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## **An Analysis of the Factors that Influence Ethnic Conflict and Minority Violence in the Western Balkans**

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The University of Southern Mississippi

An Analysis of the Factors that Influence Ethnic Conflict and Minority Violence in the  
Western Balkans

by

Druanna Mozingo

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Honors College of  
The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
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## **Abstract**

This research project explores factors affected levels of ethnic violence in the Western Balkans in the 1990's. What caused the violent outbreak and further spread of civil unrest of the different ethnic groups, culminating in the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990's? Following a comparative analysis format, this project analyzes secondary sources such as government documents, reports by international human rights organizations and theoretical work from the field of international relations to help answer this question. While there are many factors that influence ethnic conflict and minority violence, NATO influence seemed to have the most impact in this area. The main factors studied are the lack of cultural knowledge and strategic militarist interventions by NATO are analyzed. These results show that ethnic violence has certain emotional triggers that can be avoided by appropriate government policies and actions.

Key Terms: Southeastern Europe, Macedonia, Bosnia, Kosovo, War, Conflict

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## **Chapter I: Problem Statement**

South Eastern Europe has experienced a tumultuous recent history. Unstable institutions, ethnic tensions, war, and territorial disputes plague the relatively new countries. While the rest of the world focuses their attention on other regions, governments of Balkan states struggle to maintain peace and order. The Balkan countries, all with new and unstable government bodies, have managed to make an impressive impact on the world's stage. However, all of the countries face ethnic conflicts with the minority populations, and the governments seem to struggle with the issue of regulating and resolving the conflicts. This study hopes to compare how different state approaches to the treatment of minorities affect levels of ethnic conflict the Western Balkans in a comparative analysis format.

### **The Creation and Fall of Yugoslavia (1918-1990)**

To understand how the treatment of minority populations compares between the two cases, one must first understand the history of ethnic tension in the region. Although Yugoslavia officially became a fully, recognized state in 1918, the idea of a single state for Slavic people emerged around the 17<sup>th</sup> century. When formed, the largest region with the most people, the Kingdom of Serbia, gained power and influence over the region. Only 10 years into the formation of the Yugoslavia state, King Alexander I decided to abolish all historic, and ethnic areas to create five new, albeit arbitrarily drawn, borders. The subsequent years marked by World War II brought fascism and communism to the Balkan region, further causing strain among different groups. This begun an age of ethnic tensions resulting in the oppression of minority populations.



In 1945, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was formed, establishing six republics, an autonomous province, and an autonomous district in the constitution. The Socialist Republics of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, and Macedonia were created largely by trying to include whatever majority ethnic population was located in the area. The six republics continued to evolve throughout the Cold War. Even though the Republics were formed with some ethnic considerations in mind, the six were doomed to fail. One of the biggest factors that led to the break-up of Yugoslavia was the creation of autonomous provinces in ethnic Albanian-majority populated Kosovo and the mixed-populated Vojvodina, which significantly reduced Serbia's influence in the country. By 1981, protests in Kosovo calling for more autonomy from the Serbian region shook the unstable region to the breaking point. The Kosovo-Serbia conflict intensified when Serbian communist leader Slobodan Milošević sought to restore pre-1974 Serbian sovereignty, voting to reduce autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina. The fall of communism in Eastern Europe coupled with ethnic conflict, countrywide rioting, and minority based violence caused the fall of Yugoslavia. While all six republics held multi-party elections in 1990, some republics embraced democratization more quickly than others.

### **Kosovo-Serbia Relations after Yugoslavia**

After the breakup of Yugoslavia, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia all declared independence, while Serbia and Montenegro remained united to form the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). Shortly into 1990, the Yugoslav Wars erupted with massive engagements in Croatia and Bosnia. Serbian nationalists opposed independence from Yugoslavia, and received logistical and financial support from the

FRY. The ethnic-Albanian majority in Kosovo rejected Serbian engagements in Croatia and Bosnia, causing the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) to be formed. From 1995-1996, the KLA started its campaign to sabotage Serbian-run police stations in Kosovo, and started to receive smuggled weapons from Albania. With ethnic tensions between the Serbs and ethnic-Albanians at an all-time high, the Kosovo War broke out in 1998. Over the course of a year, multiple diplomatic solutions failed, NATO intervened on behalf of a “humanitarian war”, and over 3,000 victims died as casualties of war. The conflict was marked by swift action, and horrific results. The conflict finally ended with the signing of the Kumanovo Treaty that called for the removal of FRY troops from Kosovo and establishing a ground and air safe zone between each country.

From 2000 to 2008, the status of Kosovo was disputed, with ethnic tensions at an all-time high and treatment of minorities at an all-time low. After 8 years of civil unrest, Kosovo called for its independence from Serbia. Kosovo’s independence was immediately rejected by Serbia whose government imposed an Action Plan to combat the decision from Kosovo. Serbia still does not officially recognize Kosovo as a sovereign nation. While diplomatic relations have been reinstated slightly, the two countries still remain in conflict. Ethnic Albanians and Serbs not only remember the horrors of past ethnic tensions, but also remain stuck in the old ways of nationalism and ethnic discrimination.

### **The Greece-Macedonia Name Dispute**

With many countries declaring independence after the fall of Yugoslavia, The Republic of Macedonia or Macedonia was one of the first countries to secede in 1991 through a referendum supporting independence from Yugoslavia. Macedonia’s break

from Yugoslavia was characterized with peaceful democratic transition, unlike the majority of Balkan states. The country also managed to maintain its borders only undergoing small changes throughout the 1990's. While Macedonia was peaceful within the country, their independence started a conflict that is still affecting the country today.

The Greece-Macedonia name dispute started when Greece began to openly object to the usage of the term "Macedonia" by the country of Macedonia. The term "Macedonia" came from the ancient tribe of Macedon whose ancestors inhabited what is now the northern region of Greece and parts of Macedonia. The history of the term "Macedonia" and area inhabited by the Macedon tribe are sacred to many people who believe that ancient Macedonia was the cradle of modern life. Because of the cross-cultural ties to both Greeks and Macedonians, the use of the term and culture is highly debated. Greece's official stance is that the dispute could be solved if Macedonia used a geographical qualifier, like "The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia".

Macedonians reject the notion believing that they have a right to the culture just like the Greeks do. Since the northern portion of Greece is called Macedonia, which borders the country of Macedonia, the debate has pitted both countries against one another. Greece cites the possibility of Macedonia wanting a "United Macedonia", which would take the Macedonia region from Greece to form a united territory. Although most Macedonians completely reject this idea of territorial gain from Greece, Greece and Macedonia are still at odds over the name. The millions of ethnic Greeks who consider themselves Macedonian do not believe that the Macedonians from the country of Macedonia should have claim of the culture. This dispute, while seemingly unimportant, has completely changed the course of both nations both domestically and internationally.

Because of this name dispute, Greece has continually blocked Macedonia from all forms of international organizations. Macedonia was only allowed into the United Nations under the “temporary name”, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYRM). This name that Greece picked for Macedonia is still seen on some official documents, making the name official. While over 130 countries officially recognize Macedonia’s constitutional name, Greece has made few efforts to solve the issue. In 1995, Macedonia signed a UN Interim Accord with Greece making significant changes to the country’s flag in order to remove disputed cultural symbols like the Vergina Sun. While Macedonia made changes to the flag and constitution, Greece promised to not block Macedonia from organization if name the FYRM was used. In 2008, however, Greece blocked Macedonia’s accession into NATO because of the name dispute. Although the International Court of Justice ruled that Greece illegally blocked Macedonia from NATO, violating the Interim Accord, weak support from the international community has allowed the Greece-Macedonia name dispute continue.

This dispute has had a horrible effect on the citizens of both countries, particularly the minorities in Macedonia and Greece. As quoted from the Human Rights Report about Macedonian minorities in Greece, their “internationally recognized human rights and even their existence are vigorously denied by the Greek government.” Thousands of reports of discrimination and abuse of minorities both Macedonian and non-Macedonian abound in Greece. The basic right of self-determination is questioned every day by minorities in Greece.

## **Chapter II. Literature Review**

Ethnic conflict has always been a large problem in Southeastern European countries. The Balkans, in particular, have been largely susceptible to ethnic conflict due to the peculiar mixture of age-old ethnic rivalries and newly formed governments. In these cases, there are certain factors that seem to contribute to the growing tension between minorities and governments in these countries. Although the literature covers a wide variety of subjects, this review will cover three specific subjects that illustrate the problems and possible solutions of ethnic tension in the western Balkans: issues of identity/self-determination, conflict regulation, and territorial autonomy. The material present in this review will help enlighten the connections between the governments of these countries and how their regulation of minority violence affects ethnic conflict in the two countries.

### **Issues of Identity and Self-Determination**

Issues with identity and self-determination are a century's old problem. Even with the earliest civilizations, minority or indigenous peoples found themselves fighting to hold on to their culture and history. While there are multiple definitions of the term "identity", James D. Fearon's study of identity reveals the word and its meaning have changed over time. Fearon's study shows that our present meaning of the word "identity" has just recently come to include factors like culture, language, race, and ethnicity (Fearon 38). Fearon continues to explain that the term "identity" is at the heart of comparative and international politics, and has two different meanings depending on the person. The first part is described as a "social identity." This category is most often the standard description of a person, encompassing terms like "American", "French", "mother", and "teacher". This identity is often based on a nationality, or occupation, and

is mostly dependent on the status of the person, rather than the feelings of that person. The second part of identity is a “personal identity”. This category features the set factors that the person deems socially relevant, such as culture, history, beliefs, and attitudes (Fearon 13). This part of identity can sometimes contradict one’s social identity. For example, while the Albanians in Serbia held “citizens of Serbia” as their national identity, the group more closely aligned with their personal identity that represented their shared ethnicity and culture. This study is extremely relevant to this paper because the issues and complexities of identity are some of the main factors of ethnic conflict in the Balkan region.

Issues with identity continue far past their social and personal contexts; some problems of identity have led to problems of self-determination. Self-determination officially became an international right in 1949 with the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. While the right was given to the entire international community, many have debated the exact meaning of self-determination. Authors Aleksandar Pavkovic and Peter Rada debated some of the implications of self-determination in their study. The authors believed that there are two problems with the theory of self-determination: the ongoing struggle between self-determination and territorial integrity and the implications of state that use self-determination for secession (Pavkovic and Rada 1). Self-determination is the right of nation or people to freely choose its international political status, while territorial integrity maintains the current borders and boundaries already established. The authors outline different schools of political science that focus on nationhood. Realist political theory values territorial integrity over self-determination, while liberal internationalism explains that because of greater individual liberties and

expanding international cooperation throughout the world, people have a greater sense of self-determination and identity (Pavkovic and Rada 7). The issue of territorial integrity and self-determination is not only debated in international relations theory, but also present in countries around the world. This study of self-determination is relevant to my paper because of both Greece and Macedonia, and Serbia and Kosovo's issues with self-determination and border disputes.

While there are many nations facing issues with territory, the international community has yet to establish criteria for succession that is justified and should then officially recognized. In Aleksandar Pavkovic's article, "Secession, Majority Rule and Equal Rights: A Few Questions", the issues of international justification for secession are discussed. While Pavkovic covers theories such as Anarcho-Capitalism or Democratic Secessionism, the most prevalent theory seen in the Balkans is that of Cultural Secessionism (Pavkovic 5). This theory explains that a minority has a right to secession if the parent country has disallowed the development of the minority culture. The author explains that the institutions of the majority are created in a way that automatically "excludes any minority culture and those who share it" (Pavkovic 6). This theory of cultural secessionism is seen in many parts of the world, but is especially prevalent in Southeastern Europe. While the newly formed governments of the Balkan region have tried to establish democratic institutions, the discrimination seen in the Cold War era is still present in those countries. These theories of secession will help explain why some countries choose to recognize some countries, but not others.

## **Conflict Regulation**

With so many conflicts ending in violent confrontations and war, governments are now looking at ways in which to solve ethnic conflicts peacefully and efficiently. Within the last decade a new field of political science, “Peace and Conflict Studies”, has become one of the most widely applicable areas in the study. In Mary Frances Lebamoff and Zoran Ilievski’s article about the regulation of conflict in Macedonia, the authors delve into the types and the regulations of ethnic conflict. The authors use the common definition of conflict regulation that covers any practices or methods that help facilitate the peaceful ending of conflict. The authors even describe three different types of ethnic conflict that conflict regulation can help manage. The first type of ethnic conflict is “group-state conflict”, which is tension between a minority and state institutions (Lebamoff and Ilievski 1). The other types of conflict are “inter-group conflict”, which is conflict between the host nation and a minority, and conflict between two or more minorities. While these conflicts share some of the same aspects, the conflicts should all be dealt with separately. Both authors believe that every ethnic conflict is waged because of the clash of values or culture or the struggle for resources and power (Lebamoff and Ilievski 3). The different factors that cause ethnic conflict, like the situation in Macedonia, create a condition that leaves the government with little to influence the conflict.

Another key portion of this article is the explanation of three different types of conflict regulation. Since the authors believe that different ethnic conflicts should be dealt with in different ways, they describe ways to help reduce tensions in a situation like in Macedonia. The theory of “consociational” calls for elite power sharing within the



society. The main argument for “consociational” is that with power being shared among all groups, not just majority in power, the policies and laws will be less restrictive and more accessible to all ethnic groups in the state (Lebamoff and Ilievski 4). While many believe that the redistribution of power will grant all ethnic groups a “fair chance” in government, there are many who doubt the theory’s effectiveness. Some political scientists believe that sharing the power will allow for an excess of autonomy, which will in turn create a strong incentive for secession. The second type of conflict featured in this article is the “Integrative Approach”. This approach calls for more participation, mainly through initiatives and policies from the State, that extends across ethnic and cultural lines (Lebamoff and Ilievski 4). The main policy of this theory is to include more of multi-ethnic parties in policies and local elections. By creating more self-actualization for these groups, a stable, multi-ethnic democratic society would be possible. While both are very popular theories of conflict regulation, these authors have created a new possibility for governments called “Complex Power-Sharing”. This approach would call for aspects of both the Consociational and Integrative theory, but would call for more participation by international actors and institutions, and would also focus on “structural issues [such] as economic management, civil-military relations, and human and minority rights” (Lebamoff and Ilievski 5). All of these theories of conflict regulation are distinctive and effective in their own ways showing that every ethnic conflict must be treated in a unique way.

While there are many ways to solve ethnic conflict, why do some governments choose to implement a plan to peacefully resolve conflict while others result in violence? In Irina Khmelko and Krista E. Wiegand’s article, the authors try to answer that question

using a theory that incorporates factors like institutional mechanisms and cultural legacies. The authors used models from different countries around the world to find factors that would increase the country's chances of resorting to violence against ethnic groups within the countries. After running the data, the authors found that in all ethnic conflicts in all cases, there was one factor that appeared in every case: more than one group was living within boundaries of the state and one or more groups felt excluded from the political system and wanted changes in state policies (Khmelko and Wiegand 9). While that factor is present in every case, each case of ethnic conflict and government action is different. The authors explain that when governments use "repression" techniques against a minority, the State is often acting defensively, fearing retaliation or the use of force from the minority group in order to gain power or make substantial changes to the system. The authors then argue that ethnic conflict is sometimes guaranteed because of the nature of bonding with other of same culture, and in turn, leaving those of unlike culture out. While both are reasons why governments choose to oppress a minority, the authors give specific data explaining which situations are more likely to end in violence. Violent repression of minority groups, ending in death, is 2.4 times more likely in countries with political parties that are coerced and excluded from the political competition (Khmelko and Wiegand 24). The authors also explain that violent repression causing death is 76 times more likely when the targets are tagged as militant instead of civilian (Khmelko and Wiegand 25). The results of this study are extremely helpful in this paper because the data can help explain what factors led to violence in Serbia and relative peace in Greece.

## **Territorial Autonomy**

In dealing with ethnic conflict, especially in Europe, there are many different ways for states to take action against the tension. While there are many responses to ethnic conflict and violence, territorial autonomy is often the most sought after and disputed option-- both for minorities and their governments. In Yash Ghai's book called, *Autonomy and Ethnicity: Negotiating Competing Claims in Multi-Ethnic States*, Ghai seeks to study the meaning of autonomy and use case study analysis of countries that have invoked autonomy in some form. Ghai begins his article stating that the idea of autonomy changes within the different cultures and states, resulting in major gains and losses for the cultures involved. Some states like Canada or India enjoy relative stability through autonomy, while other states like the former Yugo-Slav states strive for autonomy in order to express a cultural diversity (Ghai 2). These differences in the stability and functionality of autonomous regions seem to be directly related to the type of autonomy involved. Ghai points out two major forms of autonomy: federal and regional autonomous regions. Federal autonomy is used when all regions have identical powers and share the same relationship to the central government (Ghai 8). The author notes that while a federal autonomy allows for the sharing of powers and responsibilities, this form does little to stem ethnic and minority tension. Federal autonomy is based solely on fixed borders, not taking consideration for the population make-up. While this is the most common type of autonomy, it serves little purpose in ethnically diverse regions of the world like South Eastern Europe. The other type of autonomy, regional autonomy, is a better answer to ethnic conflict. Regional autonomy is when a government gives specific powers to a region where the minority makes up the majority (Ghai 8).

This type, unlike federal autonomy, helps minorities create institutions in line with their own cultural diversity. The major difference between the two types is that, while regional autonomy does account for the minority population within a county, the regional type decreases the role of the region in national government. Ghai soon points out that studying regional autonomous territories through the lens of liberal democracy will not properly explain the phenomenon. Regional autonomy is in itself asymmetrical because it allows the central government to distribute powers, laws, and policies different across the territorials, directly violating the liberal democracy tenant of similar treatment for all (Ghai 12). Examples of both of these types of autonomy are seen throughout the world, but with the widespread ethnic conflict, the Balkan region seems to be a testing ground for autonomous regions and their central states.

In Stefan Wolff's article, "Conflict Management in Divided Societies: The Many Uses of Territorial Self-governance", Wolf discusses the Balkan region and its autonomous regions. Wolff cites autonomy or territorial self-governance as one of the main answers to ethnic conflict in the Balkan region. Self-governance or TSG arrangements help to provide utilitarian solutions that allow the different ethnic groups and minorities to fill their need for self-determination while simultaneously conserving the overall social and territorial stability of the existing state (Wolff 7). This cohabitation of ethnic minorities and majority governments allows for the peaceful resolution of most conflict, based on the premise that neither party's identity is in jeopardy of realization. Based on the theory of territorial autonomy, the usage of autonomy as a tactic of conflict resolution seems to serve as the panacea for all ethnic conflict. Wolff, however, finds that the theory and actualization of territorial autonomy differs in practice. Wolff cites that the

focus on just the territorial dimension of autonomy only further allow for the majority elites to gain more power over the minority (Wolff 8). To counteract that problem, Wolff suggests that territorial self-governance should be paired with other conflict management mechanisms in order to create a sustainable solution to ethnic conflict. A conflict regulation mechanism like “complex power sharing” or CPS is a crucial addition to autonomy. By devolving the central powers of the government in order to share with the autonomous region, which can then assign powers to local institutions.

In using CPS, both the state and the territories feel a certain competency and participation in national legislation making without infringing upon cultural diversity (Wolff 10). Wolff explains that the success of these two conflict management techniques relies on two factors: the degree of ethnic heterogeneity in the territorial entities and the size of the area compared to the state. When there are many different ethnic groups in an autonomous region, CPS institutions will be more likely in order to allow all groups to shape policy. The size of the territorial will determine how much land is valued for resources, cultural heritage sites, and military advantages (Wolff 9). The combination of these seems to answer the major critique of territorial self-governance. Some critics of CPS and TSG fear that after a region has gained autonomy, the majority ethnic group in charge will then begin to subjugate the new minority, causing more ethnic tension. While many critique the institution of territorial self-governance, Wolff ends his article citing the reasons explaining why autonomy is a good answer to ethnic conflict. Autonomy offers viable alternatives that satisfy self-determination demands without decreasing the effectiveness and stability of the state. This method allows for the peaceful negotiation of conflict without diminishing ethnic or minority rights (Wolff 14).

While autonomy and TSG is a popular choice for conflict regulation, the global community still debates the legality of the issue. When Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia in 2008, Serbia looked towards international law for legal precedent on the matter. However, little about the issue of autonomy has been justified or declared illegal in the realm of international law. In Alexander Osipov's article, "Non-territorial Autonomy and International Law", Osipov seeks to see how international law plays into the ideas of autonomy and TSG. Before 2007, there was no case law on the matter of autonomy and international law had never officially recognized the term "autonomy". After the creation of the "UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples", the international community finally saw the "right to autonomy", but it did little to help stem ethnic conflict (Osipov 398). In his article, Osipov studies previous case law and international norms to understand how the international community views autonomy as a viable solution to conflict regulation. While Osipov found that there were several examples of hard and soft law policies that contained the rhetoric of rights and autonomy for minorities, he discovered that most rights were granted on a *'per se'* basis (Osipov 408). In conclusion, Osipov notes a specific and wide gap between the theory of autonomy and TSG in international law, and the realities and functionality of determining its legality on an international basis (Osipov 409). Questions of international law and autonomy are important to understanding the likeness of a minority group to resort to violence in order to gain its independence from its state. As in the case of NATO's involvement with Kosovo's autonomy and then subsequent independence from Serbia, the international community is willing to involve itself in some cases of minority conflict, but unwilling to help in maintaining the newly formed state's prosperity in the future.

### **Chapter III. Methodology**

The research design of this thesis takes the form of a comparative analysis study. Before outlining the comparative method, a brief description of key terms is necessary. The term “policy” or “policies” is defined in this methodology and further analysis as any specific action or non-action by a government agency, body, or presidential mandate in regards to a specific event. The term “ethnic violence” is defined by any measure of mistreatment of a minority, whether emotional, physical or damage to property. “Ethnic violence” can also be associated with majority/minority issues or minority/minority conflict.

The design will be based on the structure set by Arend Lijphart in his 1971 article, “Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method”. Lijphart defines the comparative method as the systematic analysis of a small number of cases, or “small-N analysis”. Lijphart’s comparative method is one scientific method that works to discover empirical relationships among variables, correlating information in order to make generalizations about the “small-N analysis”. For Lijphart’s comparative method, two factors must be present within the data: the establishment of general empirical relationships among two or more variables, and that all other variables are controlled. While Lijphart outlines the experimental, statistical, and comparative methods in his work, this study will comprise of a comparative analysis.

The only difference between the statistical and comparative methods is the numbers of cases, in that the number of cases used in the comparative method is too small to permit systematic control by means of partial correlations. The weakness of using the comparative method is that one often has too few cases to study, and many variables to apply and correlate. In order to combat the imperfect structure of analysis,

one must increase the number of cases when possible, reduce “property-space” analysis, and focus the research on specific variables. After choosing the method structure of analysis and understanding the weaknesses of said method, the researcher must then choose her cases and variables for analysis. The “small-N” variable or cases needed to form a comparative analysis will comprise of a study of the Western Balkans: Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia, Greece, Macedonia, Kosovo, and Serbia. In this study, the independent variable will be government policies affecting social, economic, and political conditions, while the dependent variable will be defined as the levels of ethnic violence recorded. After choosing method, cases, and variables, Lijphart’s method instructs the researcher to analyze and compare explicit events, any case-specific data previously recorded, policies or actions enacted by the “small-N” cases, or any other source related to the cases analyzed.

In order to properly answer the research question, an analysis of secondary sources is necessary. The literature reviewed will consist of historical reports, government documents, first-hand accounts of the ethnic violence experienced, and official reports recorded from organizations like human rights groups, non-profit research institutions, and academics in the field. Evidence and literature from the late 1980-current will be analyzed. This set of sources was produced based on the timeline of events starting from the fall of Yugoslavia to the formation of the new nation states, both of which are crucial to this study. These sources will be used to answer the research questions presented in this thesis in hopes to find certain factors that cause ethnic violence.



Case studies of each country will also be analyzed in order to better expose the official practices and policies of governments in times of war and ethnic conflict. While this study will primarily consist of the qualitative analysis of secondary material, economic data, like the “Index of Economic Freedom Report”, will also be used to show the economic status of countries before, during, and after ethnic conflict. This analysis will help determine if economic status has a relation to the rise of ethnic tension and mistreatment of minorities. Other data such as the “International Religious Freedom Report” and the “Global Democracy Ranking Report” will be evaluated in order to gain valuable statistics about the governments and countries under review.

The main focus of this thesis is to evaluate different state approaches of the treatment of minorities in the Western Balkan countries in order to understand how government policies and actions affect levels of ethnic violence. The research question presented in this thesis is as follows:

1. What factors influence levels of discrimination and ethnic tension in each case?

In order to best answer the first question presented in this thesis an analysis of the official reports of each country from governments and human rights organizations concerning the ethnic violence of the late 1990’s-current is necessary. These documents allow for the investigation of specific events that took place. An analysis of first-hand accounts from victims of discrimination and violence will also be required in order to better understand the tension and xenophobia shared by minorities and their governments.

## **Chapter IV: Factors of Ethnic Violence: NATO Intervention**

After a careful review of multiple factors, NATO and United States involvement has made a large impact on ethnic and minority violence in the Western Balkans. Since the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949, the role and powers of the organization have shifted from a peacekeeping approach to conflict prevention and direct military intervention. NATO involvement in the Balkan region stands as a turning point for the organization, as it forced the alliance to begin a new era of conflict management. The current instability and crises in the Balkan Region is a direct result of NATO influence and lack of action in the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990's. NATO involvement in the region's conflicts only stood to increase ethnic conflict as the organization's actions revealed a lack of true understanding of the issues.

This study will first examine the four major conflicts of the Yugoslav Wars, with particular emphasis on NATO's military involvement. By enacting a "closed door policy" towards enlargement and its selective and strategic militarist interventions in the Balkan Wars, NATO has shown a disregard for the citizens and their issues in the region. The "Balkan Question" is only an example of NATO's inability to correctly respond to humanitarian crises in other regions of the world. Furthermore, NATO action and subsequent removal from Balkan conflicts has increased levels of ethnic violence and tension in the region. While this study shows varied evidence for the negative effects of past NATO influence in the region, the question still remains if the Balkans could still stand to gain from a strong NATO presence. NATO may still be able to save the delicate transatlantic alliance by the strategic membership enlargement of Balkan countries.

## *The Evolution of NATO*

NATO's first Secretary General Lord Ismay was once famously quoted saying that NATO's purpose was "to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down." This statement was largely true at the time, making the organization's role seem deceptively simple. However, over the last 65 years, the role of NATO has changed drastically. At the core of the treaty, NATO sought to deter Soviet expansionism, halt any revival of nationalist militarism in Europe through a strong North American presence on the continent, and encourage European political integration. While NATO has experienced successes in its 65-year history, the organization has seemingly abandoned the Balkan region post break-up of Yugoslavia. With ethnic conflict worsening and the number of conflict increasing, the region is searching for the organization that promised a Europe "whole, free and at peace."

In 1989, NATO accomplished its foremost initiative with the dissolution of Communism and the fall of the Berlin Wall. The greatest perceived threat to the United States was soviet expansionism; most nations happily turned away from the region after 1989. The Balkans, however, were only to experience more violence and civil conflict. Up until 1989, the primary purpose of the organization was to deter the Soviet Block, but with it disbanded, NATO quickly had to evolve to meet these changes. Sensing the tension, NATO began its mission as a cooperation and diplomatic alliance by allowing former Warsaw Pact countries opportunities to partner with the organization. While NATO encouraged former Soviet Block counties to engage in the Partnership for Peace alliance, the organization still held onto the ideals of only involving in member countries'

conflicts (Pagenkopf, 2014). While this inclusive exercise helped alleviate some former Soviet tensions, the role of NATO would soon change again after 1989.

Fueled by the fall of Communism and the Soviet Union, the delicate balance of power crushed the already unstable Yugoslavia. Countries began declaring independence, exacerbated by the fears of instability and the hope for democracy and peace. To combat the sudden rush of ethnic tension, NATO took on the role of a security organization (Holmberg, 2011). During the 8 years of the Yugoslav Wars, NATO military forces intervened in two of the conflicts with massive bombing campaigns and ground troop forces. These specific interventions stood to fully recognize NATO as a military organization, one that is willing to intervene on behalf of non-members countries.

### **NATO Interventions: Success or Failure?**

The definition of success in NATO involvement is tricky, as it seems to change with the year and type of conflict. As seen in the Libya crisis, NATO military involvement has been hailed a success, while involvement in Balkans can only be classified as a failure. This study uses scholarship from both sides of the debate to discuss the success of NATO involvement in the Balkan region. While NATO involvement in international crises is well studied, most scholarship remains to debate the effectiveness and definitions of success for the organization. Supporters of NATO as an effective organization tout NATO involvement in the Libya crisis in 2011 as the “success story” of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Through rapid response and collaboration with the surrounding countries, NATO “remained [to be] an essential source of stability” (Daalder & Stavridis, 2012). Despite

supposed successes in Libya, there are still questions of the relevancy of NATO in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Some believe that the primary purpose of NATO was to ensure the fall of the Soviet Union; therefore, the organization soon became irrelevant after 1990 (McInnes, 1994). They argue that NATO was forced to become both a political security and military defense organization in order to combat the sudden instability in Eastern Europe (Holmberg, 2011). Unfortunately, NATO's current and sporadic action in the Balkans only seems to increase ethnic violence.

This study concludes that the success of NATO cannot only be measured by the organization's ability to meet its objectives; rather it should be measured by the outcome and impact of actually meeting those objectives. Failure should be further defined as any action that exacerbates violence or destabilizes the country after NATO involvement. As NATO's role is to "safeguard the freedom and security of its members through political and military means", the result of even a limited role in the worsening of ethnic, minority, or gender violence is undoubtedly a failure.

When dealing with conflicts that involve terrorism, NATO's role is clear, as its purpose is understood: support U.S. efforts to combat terrorism (de Nevers, 2007). Even before 2001, NATO and the U.S. clearly supported any deterrence of terrorism as it could possibly harm our strategic and economic interests in Middle Eastern countries. Unfortunately ethnic conflicts and humanitarian conflicts have never been a clear priority for the US and NATO, which is further evident in the lack of involvement in the Rwandan and Darfur genocides. NATO only involved itself in the Yugoslav Wars

because of the fear of post-Soviet states becoming closer with Russia, thus harming the strategic gains of the US and NATO after 1989. NATO missions in Yugoslavia were never to be a success because of NATO's lack of actual understanding and stake in the unique ethnic conflicts in the region.

### **An Increase in Violence: NATO in the Balkans: 1989- 1999**

Most experts agree that the NATO alliance was ill prepared for the sudden power vacuum in Eastern Europe. In hopes of calming the region, NATO quickly created The North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) in 1991. Even though 11 of the former Soviet republics accepted the "hand of friendship" and joined under the banner of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the partnership was not enough to quell the ethnic tensions in the region (McInnes, 1994). The Yugoslav Wars began soon after the creation of the NACC. The Yugoslav Wars consisted of four conflicts: the Slovenia War, the Croatian War, the Bosnian War, and the Kosovo War. Most of these conflicts began when Serbian-nationalists in the Yugoslav-countries, fueled by Serbia President Slobodan Milosevic's xenophobia and extreme nationalism, revolted against proposed independence from Yugoslavia. While NATO had little involvement besides arms and naval embargos in the first two conflicts, NATO direct military involvement in the Bosnian and Kosovo Wars only managed to increase levels of ethnic violence.

The first conflict or the "10-Day War" began shortly after the election of Milan Kucan in 1990. In 1991, war broke out between the Slovenia Territorial Defense and the Yugoslav People's Army or (JNA). The fighting ended a short 10 days after June 26<sup>th</sup>,

1990. While this conflict did result in more than a dozen deaths and hundreds of injuries, this war was of little concern to the major Yugoslav powers because of the small Serb population within Slovenia. The next conflict was Croatia's independence in 1991. This conflict would last five years. Fueled by the fear and warmongering media campaign of Milosevic, Croatian Serbs rejected Croatia's independence and began fighting the Croatian government (BBC, 2014). The Yugoslav People's Army supplies the Serbian nationalist with weapons and military assistance. By the end of the first year, one third of Croatia was within Serbian control.

With former Yugoslavia falling apart, many non-Serbian citizens called on the US, Europe, and NATO for assistance. Unfortunately, those calls fell on deaf ears. NATO remained largely absent in the crises for the better part of the early 1990's. With two conflicts raging on, the former Yugoslav countries were falling apart, but little attention was given from NATO. Unfortunately, when NATO did intervene, it only created more conflict. "Operation Sharp Guard" started in 1995 and was carried out by NATO and the European Union. Operation Sharp Guard was a joint naval blockade and arms embargo of the Adriatic Sea and former Yugoslav countries. While the blockade's purpose was to halt the proliferation of military equipment across Eastern Europe, it ended up helping the Serbian armies. The embargo actually managed to allow the Yugoslav People's Army and Serbian militants to keep and spread their own weapons. The embargo particularly gave the JNA an advantage over Croatia, securing their place as the dominant militant group in former Yugoslavia (Cepanec, 2002). The results of the embargo were obvious; even though indirectly, NATO action not only exacerbated ethnic

conflict in the region, but also allowed the Serbian nationalists to nearly destroy the newly independent Croatia.

### **“Adding Fuel to the Fire”: NATO in the Bosnian War**

While the role of NATO is seemingly hard to determine in the Slovenia and Croatian crises, the alliance’s failure in the Bosnian and Kosovo Wars directly related to an increase in the ethnic violence seen later in the region. After Slovenia and Croatia’s independence in 1991, conflict and violence spread to Bosnia and Herzegovina. While all countries in the Balkans are characterized by their diverse ethnic nature, Bosnia and Herzegovina has one of the most complex ethnic populations. The 1991 Bosnia National Census and Council of Europe estimate the Bosnia population as follows: Bosniaks (43.5%), Serbs (31.2%), Croats (17.4%), Yugoslavs (5.5%) and Others (2.4%). Out of the whole population, over 34% identified as Muslim, which is considered a national recognized minority (Council of Europe, 2004). This diverse population led to the one of the most violent conflicts of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The Bosnian War began in 1992 with the Bosnian Serbs rejecting Bosnia’s declaration of independence. Known for his extreme islamophobia, Milosevic attacked the capital of Bosnia in order to “protect” the Serb minority from Bosnian Muslims. The Bosnian Serbs, backed by the Yugoslav People’s Army, armed Serbian nationalists and soon mobilized their forces in order to secure Serbian territory within Bosnia and Herzegovina. As in Croatian Independence War, the Serbs were quickly able to secure territory because of NATO’s arms embargo and the JNA’s ability to distribute military equipment across the region. The conflict lasted 3 years, and resulted in the most lives



lost since World War II. During the three-year conflict, over 100,000 died, 2.2 million were displaced, and the largest recorded mass-rape campaign was recorded. According to Lene Hansen's work on mass-rape during the Bosnian War, between 20,000-50,000 women were systemically raped as a form of genetic cleansing in order to create a long-lasting Serbian patrilineal legacy (Hansen, 2001).

Although most depictions of NATO involvement portray the NATO bombing of Bosnia in 1995 to be its first example of involvement in the region, the organization's action leading up to the 1995 bombing depict a different account. The most violent acts of ethnic conflict began after the failed 1991 US-sponsored peace agreement between groups fighting in Croatia. Between 1992-1995, the role of NATO in the Bosnia War evolved from monitoring to enforcing compliance, and then finally in 1995, to full military involvement.

In 1992, NATO agreed to monitor and secure UN missions "Operation Sharp Vigilance", "Operation Maritime Guard", and "Operation Maritime Monitor"; all of which helped secure the arms embargo and restricted air and maritime zone around the Balkan countries. In the events leading to the 1995 NATO bombing campaign in Bosnia, the scope of NATO involvement evolved to include limited bombing and forcing compliance of UN "safe" zones. When Serb forces attacked the UN safe zone in Goražde, NATO responded by limited bombing campaigns of Serbia forces. This attack came without regard to the safety or well-being of UN officers, which led to the capture and murder of dozens of NATO peacekeepers and Goražde Bosniaks.

While NATO did have a small hand in Bosnian affairs pre-1995, most of the efforts were ineffective. NATO intervention only stood to increase the amount of violence and uncertainty for both Bosniaks and UN peacekeepers. The real failure of NATO in the Bosnia War, however, came in 1995. Described as the “West’s Greatest Shame” by Brookings Senior Foreign Policy Fellow Ivo H. Daalder, the massacre of UN “safe” zone Srebrenica (a small village with over 60,000 Muslims) was the turning point for NATO involvement in the conflict. In the days leading up to the events of Srebrenica, Serb forces were transparent in their plan on attacking the safe zone. Backed by the fear of retaliation by the international community, both NATO and the UN failed to protect the Bosnian Muslims in order to maintain partiality in the crisis. NATO agreed to “traditional peacekeeping practices”, which in turn allowed Serb forces no opposition (Daalder, 1998). In no more than 10 days, Serb forces carried out the largest mass extinction of a minority since the Holocaust. Over 7,000 Muslims were murdered, and thousands more women were subject to mass-rape and sex slavery (Honig & Both, 1996).

Even though the genocide had taken place since the beginning of the war, NATO failure to respond to Serb threats to UN safe zones mark the overall failure of NATO in Bosnia. In response to the Srebrenica massacre, NATO began its first-ever military operation by launching a campaign of air strikes against Bosnian Serb positions in 1995. “Operation Deliberate Force” was NATO first full-scale military operation, with over 1,100 bombs dropped in a one-month timeframe. The bombing was aimed for certain strongholds of Serb forces within Bosnia, and quickly resulted in a ceasefire between the Bosnian and Serb parties (Kutsch, 2013). The NATO campaign in 1995 ended with the military stalemate of the ethnic parties’ signing of the Dayton Accord. While most of the

world quickly turned away from the Balkan region after the parties signed the Dayton Accord, NATO influence would continue to exacerbate ethnic conflict in the region.

Even before beginning its bombing campaign and the proposal of the Dayton Accord in 1995, NATO involvement only escalated and helped the proliferation of ethnic conflict through mindless arms embargos, and lack of effective use of force against Serb forces. Furthermore, the Dayton Accord only positioned Bosnia for an unclear and unattainable path to peaceful state building. Richard Caplan, in his research on the Dayton Accord, argues that the structure of the Accord is the reason for Bosnia's continued failure in the region. The Accord heavily emphasizes the military aspects of peace rather than the civil, and focuses on and promotes the segregation of ethnic parties in the political participation process (Caplan 2000). The separation of ethnic parties only worsens the problem of ethnic conflict, as evident in the United States' policy of racial segregation in the 1950's (Taylor, 2003). This accord, followed with demands of the deployment of 60,000 NATO troops to "carry out" the new constitution, only stood to prolong Bosnia's image as a war-torn and hopeless country for ethnic diversity. These final steps by NATO and US forces cemented the failure of the organization as both an international state builder, and a military force in the Balkan region.

### ***Ethnic Conflict in Kosovo after NATO Involvement: 1999-2001***

The NATO campaign of 1995 was crucial to the development of NATO; the organization was now seen as a military powerhouse that had the ability to involve itself in Balkan disputes. The newfound militaristic power of NATO was soon exercised again in the Kosovo War in 1999 with the unsanctioned 11-week bombing campaign of Yugoslavia

over Kosovo. While different ethnic groups fought during the Kosovo War, NATO action in the war would soon mirror the failures of the Bosnian War.

Unlike the Bosnian War, the negative effects of NATO involvement have been widely studied and debated. The Kosovo province of Serbia was one of the major enclaves for ethnic-Albanians in Serbia. As Serbian nationalists continually opposed independence from Yugoslavia, the ethnic-Albanians in the minority enclave of Serbia soon grew nervous of the Serbia agenda. In response to Serbia's inevitable prosecution of the minority, the ethnic-Albanian majority in Kosovo rejected Serbian engagements in Croatia and Bosnia, and formed the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in 1991. From 1995-1996, the KLA started its campaign to sabotage Serbian-run police stations in Kosovo, and started to receive smuggled weapons from Albania. With ethnic tensions between the Serbs and ethnic-Albanians at an all-time high, the Kosovo War broke out in 1998. In March of 1998, open conflict between the KLA forces and the Serbian police broke out in civil war. Almost immediately after the ensuing bloodshed between the two parties, Secretary of State, Madeline Albright was famously quoted saying, "We are not going to stand by and watch the Serbian authorities do in Kosovo what they can no longer get away with doing in Bosnia" (Erlanger, 1998). While these comments seemed to promote the Balkan's best interest, NATO involvement will only seem to benefit US interests abroad.

Only months after the comments on the Kosovo crisis from the former Secretary of State, NATO flew 85 warplanes over Albania and Macedonia in "Operation Determined Falcon" in hopes of stalling Serb forces in Kosovo. Colloquially known as the "1995 Balkan Air Show", the operation only seemed to force NATO military action

and worsen ethnic conflict in Serbia (Kiss, 2014). In result of these actions, Serb forces retaliate and systematically attack thousands of Kosovar Albanians in villages in Kosovo. In one of the most violent summer offensives, Serbian forces killed over 1500 ethnic-Albanians and displaced over 300,000 (International Crisis Group, 1998). While thousands of ethnic-Albanian were displaced and murdered in response to NATO action, NATO officials still negotiated the preferred actions of the organization. Only in 1999 did NATO officials begin to act in the Kosovo crisis.

On March 24, 1999, NATO forces began a 78 bombing campaign in Serbia. NATO action was soon disregarded as mere “coercive-diplomacy” and subsequently replaced with efforts of engaging in a full-scale “humanitarian war” in Kosovo. While no one argues the results of NATO action in Kosovo, the principle justification for the war was and is still being debated today. NATO acted without consent of UN Security Council—the first unauthorized NATO action of its kind. Most scholars argue the just cause of NATO intervention was for the sake of preventing wide scale human rights abuses. If human rights were just cause for war, then why intervene in Kosovo, but not in Rwanda or Bosnia? NATO used genocide in Kosovo as the reason for war, although the total casualties of war (2,000 for both Serb and minorities) do not qualify the crisis as genocide (Euka, 2013). The reasoning by the Clinton administration’s decision to involve NATO in Kosovo is still unknown, but its failure to prevent human rights and ethnic conflict is evident in the weeks following the bombing of Serbia.

In a little over one month after the initial bombing campaign began, over half a million Kosovar Albanians and other ethnic minorities fled Kosovo and Serbia. Adam Roberts, senior research Fellow at Oxford, explains that the bombardment of Kosovo

and Serbia only stood to increase both the number and severity of ethnic conflict within the country (Roberts, 1999). Even a spokesperson from the Clinton administration was quoted saying that the Kosovo had indeed taken "a dramatic and serious turn for the worse" following the NATO bombing campaign (Williams, 1999). The hundreds of thousands of refugees flooded into neighboring countries of Macedonia, and Albanian, only to stir up ethnic tensions within these countries. The 1999 Macedonian Refugee Crisis was a direct effect of NATO bombing in Serbia. Macedonia received over 344,500 refugees in an unprecedented 9 weeks of immigration (Donev, Onceva & Gligorov, 2002). Neither the refugees nor the host countries were prepared for the influx, causing some conflict between the refugees and the Macedonians.

Besides the negative effects the bombing campaign had on the displacement rates of ethnic-Albanians and minorities during the crisis, NATO action even began to increase the amount of minority killings across the countries. Although over 90% of the ethnic-Albanian population was displaced during the crisis, Serbian forces still found and retaliated against the remaining minority. In a study focused on human rights abuses of ethnic-Albanians after NATO involvement, the researchers conclude that over 50% saw Serb forces killing, torturing, directly separating families or burning Albanian-owned structures after the NATO bombings (Iacopino et al., 2001). Even though the actions of Serbian forces in Kosovo were not considered "genocide", the horrors faced by the ethnic-Albanians and other minorities seem to further highlight the failures of the US and NATO foreign policy in the region. One ethnic-Albanian explained that the "Serbs can't fight NATO, so now they are after us" (Roberts, 1999).

The 78-day bombing campaign ended in June 1999 when President Milosevic agreed to withdraw troops from Kosovo (BBC, 2012). Unfortunately, Kosovo's troubles were far from over. Kosovar Albanians fought for independence on the principle of the universal right to self-determination and statehood. The minority used the UN Declaration of Human Rights as backing, but was soon met with resistance from NATO forces. While NATO fought under the guise of allowing for Kosovo's independence, NATO signed the Kumanovo Agreement with little intention to give Kosovo statehood. One of the main tenants of the agreement was the five-kilometer safety zone around Kosovo, which denied access of Serbian troops into the region. This, however, did nothing to give the ethnic-Albanians independence.

Besides questions of Kosovo statehood (questions that would not be answered until 2008), implications for future military involvement on the basis of human rights were raised. While the casualties in Kosovo were horrible in their own right, the scope of the war cannot compare to crises in South Sudan, Sierra Leone, or Rwanda. If crises in those African nations did not warrant involvement, why did Kosovo receive international aid? NATO involvement in Kosovo only seemed to confuse and belittle any standing international law in intervening on behalf of humanitarian causes (Mandlebaum, 1999). Introspectively, the Kosovo War seems to result in yet another NATO military failure in the region. After reviewing all four of the crises in the Yugoslav Wars, NATO action seemed to exacerbate ethnic conflict, and only give way to international confusion and uncertainty about the future and roles of the organization.

## **Chapter V: Implications**

With its beginnings founded upon principles of containing Soviet influence in Europe, NATO has continually transformed its roles throughout the 20th and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Heading into nearly 66 years of existence, NATO's role must again evolve in order to save the delicate balance of the transatlantic alliance. Even after countless conflicts, the region is still susceptible to extreme ethnic conflict without proper stabilization. Instead of seeing the Balkan region as "NATO's burden", the region could possibly hold important military and economic benefits for the alliance. The "Balkan Question" is one that NATO has yet to solve, and enlargement may actually be the answer.

Throughout NATO's enlargement history, scholars have debated the importance of gaining members of NATO. While some believe that the Yugoslav Wars led NATO to "an irreversible path of enlargement", most countries that have received NATO membership have enjoyed relative peace and stability (Kay, 1998). Most opposition to enlargement for the Balkan countries has come from Russia, and US officials who feel that taking more countries into NATO would only increase the dependency on the US during times of crisis (Malksoo, 2004).

While there could be drawbacks to adding Balkan countries to the alliance, the reality is that enlargement has helped US image in the Balkan area, and a commitment to a united Balkans seems to coincide with a Europe "whole, free and at peace". The Balkan region is described as a "geo-political gateway" for its strategically important location for oil reserves, engagements in the Middle East, and a secure base for close Russia operations (Fouskas, 2003). Both the U.S. and NATO could benefit from a stronger



alliance with the region. While the era of NATO as a military war hawk may be over, there has never been a more important time for a strong and untied stabilizer for the region.

Ethnic conflict in the Balkans is directly related to NATO “missteps” and intervention policies in past Yugoslav Wars, and as a result of botched enlargement campaigns. In order to stem the ethnic violence in the region, and maintain the Balkan alliance, NATO must rethink their military strategies and open their “open door policy” again. If the alliance were to carefully navigate through the conflicts of the Balkans while allowing for membership for eligible aspiring nations, NATO could both curtail ethnic violence while keeping Eastern Europe at peace.

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