kosovo will achieve some kind of a political autonomy, where the majority of population, ethnic Albanians, will remain in power.

What has taken place in the so-called “last battle for Kosovo,” as defined by the Serbian mainstream media? A part of an answer lays in the deconstruction of Serbian media nationalistic discourses.² According to many regional scholars (e.g., Curgus 1999; Zakosek 1999) the media have played a crucial role in escalating nationalism in Serbia and former Yugoslavia.

The goal of this article is to show how the most popular Serbian newspapers appropriate different discourses to justify and legitimize nationalistic ideology. We draw on Fairclough’s theory of a recontextualization (Fairclough 2003). Recontextualization is understood here as not only a representation of social events but as an appropriation of discourses. In this case, we refer to a recontextualization relation between the global scale and the national/local scale and between the present and the past. Thus, we attempt to present an example of a study that uncovers recontextualization discourses used by the newspapers to legitimize and justify the nationalistic ideologies.

The Political–Historical Context of Serbia

The Yugoslav constitution of 1974 created the status of Kosovo as an autonomous province; the aspirations for the independence of the Albanians in Kosovo were triggered in 1980s with the death of the Yugoslav president Tito. But in 1986, the Serbian Academy of Science and Art prepared a Memorandum—a long list of Serbian grievances against their position within the federation, which articulated the need for a collective mobilization of the Serbs throughout Yugoslavia. Milosevic reproduced historical and scientific data for the construction of the ideology of a “Greater Serbia.” Its crucial vision was the idea that all ethnic Serbs need to live in the same state (MacDonald 2002).

Kosovo, Serbian’s southern region, was the base of the early Serbian Orthodox Church and was traditionally seen as the Serbian heartland. Today it is also the home to an Albanian Muslim majority—some 90 percent of its

two million inhabitants. Starting in 1987, Serbia was swept by nationalist rallies protesting the situation in Kosovo, where the Kosovo Serbs were continuously expressing how threatened they were by Kosovo Albanians. The mass “spontaneous” rallies organized throughout Serbia and popularly defined as “the happening of the people” included an antibureaucratic revolution and “Meetings of Truth,” whose purpose was to spread information about endangered Serbs in Kosovo and to demand the return of Kosovo to Serbs (in Brankovic 1995). In the public discourses, different mechanisms were used: reinterpretation, mythologization, ideologization of history, return to the national tradition, and the creation of a thesis of the endangered Serbs (Blagojevic 2000). The Battle of Kosovo,³ a battle fought between Serbian and Turkish forces on June 28, 1389, ultimately resulted in Serbian sacrifice, which elevated them to the status of a heavenly and chosen people. This myth was generalized and focused on Jewish imagery in such a way that Kosovo became the “Serbian Jerusalem.” In 1989, Kosovo lost its status as an independent region and became a part of Serbia. Albanians declared that the Serbs were colonizers, and Kosovo a colony. Serbian politicians represented Albanians as colonizers and persecutors, pointing to the massive migration of Serbs from Kosovo in the 1980s that has been the cause and the consequence of the change in the ethnic structure and also in the quality of interethnic relationships. According to the Serbian side, the Serbs in Kosovo had a historical right to continue their rule of Kosovo (see Zirojevic 2000).

During the 1990s, the rights of Kosovo Albanian Muslims were systematically violated, and a passive resistance movement failed to secure independence (MacDonald 2002). In the mid-1990s, an ethnic Albanian guerrilla movement, the Kosovo Liberation Army (OVK), intensified its attacks on Serbian targets, including civilians.

The attacks precipitated a brutal Serbian military crackdown. In November 1997, the first armed conflicts occurred between OVK and Serbian military. During this war, the Serbs killed 10,000 Albanian civilians (MacDonald 2002). The war ended with the NATO bombing of Serbia in March 1999. As a result, the prolonged NATO bombing campaign only succeeded in restoring ethnically cleansed Kosovar Albanians to their homeland. According to Banac (2006: 41), in every other way it was a political failure, for the following reasons: (1) Milosevic became stronger than he had been before NATO intervention, (2) Kosovo was effectively divided as a result of the NATO/U.N. inability to stem the tide of Albanian revanchism and Milosevic’s infiltration, and (3) the military strategy applied against Serbia proved useful to Russian efforts against Chechnya and others.

Since June 1999, Kosovo has been a U.N. protectorate, run by the United Nations’ Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), which has control of foreign affairs, monetary policy, justice, and public order. Security has been provided by a

NATO-led peacekeeping force, known as KFOR. U.N. Resolution 1244 envisages a self-governing Kosovo. In that, Kosovo remains a province of Serbia, but has been administered by the United Nations since Serb forces were ousted in 1999.

In February 2006, U.N.-supported talks on the future status of Kosovo began. Kosovo's ethnic Albanians want independence, while the Serb minority—estimated at up to 10 percent in the 1980s, and roughly 5 percent after the population movements of 1999—wants to remain part of Serbia. Belgrade's political approach also supports Kosovo as an integral part of Serbia and held a referendum on a new constitution. Voters in Serbia have voted for a new constitution that clearly declares that Kosovo is an integral part of the country (there is a special clause reaffirming Kosovo as a part of Serbia). Kosovo's Albanians were excluded from the ballot, but the U.N.-sponsored talks on the future of the disputed province continue.

Serbian (Nationalistic) Journalism

In Serbia during the 1990s, there was a dominant professional ideology of “nationalistic journalism.” There are a lot of elements characteristic for this particular type of a journalistic discourse (Milivojevic 1996; Curgus 1999; Cirman 2003; De la Broose 2003)—an “us-versus-them” dichotomy, a “my-nation-right-or-wrong” version of reporting—which may forge a sense of national pride and patriotism. An important phenomenon was then the nationalization, popularization of the public sphere, where the public became subordinated to the national dimension. Media systems were centralized and information about important political events was distributed according to the principle of national loyalty. For example, when NATO bombed Serbia in March 1999, journalists represented Kosovo Albanians, in strongly controlled Serbian media, as terrorists, criminals, and as the people of an alien culture and civilization. NATO was portrayed as a set of bandits, criminals, or as “the strongest concentration of crime in human history” (Vujovic 1999: 507). The Serbs were portrayed as the “people of the Gods,” “heavenly people,” and “brave people” (Vujovic: 505). Daily newspaper *Politika* started with the practice of validating nationalistic politics in the 1980s, followed by *Vecernje novosti* newspaper, which is the key focus for our analysis here (Susa 2005; Cirman 2003; De la Broose 2003).

Important for the argument here is that the nationalistic discourse still dominates the public sphere in Serbia after the fall of Milosevic's regime in 2000, when he lost the support of the mainstream media. There are numerous scholars who explore how nationalistic discourses and practices still colonize Serbian mainstream spaces (see Susa 2005; Cirman 2003; De la Broose 2003). In particular, we follow here critical anthropologists who started to explore the lives and discourses of identities in the context of former Yugoslavia (e.g., Hayden 1993; Bowman 1994). Our questions here are concerned with if and how this discourse has changed in fall of 2006.

Method and Database

Recontextualization

In this study, we concentrate in particular on the appropriation of local discourses into global discourses, based on Fairclough's (1995, 2003) notion of recontextualization, defined as the dissemination of discourses across structural and scalar boundaries. In this case, we refer to recontextualization in terms of different relations between the global scale and the national/local scale, and also between the present and the past. Recontextualization is a specific kind of a dialectic that appropriates and colonizes from different spaces and times (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999). The concept of appropriation accentuates the fact that even in the process of colonizing, a new discourse enters potentially transformative relationships with existing discourses in the recontextualizing context. We analyze how the newspapers appropriate specific discourses from past to present and from global context to the national context to legitimize and justify different practices of nationalism.

The linguistic analysis of the journalistic news articles was conducted on three levels: macroproposition, choice of keywords, and representation of social actors.

Analysis of Macropropositions

The semantics of discourse deals with meanings in terms of propositions (Brown and Yule 1983). A proposition is a conceptual structure, which consists of a predicate and one or more arguments. Brown and Yule argue that a propositional analysis is problematic, since no specific means have been provided to reduce the semantic representation of propositions. Furthermore, various interpretations of one text are possible. Yet, according to Van Dijk (1988), propositions are the smallest independent constructs of language and thought, typically expressed by a single sentence or clause.

On the basis of propositions, Van Dijk (1980, 1988) introduces the analysis of thematic organization of the news. This hierarchical structure consists of (macro) propositions that define the most important or relevant pieces of information in the text. Semantic macrostructure is derived from local meanings of words by macrorules, such as deletion, generalization, and construction. Such rules have omitted irrelevant details, connecting the essence on a higher level into abstract meanings or constructing different meaning constituents in higher level events or social concepts. The thematic organization is directly connected with the discourse schemata or the so-called superstructures (Van Dijk 1980). Not aiming at investigating the thematic structure of the news discourse, we will explore the inclusion or exclusion of the propositions by the media's reporting on Kosovo.

In this study, a proposition is defined as an idea unit in the form of a single sentence, several sentences, a paragraph, or a whole news story. A proposition is a unit only for the convenience of comparison. The analysis of a type of macrosemantics, which deals with global meanings and enables the description of the meanings of news items, will be presented.

The most important or relevant piece of information in the articles will be defined using the abovementioned macrorules. This is a rather subjective process on the part of the researcher. However, since only a single researcher has made the definition, it is assumed that news discourse is on a basis of equal comparison and contrast. We intend to find the propositions, which are conveyed, or are missing, in news items about the same phenomenon, that is, Kosovo. The significance of the presence or absence of the proposition will be probed. In the process of news making, media/journalists construct reality in accordance with their underlying ideological and political positions. Thus, with the analysis of macroproposition, we intend to find out how mainstream Serbian daily newspapers designate and define Serbia's relation to Kosovo.

Analysis of Representation of Social Actors

In the analyzed newspaper articles, one of the main functions of social representation of the actors serves as an affirmation of the ideology by contrasting it to the opposing ideology. It is precisely for these reasons that we consider Hall's (1989) "discourse of difference" the most effective method to think through binary positions. The fact that meanings of *us* and *them*, implying identification with and differentiation from, are not ontologically given, but ideologically constructed, becomes even clearer through linguistic analysis.

Analysis of Choice of Keywords

We also analyzed the choice of keywords of the media and compared them with groups of typical keywords. It is widely accepted that the choice of the words used by elites is by no means arbitrary. Trew (1979) and Teo (2000), in their studies of lexical choice and ideologies, concluded that all perceptions that are embodied in lexicalization involve (elite) ideologies.

Data

For our research analysis, these two daily newspapers were carefully chosen as the main representatives of the national, mainstream daily voices, since both of the papers more or less support the official governmental policy in Serbia, and have the largest circulations among the nontabloid newspapers in Serbia (Curgus 1999). *Vecernje novosti* is the most popular daily in Serbia (about 210,000 copies are sold every day, and it has 265,000 regular readers) and *Blic* is the second-highest-circulation daily newspaper in Serbia (150,000 copies are printed every day, and more than 200,000 people read it; Džokovic 2004: 432).

The following analysis covered 123 news articles published from September 15 to November 2006 by Serbian daily *Vecernje novosti*, and 91 news articles published by *Blic*.⁴ Thus, the sample included all the articles published in selected daily newspapers that respectively dealt with the notion of Kosovo—that is, in some way or another, these articles included the words *Kosovo* or *Kosovo's*. The news articles were published in national and/or international pages of selected newspapers. This period was decided on precisely because this was the time of a nationalistic euphoria that achieved its peak in 2006 and was widely embraced by coalition and oppositional political parties.

Newspapers' Discourses of Nationalism

In all analysed news articles we identify macropropositions, choice of words and representation of social actors. On the basis of results, we then defined five distinctive discourses that justify and legitimate Serbian nationalism.

1. Antiterrorism discourse: "We fight against Islamic terrorism." The comparison of the propositions of the analyzed news article enables us to discover that the proposition "we fight against Islamic terrorism" has been adopted by more than a third of all articles in both newspapers. Serbian journalists have appropriated G. W. Bush's war on terrorism discourse according to their own political–historical context to legitimize and justify the nationalism. Most of the research on G.W. Bush's discourse after September 11 (e.g., Bailey and Chermak 2003; Chomsky 2001; Graham et al. 2004; Höijer et al. 2004; Ottosen 2004; Jackson 2005; Johnson 2002; Kellner 2002, 2003, 2005a, 2005b; Woodward 2002) agrees that the discourse contains the following elements: The war has been proclaimed between good and evil; the evil Other is Islamic terrorism, personified by bin Laden; and the West has to unite in a war against terrorism to defend its civilization and its freedom. By recontextualizing Bush's discourse into the former Yugoslav context, the newspapers were drawing an analogy between the war against Kosovo Albanians and the U.S. war against terrorism. The newspapers name Kosovo as "the Balkan base of terrorism" and the war against Kosovo Albanians as war on terrorism. For example, here are some illustrative articles:

Serbia is in a state of "*a war against terrorism*." . . . Serbia, with all its power, is *against terrorism in Kosovo* and for the stability of the region. According to available information, *Kosovo is the cradle of Islamic terrorism* in the Balkans. (emphasis added)⁵

or

Serbia, while following *USA, fights terrorism*. . . . We fight against *Islamic terror in Kosovo*. . . . Independent Kosovo would inevitably lead towards a creation of a

new *state of evil, run by jihad terrorists*. The so-called president of the Kosovo Government is a man who should be held responsible for killing of 669 Serbs and 18 members of other ethnic groups. He is also responsible for 518 wounded victims and 584 kidnapped ones, many of whom are considered to be dead. (emphasis added)⁶

The newspapers also used the same words as G. W. Bush to describe what they were fighting for—that is, *freedom, democracy, liberty, way of life, and civilization*—but the meaning of these abstract notions was in both cases not defined (Ottosen 2004). For example: “The war against the terrorists is a fight for *our freedom and civilization*” (emphasis added);⁷ or, “The war against terrorism is a war for *freedom and democracy*” (emphasis added).⁸

Similar to Bush’s discourse, in this case the “threat” posed by terrorism is overlexicalized (Fowler et al. 1979)—that is, a threat is lexicalized in a variety of ways (*instability and disorder*), a sort of a lexical “overkill.” Relations of equivalence are textured between *stability, security, and economic progress* on the one hand and *instability and disorder* on the other hand. For example: “The war against terrorism is a war against *instability and disorder* and these are the enemies of *stability, security and progress* in our society” (emphasis added);⁹ or, “Losing the battle with terrorists in Kosovo and Metohija would mean *a radical instability of a country, a collapse of economy, the loss of foreign investments in Serbia* and the end of EU integration negotiation process” (emphasis added).¹⁰

Analyzed newspapers use the same binary opposition as does Bush regarding two groups: “us” and “them.” Such language is at the heart of the analyzed discourse, especially with claims for the need of the Serbs to fight “fundamental” Muslims. Thus, the newspapers reproduce Bush’s discourse, and appropriate it according to their own political–historical context. The news articles employed in this kind of argumentation rely on a common-sense language such as “everybody knows” or “everyone is familiar” to further naturalize this polarization. For example: “By now everyone is familiar with the facts of the real situation in Kosovo, of the unsuccessful UN mission, of an unstable position of the International community and everyone knows about Albanians who support or are themselves a part of a *terroristic Jihad*” (emphasis added);¹¹ or, “The Serbs from Orah were kidnapped on the 17th, 18th and 19th of July, 1998. That happened during the worst attacks committed by the Albanian terrorists We are *fighting terrorism for centuries now* (emphasis added).¹²

Bush’s war on terrorism includes some essentialist stereotypes about Islam and violent Muslims (see Karim 2002), many of which are recycled by journalists; for example: “*Muslim terrorists in KiM*¹³ aggressively offer two choices: independence or death. We’ve achieved the situation where violence becomes the legitimate tool in a political process of negotiation—and this happens in the era of a struggle against the terrorism” (emphasis added);¹⁴ or

Muslim Albanians are terrorists because they use violent means against the Serbs—such as kidnapping, torture, killings, burning down numerous houses and other similar acts while not accepting our peaceful offers. They only know and acknowledge violence: it's only with arms that they want to achieve their own victory.¹⁵

2. *Discourse of a territorial integrity*: “Serbia demands territorial integrity because Kosovo has been a part of Serbia for centuries.” The newspapers appropriate a particular discourse of territorial integrity to legitimize and justify the Serbian nationalistic practices. In terms of a sheer quantity, *Večernje novosti* has published more than half of its articles while following this particular discourse. *Blic* published less than one-tenth of the articles in this discourse. According to Neuberger (1994), a theorist of international relations, it is characteristic for this discourse that actors advocate the territorial unity of a particular state and argue against succession of different parts of the nation-states (for example, Baskia in Spain, Abkhazia in Georgia, Pridnestrja in Moldavia). This discourse emphasizes universality of a succession, but stresses the danger of partition and “epidemics of separatism” (Neuberger: 153). In this discourse, social actors (representatives of a state) are divided into supporters of successions and supporters of territorial integrity.

Both newspapers included the proposition that “Serbia demands territorial integrity because Kosovo has been a part of Serbia for centuries.” The example of Kosovo is represented as a “universal” case and not as a particular case. From that, it follows that if an international community would have allowed the independence of Kosovo, other national minorities or majorities living in a “host” nation-state would similarly have the right to demand independence.

Integrity is overlexicalized—that is, integrity is lexicalized in the word connections such as *territorial integrity*, *sovereignty over the whole state*, and *control of Serbia*, a juxtaposition to the words *separatism*, *succession*, *independence*, and *autonomy* that started to appear. For example:

The Serbian president Boris Tadić made it clear that *Kosovo independence* would lead towards instability of the whole region and would contribute to *new separatisms*. He claimed that Serbia does not want to decide on the Albanian destiny, but that it has the right to *the sovereignty over the whole state* and to defend its borders. Namely, Kosovo has been ours *for centuries*. (emphasis added)¹⁶

or

Constitution wants to preserve the *territorial integrity of the country*. Kosovo is, legislatively speaking, an essential part of Serbia *from the early 20th century on*, but in reality, *it has been a part of Serbia for centuries*. The international community needs to respect the will of the people. Independent Kosovo would set the

precedent for other similar cases in Europe and around the world. According to our data, there are more than 30 *separatist regions* in the world today, and these separatist groups only await the political finalization of the Kosovo case. The international community understands Kosovo as a particular case, but in essence, this is a *universal case*, that could be applied anywhere else in the world. (emphasis added)¹⁷

Despite the data that there are only 10 percent of Serbs who live in Kosovo today, the newspapers claimed that the Serbs have a historical right to Kosovo—precisely because Serbs lived in Kosovo for centuries and Kosovo has been a part of Serbia for the whole 20th century.¹⁸

Newspapers have divided social actors to “us” (Serbs/Russians) versus “them” (Kosovo Albanians/U.N./U.S./E.U.). The Chinese and the Russians alike are represented as the only ones who truly understand and support the situation in Serbia; for example: “In negotiations over the future status of Kosovo, *Russia is on the Serbian side*” (emphasis added);¹⁹ or

Russian President Vladimir Putin has warranted the West that Russia could use its right to veto in U.N. Assembly if Russia will not agree with the “final status” of Kosovo and Metohija. Russia will respect all the decisions that rest upon the International law and *are agreeable to Serbia*. (emphasis added)²⁰

The below example suggests the threat of the “dangerous precedent” in international relations that would be caused by an independent Kosovo, citing U.N. representative and leader of negotiations between Serbs and Kosovo Albanians, Martti Ahtisaari:

Western strategy to solve Kosovo situation without Serbia’s agreement—while at the same time neglecting Moscow’s request that this should not become a *precedent* for other conflict situations—has been spectacularly defied. The argument made by Martti Ahtisaari, *who does not understand the situation*, is naive. Especially because of the situation in Georgia, this is not really a moment to solve Kosovo status. (emphasis added)²¹

or

As the advisor to the Russian president claimed, to give independence to Kosovo, in spite of Serbia’s disapproval, would create a rather *negative precedence* in international relations. Serbia’s government’s media advisor Srdzan Dzuric stated for “Novosti” that Martti Ahtisaari *does not understand the situation* and that independence should not happen. (emphasis added)²²

3. *European discourse: “Serbs are defending Europe against Islamic state.”* The next discourse is a discourse that emphasized the struggle for Europe. Analyzed

newspapers claimed that with defending Kosovo's position as a part of Serbia, "Serbs are defending Europe against Islamic state." They appropriated "European discourse" to their own political–historical context to make sense of and legitimize and justify their nationalism. Most of the research on European discourse (e.g., Wintle 1996; Mastnak 1998; Musolff et al. 2001; Spohn and Triandafyllidou 2003) agree that the Eurocentric discourse contains repeated use of the words *Europe* and *European*, without specific explanation as to what these attributes were supposed to mean, but clearly suggesting a positive connotation; at the same time, all things that are considered obsolete, problematic, or violent represent the Balkans, the East, the communist past, the Muslims, and so on. The terms *European Union* and *Europe* are frequently used interchangeably. Thus, Europe has become a magic formula, a moral concept, a synonym of the new meaning. Examples from the newspaper articles depict the above:

The president of the state has claimed that a new constitution in Serbia brings Serbia one step closer towards the *European Union*. Tadić colourfully illustrated how with this constitution the Serbs actually *defend Kosovo* that has always *belonged to the European, and not the Islamic world*. (emphasis added)²³

or

Passing a new constitution has a primary political significance—since it will help us to move *towards the European Union*, overcome the barriers, and open all the doors. The most important is the fact that the new constitution adopts *European principles* and values of participatory democracy. This constitution should serve as important evidence that Serbia is a modern democratic state in *Europe* and that *Kosovo* within is not only a central part of our territory, but is also a part of each of us. . . . As *Serbia is a part of Europe*, so is *Kosovo* a part of Serbia, and that is why we need to *defend Western Europe* and vote for *Kosovo* to ensure that it forever stays a part of Serbian territory. (emphasis added)²⁴

Europe is overlexicalized—that is, *Europe* is lexicalized and is a common denominator in the following phrases: *the European Union*, *European Council*, and *Western Europe*. The newspapers conveyed an image of Serbia protecting the West from the East in a manner reminiscent of the Ottoman invasion. The newspapers also compared the Muslim Albanians to "Turkish occupiers." The picture of Serbia standing on the border between East and West was a powerful image. For example:

We, the Serbs have always defended Europe against the Turks. They have been and always will be aggressive against the Serbian nation and they continue to pose a serious threat for Europe . . . especially in the light of a possibility where an Islamic state could have been created in Kosovo.²⁵

The newspapers recycled Western stereotypes (see Karim 1997; Said 1978, 1997) about Muslims and Islam. Karim (1997) in particular argues that violence, lust, and barbarism seem to be the primary Western images associated with Islam and he cautions against drawing hurried conclusions about the nature of Islam. Muslim Albanians are framed as having a different way of life than the Serbs and other Europeans. The newspapers use the words *Muslims*, *Muslim Albanians*, *Turkish occupiers*, and *Islamic state* synonymously, just as Serbs are interchangeable with Europeans. The journalists have, when naming the Muslim Albanians, synonymously used *Muslim* and *Islamic*, although Islamism must be seen as a political discourse, akin to other political discourses such as socialism or liberalism, which attempts to center Islam within the political order. As Sayyid (1997) explains, "Islamism can range from the assertion of a Muslim subjectivity to an attempt to reconstruct civil society on Islamic principles" (p. 17). An Islamist is someone who places her Muslim identity at the center of her political practice, who uses the language of Islamic metaphors to think through her political destiny, who sees Islam in her political future. This should not be understood as suggesting that Islamism is a monolithic structure without internal differences. Islamists are no more or less identical in their beliefs and motives than bourgeois liberals or nationalists.

By using a strategy of cultural differentiation, newspapers also seek to construct a meaning that exists as a homogeneous one, expressing a unified European cultural way of life and at the same time again denying any structural discrepancies between them and other Europeans. The newspapers regularly used the notion of "our" Europe, our European way of life, or our world; for example: "Muslims tried to infiltrate their Islamic habits here, and changed *our European way of life*" (emphasis added);²⁶ or: "The Muslim Albanians are known for their *regression*, and for being *rural, uncivil, uncivilized, and funny*" (emphasis added).²⁷

The newspapers emphasized the cultural differences—grounded in the cultural "otherness" of Muslims (including a way of life, habits, customs, and manners). Many scholars (Barker 1981; Balibar and Wallerstein 1991; Miles 1994) define this kind of a cultural differentiation as a kind of "differentialist racism," "cultural racism," or "culturalist racism."

4. *Religious discourse: "Serbs are defending Christianity against Islam."* In Serbia, religion was effectively excluded from public life under communist rule, but it reemerged in the end of the 1980s from the partly forgotten past. Religious beliefs have been associated with nationalistic ideology of a Greater Serbia and the Serbs continue to see themselves as "defence walls of Christianity" (Ivekovic 2002: 526). Paradoxically, Milosevic, as a devoted socialist, had the support of a Serbian Orthodox Church for his nationalistic ideology, and for his vision of Kosovo as a "cradle of Serbia" (Velikonja 1998: 290). The analysis of Serbian newspapers has shown how they continue to use the religious

discourse for specific nationalistic interests and how they appropriate the religious discourse to present political–historical context, and furthermore to make sense of and justify their nationalism. Thus, newspapers support and justify the demand that Kosovo politically stays a part of Serbia, while claiming that “the Serbs defend Christianity against Islam.” For example:

Kosovo is the center of Orthodoxy and to defend Kosovo means not only protecting the state’s integrity, but also *securing and protecting Orthodoxy and Christianity* on the continent. The Balkans has always been a crucial space of Europe, and that includes Kosovo as a crucial site. The world is not familiar enough with the events of the last seven years here . . . and the fact, for example, that 400 new mosques have been built during this time. *Islam is going to replace Christianity in Europe*, if we do not *protect Europe* from Islam. (emphasis added)²⁸

Or “Kosovo is not only the *cradle of the Serbian nation and the Serbian Orthodox Church*, Kosovo is also a *cradle of Christianity*. When we defend Kosovo, we *defend Christian Europe* against Islamization” (emphasis added).²⁹

Religion is overlexicalized—that is, *religion* is lexicalized in words such as the *Orthodox Church*, *Orthodoxy*, *Christianity*, and *Christian Europe*.

The newspapers construct a bipolar opposition between Christianity and Islam, describing Muslim Albanians as a homogenous social group responsible for the Islamization of Kosovo, Serbia, and the whole of Europe. For example:

The Vladika, who leads talks about Kosovo in Canada for the last ten days, stated that on one hand there were 150 Serbian Orthodox churches destroyed from 1999 till 2006. On the other hand, there are 400 new mosques built with the support of Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries. United States of America and other free world countries have supported Kosovo Muslims and their strive for Kosovo independence for too long now, while not being aware that this perhaps leads toward the destruction of the *Christian world*, and toward *Islamization of Europe*. (emphasis added)³⁰

Or “Islamists were trying hard to create and *violently push for Muslim laws* within the *Christian Europe*” (emphasis added).³¹

5. *Crime discourse*: “*Serbs defend themselves against the criminal Kosovo Albanians*.” In the analyzed newspapers, and in quantity newspapers such as *Blic*, crime discourse has been appropriated (Donais 2003) to legitimize and justify the nationalism. For example: “The biggest problem for our society remains solving the Kosovo status and collaborating with the Hague Tribunal. That is why the government is ready to fight the corruption, and *the Albanian criminals* that are like *cancer within Serbian society*” (emphasis added);³² or

Kosovska Mitrovica—In the Albanian village of Rudnik, the Serbs from Osijan have been stoned again. One of the stones has hit the U.N. bus window with many children inside. No one was hurt. But from the last year onwards, after the withdrawal of the Spanish KFOR military, every Tuesday and Friday, when the U.N. accompanies the Serbs to Kosovska Mitrovica, in Rudnik, they are stoned by a large group of adolescents. The Serbian community formally files a report to UNMIK and to the local Albanian authorities, but no one reacts. This is one more example that proves how *we, the Serbs*, need to defend ourselves *against the criminal Albanians*. (emphasis added)³³

Crime is overlexicalized—that is, *crime* is lexicalized in the chain of words of *drug trafficking, corruption, killings, destruction, violence, stealing, and traffic with people*. The newspapers again constructed a bipolar opposition between “us” (the Serbs) and “them” (the Kosovo Albanians). For example:

Serbian nation in Kosovo and Metohija is exposed to violence, and has no legal protection whatsoever. The Serbian count Aleksandar Karadzordzevic, after his three-day visit of Kosovo and Metohija, declared at the press conference in Kosovska Mitrovica that *the essential human right—the right to live—does not exist for the Serbs*. Serbs have no freedom to move, Albanians kill them with no reason, their property has been destroyed and stolen, and *their sacred lands have been burnt down and destroyed*. (emphasis added)³⁴

or

Kosovo Albanians are a part of the *international criminal group* that has been responsible for transfer of 275 illegal migrations from Kosovo to Western Europe only in the last seven months. Kosovo is a *safe-heaven for illegal migrants’ dealers*. Kosovo Albanians are a *part of an international drug-trafficking network*. (emphasis added)³⁵

or

Drug-dealers in Serbia have lost more than 13 million euros worth of drugs. In the last nine months, in 1.636 police actions, more than one ton and 200 kilograms different narcotics and drugs were seized. The main base for Albanian *narcotic-dealers* is Kosovo. The village of Veliki Trnovac is well-positioned on the global map of drug-trafficking. In Veliki Trnovac, every single moment, there are more than one ton of different narcotics and drugs. (emphasis added)³⁶

Discussion and Conclusion

The analysis of the two most popular Serbian newspapers has shown that, while presenting political context, the newspapers reproduced decades-old

Serbian nationalistic discourse of a Greater Serbia and, with the appropriation of different discourses, only legitimized and justified the Serbian image of Kosovo. From the past discourses, the newspapers have reproduced a particular type of a religious discourse, and they have borrowed a European war on terrorism and crime discourse, and appropriated them both into a Serbian national political context. Even more, these newspapers, it was shown, necessarily rely on established repertoires of references shared by their respective national readers, which are also connected to interpretative frameworks—supporting some positionings and images while avoiding others. The newspapers reappropriate different discourses by reclaiming Serbs as the victims of their own local perpetrators, Kosovo Albanians.

The differences between the newspapers do not exist in terms of the inclusion of discourses, but only in quantity of articles that included a particular discourse. Because *Blic* is more tabloid than *Vecernje novosti*, there are more articles written in the so-called criminal discourse and less in the so-called European discourse.

The journalists of both daily newspapers still practice the so-called nationalistic journalism, which borrows its tactics from nationalistic ideology. There are a lot of elements that are characteristic of these journalistic practices: evoking the past, and claiming to regain, or at least not to have lost, different historic symbolic glories and territories. This journalistic discourse is selectively idealized—the essentials of “our” nation are to be found nowhere else. This journalism expresses obedience to authority, it conforms to conventions and the dominant common sense, and it remains loyal to the mainstream nationalistic principle (Billing 1995). Nationalistic journalism establishes loyalty toward the state power and nationalistic elites, recreates the dichotomy of an “us-versus-them,” “my-country-right-or-wrong” version of reporting, and forges a sense of national pride and patriotism. Journalists of analyzed newspapers are, in that way, reproducing Serbian journalistic nationalistic ideology—which was extremely one-sided and lacking information on complex issues such as Islam, terrorism, Europe, crime, and independence. The analyzed journalism aligns itself with the research arguments on foreign news made by Nossek (2004), that “the more national the report is, the less professional it will be, i.e. the closer the reporters/editors are to a given news event in terms of national interest, the further they are from applying professional news values” (p. 343).

Why have both newspapers similarly published articles about Kosovo in global discourses? While Kosovo resonated strongly with the international community (which pressures the Serbian government to finally solve the Kosovo crisis and to withdraw from Kosovo) and the Serbian people, the mainstream newspapers, as crucial Serbian state propaganda apparatus, also saw the need to generalize the lessons of Kosovo and incorporate non-Serbian and contemporary

symbolism into the nationalism, to justify the reemergence of Serbia to the outside world. The lessons had to be universalized and brought into the beginning of the twenty-first century. For this reason, a new form of Kosovo interpretation began, bringing Serbia into the comparative antiterrorism, anticriminal, anti-independence, and European debate. In this particular historical position, Serbia has found itself in a situation in which Islam continues to be portrayed as the “other” and different marginal groups are also excluded from the images of Serbian citizenship—for example, Hungarians and Roma. Paradoxically, the new type of nationalism, we suggest, wants to be a global and democratic one—for example, resting on the specific imagined discourse of the global discourses. Even further, by appropriating global discourse, journalists (re)produce a hegemonic global order of this discourse. Thus, an allegedly agentive act is at one and the same time the very same act that (re)produces a hegemonic order which, arguably, creates the “opportunity” for the newspapers to adopt a dominant (political) language.

Mass media remain the central ideological battlefield today and media certainly perform an important role in providing the type of news and entertainment that fits with the imperatives of the existing socioeconomic, national structure. But even further, media are reinforcing the established nation-state system, and one needs to analyze the nationalistic logic of mass media—and how they evoke the nation with a national “we.” The internalized and naturalized imperative to encourage circulation and ratings, and to reassure the sense of national belonging, are all an important part of this process and must also not be overlooked. To that end, one of the crucial questions is how the diversity of cultures, interests, and groups that constitute civil society are to be related to the whole and to a universal equality of rights.³⁷ Is diversity, by essence, conflicting or complementary in a society? Attention to these questions in terms of national identity is crucial to the issue of the nation and the ability of different peoples to live together. It is necessary to distinguish between national identity, in terms of citizenship that implies the equal rights of all the ethnic groups within the given political unit, and the conception of a nation as ethnicity, which tends to monopolize all the other forms of identity and become a “substantial identity.” In this light, it is necessary to define the border between a natural national feeling and nationalism that is closely linked with an ethnocentrism that overvalues one’s own nation and undermines that of others.

Notes

1. Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica presents himself as a moderate nationalist. He was, however, in the context of Kosovo, threatening to impose sanctions on countries that would have recognized an independent Kosovo.
2. Nationalistic discourse here generally denotes those practices that create the objects of which they speak. We define nationalistic discourse here as all those discursive practices

- and articulations that on the first level of an identity creation advocate a superiority of belonging to a nation. We understand national identity as involving both self-awareness of the group and awareness of outside and inside “others” from which the nation wants to differentiate itself. Nation looks both inward, to unify itself, and outward, to divide itself from others. These socially constructed entities create cohesive identities through exclusionary nationalistic discourses that invoke common and unified cultural codes and experiences.
3. Milosevic’s skills in exploiting Kosovo for nationalistic purpose was apparent by 1989, when a huge rally was planned to commemorate the 600th anniversary of the Kosovo Battle. This battle was fought in the year 1389 on St. Vitus’ Day (June 28). The basic story surrounds Prince Lazar, an elected Serbian prince, who in legend was handed an ultimatum, whereby he was either to pay homage to the Turkish Sultan Murad I, relinquishing control of Serbian lands and taxation, or bring his forces on to Kosovo Polje to face the Sultan’s army. Lazar was later approached in a dream by a grey hawk flying from Jerusalem, and was offered a choice: an earthy kingdom or a heavenly kingdom (where the Serb would be defeated in battle). Lazar chose the latter.
 4. Both researchers come from the region of former Yugoslavia and they both speak and read Serbian and Croatian languages. There were no significant problems with the translation of news text from its original language to English.
 5. “State of Regions,” *Blic*, October 17, 2006:3.
 6. “Kosovo Will Not Fall,” *Vecernje novosti*, October 3, 2006:4.
 7. “Kosovo Issue Taken off the Agenda,” *Vecernje novosti*, October 2, 2006:4.
 8. “EU Ministers of Defense on Kosmet,” *Blic*, October 1, 2006:4. Kosmet is a Serbian name for Kosovo and Metohija is the Serbian official name for Kosovo.
 9. “On the Gathering of Active Supporters of Al Qaida,” *Blic*, October 22, 2006:5.
 10. “A Voice for a Constitution is a Voice of Hope for Kosovo,” *Vecernje novosti*, October 21, 2006:6.
 11. “We are Responsible for Postponing the Solution,” *Vecernje novosti*, October 12, 2006:4.
 12. “The Evidence on Terrorists’ Crimes,” *Blic*, October 16, 2006:2.
 13. Kosmet and Metohija.
 14. “Independent Kosovo—A Dangerous Precedence,” *Vecernje novosti*, October 7, 2006:4.
 15. “Holy Kosovo Borders,” *Blic*, October 21, 2006:4.
 16. “Tadić: Serbia Has a Legitimate Right to Defend its Borders,” *Blic*, October 26, 2006:2.
 17. “Destiny Is in Our Hands,” *Vecernje novosti*, October 10, 2006:4.
 18. The migration of Serbs and Montenegrins from Kosovo in the 1970s and 1980s has been both a cause and a consequence of the change in the ethnic structure and the quality of interethnic relationships. Between the 1941 and 1981, more than one hundred thousand Serbs have left Kosovo (Blagojevic 2000). Migrations of Serbs from Kosovo were usually explained as economic by the Albanian side and as a political and ethnic by the Serb side. For more on the migration of Serbs from Kosovo in the 1970s and 1980s, see Blagojevic (2000). She focuses on the real roots of this trauma, and on the ways it has been interpreted and manipulated within the Serbian nationalistic movement. Figures have been differed, and they have been differently interpreted and used as arguments to prove opposite points.
 19. “Moscow Advises Belgrade on Kosovo Negotiations,” *Blic*, October 20, 2006:4.
 20. “If Needed, a Veto for Kosovo,” *Vecernje novosti*, October 1, 2006:4.
 21. “The Crisis of Kosovo Strategy,” *Blic*, October 7, 2006:6.
 22. “Ahtisaari’s Nothingness,” *Vecernje novosti*, November 2, 2006:3.
 23. “Tadić for Elections of a President and a Parliament,” *Blic*, October 6, 2006:5.
 24. “Serbian President Boris Tadić: A Bridge towards Europe,” *Vecernje novosti*, October 27, 2006:4.

25. "Serbia Has Passed a New Constitution," *Vecernje novosti*, October 29, 2006:5.
26. "Our Political Aim Is a European Way of Life," *Vecernje novosti*, October 29, 2006:4.
27. "Albanian Premier Is Warned About Kosovo," *Blic*, October 4, 2006:3.
28. "Kosovo Is the Heart of Orthodoxy," *Vecernje novosti*, October 3, 2006:5.
29. "They Restore Churches in Kosovo, but Stone by Stone," *Blic*, November 14, 2006:5.
30. "The Voice for the Serbian Heart," *Vecernje novosti*, October 26, 2006:6.
31. "Patrijarh Pavle Calls Citizens for their Constitution Vote," *Blic*, October 27, 2006:5.
32. "Elections Are a Part of a National Interest," *Vecernje novosti*, October 7, 2006:6.
33. "The Bus Full of Serbs Stoned," *Blic*, October 7, 2006:4.
34. "Serbs with No Right to Live," *Vecernje novosti*, October 15, 2006:4.
35. "Albanian Base of Human Trafficking," *Blic*, October 27, 2006:5.
36. "Criminal: Strong Dealers," *Vecernje novosti*, October 15, 2006:5.
37. New questions come from a large set of issues surrounding the meaning of citizenship in liberal democracies; particularly, what values and virtues must citizens share as a minimum, how much diversity is optimal, etc. In this "radical pluralism argument" the cultural fragmentation of citizenship is seen not as a danger, but as a positive advantage. She argues that the universality of citizenship, in the sense of inclusion and participation for everyone, stands in tension with the other meaning of universality embedded in modern political ideas—universality as generality and universality as equal treatment.

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