The Gorani People During the Kosovo War: Ethnic Identity in the Conflict

Musa Dankaz
La Salle University, musadankaz@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/cees_ma

Recommended Citation
http://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/cees_ma/1
We hereby acknowledge that we accept and approve

The Gorani People During the Kosovo War: Ethnic Identity in the Conflict

A thesis submitted by

Musa Dankaz

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Central and Eastern European Studies at La Salle University

________________________________________________________________________

Mark Thomas
Thesis Director

________________________________________________________________________

Victoria L. Ketz, Ph.D.
Program Director

January 2018
The Gorani People During the Kosovo War: Ethnic Identity in the Conflict

A Master’s Thesis Presented

by

Musa Dankaz

Submitted to the Graduate Department of the Central and Eastern European Studies Program at La Salle University, Philadelphia

MASTER OF ARTS
January 2018
Table of Contents

Abstract

Introduction ........................................................................................................................................................................ 1

1. Why Do People Mobilize? ........................................................................................................................................ 4

1.1 Definition of Terms ................................................................................................................................................ 4

1.2 Group Identity and Group Mobilization .................................................................................................................. 6

1.3 Ethnic Mobilization .............................................................................................................................................. 15

1.4 Theories of Ethnic Mobilization .......................................................................................................................... 18

1.5 Emotional Choice .................................................................................................................................................. 25

2. The Gorani and The Political Symbols .................................................................................................................. 36

2.1 General History of the Region .................................................................................................................................. 36

2.2 The Gora Region .................................................................................................................................................... 40

2.3 The Gorani People .................................................................................................................................................. 44

2.4 Religion of Gorani ................................................................................................................................................... 53

2.5 Language of Gorani ............................................................................................................................................... 57

2.6 Gorani Identity and Albanian Chauvinism from Balkan Wars to the Kosovo War ...................................... 62

Conclusion .................................................................................................................................................................... 73

Appendix A ................................................................................................................................................................... 79

Appendix B ................................................................................................................................................................... 80

Work Cited .................................................................................................................................................................. 85
Abstract

Using the case-study methodology, the paper explores political mobilization of the Gorani during the Kosovo War, which lasted from 1998 to 1999. During the Kosovo War, the Gorani, a Muslim people, did not side with the Kosovo-Albanians, also a largely Muslim people. Nor did the Gorani openly support the Kosovo-Serbs, with who they share a common linguistic heritage. The purpose of this work is to answer the question why did the Gorani, who are a Muslim, Slavic group choose their Slavic roots over their religious roots shape their political position during the Kosovo War. After a review of the various schools of thought explaining political mobilization of ethnic groups, e.g. the Primordialist, Instrumental, Constructivist, and Symbolic Politics approaches, the paper accepts the Symbolic Politics approach as the one which holds the most explanatory value. The paper concludes the Gorani has established their identity along three main elements: religion, which an element which separates them from the Orthodox Serbs; language, which differentiates them from the Kosovo-Albanians, and territory, an element which links their heritage to the economic well-being. However, the Gorani did not consistently place a significant emphasis on all three elements simultaneously. Although they clung to their religion, they did not emphasize it. Rather, the Gorani defined their political identity around the defense of their language and the defense of their traditional lands. In doing so, the Kosovo Albanians came to view the Gorani as sympathizing with the Kosovo Serbs. The Gorani case thus expands and clarifies Kaufman’s explanation of the role of Symbolic Politics in understanding ethnic mobilization by showing that the elements of an ethnic group’s in-group political symbols vary in importance depending on which other ethnic group is the out-group.

Key Words: Kosovo War, Serbian, Gorani, Albanian, political mobilization, ethnic identity, ethnic conflict.
Introduction

The Kosovo region historically has hosted ethnic Albanians, Serbs and many other ethnic groups. An important milestone in the history of the Republic of Kosovo is the 1998-1999 Kosovo War between ethnic Albanians and ethnic Serbs. The Kosovo Liberation Army (UÇK, KLA) conducted a guerrilla war against the Serbs, generating a conflict which gained international attention for alleged ethnic cleansing and other types of war crimes. The war ended with the intervention of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Kumanovo Agreement between the Yugoslav and Serbian governments which left the governance of Kosovo to the United Nations (UN). The process reached its current state then the Parliament of Kosovo declared independence on October 17, 2008.

As sources of a conflict, some factors play a significant role, namely uneven economic development across Kosovo, ongoing tensions between the various ethnic and religious groups, and the fear of losing territory associated with a specific ethnic group. All of these can occur between countries, but in the case of Kosovo, like other countries in the Balkans and Central Europe, they occur within a country.

In the Kosovo case, both Serb and Albanian historians claim that each group’s arrival to the region predates that of the other.¹ Some local inhabitants were Christianized, and others converted to Islam when the Ottomans took control of the region after the Battle of Kosovo in 1389.² Both religions influenced the shaping of identities of groups in the region, and also were the sources of conflicts which the region has had to face through the centuries. The rivalry between Islam and Christianity manifested itself in Bosnia as well as in Kosovo. The withdrawal

² Ibid.
of the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth century played a vital role in this regard. The Ottoman withdrawal was followed in quick succession by the Balkan Wars and World War I. This period of wars ended with the rise of many nation-states, including Yugoslavia as a multi-ethnic state, where wars and economic turmoil had created a kaleidoscope of ethnic groups, some intermingling and others seeking to live in regions where their ethnicity dominated.

How people identify themselves or mobilize politically is important. Whether based on religion, language, gender, social class or nationality, group identities play an important role in governance and policy-making. Political elites use group identities to mobilize the populace. Especially during a conflict, group identity is significant in determining the nature of the conflict.

Such is the case with the Gorani-Goranci people, an ethnic group whose language is Slavic, but whose members profess to be Muslim. The Gorani people have historically concentrated primarily in the southern region of Kosovo, but have immigrated throughout the region at various times in their history. The Gorani people can be found in what are today Albania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Bosnia and even as far as Romania.

As inhabitants of the southern region of Kosovo, the Gorani, from a scholarly perspective, played an interesting role during the Kosovo conflict. Like the Serbs, the Gorani are ethnically Slav, but, like the Kosovo Albanians, their religion is Islam. The Gorani bear similarities to the Bosniaks, who, although ethnically Slav, adhere to Islam. Naturally, the Serbs are Christian, specifically Serbian Orthodox. In the 1992-1996 Bosnian conflict, religious identification was one of the many reasons for the Serb massacre of the Bosniaks. Serb elites mobilized ethnic Serbs to war against their Bosnian neighbors in the name of religion. However,

---

during the Kosovo conflict, the Serbs did not direct their rage at the Gorani. Even more interesting, the Gorani people remained largely neutral and, by not cooperating with their Kosovo Albanian neighbors, their Muslim brethren, they seemed to side with the Serbs during the Kosovo conflict in 1998-1999.

Accordingly, the main objective of this work is to determine why the Gorani peoples’ mobilization was based on their Slavic ethnicity and not on their religion during the Kosovo War. The research seeks to explore the theoretical roots of group mobilization and to ascertain why the Gorani, who knew of Serb atrocities against the Bosniaks, chose not to ally with the Kosovo-Albanians, a predominantly Muslim group which justified its fight against Slobodan Milosevic’s forces largely as another instance of Serbian ethnic cleansing of Muslims.

The first section of the work will explain group identity and will explore the four schools of thought regarding ethnic mobilization: the Primordialists, Instrumentalists, Constructivists and Symbolic Politics theorists. The source of ethnic conflict, according to each of the four schools of thought, will also be described. Besides the theories of ethnic mobilization, theories explaining religious mobilization will also be explained.

The second section, focusing on the Muslim minorities in the former Yugoslavia, will be followed by a brief history of the Gorani people and the Gora region. After some general information about the Gorani people, within the context of the Symbolic Politics theory, the symbols which mobilize the Gorani community will be analyzed.
1. Why Do People Mobilize?

1.1. Definition of Terms

To understand theories of ethnic and religious mobilization, a common understanding of key basic terms, e.g. identity, ethnicity, and nationality is necessary. The *Merriam-Webster* provides three definitions for identity: oneness, individuality and identification. Oneness is defined as “sameness of essential or generic character in different instances.” Individuality is defined as “the distinguishing character or personality of an individual;” identification is defined as “the relation established by psychological identification.”

In terms of individuality, identity might be a nation’s traits which distinguish it from those of other nations. Generally, people define their identity in terms of their relationships with others. Stephen Reicher, however, describes identity as “on the subordinate or personal level (where my self is what makes “I” distinct from “you”); on the intermediate level or social level (what makes “us” distinct from “them”); and on the superordinate or human level (what makes people distinct from non-humans).”

So identity best follows what Reicher describes succinctly as what distinguishes “they” from “us” or the “in-group” from the “out-group.” Identity is how an individual or a group establishes a sense of community, of oneness among themselves, and sets them apart. Identity is a source of unity, a unity which can harvest peace or sow conflict with the “out-group.”

---

The second question is: What is the ethnicity? Scholars have answered the question very differently. Nelson Kasfir explains that “The individual's choice may be fundamentally ethnic, class, religious, or - it is worth stressing - a combination of these identities.” Olzak points out that ethnicity studies accepted ethnicity as an “underlying and fundamental set of ascriptive characteristics that form a basis of collective sentiment, and under some conditions, collective action.” However, the author also states that the understanding of ethnicity has changed recently with the influence of Marxist assumptions regarding the nature of class and class conflict. The latter refers to the conflict between economic classes in industrial society. The second type of theories about ethnicity is “boundary makers” which refer to boundaries such as race, language, shared common culture or symbolic meanings within the ethnic culture. Newer interpretations of the term relate to ‘socially and politically constructed boundaries,’ for example skin color or territory sovereignty that played roles in the manufacturing economy.

The term “nationality,” which is closely related to ethnicity, needs clarification. “Ethnic group” and “nation” differ in terms of overlapping concept. Anthony Smith maintains that an ethnic group “needs a group name, an accepted common heritage, common history, fundamental elements of common culture for instance religion or language, and a land.” However, a nation

---

8 Ibid.
differs from an ethnic group that is a “socially mobilized group that wants political self-determination.”\textsuperscript{13} Therefore, “not all nations are ethnic groups and not all ethnic groups are nations”\textsuperscript{14}

\textbf{1.2. Group Identity and Group Mobilization}

People identify with various factors which are important to them in a certain context, and that shape their level of abstraction.\textsuperscript{15} In terms of ethnic group definition, “formed along ethnic, racial, religious, regional, or class lines, they have distinct origins and appeals, but they share common features.”\textsuperscript{16} However, any kind of conflict puts pressure on people involved the conflict to identify themselves with one side or the other.\textsuperscript{17} This categorization is a quick, natural and emotional progress that requires little effort from the people. It will automatically occur, to create a sensible environment by creating categories based on general understandings.\textsuperscript{18} Self-categorization is important because “it makes collective behavior possible.”\textsuperscript{19}

In the field of social psychology, scientists have done many studies on why human behavior is politically mobilized and becomes violent. For example, one experiment on “conformity” and “obedience” demonstrated that people can be influenced by a small group and

\textsuperscript{13} Kaufman, \textit{Modern Hatreds}, p.16.  
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{17} Sageman, \textit{Misunderstanding Terrorism}, p.112.  
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, p.113.  
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid, p.114 Marc Sageman also writes that even loners think themselves as a part of larger community, “they view themselves as interchangeable members of their social group; one’s own personal and individual identity does not come to mind since it is not relevant in that situation.” The author categorizes that process as “\textit{personalization}” being a team member, rather than individual player.
would become horrible killers when they were urged to do so.\textsuperscript{20} Another example showed that when a social role is given to a normal young man, it may transform him into a sadistic prison guard or into a hopeless prisoner.\textsuperscript{21} Such examples demonstrate that people’s behaviors can be strikingly influenced by the power of the situation, and they would not even be aware of it.\textsuperscript{22} Besides individual mobilization, people may mobilize as a group, for example as an ethnic group, as political party members, or as striking factory workers seeking better economic conditions, etc. First to be explained is group identity, its sources, and when they become political; then will follow mobilization of established identity, and that as a pattern of political violence.

History has many examples of bloody conflicts, and many individuals have sacrificed themselves for the sake of honor, have fought to provide some benefit for the group to which they belonged, e.g., their kin, ethnic group, nation, or class.\textsuperscript{23} All those individuals’ behaviors have been explained as “collective action” in favor of a relevant group.\textsuperscript{24} Within this context, Russell Hardin establishes group identity on “self-interest,” and although the author points out that nationalist or ethnic commitments could be idealistic motivations, there might be individual interest in these idealistic motivations, because “the benefit is often likely to be collectively provided but individually distributed.”\textsuperscript{25} Moses Shayo uses the term “social identification” and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{20} Sageman, \textit{Misunderstanding Terrorism}, p. 111.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Ibid. p.50.
\end{itemize}
defines it “in terms of preferences: to identify with different groups means to have different preferences over outcomes.”

From a psychological perspective, social identity theory helps to explain how people decide to be in one group but not the other. Michael Hogg refers to social identity an “evaluative definition of self in terms of group-defining attributes, and was viewed as the bridging process between collective phenomena and individual social cognition and behavior.” The earlier formulation of the theory was that of Henri Tajfel, who established his ideas on “how societal beliefs about the relationships between groups guide members of particular group in pursuing a positive sense of distinctiveness for their own group and thus for themselves.” Subsequently, researchers separated “the self-categorization component from the self-esteem (evaluative) and commitment (psychological) components in order to empirically investigate the relationships among them.” An approach of social identity theory sees group membership as the “central feature of individual identity” and argues that significant changes over salience identities can modify choices over policy. People identify with a potentially prominent group; thus, the identification has two factors that display “similarity in relevant features and status of the group,” and the group members’ behavior is consistent with the larger group’s interests.

---

28 Ibid.
31 Ibid. The author gives an example that in terms of national and class identities, the tax rate decided by a poor citizen, is lower, based on how the citizen identity herself, “if she identifies with the nation than if she identifies with her class.”
Dankaz 9

terms of national and ethnic identities, while factors such as the acquisition of indispensable resources promote the status of nations, those are also strengthening ties to the national identity over ties to ethnicity.\textsuperscript{32} Consequently, the varied sources of group identity might be based on ethnic or clan relations, gender, family, race, and there also could be an economic base. In this work, it will be accepted that the source of group identity is ethnicity.

People’s behaviors can turn violent during a conflict. Political violence is the result of a conflict in which one side are protesters and the other side is generally the state. The result of the conflict between protestors and the state is escalation into violence.\textsuperscript{33} Sageman points out that social identity is at the center of the process of turning politically violent.\textsuperscript{34} Not only during a conflict do people identify themselves with a group. Self-categorization is a natural, emotional, and automatic process intended to make life simpler, based on common ground realities.\textsuperscript{35} However, in certain contexts people may have several identities. For example, humankind vs. animals in the context of creatures. Even within the group, some form a sub-group. Other examples are an individual identifying himself with a nation, particularly during an international conflict, or a single person versus other people. This natural and basic categorization is capable of creating prejudice or “namely, in-group favoritism and out-group denigration,” and accordingly that self-categorization leads to increased differences over intra-group.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} Sageman, Misunderstanding Terrorism, p. 113.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid. p. 115.
People can see themselves in a larger social group and as “interchangeable” group members within their social group, which is the case with one who does not consider his/her own self and with one whose individual identity falls astern of the group’s identity, such as a team’s. Individual players think as team members. This process is called “depersonalization -- being a team member rather than an individual player.” Teammates are in-group members opposing other in-group members, their opponents, who are not seen as individual players but simply as members of the opposing team, an “out-group.”

Within the example of team member phenomena, any kind of dangerous movements for the team or injury to one of the team players is accepted as if occurring against the whole team. Likewise, each team member becomes involved in political violence not because of personal, but because of group motives. This is “normal, natural, automatic and direct consequence of the everyday process of categorizing oneself as a member of a group, or in terms of group identity: one’s identity is the group identity.” Social identities are our cumulative identities from social groups of which we are members, and it must be noted that identities are plural; a person may belong to several social groups based on gender, nationality, club membership, family, friends, etc. These social group identities might be salient depending upon the context. Sageman writes that “Social categories are not fixed, absolute properties of the observer but are relative, fluid, and context dependent. Activation of a particular category is contextual: it reflects the relevant concern at the time and conforms to the three principles of meta-contrast, availability, and fitness

---
37 Ibid. The author writes that self- categorization makes collective behavior, and this process of depersonalization makes group phenomena possible.
38 Ibid.
to this context.” If aggression by an out-group occurs against one of the group members, group identity immediately escalates in salience and significance. In a certain situation, people self-categorize themselves with a particular group because they have more in common with in-group members than with other groups. That is called the meta-contrast principle, by which individual differences are less important within the in-group than are the differences between in-group and out-group members.

In sum, people self-categorize themselves and view themselves as a part of a larger group. Members of the group demonstrate more trust in and respect for other group members, and seek cooperation and provide opportunities, which establishes a sense of belonging. People see themselves in various social groups and view world events in terms of their importance to their group and group members, rather than to a person as an individual.

After the creation of social identity, the next step is “creating an imagined community and activation of a politicized identity.” Actors of politicized social identity do not see themselves as political at the beginning. Here it should be highlighted that politicized social identities divide into two groups: one is serious political grievance, the other is non-political grievance like that of students, workers, citizens. If demonstrators are suppressed by police forces during peaceful protests, then protests turn political. It is important to note that the original motivation of the protest loses its importance in the face of violence following the repression of the demonstrators. That repression then leads to the activation of politicized, anti-

---

41 Ibid. The author adds also that self-categorization always occurs in opposition to an out group.
42 Ibid.
state social identity. Furthermore, police intervention in response to peaceful protests causes shock to potential members of the group, and they will switch their positions from neutral observers into threatened members of the group. On a larger scale, mass media and internet\textsuperscript{45} are playing active and vital roles, because when the public sees aggression against one group, whether right or not, they self-categorize into an imagined community. This self-categorization into politicized social identity then changes from personal to political.

During a conflict with an out-group, generally a state, police intervention leads to disillusion, failure of peaceful demonstrations and moral outrage. Some in-group members start thinking of themselves as soldiers who are protecting their political community. “This second self-categorization, into martial social identity, leads a few to turn to violence in defense of their imagined community.”\textsuperscript{46}

After individuals have categorized themselves, the second step is collective actions. Shared group identity is getting stronger, and the relationship among in-group members opens a communication stage which enables coordinated and effective collective action. Hence, in-group members start to trust each other more, co-operate, help, respect other group members, and most likely seek agreement with in-group members. All these cooperative factors lead to an increase of organizational efficiency.\textsuperscript{47} The strong social identity makes “leadership possible.”\textsuperscript{48}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item Internet has a vital role in activation of politicized identification, and it is also playing an important role in collection of people for imagined politicized community.\textsuperscript{45}
\item Ibid, p. 117.\textsuperscript{46}
\item Reicher Stephen, Hopkins Nick, Levine Mark, Rath Rakshi, “Entrepreneurs of Hate and Entrepreneurs of Solidarity: Social Identity As a Basis for mass Communication”, p. 624.\textsuperscript{47}
\item Ibid, p. 625.\textsuperscript{48}
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
The group who established an identity is not violent; they are just some political protesters. The conflict between in-group and out-group approaches violence following the disappointment after the failed, nonviolent legal approaches and moral outrage. According to the Sageman, people precipitate political protests. In other words, people side themselves with a group, and that leads to recognition that the other protestors are holding the same identity. This process leads to solidification in the group, which increases confidence to resist and make more claims against the out-groups. He describes the process of transition from non-violent to violent within the context of the escalation of conflict. The perceptions of each group toward the other change, and out-group reactions start to be seen as hostile. The transition process is important because the in-group creates their norms based on the violent other group’s hostile perception. While physical escalation of conflict is increasing, the used language of both sides helps to increase the tension. Each group blames its out-group for the extremist speeches. This situation is fed by the sensationalist media, and this extremist talk prevails within out-group extremism and gives support to in-group extremism activities. Furthermore, extremist speech is the main justification of in-group hatred of its enemy. Leaders of in-groups and out-groups use the hatred to motivate neutral members and denigrate them as rivals as though they are part of the out-group, unwilling to protect the in-group with the exaggeration of the threat and danger of its out-group. It should be highlighted that hate speech is not enough to start violence but it is one of the important factors for violence.

49 Sageman, *Misunderstanding Terrorism*, p. 130.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid, the Following part source is Sageman, *Misunderstanding Terrorism*, p.130-150.
Another factor of violence is “disillusionment with nonviolent tactics.” People who have weak social identity are not going to sacrifice anything for the group. Those are “free riders” and they leave action for the activist. When it is time for reform in the group, they quickly lose their interest and leave the group. Moderate members of the group are more willing to give some time, effort and resources for their group. They try to fix group grievances, can criticize ineffective group leaders; “just talk, talk, talk – and nothing happens.” Feeling disappointment, they also leave the group and fade away. Later, they also become free riders. However, for those who gave so much time, sacrificed many things for the group, they have increased their activism, including more extreme and maybe illegal activities.

As with hate speech, disappointment with the nonviolent tactics is not enough to politicize people to turn to violence as well. Generally, an unexpected and horrifying incident occurs, with out-group against in-group. The aggression of out-group is perceived by in-group members as an attack on all group members. The attacked group shows strong moral outrage toward the out-group attackers, and starts seeking punishment. At this level, emotions are playing an important role in the turn to political violence. As mentioned previously, people may hold different social identities at the same time, but some of those might be latent identities. However, the identity which has to face the aggression, becomes salient due to the attack, and those moderates or free riders may become either in-group or out-group sympathizers, or even become a member of either group. To summarize, many people become politicized by the aggression, and their new, politicized and triggered identity gives them a role: they have become part of an active political group. Another important factor that causes moral outrage is aggression against symbols of social identity, such as burning religious books, state flags, writings or drawings that insult emblematic figures of either group. Consequently, out-group aggression
against in-group affects in-group perspective, convincing in-group that its social world is in
danger and the group needs to be defended. Within this context, any small step for self-defense
may change the perception of violent limits. Therefore, one small step may lead to horrifying
violence.

The final level is activation of a martial social identity. Through out-group threats and
attacks, a few within the in-group become volunteers to defend their imagined community
without seeking possible legal ways. At this point, the small, frustrated group self-categorizes
itself as soldiers of the victimized in-group. With this new, martial identity, they defend their in-
group fellows against the combatant out-groups. Because this activation of martial identity
occurs unconsciously, there is not a definite moment of becoming a soldier of the group.
Generally there is no key event of identification and self-categorization, but the members with
the activated, martial identity at some point view themselves as soldiers who are fighting for
fellow group members and a cause. Based on this perspective, activated martial social identity
justifies its political violence because those culprits are soldiers of the imagined community and
are defending the imagined community. It is natural for a soldier to fight; violence is basically
what soldiers practice. The shift from activist in-group to martial identity means that violence is
around the corner, because people with the martial social identity are more likely to act out,
based on what they believe they are.

1.3 Ethnic Mobilization

During any conflict, people categorize themselves within one group against the other, but
what are the factors that allow ethnic wars to occur? Stuart Kaufman categorizes reasons for
ethnic wars as ancient hatreds, manipulative leaders, economic rivalry, spiral of insecurity,
symbolic politics, and mass-led or elite-led mobilizations. One important factor is the theory of ‘ancient hatreds,’ that hatred stems from ancient roots, and traces back to historical legends. One example of the ancient hatreds: during the Srebrenica massacre, Serb General Ratko Mladic made the following statement for the Bosniak Serb channel: “Here we are in Srebrenica on the eleventh of July 1995, on the eve of yet another great Serbian holiday. We present this city to the Serbs as a gift. Finally, after the rebellion against the dahis, the time has come to take revenge on the Turks in this region.” However, culture is also playing an important role in keeping generations connected. People pass down hatred from one generation to the next within epic poems, songs, etc., because this process is necessary in order to not to forget and to become an ‘ancient’.

The second factor of the ethnic wars is manipulative leaders. In this aspect, leaders are playing an important role rather than promoting hatred, and an ethnic war is a result of the manipulative leaders conducting policy through mass media. V. P. Gagnon Jr writes that “I argue that violent conflict along ethnic cleavages is provoked by elites in order to create a domestic political context where ethnicity is the only politically relevant identity. It thereby constructs the individual interest of the broader population in terms of the threat to the community defined in ethnic terms. Such a strategy is a response by ruling elites to shifts in the

53 Kaufman, Modern Hatreds, p. 15-47.
56 Kaufman, Modern Hatreds, p. 4.
structure of domestic political and economic power: by constructing individual interest in terms of the threat to the group, endangered elites can fend off domestic challengers who seek to mobilize the population against the status quo, and can better position themselves to deal with future challenges.”

Kaufman summarizes that leaders of an ethnic community lead the community toward ethnic war to gain, or keep, power for themselves.59

The third factor in the ethnic wars is economic rivalry. Ethnic groups are essentially interest groups, and each ethnic group is a rival for the other to gain more political and economic benefits, just like other interest groups.60 Thus the ethnic group mobilizes itself when members think that it is the best time to get what they want. They organize themselves in the best possible manner to achieve their goals.61

The fourth factor for ethnic war motivation is a spiral of insecurity. Kaufman highlights the spiral of insecurity of ethnic war that political scientists generally describe as “the structure of the situation” and “strength of the federal government,” which means that during the conflict of the groups, the government cannot solve the problem within the groups. Furthermore, the government is not able to prevent fighting between the groups due to its weakness. This leads to the groups’ self-defense idea, which leads to the groups arming themselves for protection.62 Besides the government position, if one side starts to arm themselves in a conflict, the other side

59 Kaufman, Modern Hatreds, p. 5.
60 Ibid, p. 7.
61 Ibid.
also starts to arm its group. This leads to the case of security dilemma, which basically is an arms race.

The fifth factor of ethnic war is Symbolic Politics theory. Despite other factors, ethnic groups have some symbolic figures or items which have meaning in their semantic world. The perspective explains that ethnic myths and symbols are also important for mobilization, therefore any attack to those images, or defending/honoring could also be a reason for mobilization. The approach of symbolism has an embracing position, because it bonds the factors of ancient hatreds, manipulative leaders and economic rivalry.  

While analyzing how ethnic groups react to mobilization, scholars primarily traced the works of those who studied, analyzed and explained the rise of modern Europe. The first group was inspired by Marx and Engel, hence they were analyzing ethnic groups based on capitalism, industrial development and class struggle. The second group focused on Weber and Durkheim works which seek answers based on modernization, organization and culture.

1.4 Theories of Ethnic Group Mobilization

There are many approaches about ethnic group mobilization, and there are broadly two main approaches regarding ethnic mobilization. As Stuart J. Kaufman is drawing a fundamental frame for ethnic theories. He categorizes two main approaches: primarily, dividing into two main parts: “rational choice” and “emotional choice.” Under the these two main approaches, there are four schools of thought. These schools are “Primordialists,” “Instrumentalists,”

---

63 Ibid, p. 12
65 Ibid.
“Constructivists,” and “Symbolic Politics.” However, it should be highlighted that these schools of thought are not strictly divided with clear borders.

Rational choice approach mainly explains ethnic mobilization with rational attempts to collect limited economic sources. Rational choice approaches divide two sub-approaches: first, ethnic group as instrumental, second, rationalist theories of ethnic war. The first school of thought, the “Instrumentalist,” defines ethnic groups as simple unions, and these groups have aimed to compete for limited goods in the context of social changes due to modernization. Kaufman gives an example of instrumentalist school of thought for ethnic conflict in Africa that “often essentially conflicts between ethnically defined patron-client networks over economic goods distributed by state.” According to this school ethnic nations formed in the last two centuries, national language is selected among different dialects, and written language is created as basic for country’s literature in certain states. This is a vital step in terms of establishing a group identity with selected language within the group. For the groups using dialect different than the chosen one, they establish a new literacy, therefore creating a new ethnic group. The created identity with new language mobilizes to gain more economic benefit. Shortly, self-interest is the fundamental of group formation, and the group identity is established to reach to shared interests by elites’ rational decisions. The school argues that the source of the ethnic war is competition for resources.

---

67 Ibid. p. 17
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
72 A language is one of the necessary-common factors to create national identity.
73 Kaufman, Modern Hatreds, p. 17.
Susan Olzak’s work, *Contemporary Ethnic Mobilization*, explains motivation of ethnic groups to mobilize with gaining more economic benefits. Thus, her work is more detailed in terms of the economic situation of ethnic groups, and the work can be categorized more Instrumentalist or more broadly, a sample work of rational choice theory. Olzak categorizes ethnic mobilization through modernization perspective and emphasizes four major approaches: Developmental Theories, Internal Colonialism and Cultural Division of Labor Models, Economic Models of Ethnicity: Split and Segregated Labor Markets, Competitive Models of Ethnic Mobilization.\(^\text{74}\)

Developmental Theories refers to identification of progress in state building and nation building. The theories view “ethnic movement as disjunction between rates of social mobilization (for example voter participation, participation in a state education system) and assimilation to the state-builder’s culture.”\(^\text{75}\) There are certain elements that should be present to be ethnically mobilized that equal size ethnic groups within a state, ethnically split in the region but relatively one is more developed than the other.

Internal Colonialism and Cultural Division of Labor Models states that there is an internal (core) colony which is at a certain level of wealth and is culturally dominant. The dominant colony makes use of the dominance towards other ethnically identified non-dominant colonies (periphery). Therefore, internal colonialism tries to explain “ethnic regionalism and regional resistance to ethnic assimilation by applying within-state settings the core-periphery model found world-systems theory.” Olzak highlights that the conflict between core and periphery meant “uneven development of industrialization.” The second step of the theory that

---

\(^{74}\) Olzak, “Contemporary Ethnic Mobilization,” p. 358-363

\(^{75}\) Ibid, p. 358.
separation of labor market by ethnic and cultural boundaries leads to a cultural division and lower level group members’ situation causes ethnic solidarity due to their low status and low-reward occupations because ethnic solidarity will be produced by combining of common experiences, social experiences and class-based interests.

The third step of the theories is that of Economic Models of Ethnicity: Split and Segregated Labor Market. The theories basically say: “economic roles determine the degree to which ethnic solidarity exists.” In this theory, there are two arguments: the theories of the split labor market and segregated labor market. The theory draws a different line from the models of cultural division of labor, because the previous model emphasizes the interest in ethnic mobilization based on the “primacy class and class conflict”. However, the model accepts that certain types of economic conditions and adaptations produce ethnic organizations and solidarity.

Olzak takes Bonacich’s model as a base which is per the theory, ethnic conflict appears when two or more ethnic groups are having competition within the same labor market but with different wages. “Three-way competition and exploitation among majority-group owners and higher-and-lower-priced ethnically divided labor groups” cause high levels of ethnic antagonism, therefore in order to keep the economic interests of capitalist owners, it should be maintained as “racially and ethnically divided labor force,” because segregation of class creates and keeps ethnic boundaries. The theory counts many factors as triggers of ethnic conflict such as racism, having prejudice about someone or some group, lynching, discrimination against someone or group, and segregation laws.

---

76 Ibid, p. 360.
The second section of the economic theory explains how people keep their ethnic boundaries through “the role of specialized economic institutions and network relations.” The main thing is that smaller groups or ethnic groups create institutions, “kinds of insular occupational adaptations,” or network relations in order to strengthen their customs, such as languages, cultures, traditional rituals, and also preserve cultural assimilation by dominant culture.77

Olzak’s last model about ethnic mobilization is the Competitive Models of Ethnic Mobilization. The theory’s perspective is that ethnic groups focus on one labor market, and obtain more economical, political and social resources, and then ethnic mobilization will take place. The theory tries to answer the question: “Why does mobilization take place along ethnic groups rather than class, kindship, occupational, or other lines of cleavages?” Per the theory, race and ethnicity depend on situations, which means ethnicity is chosen by individual people based on result of their choice’s advantages or disadvantages and abilities of a set of chosen things in life that provide ethnic boundaries. Competition theory also claims that economic and state modernization helped increase ethnic mobilization based upon identity. This new self-identification based on these two factors, leads to reorganizing in favor of larger groups rather than kindship, village, or other smaller scale boundaries. Different world systems underlined terms of organization, power, negotiation only among the nation state. That, especially after World War II, led to the increase of nation-state movement, the idea of self-determination and sovereignty. From this perspective, the theory claims that there are connections between modernization and ethnic mobilization in terms of increasing ethnic mobilization and subnational

77 Olzak also highlights that the segregated labor market theory does not give an answer to the question of “how ethnic solidarity affects ethnic mobilization.”
and territorial ethnic movements. Competitive theory explains four steps to complete from basis: urbanization, industrialization of the labor force, expansion of the political sector and the final step, independence from the empire or colonial power.

Kaufman notes that rationalist choice theoreticians have produced many theories, including the instrumentalists school. However, Kaufman focuses on three important sub-branches of theories. The first of the rationalist choice approaches is economic rivalry, which is the approach that primarily addresses economic concerns on various levels. Firstly, one of the main economic concerns is distribution. Poorer regions may unify against a central government because they believe that the central government discriminated against them. Symmetrically richer areas may also want to leave because they do not want to carry the poorer areas’ economic responsibilities with the union. At this point, Kaufman notes that such a factor has very limited influence, based on statistical studies. Furthermore, the theory cannot explain the general ethnic mobilization. However, analysts found that ethnic group mobilization occurs “under virtually all economic circumstances.” The second level of the economic theory is the “relative deprivation” and “especially decreases in life standards.” Those deprived regions and groups may ethnically mobilize against the government, but as Kaufman demonstrates by examples of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, both had serious decreases of life standards before both states collapsed. He also writes that Tajikistan is a good example of relative deprivation. The country had the second worst economic situation, and had to face a civil war, but the conflict was not an ethnic conflict. On the other hand, Armenia and Georgia had ethnic conflicts, but their economic situations improved, relative to Russia, before the conflicts occurred.  

78 Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds*, p.18  
79 For more detail of incomes of the Soviet Republics see Ibid, p. 18.
The second rational choice theory is the hard-rationalist theory, which tries to step away from instrumentalist understanding. This approach sees ethnic war as “a function of individuals’ rational pursuit not of material benefits, but of personal security.” The theory argues that in case of “emergent anarchy,” and when the state is not capable of providing protection for the people from violence, rational groups begin to mobilize to preemptive self-defense.

If there is going to be violence in a conflict, people may increase their survival chances if suppression is successful over the other group in the conflict by preemptively attacking before them, which is “I sneak up on you, before you sneak upon me.” Self-defense against even a possible attack, will be enough to motivate slaughterhouse conflict.

The mechanism of the mobilization is called a “tipping process” driven by peer pressure. If an increasing number of people are joining ethnic mobilization, they can put more pressure on others to join. It is worth joining because a growing activity is likely to succeed.

Another argument of the approach Kaufman highlights is it “relies on selective incentives.” That means that people gets involved in ethnic conflict because they have been told they will get a reward for killing others, or be threatened with death if they do not kill.

The last argument of the rational choice approach is the soft rationalist theory. This approach argues that the main reason for ethnic violence is that an extremist group values and builds on that assumption. In this model, rationality prefers to pursue the goals defined by

---

81 Ibid.
82 Hardin, *One for All, The Logic of Group Conflict*, p. 143.
83 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
nationalist ideology. In this theory, it is easier for people to participate in ethnic movements because nationalist values can be used as explanations of people's behavior. Kaufman gives an example that a group has extreme preferences, and that group wants to dominate the whole group, even if it is very risky, just as it is most likely that extremist politicians will overcome moderates. Consequently, once extremist politicians are in power, they will use the government branches to organize enthusiastic followers for war.  

1.5 Emotional Choice

The second approach to understanding ethnic mobilization is based on theories focusing on group members’ emotional choices. The emotional choice approach includes three theoretical schools of thought. They are Primordialism, Constructivism and Symbolic Politics.

Broadly, contrary to the Rational Choice approach, emotional choice theorists contend that individuals’ reactions to events are rooted in emotional ties unrelated to utilitarian benefit. Essentially, emotional choice theorists contend individuals face many choices and the amount of information is too vast for them to identify a clear gain-loss choice. In order to simplify their decision-making, individuals use historical references and traditions to understand and simplify an otherwise complex reality.

The first school of thought, Primordialism, refers to more ethno-mythology. This refers to an ethnic group that has existed for a long time and “has always yearned for a country of its own.” In this case, group identity is playing an important role. Social life begins with each

---

86 Ibid, p. 22. The author also highlights that “when preferences are extreme, a ‘softer’ version of the Hardin’s tipping argument can also be used to explain ethnic wars that start from the bottom up, without government help.”

87 Ibid, p. 4.
individual’s origins, and when a group establishes social identity, that starts from child rearing. That “is a way or method by which a group’s basic way of organizing experience (it is group identity as we noted) maintained over generations. Development through life’s stages produces “a defined ego within a social reality (…) or “identity” that connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself (selfsameness) and a persistent sharing of some essential characteristic with others.” For most people, group identity is assigned from birth, and mostly it has signs such as racial characteristics as well as being marked by circumcision, tattoo, or other artificial process. Our mother languages provide words, which is a “conceptual lens” to understand the world and religion. This is another important factor to shape values and identities; those factors are playing a significant role in our wishes and needs. Based on this logic, strong ethnic consciousness stamps “some fundamental biological drives such as defense of kin and territory.”

Primordialists identify the cause of ethnic war as historical rivalry or a historical custom. Those historical conflicts between primordial ethnic groups will re-appear someday and cause yet another conflict between the ethnic groups. Kaufman highlights that ethnic nationalism is a modern ideology, and such history or kinship ties are generally symbolic. Therefore, national identities can be hardly primordial. For example, many countries’ identities in eastern Europe are new. Before their independence, the peasants of the Balkans and the south Caucasus did not identify themselves as “Croats,” “Georgians,” “Azerbaijanis.” Hence, “they were convinced to

---

89 Ibid.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid, p. 5.
adopt these identities on the bases of shared language, religion, and historical mythology in the twentieth century.”

The second set of schools of thought, the Constructivist perspective, refers to a set of ideas, such as who is included in the ethnic group, what its values are, etc. and these identities from a constructivist view are generally created or interpreted by the ethnic or nationalist intellectuals. The process of ethnic identity building, which is creating ethnic labels, literary language, etc., is led by outsiders in some parts of Africa and the Soviet Union. Sometimes identities are created from whole cloth by those intellectuals. After creating ethnic labels, the second step is accepting and internalizing that by groups after governments apply the label to them. Primordialists and instrumentalists have accepted the fundamental point of constructivism.

The Constructivist school of thought points out that “there is a limit to the plasticity of ethnic identity.” While constructing an ethnic identity, intellectuals can invent, re-invent or hide the groups’ past, but there is a certain thing that they must use as a foundation to build upon, such as language, culture, religion and a land. “Nations are requiring ethnic cores if they are to survive. If they lack one, they must ‘re-invent’ one. That means discovering a suitable and convincing past which can be reconstructed and re-presented to members and outsiders.”

As mentioned earlier, when constructing an ethnic identity, the intellectuals needed “a name and cluster of cultural elements to a history and mythology that create ethnic symbols and give

---

93 Ibid.
94 Kaufman also points out that nineteenth century European nationalism, as instrumentalists mentioned, is also constructed depending on the role of the ethnic elites and intellectuals in “constructing” nations.
responses to the group needs.” That means ethnic groups are neither forever and fixed nor extremely workable. Not well-maintained national identities do not survive such as Yugoslavia.

The final set of theories are those of the Political Symbolists. The Political symbolists contend that while they are creating nationalist identities, ethnic elites generally create some symbols such as flags, emotional moments, and cite some key figures from the society to trigger their mobilization. For example, they highlight “motherland” to establish the understanding of home, the certain territory in order to defend the “home.” Basically, besides Primordialist and Constructivist perspectives on ethnicity, political symbolism defines the core of ethnic identity as consisting of myths, values, memories, and symbols. All these factors explain who the group members are and also what it means to be a member of the group. The main assumption of the political symbolism is that when people make a political decision, they are not always rational. People also make decisions according to their emotions, in order to fit the symbols which are created by ethnic and nationalist leaders. In terms of defending the group symbols which have symbolic meanings in their nationalist semantic world, the group members are willing to fight and even die for those symbols. Based on this perspective, people follow the leaders who manipulate those symbols, but some leaders misuse and manipulate the symbols for selfish purposes.

The Political Symbolists explain the reasons for the ethnic war with the symbols created by manipulative leaders to defend the group. The leaders also can be manipulative, with hidden

---

97 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
101 Ibid.
Dankaz aims to reach. As explained previously, four schools of thought provide different explanations of ethnic mobilization, but there are also some common areas that merge with other schools of thought.

As illustrated in Figure 1, Appendix A, according to the Constructivists and the Symbolic Politics theorists, people make decisions not always logically but also emotionally. People’s decisions are based on such elements that they do not have economical value. Even land, from which people gain economic benefit, also has an emotional value. The land is rooted to the heritage of the peoples. More than where a people raises its crops, the land is where the people place the birthplace and the graves of their relatives. Losing the land means losing their heritage.

On the other hand, the Instrumentalists and Rationalists place the emphasis for people’s choices on the utility which people gain from keeping, maintaining or losing control of their well-being or their sources of livelihood. The Rational Choice Approach holds a very cynical view of human nature. Individuals act mainly on the basis of a cost-benefit analysis.

In the common area, where the Constructivist school exist, people base their group identity as much on rational choices as emotional choices. During the creation of new ethnic identity, there should be a strong group identity. Depending on the group identity, there should be elements which people would sacrifice themselves for those symbolic elements. If there is a lack of symbolic elements, people’s unification may fade away when they understand that they cannot reach economic benefits.

When then does their sense of ethnic identity lead ethnic groups conduct an ethnic war? Kaufman categorizes the necessary conditions for an ethnic war with “myth justifying ethnic
hostility, ethnic fear, and an opportunity to mobilize.\textsuperscript{102} It should be highlighted that these conditions are necessary but not sufficient by themselves.

First, the justification of ethnic hostility with myth is when a group views its aggression against the other group with a hostile myth. For instance, people mobilize in order to respond to those ethnic symbols, for example a group of people which accepts territory as a homeland which definitely must be protected from its enemies. Kaufman gives an example that myth of Serbian martyrdom had been established based on the Battle of Kosovo 1389, and the myth reflected as the slogan, “Only unity saves the Serbs,” justified Serb hostility against the Bosniaks and Kosovo-Albanians.\textsuperscript{103}

The fear of ethnic extinction is another important reason for the groups to mobilize, not only one side, but for both side to mobilize, because it turns into a security dilemma. When an ethnic group has a fear of ethnic extinction, it justifies violent actions against the out-group and also significantly increases its own self-defense. In this case, the source of the fear is picturing the in-group as always under threat and aggrieved.

The other factor that leads to increase of fear is demographically being under the dominance by another ethnic group. Therefore, demographic threats might be motivation of ethnic fear which leads to ethnic war. Another perspective on fear is that losing national identity also may motivate to ethnic mobilization.

While all these factors are necessary, they not sufficient by themselves. There must be an opportunity for ethnic groups to conduct their mobilization, often referred to as a “political

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid, p. 30, 34.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid, p. 31.
opening.” An ethnic group must have some freedom to meet, to attract followers, and to organize. There must be a degree of freedom of assembly and freedom of expression.\textsuperscript{104} That freedom cannot be restricted by government forces. Otherwise, governments’ effective policy, be it police arrests, restrictions on free assembly, or other Draconian measures, will prevent mobilization.

After all the necessary elements for ethnic war are present, how does the process work? According to Kaufman, a new incident occurs which activate myths, triggering increasing fear and hostility.\textsuperscript{105} For example, a claim that a group attacked by the other or waving a group’s flag under influence of manipulative leader. If the case of fear and hostility is already high level, new opportunities show up for political solutions such as “reforming leader.”\textsuperscript{106}

Based on Kaufman’s Political Symbolist theory, when hostile myths are present and there is a political opening, a triggering incident leads to mobilize as mass. This process is called mass-led ethnic mobilization.\textsuperscript{107} Within the mass-led group, likely there are many true believers and fanatics in the group. In mass-led mobilization political leaders try to support the mobilization by their chauvinistic action toward symbolic elements, even though these activities are illicit to eye of the government.

Some ethnic mobilizations are also elite-led. In the case of elite-led ethnic mobilizations, powerful elites, often government officials, harness ethnic myths to gather popular support. The motivations of elites can be to increase their own power within the political system or to advance

\textsuperscript{105} Kaufman, \textit{Modern Hatreds}, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
broader political objectives. The elites make use of hostility, ethnic myths, and symbolic factors to increase their in-group followers’ fears and hostilities against the out-group.

Given the Gorani define themselves as a Slavic Muslim people, the question is what role religion plays in defining a group’s identity and influencing its political mobilization. As mentioned in the previous sections, people may hold different identities. For instance, a person can be a citizen of a country and at the same time, the person can be classified based on his/her gender. Alongside individual identity, people also have group identities which define them with the group value and criticize themselves based on these group values. In the case of religious group identification, people identify themselves according to the religious factors. While a person identifies himself/herself with a group, in-group identification is a significant condition to indigenize and to become invisible.\(^{108}\) “The more important a given group is for one’s sense of self, the more one should be inclined to consolidate that particular identity and to achieve group-related goals.”\(^{109}\)

Religion as a group identity brings rise to various political priorities. Even within the religion, these political priorities can be various. “World religious identities, such as Islam and Christianity, are ascriptive identities yet are not determined purely by birth or lineage: members have at least the perception that their membership in any particular group may be a matter of choice.”\(^{110}\) As mentioned previously, national identity might be combined with religious elements, but choosing a religious identity is assisted by some certain doctrines and sacred

---


\(^{109}\) Ibid, p. 438.

scriptures, unlikely ethnic group identity. In this case, members do not blend their religious identity with other elements of their ethnic identity. Religion becomes the defining aspect of their in-group identity. One’s country of origin and other cultural-linguistic ties become less important in defining group identity.

McCauley writes an interesting point that “with choice underpinned by formal doctrine comes an implied process of ranking one’s own group against others, based on superiority.” He also writes that this brings a division in the religious concept, which is different from the divisions between groups in the ethnic concept, and this especially plays an important role that “the given role of sacred texts in the delineating priorities for religious practitioners.” The existence of a guiding scripture in the religious identity is seen very rarely in social identities and this must lead to boost individuals in the religious context in order to spread primarily goods, such as morality, world view, salvation and justice.

As in other types of political mobilization, religious figures, like other cultural elites, hold an important role in political mobilization. And also consistent with political mobilization, where political openings create the option for more pluralist understandings of events and issues in the political sphere, influential religious sects may form a political organization and will adopt a political agenda. Religious mobilizations, like ethnic mobilizations, have occurred where religious minorities have been marginalized or perceived to have been marginalized due to their

111 Ibid.
112 Ibid.
113 Ibid.
114 Ibid.
beliefs, which are the heart of their political myths. Religious principles are also an alternative source of group identity as a group views secular philosophies such as nationalism, communism, socialism, and liberalism have failed to address past injustices. Religious organizations not only will establish an alternative political view, but they will also present an alternative governing model where the state has failed. Religious parties or religious mobilizations tend to occur in places where religious minorities have previously experienced economic or political marginalization.\footnote{Ibid.}

Religion can be then a crucial element in political mobilization. While some contend religion is a choice, it is also part of an individual’s family lineage and group heritage. Hence it is a source of group identity that interacts with other social elements such as race, ethnicity, social strata, economic class, and historic region in defining a group’s political identity.\footnote{Ibid.} Depending on how a group seeks to define itself, it can place religion as the primary defining element, in which case it creates a cleavage separating it from other societal groups.\footnote{Ibid.} On the other hand, a group, as illustrated in the case of the Gorani vis-à-vis the Kosovo Albanians, can claim another element, such as linguistic heritage or territorial integrity, as the key element in identifying in-group and out-group members. Similarly, the affiliation of religious elements other social elements within society, while social elements and political position may share a common language but different religion, a similar history of domination by outside powers, hence an intrinsic fear of being dominated, as well as historical claims to some of the same
territory, Croatian draw on their Catholic heritage to differentiate themselves from Serbians, who trace their uniqueness to Serbian Orthodoxy.

That said, religious affiliation has an international aspect transcending geographical and political boundaries. Both Greece and Russia, for example, used their common Orthodox heritage as justification for the defense of their Serbian brethren in Bosnia and Kosovo. And, Saudi Arabia and Turkey cited their defense of their Muslim brethren based largely on their defense of Islam against persecution.

Religious mobilization per se does not occur as a distinct phenomenon. Rather, religious mobilization is a type of political mobilization in which religion plays the key element uniting the in-group. The in-group subjugates other elements of their identity to establish and maintain unity.

The question then is when does religion preempt other sources of group identity. Consistent with the Symbolic Politics approach, the decisive factor is whether religion forms the basis for establishing who is part of the “in-group” versus who is part of the “out-group.” Specifically historical experience serves as the core a group’s political mythology to define itself. As the case of the Gorani will show, religion played a less than significant role in terms of defining ethnic identity. The fear rooted in historical event of Albanian discrimination of the Gorani provided the unifying core of Gorani ethnic identity.

The theoretical approaches discussed thus far provide a framework to understand the roots of the Gorani response to the Kosovo-Albanians and Kosovo-Serbs during the Kosovo War. While the Instrumentalists, hard-rationalists and soft-rationalists provide reasons, their reasons do not consistently suffice to explain the progression of ethnic mobilization to ethnic
violence. The desire for economic benefit or other types of utilitarian gain do not suffice. In the cases of the Baltic states, Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian minorities enjoyed a comparatively high standard of living. Each, however, found their unifying element in the emotional: the desire not to be dominated.

In contrast, Sageman’s argument that ethnic violence has its roots in cases of political mobilization where “in-group” members consider peaceful protest or the political process itself insufficient to address group fears bears close resemblance to the Symbolic Politics adherents’ approach that ethnic violence results when recent events evoke historically based fears, embodied in political myths, of ethnic extinction. In both arguments, such historical based fear plays a significant role in inciting unity against the perceived oppressor “out-group.” Constructivists too turn to myths to explain group identity. Ethnic violence, like ethnic mobilization and ethnic identity, has its roots in preventing a “out-group,” which has proven through myths to be oppressive in the past, to be oppressive in the current situation. And, it is in the framework of Symbolic Politics where the phenomena of Gorani ethnic mobilization and reaction during the Kosovo War is best understood.

2. The Gorani and Political Symbols

2.1 General History of the Region

To understand the Gorani, it is first necessary to understand the history of the region. The Gorani traditionally occupied the Gora Region, which today falls both within the current territories of Albania, Macedonia, and Kosovo. However, the current borders are quite new.

---

119 Schmidinger, Gora: Slawischsprachige Muslime zwischen Kosovo, Albanien, Mazedonien und Diaspora, p. 10.
The history of the Gora Region and its peoples is also the history of empires who have fought over the Balkans. As the Great Powers wrestled with each other for power, they shifted the political borders irrespective of the identities of the peoples within the region.

The Gora Region, including seven Gorani villages in the region, was mentioned for the first time in an edict of Serbian Emperor Stephan Dusan in 1348. During the 6th and 7th centuries, there was an increase in the Slav population due to the Slavic immigration into the Gora region. Soon afterwards, the region had to face with the Bulgar invasion and the Bulgars also had settled in the Gora region.

The Ottoman Empire began to conquer the Balkan region following the Battle of Kosovo, 1389. Following the Battle of Kosovo, Ottoman influence expanded across the region and political administration of the Gora region changed with Ottoman Fatih Sultan Mehmed’s conquest of Prizren in 1455. Thereafter, the Gora region was under the administration of Sandjak Prizren, and this remained so until 1877, when Ottoman hegemons realigned the region under the Vilayet-i Kosova, a newly established administrative district comprising most of what would later become Kosovo. As the Ottoman Empire expanded over the Balkan region, collaterally, there was an increase in the Muslim population in the region.

---


122 The Sanjak(Sancak) term refers to the administrative segment within a district in the Ottoman local government system. The head of the district or Sanjak Beyi, (lord of the Sanjak) was the administrative ruler. For more information about Sanjak see: Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure of Power*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), p. 184-193.

Under pressure from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Imperial Russia and other Great Powers’ search for empire in the Middle East, Ottoman dominance over the Balkan region, in general, waned throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, entering the first stages of its final decline with the outbreak of the Balkan Wars. During the 19th century, the Austro-Hungarian Empire become an important power in the region. Due to the change of balance of power in the region, the Treaty of Berlin was signed in 1878. Serbia, Montenegro and Romania gained their independence with the Treaty of Berlin. In the early 20th century, the Ottoman Empire began to shrink in the region. The influence of nationalism triggered the first Balkan War in 1912.

The Muslim Gorani fought against the Serbian army which occupied their territory during the first Balkan War in 1912. The alliance which consist of Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece, drove out the Ottomans from the region. Shortly thereafter, in accordance with the Treaty of London in 1913, Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania declared their independence.

After the war, there was a big argument over who would rule the land. On one side was Austro-Hungary and Italy, and on the other side was Russia. After all issues between the powers, the Gora region ended up divided between Serbia and Albania, and this division meant that the settlement of the Gorani people cut through with a border for the first time, but still there was not an exact border line. After the Balkan wars, the separation of Gorani villages by the great powers resulted in the largest Gorani Diaspora that ever occurred in Belgrade. Estimated were 6,000 to 8,000 Gorani people, and there are some living Gorani population in Skopje and Europe, mainly in Italy and Austria.

---

125 Ibid.
126 Ibid.
127 Harrison.
128 Ibid.
After World War I, the Austria-Hungarian Empire was defeated by the Allied Powers, and the Peace Treaty of Versailles signed. It created new political state borders in the Balkan region. Hence, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes established. The withdrawal of the Ottoman Empire from the Balkans and the rise of many nation-states led to much immigration occurring. Therefore, many minorities had to live under the sovereignty of different ethnic groups. In 1929, King Alexander I changed the kingdom’s name from the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes into Yugoslavia, which created the anti-Serb movement.

When World War II occurred, another turmoil happened: Serbia was occupied by the Germans. While the Serbs were fighting back with the Germans, Albanian and Italian troops were occupied in the Kosovo. Meanwhile, the Bulgarians invaded Macedonia. In the year 1945, under the tutelage of Josef Tito, Yugoslavia became a federation consisting of six equal republics: Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. In accordance with the administration of the federation, Kosovo, like Vojvodina, gained an autonomous status within the Republic of Serbia.

Over the course of the following thirty five years, Kosovo and the Gora Region existed with greater Serbia within the Yugoslav Federation. Regional economic development followed along the lines of a modified version of central planning, which Tito had developed. Regional development across Yugoslavia varied within the constituent republics. Slovenia became the most prosperous republic, followed by Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Kosovo, however, did not fare as well. Within Serbia, Kosovo lagged in terms of economic development. Regional leaders in Kosovo faulted the unwillingness of central planners in Belgrade to provide meaningful development projects for the region. Meanwhile, central planners blamed regional leaders for squandering the resources which they had.
With the death of Tito in 1980, the government of Yugoslavia began decentralizing authorities, both political and economic. Instead of a single individual serving as president, the six republics formed a joint presidency with each republic sending a regional leader to represent their republic’s views at the federation level. The Yugoslav government likewise decentralized economic direction to give each of the republics more autonomy over their own regional development.

Throughout the 1980’s, as power devolved from the federal level to the local government, ethnic tensions again arose. In response to local demands for more autonomy, leaders in Kosovo demanded for more autonomy. In response, in 1990, rather than increasing it, Slobodan Milosevic passed laws returning Kosovo’s status back to its status in 1971.129 Milosevic’s changes did not have the desired effect. Rather, in response to the changes, Kosovo-Albanians protested across Kosovo. Ibrahim Rugova, who later became the first president of Kosovo, opposed Milosevic nullifying Kosovo’s autonomy. Rugova sought change through peaceful resistance. Rugova was eventually replaced by Adem Jashari, who viewed violence as the only means to liberate Kosovo from Serb rule. Under the leadership of Jashari, the fire of independence gradually grew and in 1998, the Kosovo Liberation Army, consisting of ethnic Albanians from Kosovo, hereinafter referred Kosovo-Albanians, rebelled against the Serbs.

2.2 The Gora Region

The formal borders of the Gora Region, *gora* meaning “mountainous” in Serbo-Croatian, are historically very fluid. And, as Thomas Schmidinger mentions in his book, there are not comprehensive, scientific and historical sources about the history of the Gora Region in German.

---

129 In the early times of Yugoslavia, the Yugoslavia government did not see the Yugoslav Muslims as a group in the ethnic sense. After the regulation in 1970s, this situation changed.
English, Albanian, Serbian or Macedonian.\textsuperscript{130} What histories exist are subsumed in the context of shifts in the balance of powers and resulting shifts in the political borders.

The Gora Region\textsuperscript{131} describes a unique and mountainous area in the southwest of Metohija in the region Serbians understand as Kosovo-Metohija, commonly referred to as modern day Kosovo. The Gora region is an area of mountains, mainly the Sharri (Šar) Mountains. Xerxa’s Mountain is in the west part of the region; the Kornitik Mountain is in the west and north-west; the Kacina Glava is in the northern part of the region; the Gemitas Mountain is in the eastern side of it, the Kallabak Mountain is in the southern part; Gjallica Mountains are located in the south-west.\textsuperscript{132} However, the northern part of the Gora region, also known as Opolje region, is less elevated in comparison to the southern part of the region.\textsuperscript{133}

The Gora Region is a mainly rural area due to its geographic mountainous conditions. Due to its geography and natural resource endowments, the region is not well urbanized. Its inhabitants live in close-knit villages, which cluster in close proximity to one another.\textsuperscript{134} The villages are generally located near rivers and foothills.\textsuperscript{135} The Gora region is 65-70\% meadows and mountain ranges. Due to the natural terrain, the Gorani people derived their livelihood from

\textsuperscript{130} Schmidinger, \textit{Gora: Slawischsprachige Muslime zwischen Kosovo, Albanien, Mazedonien und Diaspora}, p. 59.
\textsuperscript{131} Appendix B, Figure 1 shows a political map of modern day Kosovo. Appendix B, Figure 2 shows a map of the historically Gora Region. Appendix B, Figure 3 shows the topography of southern Kosovo and the Gora Region, see Appendix B, Figure 3.
\textsuperscript{134} Hodza, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.
animal husbandry.\textsuperscript{136} For example, one of the well-known products from the Gora Region is Šar cheese.\textsuperscript{137}

Gorani people had other occupations besides animal husbandry. This lifestyle of Gorani people, which was kept for centuries, affected their collective identity.\textsuperscript{138} For instance, during the Ottoman Empire, they were doing business in bakeries and restaurants, and as sellers of dried nuts and fruits within the Ottoman Empire territory, mainly in Anatolia.\textsuperscript{139} The region could not be industrialized because of wars and other factors. Thus, the region was one of the poorest areas within Yugoslavia. Even today, the Dragash municipality is the poorest in Kosovo.\textsuperscript{140}

The Gora Region was an area in which many ancient trade roads intersected in the pre-Ottoman times.\textsuperscript{141} In the 20th century, the Brod (Slavic ford) formed, which is currently a small village near the Macedonian border, but also here were old trade roads at the end of steep canyons, and it represents the actual cultural and economic center of the region.\textsuperscript{142} However, the region couldn’t be developed, due to the geographical factors mentioned earlier.

The main settlement of the Gorani people was the town of Dragash up until the 1960s.\textsuperscript{143} The city of Dragash as a Gorani settlement changed when the Gorani population mixed with the

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{137} Qafleshi, “Gora and Goranis as Last Torbeshs of Bogumilism in Balkans,” p. 11.
\textsuperscript{139} Schmidinger, Gora: Slawischsprachige Muslime zwischen Kosovo, Albanien, Mazedonien und Diaspora, p. 123. Also Hodza, p. 105.
\textsuperscript{140} Hodza, p.104-109.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid, p.13. Also, Schmidinger, Gora: Slawischsprachige Muslime zwischen Kosovo, Albanien, Mazedonien und Diaspora, p.10
\textsuperscript{142} Schmidinger, Gora: Slawischsprachige Muslime zwischen Kosovo, Albanien, Mazedonien und Diaspora, p. 60.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid, p.64
Albanian population in the 1970s.\textsuperscript{144} Despite all that, between 1991 and 1999, the Gorani people finally established an independent municipality called Gora, which coincided exactly with the time of the Serbian ruling in Kosovo.\textsuperscript{145} The Serbs conducted policies that tried to favor the non-Albanian minorities, and correspondingly, the Gorani were seen as a friendly community by the Serbs.\textsuperscript{146} Therefore, the Serbs were treating the Gorani with particular attention and privileges.\textsuperscript{147}

On the other hand, Albanians have historically tried to delegitimize the Gora municipality as Slavic territory. Kosovo-Albanians claimed the Gora Region as “Albanian soil.” And, they viewed the Gora municipality as a Serb instrument of rule.\textsuperscript{148}

Currently, the Gora Region falls between three countries, the first being Albania, which received a portion of the Gora Region following the Treaty of London.\textsuperscript{149} In Albania, Gorani live in a total of nine to ten villages in the border region adjacent to the Gorani settlement area in Kosovo, which include the Gorani villages of Zapot (Albanian Zapod), Pakišta (alb. Pakisht), Očikle (alb. Orčikël), Košariše, Orgosta (orgjost), Crnolevo (alb. Cernalevë), Orešek (alb. Orshekë), Borje (alb. Borje) and Šištevec (alb. Shistavec).\textsuperscript{150} The second country which claims part of the Gora Region is present-day Macedonia, where the villages of Urviqi and Jelovljaniare are located.\textsuperscript{151} The remaining Gorani villages of Baçkë, Brod, Dikanci, Dragash (the former name Krakojshte), Glloboçicë, Kukolan, Lubovishtë, Mlike, Orçushë, Radesh, Rapçë, Restelicë,

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{146} Harrison.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{148} Schmidinger, \textit{Gora: Slawischsprachige Muslime zwischen Kosovo, Albanien, Mazedonien und Diaspora}, p. 64.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid, p. 98-99.
\textsuperscript{151} Qafleshì, “Gora and Goranis as Last Torbeshs of Bogumilism in Balkans,” p. 11-12.
Vranishte and Zlipotok, fall within Kosovo, the youngest state in Europe and Balkan region.\textsuperscript{152} In total, Kosovo consists of seven districts.\textsuperscript{153}

The former Municipality of Gora now falls between two of those administrative districts, i.e. the Municipality of Dragash, which remains largely Gorani occupied and includes the Gora and Dragash districts, and the Municipality of Prizren, a largely ethnic Albanian district to which the Kosovo-Albanians annexed the Opolje district in 1999, when the Kosovo-Albanians dominated the Municipality of Gora.\textsuperscript{154} In order to see the municipalities on Kosovo map, see Appendix B, figure 6 and 7.

According to Mike Harrison, a former UNMIK official, the division of the districts into Gora, Opolje and Dragash has special significance for the Gorani. It is a political division and does not correspond to the geographic or historic region that was Gora.\textsuperscript{155} The gradual loss of the Gora Region, mostly to ethnic Albanians, is a source of rivalry between the Gorani and ethnic Albanians. But, more importantly, it is a factor unifying the Gorani as an ethnic group.

2.3 The Gorani People

The origin of the Gorani people, like the history of their territory, is in dispute and is clouded by the Albanian, Bulgarian, Macedonian and Serbian historians who, in order to justify political outcomes, seek to categorize the Gorani as merely descendants of their own historical lineages and to justify the Gora Region as traditionally part of their territory, or at least, to show the Gora

\textsuperscript{152} Bajram Hodza, “Gora people’s position in Balkan policies,” (Master’s Degree, Sakarya University, 2013, (in Turkish), p.13 The author is from Gora.
\textsuperscript{153} Those districts are Ferizaj, Gjakova, Gjilan, Mitrovica, Peć, Pristina, Prizren.
\textsuperscript{155} Mike Harrison, Interview via E-mail, October 20, 2017.
Region did not ever belong to other regional rivals. This contest over history of the Gorani in that sense confirms the rivalry of these outside powers. It also serves as the keystone along which the Gorani identify their ethnic identity.

Confusion about the origins of the Gorani also comes from the topographers and census-takers themselves, who while perhaps motivated by government policies or simply out of lack of understanding of the Gorani as a people. Census-takers often categorized the Gorani as either Bosniaks, Bulgarian Muslims or Macedonian Muslims or even Serbians largely because the Gorani, whose relative population size was always small, fit easier into categories of the larger minorities in the region. Similarly, topographers seeking to identify religious or ethnic distributions in the region, simply depicted the Gorani under the moniker of the largest groups in the region. Hence, Ottoman maps of the region depict the Gorani as Muslims; Russians maps as Albanians, and Serbian maps as Bosniaks.

In terms of historical research, scholars use mainly written sources and those are generally chronicles, archives or the notes of travelers who visited that region. Since the Gorani people are mostly peasants and living far from urban areas, the Gorani people themselves did not develop a clear and definitive written history. A Gorani intellectual elite also did not arise to consolidate the literature or its traditions. What history there is exists largely as oral history.\textsuperscript{156} And, in terms of notes of travelers, the Gorani people were not a subject of the travelers of that region due to the small size of the group.\textsuperscript{157}

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid.
However, the Gorani have a unique identity. The name Gorani or Goranci-Goranski means inhabitants of mountains, and they also call themselves ‘Nashinski’, which means our people.\textsuperscript{158} Not much research has been conducted about the Gorani people due to some factors. Mainly, research about Gorani and their origins are conducted by a small group of scholars who study them and a small group of Gorani themselves as well.\textsuperscript{159}

Insofar as circumstances permit, the assumptions about the origin of the Gorani people are still complex because the theories of the origin of the group are mostly under the influence of political opportunists. However, Schmidinger writes an important argument that a certificate was issued by the Syrian Ministry of Education on 10 October 1995 that claimed that some people from Aleppo had immigrated to the Gora region between 1095 to 1291.\textsuperscript{160} As evidence, he points that there is a mosque named the mosque of Mlike, in the place where they had immigrated, and the neighborhood where the mosque is located is still called Halepovci. Through this perspective, it might be the case that the Gora region met with Islam before the Ottoman Empire’s conquest of the region.\textsuperscript{161}

It should be highlighted that nationalism influenced multiethnic states from which many nation-states arose in the Balkan region. Nevertheless, though ethnic and national identities became primary identities in most of the Balkans, the religious dimension remained strong. Religious identification has been made subordinate to ethnic identification, and religious rivalry transformed into the ethnic and national antagonism.”\textsuperscript{162} One example of it is in Kosovo, where

\textsuperscript{158} Enrico, (accessed date: 10/24/2017)
\textsuperscript{159} Schmidinger, \textit{Gora: Slawischsprachige Muslime zwischen Kosovo, Albanien, Mazedonien und Diaspora}, p.13
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid, p.18
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{162} Duijzings, \textit{Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo}, p.29
the conflict between ethnic Serbs and Kosovo Albanians took on the appearance of a conflict between Muslims and Christians.

In terms of identification of Gorani in the face of differing historical claims, Yugoslav officials classified the Gorani in the category of “non-Slavs,” the reason most probably being their religion. In the 1980s, while the Macedonian press was claiming that the Gorani are actually Macedonian (Torbeši- Macedonian Muslims), the Gorani people defined themselves as ethnic Muslims just like their brethren in Bosnia.

The various arguments create some doubt as to when the Gorani became Muslim. However, the common theme in all these arguments is the Gorani are Sunni Muslims, who speak a Slavic language akin to Macedonian and Bulgarian. They have inhabited the Gora region for several centuries. In sum, religion is one of the necessary factors to identify the Gorani as an ethnic group for both the Gorani and other outside observers. On the other hand, pro-Serb and Serbian historians see the Gorani as Serbs who converted to Islam during the era of the Ottoman Empire in the region. In contrast, Albanian historians accept them as Slav-Albanians, or Balkan people. Another complication in the Serb-Albanian conflict over Kosovo is that according to the Serb writer, Gora and Opolje regions are entirely Slavic Muslim people and the people have Serb origins. In contrast, the Albanian perspective is that the Opolje region was the home of the Albanian population, just like today, and the Gorani were Slavic-speaking people but they were not Serbs. On the other hand, Harun Hasani writes that according to the first written

163 Ibid, p. 27
164 Ibid.
165 Ibid.
166 Qafleshi Muharrem, “Opoja and Gora according to the Serb Author Milisav Lutovac,” p.9656
167 Ibid.
document (1348) which is an Old-Church Slavonic document, Brod was mentioned as this (Gorani) people’s settlements. Another perspective on the origins of the Gorani, held by Bulgarian and Macedonian historians, is that the Gorani are Islamized Bulgarians and Macedonians. In addition to all that, there is one more claim that seeks to connect the origin of the Gorani to the Turkic people. According to Harrison,

“Some researchers claim that Gorani are Muslim Macedonians. These facts (include this: they were Orthodox Christians and became Muslim) are often denied by some Gorani people for political and religious reasons. After 1999, some Gorani, in order to get distant from Serbs, have come up with new theories on their origin. Some Gorani believe that they are descendants from Bulgarians, members of the heretic Orthodox sect of “Bogomil,” who were prosecuted and forced to migrate to southern Balkans. Others say the Gorani are ethnically linked to the Bosniaks. However, there seem to be enough scientific and historic evidences proving their close ethnic relationship with Macedonians as well as their Christian-Orthodox past.”

In terms of the origin of the Gorani people, there are various claims as described in the previous paragraph. The main reasons for the complexity of “Gorani” identity were, firstly, that the group adapted the identity of the ruler state of the region, and secondly, that the identification was tried drawn by different state policies and political elites as mentioned previously. According to the

168 Hasani, “Migration of the population of the Sar Mountain zupa Gora,” p.34-35
170 Ibid.
171 Ibid.
172 Hodza, p. 90.
Hasani, “they are holding a separate ethnic group identity based on anthropological, anthropogeographical, ethno-social, philological, folklore and other characteristics Goranies represent, even though they are Serbo-Slavic population.” Thomas Schmidinger outlines the claims of the origins of Gorani.

Broadly, the Albanian and Kosovar Albanian thesis claims Illyrians lived in the region historically. Therefore, all Albanians are descendants of Illyrians. Thus, the inhabitants of the region grounds to the Illyrians. Therefore, the region had been inhabited by the Illyrians and then by Albanians since ancient times. Albanian historian Muharrem Qafleshi, tries to prove his argument with the customs of Illyrians among Albanians and Gorani. According to the theory, the existence of the Slavic people in the region is based on late Slavicization by a relatively small a group of Slav immigrants. Opposite to the Albanian thesis, the Serbian perspective is that the region was the old-Serbian settlements and propagated with Islamization of originally Serb Gorani- Goranci in Serbian. However, Serb authors did not unify about when the Islamization occurred over the Gorani people. Schmidinger writes an interesting point that there are also some pro-Serb Gorani authors who defends the thesis.

Those two main arguments are rival arguments. There are some more arguments about the origins of the Gorani people. The first of the arguments is driven by a language researcher Ramadan Redžeplari, who is from Zlipotok, the Gora region. He tries to establish a link between the Gorani and the Turks. The first of Redžeplari’s claims that early Islamization of the region. The second is that the ancestor of Gorani came to the region with immigration of Turkish-

---

173 Hasani, “Migration of the population of the Sar Mountain zupa Gora,” p.34
174 Schmidinger, Gora: Slawischsprachige Muslime zwischen Kosovo, Albanien, Mazedonien und Diaspora, p.14-22
175 Qafleshi, “Opoja and Gora according to the Serb Author Milisav Lutovac,” p. 9663.
Mongolian tribes, which occurred 2,500 years ago from Central Asia to Balkans. The third claim is the Gorani term was not derived from Slavic word ‘Berg’ but the Central Asian breed of goral.\textsuperscript{176} The Gorani people brought the name through the Black Sea to the Gora with the migration from Central Asia.\textsuperscript{177}

Thomas Schmidinger writes another argument about the origins of the Gorani people that Nazif Dokle also supports. Nazif Dokle is one of the important Gorani intellectuals about the language and Gorani history from Albania.\textsuperscript{178} According to the Dokle, the Gorani are descendants of Slavic speaking Bogomil, which was a Christian sect, and were spreading Christianity in South-East Europe and Anatolia around the 10\textsuperscript{th} to 15\textsuperscript{th} centuries. Dokle establishes his theory based on the linguistic similarities between Torbeš, which is the term for Macedonian-speaking Muslims, and the term of ‘beggars,’ and claims similarities to the Bogumilic symbols from the Goran villages of Borje and Šištevec in Albania. Muharrem Qafleshi cites Dokle’s work and writes that Dokle the Gorani had a unique national consciousness.\textsuperscript{179} “Gorani do not call themselves Serbs, Bulgarians, Macedonians, Turks or Albanians but only Gorani and Bosniaks.”\textsuperscript{180}

Regarding the Bosniak identity of the Gorani people, Schmidinger points out that small minority groups have been forced to create political and economic connections by assigning

\textsuperscript{176} The animal is Naemorhedus.
\textsuperscript{177} Ramadan Redžeplari is also sees a connection between the Goranians in Gora region and the southern Kurdish Gorani as well.
\textsuperscript{178} Schmidinger, \textit{Gora: Slawischsprachige Muslime zwischen Kosovo, Albanien, Mazedonien und Diaspora}, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{179} Muharrem, “Gora and Goranis as Last Torbeshs of Bogumilism in Balkans,” p.15
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid.
them to a larger ethnic group in order to keep their existence.\textsuperscript{181} In that sense, after the Serb withdrawal from Kosovo, meaning the ability of the Serb government to protect the Gorani people, the Gorani, largely for census purposes, identified themselves a “Bosniaks.”\textsuperscript{182}

Duijzings summarizes the situation of the Gorani in Kosovo best. He writes:

“During Ottoman Empire and thereafter, where group boundaries tended to be fluid and less institutionalized, and where identities weakly defined or ambiguous identity, ethnic identity becomes a bone of contention between more powerful groups. (…) This is the case is exemplified by the existence of ethnic and religious anomalies; small ethnic and religious minorities do not fit into the neat system of the dominant Serbian-Albanian opposition, for example the Croats, Turks, Gypsies, Circassians and Slavic Muslims (Goranci), as well as the Catholic Albanians, the Turkophone Albanians (particularly in Prizren) and the Slavophone Albanians (in Rahvec). Their identity can be considered as ‘neither-nor’ or ‘both-and.’ They are ‘betwixt and between’ and tend to mess up any neat system of contrast in ethnic classification.”\textsuperscript{183}

Thus, most of these discussions about the origins of Gorani to-date aim to merge Gorani identity with the other powerful ethnic identities in the region.

External events also impacted the Gorani in forming their ethnic identity and group unity. The Balkan Wars and a subsequent famine, during which many Gorani lost their lives due to

\textsuperscript{181} Schmidinger, \textit{Gora: Slawischsprachige Muslime zwischen Kosovo, Albanien, Mazedonien und Diaspora} p.67-68
\textsuperscript{182} Ibid, p. 68.
hunger and disease, led the Gorani to migrate from the Gora Region to escape poverty. Specifically, many Gorani fled to local urban areas in the region, where jobs and food were more plentiful.\(^{184}\) The Gorani, who remained the Gora Region, lost their lives due to hunger and diseases. Others perished on their trek to Prizren and Tetovo, which became havens for the Gorani refugees.\(^{185}\) And, after World War II, there was another immigration movement for the Gorani people. They had to leave their houses “because of new socio-economic relations, political circumstances, introduction of collectivization and buying up of crops in their villages.”\(^{186}\) Their land and properties were desolated and sold at very cheap prices, and groups fled to the nearest towns: Prizren, Pristina, Tetovo, Skopje, and Belgrade; the other group who immigrated went to Turkey.\(^{187}\)

The Gorani, whose ethnicity was not listed as one of the larger minorities on official documents, classified themselves as the ethnic group with which they resembled the most. Hence when they immigrated, they mostly introduced themselves as Bosniaks or did not specify their ethnic backgrounds.\(^{188}\) Today, in addition to the cities named above, the Gorani reside in the cities of Prizren, Mitrovica and Pec, and in Skopje along with three Gorani Villages in the territory of Macedonia and other nine settlements in Albania.”\(^{189}\)

The origins of the Gorani is a question for further research. Their origins have become shrouded first by the desire of larger ethnic groups to assimilate them and second by census-takers, other government officials and the Gorani themselves who categorized the Gorani as

---

\(^{184}\) Hasani, “Migration of the population of the Sar Mountain zupa Gora,” p. 37.
\(^{185}\) Ibid.
\(^{186}\) Ibid.
\(^{187}\) Ibid.
\(^{188}\) Enrico, (access date:10/24/2017)
\(^{189}\) Harrison.
members of the similar larger ethnic groups. All recognized they were Muslims who spoke a Slavic language and coming from the Gora Region. But only the Gorani recognized the uniqueness of their language, their customs, their religion and homeland as unique from their fellow Muslim and Slavic neighbors.

2.4 Religion of Gorani

The Gorani, as people, are Sunni Muslims, whose interpretation of Islam also includes traditions associated with the Bogumils, a Bulgarian Orthodox sect which spread their faith across Southeast Europe between 900 and 1400 AD. Founded by the priest, Bogumil, the Bogumils favored a more spiritual, less hierarchical, approach to understanding the Orthodox faith. The Bogomil influence lingers to this day and differentiates the Gorani from other Sunni Muslims. While fundamentally Muslims, the Gorani still recognize Bogumil, observe a number of Bogumil traditions and celebrate certain holy days honoring Bogumil saints.

How the Gorani came to be Muslims is also in debate. According to most accounts, the Gorani met Islam with the conquest of the Balkans by the Ottoman Empire. As the Ottoman Empire expanded over the Balkan region, there was a simultaneously increase in the Muslim population in the region. The proselytization of the Gorani people occurred in 1766. According to Malcolm, legend maintains the main reason for the Gorani, who were originally Christian Orthodox, accepting Islam was “the neglect or hostility shown to the Gorani by Greek Bishops after the closure of the Serbian Patriarchate.”

---

192 Ibid.
The second reason the Gorani people converted to Islam was the *millet* system, which the Ottomans used to categorize peoples in the Ottoman-occupied territories.\(^{193}\) According to the millet system, the Ottoman precepts defined “the politically relevant identities” based in terms of their religion.\(^{194}\) Hence, Ottoman censuses classified the inhabitants of regions based on whether they were “people of the Book,” e.g. as “Christian,” “Muslim,” “Jews,” all of which are historically descendants of Abraham, and “Others.” Basically, the peoples living in the Ottoman’s multiethnic, multi-religious society were classified according to their religions and sects.\(^{195}\)

However, the meaning of “*millet,*” a Turkish term, has two senses. As used during the period of Ottoman rule in the Balkans, it primarily referred to one’s religious or a sectarian affiliation, but could also connote ethnicity.\(^{196}\) Around the end of the 19\(^{th}\) century, *millet* began to refer primarily to ethnicity; religion became an identified of ethnicity.\(^{197}\)

But, more than merely being a basis to classify and count who lived in their territories, the *millet* lists also served as the basis upon which to levy and collect taxes. Those who converted to Islam paid lower taxes and received other economic advantages. Economic factors led to many minorities to become Muslim. Many ethnic groups living the Ottoman dominated

\[^{193}\text{Duijzings, Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo, p. 27.}\]
\[^{194}\text{Ibid, p. 28.}\]
\[^{195}\text{Buckley, Kosovo: Contending Voice on Balkan Interventions, p. 120-122. Each Millet was bound with their law rather than Islamic Law, and they went to trail based on their religious rules.}\]
\[^{197}\text{Ibid.}\]
areas therefore accepted Islam, and, in doing so, became part of the ruling class regardless of their ethnic background or language.  

There is yet a third argument as to when the Gorani became Muslims, an explanation which predates the Ottoman conquest. According to Schmidinger the Syrian Ministry of Education issued a certificate claiming that some Muslims from Aleppo had emigrated to the Gora Region between 1095 to 1291, a period the Serbian Despotate’s conquest of the Gora Region in 1455. As possible evidence to substantiate this claim, Schmidinger points to the ancient Mosque of Mlike in the village of Halepovci, a derivative of the Arabic name for Aleppo. Through this perspective, it might be the case that the Gora region met with Islam before the Ottoman Empire’s conquest of the region.

Clearly, by the late 1700’s, the Gorani were practicing Muslims. The singular identity of their religion got diluted in later years, again due to political pressures and perhaps largely out of bureaucratic laziness. As the Ottoman millet system hid the Gorani’s Slavic roots, the Yugoslav census takers obfuscated the Gorani’s approach to Islam from with other Yugoslav Muslims. While some Yugoslav records indicate that Yugoslav officials classified the Gorani in the category of “non-Slavs,” due to their religion, the general trend was to place the Gorani into a larger basket of Slavic Muslims.

According to Yugoslav records, the Muslim community officially consisted of four main groups: Bosniaks, Albanian Muslims, Turkish Muslims, and Slavic Macedonian Muslims.

198 Schmidinger, Gora: Slawischsprachige Muslime zwischen Kosovo, Albanien, Mazedonien und Diaspora, p.13
199 Ibid, p.18
200 Ibid, p. 27
who resided largely in Bosnia as well as the Sandzak, Kosovo, Metohia, and Kumanovo regions of Yugoslavia. Due partially to similar linguistic roots of Gorani and Serbo-Croatian; and due partially to the Gorani and Bosniaks living in close proximity to one another in the Gora Region, the Gorani identity fell under the category of “Bosniak.”

A Tito era decision however blurred the Gorani identity even further. Initially, Muslims had to declare themselves as either Serbs or Croats. Later, they could declare themselves as “nationally non-aligned Muslims.” But, in January 1968, as part of an effort to recognize the uniqueness of the Bosniak ethnicity in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in a step toward decentralization of power, the Yugoslav government officially recognized the Bosniaks in Bosnia-Herzegovina as a separate ethnic group and afforded the status of a full nationality. This status covered the Muslims living in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia and Serbia (but not in Kosovo) only.

In Kosovo, Albanian-speaking Muslims were categorized Albanian and in Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Macedonian-speaking Muslims were categorized as Macedonian. Due to the close affinity of the Gorani language to Macedonian, the Gorani could have been classified as Macedonian Muslims. And, as recent as the 1980s, the Macedonian press was claiming the Gorani were Torbeşi- Macedonian Muslims.

However, by the 1980’s, the Gorani sought to differentiate themselves from other Slavic Muslims. First, they refuted the Macedonian claims they were Torbeşi. And second, they

202 Ibid.
204 Ibid, p. 110.
205 Ibid.
206 Ibid.
207 Duijzings, Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo, p. 27.
distanced themselves from the Bosniaks. Instead, the Gorani people defined themselves as a separate ethnic Slavic Muslim group distinct but like their Bosniak brethren in Bosnia-Herzegovina. 208

The Gorani also differentiate their approach to Islam as distinct from other local Muslims. According to the Gorani, the ethnic Albanian and other Balkan Muslim groups fell under the influence of the Bektashi, 209. The Bektashi order, which was founded by Balim Sultan, is a spiritualistic Sufi Muslim ascetic order. The Bektashism has many similarities with other Islamic mystical groups through spiritual path. The Gorani derive their spiritualism as well as many other traditions from their Bogumil tradition.

2.5 The Language of Gorani

Language is a significant factor in many aspects. Language is the basis for social relations as well as national identity. It provides a basis to trace the historic origins of a people and their thought system as a nation. Language provides the optic through which a people understand the world around them. But most importantly, language is a defining element in determining national consciousness, separating one group from another.

In the case of the Gorani language, according to Schmidinger, the Gorani name the language they speak as Nashinski, which means “our language,” but often referred to by others as Goranski. 210 Nashinski belongs broadly to the South Slavic language family which includes Slovenian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Serbian, Bosnian, Croatian and Montenegrin. More

---

208 Ibid.
209 Schmidinger, Gora: Slawischsprachige Muslime zwischen Kosovo, Albanien, Mazedonien und Diaspora, p. 50.
210 Ibid, p. 23.
narrowly, it bears close relation to Macedonian and Serbian.\textsuperscript{211} More specifically, however, Goranian scholars associate their language, however, closer to the Bulgarian spoken in northwest Macedonia.\textsuperscript{212} And, due largely to the history, geographic proximity and the consequent interaction of peoples, Nashinski also has numerous loan words and cognates from Turkish, Arabic and Albanian.\textsuperscript{213}

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the former Gora Region is currently divided in two parts, Opolje and Gora. The main language in Opolje is Albanian where the Kosovo-Albanians dominate and have displaced the ethnic Gorani. The language currently spoken in Gora, where Gorani outnumber other minorities, is Nashinski. But, because of the sizable Bosniak community in the Gora, many residents also speak Bosnian.\textsuperscript{214}

As with claims for dominance over their territory, other ethnic minorities, ethnic Albanians in particular, have sought to have their language dominate or subsume Nashinski as they moved into the region and gained political sway. This was especially the case following the Balkan Wars but mostly during the period when Kosovo-Albanians called for Kosovo’s independence. As they moved to annex territory from the Gorani, ethnic Albanians have attempted to make Albanian the language of business, governance and education in the areas where they have political dominance. And, in 1946, the Kosovo-Albanians forced many Gorani to adopt Albanian names.\textsuperscript{215} Kosovo, which has traditionally had a large ethnic Albanian

\textsuperscript{211} Judah, Kosovo, What Everyone Needs to Know, p.104.
\textsuperscript{212} Nazif Dokle, Goranian (Nashinski)-Albanian Dictionary, Sofia 2007, published by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, p. 5, 11, 19.
\textsuperscript{213} Enrico, (Accessed date: 10/24/2017)
\textsuperscript{214} Hodza p. 13.
population, also designated Albanian as the primary language of social and business interactions. The Gorani have largely resisted such attempts by speaking Nashinski at home and advocating for learning Serbian in school. Kosovo-Albanian efforts to minimize the importance of Nashinski extend further insofar as they are putting pressure on the Gorani to abandon both Serb-Croatian and Nashinski as the language of education. Harrison stated that the language of education has traditionally been in Serbo-Croatian for decades, but as the Kosovo-Albanians come asserted their independence from Serbia, language policies which complemented their political objectives followed suit. Wanting to reduce the influence of Serbia in Kosovo, the Government of Kosovo has pushed to make the languages of instruction Albanian and Bosnian, the latter replacing Serbo-Croatian. And despite their previous affiliation with the Bosniaks, the Gorani are now even seeking to clearly distance themselves from the Bosniaks. As Harrison highlights

“it (Gorani language of education) became controversial and politicized after 1999, when Kosovo-Albanians and Bosniaks started to press the Gorani to switch (their primary language of instruction) to Bosnian. The Bosniaks claim that Gorani teachers are being paid by Belgrade to keep the students engaged in (Serb) parallel structures in order to avoid integrating into the Kosovo institutions. On the other hand, the Gorani teachers and parents claim that Bosnian language is not traditional among Gorani, and they want education in Serbia-Croatian for practical reasons, as the students often follow the higher education in Serbia.”

The debate over language education in Gora is thus divided into two groups: the Gorani and the Bosniaks. The Gorani want education to be in Serbian instead of Bosnian because they want to

---

216 Harrison,
217 Ibid,
preserve their identity from real and potential assimilation efforts pushed by their counterparts in the Bosniak community. 218

On the opposite side of the debate are the Bosniaks who do not accept the Gorani people as a separate ethnic group. They view the group “as integral members of the Bosniak ‘corpus’ who have not yet fully developed their “national consciousness.” 219 From the Bosniak point of view, the Gorani, who want to be educated in Serbian, are “betraying their collective identity with their Bosniak brethren.” 220

This controversial situation manifests itself in the Kosovo Education Strategic Plan of 2017-2021. Although, the plan does not address the Gorani community directly, it mentions the Serb community as an umbrella term for the Kosovo-Serbs and the other groups who receive their education in Serbian. 221 The author writes that some schools continue to teach in Serbian thus remaining outside of the Kosovo education system. 222 The plan describes the students who get education from the schools teaching in Serbian as not fully integrated into the Kosovo education system. 223

The reasons extend beyond language of instruction but reinforce Gorani opposition to adopting Albanian or Bosnian. According to Harrison, many Gorani parents oppose the new

---

219 Qafleshi, “Gora and Goranis as Last Torbeshs of Bogumilism in Balkans,” p. 15.
Kosovo government’s nine-grade education system because it is not compatible with the 8-grade education system used in Serbia. The incompatibility of the Serbian and Kosovo education systems affects Gorani students who want to continue their higher education in Serbia. Gorani students must study one more year, a “9th grade,” in order to graduate from primary school in Kosovo. Therefore, many Gorani students, who complete 8th grade, decide not to go to 9th grade, and instead, stay at home.

Even though the Gorani make up a small group, they have been able to maintain their customs and cultures. The Gorani have used their approach to the education policy as a means to resist the Bosniaks and Kosovo-Albanians, who, unlike the Serbs, live in close proximity in the Gora Region and represent the most pressing threats to the Gorani lands. Even though the Gorani and the Bosniaks share a similar language and, in general as mentioned, a common religion, the Gorani still differentiate themselves from the Bosniaks as they speak Nashinski and the Bosniaks Bosnian.

But the small size of the Gorani population in the larger Kosovo likely precludes the Gorani from requesting a separate Nashinski-based education system. In order to oppose larger threats to their identity, e.g. Kosovo-Albanian dominance and Bosniak assimilation, and still maintain their future viability, the Gorani have acquiesced on the language of education. The Gorani are, consistent with their historical fears, acquiescent on the language issue. While it does

---

224 Education is conducted both by public and private institutions in Kosovo. The Primary education takes 5 years and the (low) secondary education is 4 more years. And the both, primary and low secondary educations are mandatory by the law. Public schools are free. Education languages are conducted in 5 different languages: Albanian, Serbian, Bosnian, Turkish, and Croatian. [https://www.rks-gov.net/en-US/Qytetaret/Edukimi/Pages/ArsimiFillorDheMesem.aspx](https://www.rks-gov.net/en-US/Qytetaret/Edukimi/Pages/ArsimiFillorDheMesem.aspx) (accessed date: 10/24/2017)

225 Harrison.
not bode well for the future of Nashinski insofar as the Gorani are willing to speak Nashinski only in the home and amongst their own kind, by accepting the education of their children in Serbian, the Gorani ward off Bosniak and Albanian assimilation. The Serbs do not represent a substantive threat to the Gorani identity. And, to date, the Gorani elite have not yet asserted themselves in pushing a separate Gorani-mobilized political identity.

In sum, the Gorani have so far been able to protect their native language in spite of many outside attempts to influence them. Important to the preservation of their language is geography. As discussed earlier, the Gora region is mountainous and compact. Because of this, the Gorani people kept themselves relatively isolated and accepted Islam without losing their own language. The use of Nashinski is a defining element of the Gorani, differentiating them from the Albanians and Bosniaks and uniting them with Serbs, who have not threatened them.

2.6 Gorani Identity and Albanian Chauvinism from the Balkan Wars to the Kosovo War

According to the Kaufman’s Symbolic Politics theory, the creation of symbolic elements for the Gorani culture resulted in the creation of various symbolic factors within the culture. Despite all those being under construction by various powers, the Gorani people were able to create and maintain their own group identity. The three traits which define Gorani identity, their political symbols so to speak, are thus defense of their language, defense of their religion, and defense of their territory from outside aggression.

Relations between Gorani and Albanians have been historically tense. An indicator of the tension is the dearth of intermarriages. Albanians and Gorani living in rural areas seldom married. Only in Prizren did families of Albanians and Gorani intermarry. Therefore, the

---

226 Duijzings, Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo, p.16
227 Schmidinger, Gora: Slawischsprachige Muslime zwischen Kosovo, Albanien, Mazedonien und Diaspora, p. 65.
separation in both group, in their villages and lifestyles, was distinctly visible in the region.  

Through this division, it may be understood that the Gorani did not see themselves as part of their fellow Muslims in Kosovo, e.g. the Kosovo Albanians.

The most pressing threat to the Gorani’s existence as an ethnic group is that posed by Albanians, be it those in Albania or Kosovo-Albanians. And, Albanian nationalism is an important element to understand in the Gorani situation during the Kosovo War (1998-1999). Linked to Albanian nationalism is the ethnic Albanian efforts to take land within the Gora Region.

Albanian nationalism occurred later than Serbian nationalism. In the early 19th century, the Greeks gained their independence from the Ottoman Empire and, in 1815, the Serbs gained greater autonomy but not independence, remaining part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Serb nationalism and the desire for an independent state was the spark which ignited World War I. Only after the end of World War I did the Serbs receive a degree of independence with the newly created Yugoslavia, one in which the Serb exercised a degree of political dominance over the other ethnic groups.

However, the Albanians did not develop nationalist sentiments until later. Present day Albania remained part of the Ottoman Empire. Further, Albanians, many of whom were Muslim and hence occupied prominent regional positions within the Ottoman Empire, maintained their allegiance to the Ottomans much longer than the Serbs and Greeks. Albanian nationalist

---

228 Ibid.
229 Buckley, Kosovo: Contending Voice on Balkan Interventions, p. 102
230 Ibid.
231 Ibid.
yearnings came later following the Balkan Wars when the Treaty of London (1912) established Albania as an independent nation-state.

Nationalism is relatively recent term. But, as Duijzings mentions in his book, even though nationalism is a modern concept, “it has often resorted to pre-modern values and symbols, borrowed in particular from kinship and religion.” 232 For example, in the process of the construction of Serbian and Albanian national identities, intellectuals and ideologists used religious elements in order to establish nationalism. 233 The Greeks and the Serbs shared a common Christian identity against the Ottoman Empire in their independence. 234

However, although Serbian nationalism united ethnic and religious identities, Albanian nationalism later lost its religious aspect. Unlike their Kosovo-Albanian brethren, the ethnic Albanians in Albania professed to three religions. Although Albanian Muslims were the largest subset of religious groups, there were also Catholic and Eastern Orthodox communities among the ethnic Albanians in Albania. 235 All of these religious followers in Albania contributed to the national development of Albanian nationalism around the 1900s. 236 Radical Albanian leaders thus underscored cultural and linguistic unity rather than religious unity as an element of establishing Albanian identity. 237 “The Albanian language established commonality among the Albanian peoples’ various religions and therefore played an important role in the Albanian

233 Ibid.
234 Buckley, Kosovo: Contending Voice on Balkan Interventions, p. 102.
237 Ibid.
nationalist movement. The Albanian language, in particular, gave Albanians the feelings of belonging to the same nation.”\(^2\)\(^3\)\(^8\)

Language was a main tool for Albanian nationalism because language was an explicit element that differentiated the Albanians from their Slav neighbors.\(^2\)\(^3\)\(^9\) Duijzings points out that, even though 90% of the Albanian population in Kosovo was Muslim, Islam did not have any role for the political mobilization of Albanians.\(^2\)\(^4\)\(^0\) Furthermore, the Albanian Catholics were prominent supporters of their Albanian Muslim fellows in the Albanian opposition against the Serb hegemony.\(^2\)\(^4\)\(^1\)

Albanian chauvinism, in the Albanian national awakening, thus included the dominance of Albanian over Slavic languages. Albanian nationalism, which was established based on the Albanian culture and language, was not tolerant for the other non-Albanian minorities, which were expelled from Kosovo.\(^2\)\(^4\)\(^2\) As a Slavic speaking people, the Gorani represented an “out-group” to the Albanians and seemed to the Albanians a natural ally of the Serbs due to their common linguistic heritage. The fear of being unable to speak one’s own language may have led them to take sides with the Serbs during the war.

Unlike their opposition to the Gorani, the Kosovo-Albanian opposition to the ethnic Serbs was based on religion. The Kosovo-Albanians relegated religion in their approach to the Gorani as they had done when unifying Albanians in creating an independent Albania. The Gorani too, on their part, downplayed the role of religion in developing their collective identity.

---

\(^{238}\) Ibid.
\(^{239}\) Duijzings, *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo*, p. 159.
\(^{240}\) Ibid.
\(^{241}\) Ibid, p. 160.
\(^{242}\) Schmidinger, *Gora: Slawischsprachige Muslime zwischen Kosovo, Albanien, Mazedonien und Diaspora*, p. 64.
against the Kosovo-Albanians. If the Gorani had placed more emphasis on religion, the Gorani would have sided likely sided with the Kosovo-Albanians. With that in mind, language became the defining elements of the clash of identities between the Kosovo-Albanians and their Gorani religious kin.

An important source of tensions between the Gorani and the Kosovo Albanians is the Gorani’s fear of losing territory. First, in 1912, with the creation of Albania, the Gorani lost the western reaches of the Gora Region to Albania. Then as Yugoslavia dissolved following the death of Tito, the Gorani again lost territory.

The Gorani, whom the Serbs treated benevolently, received protections against further Albanian aggression. The Gorani settlements along the Albanian border were holding a strategic importance for Belgrade. Therefore, following World War II, the Tito regime established the Gora District within Kosovo. The Gora District consisted of four communities: Dragash, Vranishte, Brod and Krushevo. Unlike other minorities, the Gorani were not ordered by the Serbs to evacuate their villages during the conflict. And, between 1991 and 1999, in order to bolster the non-Albanian minorities in the Gora Region and to delegitimize Albanian claims to territory, the Serbs established the Nashinski-speaking autonomous Gora District, an act which the Albanians perceived as a means of Serb dominance in the area.

---

243 Appendix B, Figure 4 maps the current ethnic concentrations of Gorani, Bosniaks, Kosovo-Albanians and Kosovo-Serbs in Kosovo and shows how other ethnic groups have come to populate the territories which the Gorani consider their homelands.
244 Harrison.
245 Ibid.
246 Ibid.
247 Schmidinger, *Gora: Slawischsprachige Muslime zwischen Kosovo, Albanien, Mazedonien und Diaspora*, p. 64.
Not surprisingly, Albanian efforts to increase their dominance over the Gorani increased. Starting in the early 1960s, Kosovo-Albanians began to settle in Dragash, increasing the size of their population in the city. And, between 1991 and 1999, the number of Albanians in Dragash doubled and the Gora District divided de facto into the upper Dragash, where the Albanians outnumbered the Gorani and the lower Dragash, where the native Gorani lived. The former corresponded to the Opolje area. From the Gorani and Serb perspective, the Albanian resettlement of Dragash came to represent an “Albanianization” of the region.248

Another significant incident occurred in 1991; namely in 1991, the Yugoslav government issued a regulation, which among other administrative changes in Kosovo, divided the Municipality of Dragash into two separate municipalities: The Municipality of Gora, which covered the region of the Gorani villages, and the Municipality of Opolje, which included the Albanians villages. Although the Gorani accepted the decision, the Albanian side did not. Instead the Albanians boycotted the decision and instead attached themselves to the Municipality of Prizren, a predominantly Albanian district.249

The outbreak of the Kosovo War in 1998 and 1999 marked a more aggressive phase of Kosovo-Albanian attempts to dominate the Gorani. The Kosovo-Albanians directed their political efforts as well as their military forces against both the ethnic Serbs and other ethnic groups, which either did not side with them or whom they viewed as sympathetic to the Serbs. The Gorani naturally fell into both categories.

The Kosovo War broke out in 1998 when Kosovo-Albanians, who were calling for independence from Serbia, met resistance from the Serb government and the remnants of

248 Harrison.
249 Ibid.
remaining Serb-dominated Yugoslav National Army (JNA). The Kosovo-Albanian military, which came to be known as the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) or, in Albanian, the Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës-(UCK), was primarily a paramilitary organization. The KLA gained both notoriety and acclaim for its successful use of guerrilla tactics against those who opposed them. In response, the JNA intervened in Kosovo to defend from the KLA wrath both the territorial integrity of Serbia, of which Kosovo was merely an autonomous region, and to defend the Serb population and culture. Both the KLA and JNA committed what the international community considered incidents of ethnic cleansing and other types of war crimes. In early 1999, in the wake of the humanitarian crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina, NATO forces intervened to repel the JNA and to quell the violence. In June 1999, after months of NATO bombing of Belgrade and Serbian military sites, the United Nations (UN) approved United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1244, which established UNMIK as the UN entity to oversee resolution of the Kosovo crisis and also identified the NATO-led Kosovo Forces (KFOR) as the peacekeeping force to maintain order in the region. 250

After the UN adopted UNSCR 1244 concluding the war, many Serbs and other ethnic minorities migrated. Some immigrated to Serbia; others simply migrated to areas where they felt safe from either the JNA, the KLA or both. As might be expected, many Serbian administrative systems collapsed, and only very limited Serb settlements were left because most fled. On the other hand, many Kosovo-Albanians, who had sought refuge Albania, Macedonia or elsewhere, returned to Kosovo. 251 Consequently, KLA assumed power in the region after the Serbs’ fled. 252 Moreover, despite the presence of KFOR, many KLA members conducted revenge attacks

---

252 Ibid.
against Kosovo Serbs and “their allies.” Such revenge include ethnic cleansing and violent retribution by the Kosovo-Albanians on the Gorani.

In addition to acts of retribution against the Gorani, the Kosovo-Albanians took revenge on the Circassians (Adyghe/Cherkess). The ethnic Albanians in Kosovo considered the Circassians supportive of Serbs even though they too were Muslims just like the Kosovo-Albanians. The Circassians therefore fled from Kosovo to Russia.

Furthermore, in addition to using military force to remove the Gorani, the Kosovo-Albanian leaders made efforts to repress the Gorani from speaking their native tongue. Kosovo-Albanian leaders, banned language education in Serbian, and forbade the Gorani from speaking Nashinski, a policy which the KLA enforced. To the Kosovo-Albanians, speaking Serbian and any language related to Serbian misrepresented of the Kosovo-Albanian dominance in Kosovo and threatened the unity of Kosovo as an aspiring independent entity.

Finally, the Kosovo-Albanians continued to assert their dominance over Gorani territory. In the course of the Kosovo War and subsequent peace-settlement process, Albanians occupied the central municipal building of Gora in Dragash, declaring the re-establishment of the Municipality of Dragash, a move which established Kosovo-Albanian political dominance over the other ethnic groups living in the municipality. The Kosovo-Albanians encountered no
resistance from KFOR and the rest of the international community, which empathized with the Kosovo-Albanians’ plight in relation to the Serbs. The Gorani argued that this administrative change was unfair after taking into account the other administrative changes which had occurred in 1991 when the Kosovo-Albanians had aligned themselves de facto with the Municipality of Prizren.\(^{259}\)

However, the international community accepted the changes, which the Gorani claimed was a violation of SCR 1244 and which favored the Kosovo-Albanians. The NATO KFOR forces arrived too late to Dragash to counter the Albanian actions. The NATO force’s late arrival opened the Gorani to having terrible experiences inflicted on them by the Kosovo-Albanians. Kosovo-Albanian forces harassed and threatened the Gorani, forcing them to leave Dragash and other parts of the Municipality of Gora. The Gorani people were afraid of losing their other lands.\(^{260}\) Consequently, the Gorani found themselves totally isolated and disoriented having lost control over the Municipality of Gora.\(^{261}\)

In the years that followed, the Government of Kosovo, which was dominated by the Kosovo-Albanians, further whittled away territory from the Gorani. The Kosovo government again re-organized the municipalities which included the former Gora Region. Most importantly, the Kosovo government separated the Opoje area from the Municipality of Dragash and placed it within the Municipality of Prizren.

So why did the Serbs not repress the Gorani as they repressed the Bosniaks? First, the Gorani and Serbs share mutually friendly views over the course of their histories. As Muharrem Cufta states:

\(^{259}\)Harrison.  
\(^{260}\)Muharrem Cufta, Interview via E-mail, October 30, 2017.  
\(^{261}\)Harrison.
“The Gorani people have had very good relations with the Serbs and it is still the same. Because there were many families which were working and studying in the Serbia, and currently there are still. The Gorani people were a people known for being mostly friendly and well-adjusted among the people in the Yugoslavia. We had the same education and lived under the same ceiling, and we are speaking the same language with them (the Serbs). We did not have any problem with them. Therefore, a state which started to fall apart, and everyone, naturally, defends their homeland.”

As Cufta stated, even though, the Gorani had different religious background then the Serbs, the relations between the Gorani and the Serbs, unlike the Bosniaks, did not have any issues.

But the more important reason rests in the Gorani response to the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Specifically, the Gorani reaction differed from that of the Bosniak brethren in Bosnia-Herzegovina. First and foremost, the Gorani did not translate their ethnic identity into a national identity and seek independence from Yugoslavia, their own separate republic, or even autonomy within Serbia. According to Cufta, who is from Gora, unlike the Bosniaks, the Gorani people did not aspire to independence from Serbia or seek to establish a state. They just aimed to protect their property and the lands they worked. Rather, the Gorani remained content being an ethnic group within the larger Serbian-dominated federation. Nor did they seek a national presence in government. The Gorani desired only to have voice over policy within the Gora region. As such, they did not incur the wrath of the Yugoslav military or the Kosovo-Serb militias in the Gora and other neighboring regions. Rather, the Yugoslav military and Kosovo-

---

262 Ibid. The translation made by author.
263 Cufta.
Serb militias concentrated on protecting ethnic Serb communities in the broader region and countering the Kosovo-Albanian forces seeking independence.

Further, unlike the Bosniaks, the Gorani did not define their identity based solely on their religion to distinguish themselves from their Serb and Croat neighbors. As mentioned previously, the Bosniak, Serb and Croat peoples all speak the essentially the same tongue, Serb-Croatian. Religious affiliation is the primary trait which defines the differences between the Bosniaks, the Serbs and Croatian.

And, finally, Gorani leaders, unlike their Bosniak counterparts, did not share a history of politically mobilizing their followers based on religion. In the years preceding the outbreak of conflict in Bosnia, Alija Izetbegovic, the individual who would become leader of the Bosniak minorities in Bosnia, had advocated “the creation of a united Islamic community from Morocco to Indonesia, in his *Islamic Declaration of 1970*. Izetbegovic, whose more clericalist views caused more moderate Bosniak politicians to distance themselves from him, formed the Muslim Party of Democratic Action (SDA) with goal of seeking independence from Yugoslavia. Izetbegovic’s stance incited Serb political symbols of defend Christianity against Islam as well as awakened associated Croat and Serb fears of being dominated by Muslims.

A consequence of Izetbegovic’s stance was Bosniak-Serbs but also Bosniak-Croats came to view the Bosniaks as a threat to their immediate safety, if not a long-term threat to their existence. As such, the Bosniak-Serbs and the Bosniak-Croats targeted Bosniak villages and militias. The Bosniak-Croats only latter allied with the Bosniaks after international forces

---

intervened and subsequent peace negotiations convinced them that unity against the Serbs assisted in gaining political leverage with a unified Bosniak-Croat and Bosniak federation against the Bosniak Serbs within a unified Bosnia-Herzegovina.

On the other hand, the Gorani approach to Islam and stance on independence neither incited Serb nor Kosovo-Serb fears. But, it did reinforce ethnic Albanian prejudices that the Gorani sympathized with the Serbs. As such, the Gorani provoked the ire of the Kosovo-Albanians.

The Gorani stance around which they politically mobilized was rooted in the political symbols rooted in their fear of Albanian domination. The Albanian policies of annexing Gorani territories in the Opja region and historical efforts to minimize the Goranian language in relation to the Albanian language precluded the Gorani as viewing the Kosovo-Albanians as allies, despite their common religious beliefs. The Gorani thus chose not to ally with the Kosovo-Albanians, again causing them to be treated as enemies to the Kosovo-Albanians whose objective was seeking independence from Serbia.

**Conclusion**

The aim of this work was to answer the question of why did the Gorani, who are a Muslim, Slavic group choose their Slavic roots over their religious roots shape their political position during the Kosovo War? In other words, what elements of the Gorani shaped the Gorani ethnic identity, and how did this identity play a role in the Gorani coming into opposition with the Kosovo-Albanians, who are the predominantly Muslim? The research seems to indicate Kaufman’s Symbolic Politics theory more than the other schools of ethnic mobilization offers the best explanatory model. As a relatively small group, outnumbered in terms of population
within the region and frequently under the sway of larger regional powers, the Gorani shaped their identity on three elements. Of these three elements, only two, language and fear of the loss of territory, however, defined the Gorani political symbolic myths which caused them not to side with Kosovo-Albanians in opposing the ethnic Serbs in the Kosovo-Albanian effort to gain independence for Kosovo.

The first element, in terms of the Gorani ethnic identity, is their religion which is Islam, which sets them apart from the Serbs, who are Orthodox. The Gorani interpretation of Islam also differs from the Kosovo-Albanian interpretation of Islam. Although both the Gorani and the Kosovo-Albanians are Sunni Muslims, the Gorani interpretation of Islam incorporates elements of their Bogumul heritage. The Kosovo-Albanian interpretation derives much from the influence of the Bektashi tradition.

Even so, neither the Gorani nor the Kosovo-Albanians used religion to define “in-groups” and “out-groups” vis-à-vis one another during the Kosovo War. The Kosovo-Albanians, similar to their Albanian nationalist brethren who unified Albanian Catholics, Albanian Orthodox and Albanian Muslims against the Orthodox Serbs to gain independence for Albania, downplayed religion among themselves. In creating a truly Albanian identity, Albanian nationalists emphasized other elements of their ethnicity to create a nation-state. Likewise, Kosovo-Albanians chose not to stress their common Muslim roots with the Gorani. The Gorani too, for who typically only use religion when defining their identity vis-à-vis ethnic Slavs, did not find religion as touching the emotions necessary to define their identity in relation to the Kosovo-Albanians as sufficient to provoke a sense of unity among the Gorani. Thus, while religion is important to the Gorani identity, the Gorani did not stress religion and did not find religion as a source of common identity with their religious kin, the Kosovo-Albanian during the conflict.
Another significant factor in the creation of ethnic identity of the Gorani is language.

Even though, existence of the various arguments about similarities between the Serbian and the Nashinski or between the Macedonian and the Nashinski, the Gorani have been able protect their native language due to mountainous geography and other factors. And unlike religion, language became a unifying element for the Gorani and Kosovo-Albanians in defining their separate ethnic identities. In the Albanian case, language was a common element among Albanians who had religiously different backgrounds. Thus, Albanian nationalist unified Albanian Muslims and the Albanian Christians occurred based on them all speaking Albanian. Albanian nationalist achieved independence as a nation-state by uniting Albanian speakers against non-Albanian speakers. There is, in the Albanian mind, success in achieving political objectives in using language as a unifying factor in forming both an ethnic identity as well as national unity.

Kosovo-Albanians thus made efforts to repress the Gorani from speaking Nashinski because Nashinski was not Albanian but more because Nashinski was a Slavic language akin to the language of the Kosovo-Albanians’ main political adversary, the ethnic Serbs. Especially during the Kosovo War, Kosovo Albanians attempted to ban Nashinski and years thereafter have advocated policies to adopt Bosnian. The Gorani clung then and still do cling to Nashinski as differentiating themselves, even from the Bosniaks who, though less than the Kosovo-Albanians, too represent a threat to their separate ethnic identity.

Last but not least, another significant component of the Gorani ethnic identity is territory. Historically, the Gora Region expands currently three country lands, Kosovo, Albania, and Macedonia. The fear of losing territory can be interpreted via the Instrumentalist approach along with the Symbolic Politics theory as well. According to the Instrumentalist approach, people mobilize in order to gain economic benefits. Based on the school of thought perspective, the
Gorani wanted defense their land, where they earn their life. Keep in mind that, the Gora Region is mountainous, hence, many of the Gorani’s occupation was animal husbandry or farming. Therefore, the Gorani tried to keep their land in order to maintain their status stable.

But, through the perspective of the Symbolic Politics theory, land is not only place in which you can live and spend time on it. Territory also has the symbolic elements rooted in emotions. Territory represents historical heritage. Rationally, using the logic of the Instrumentalist, people could substitute one piece of land for another, especially if the land provides equal or better economic benefit. But, land often represents more than a mere place where people derive their incomes and well-being. Land is also tied to people’s memories/ It is the place they inherited from their ancestors and where their ancestors gave birth, raised their children, and ultimately rest after a life lived. Land is where the younger generations go to remember the older generations, pay them homage, and feel their presence even though they are no longer alive in body. Land is meaningful to people it is linked to their memories, their heritage.

The history demonstrates how larger politically dominant ethnic groups, primarily the Albanians, have shrunk the Gora Region and it divided it up with political borders, notably when Albania and Macedonia gained their independence. The Gorani lost even more territory and more importantly political control of Gorani territory first in 1991 when the Kosovo-Albanians in Opolje aligned themselves with the Municipality of Prizren. And it occurred again in 1999 with the division of the former Municipality of Gora when the Kosovo-Albanian political leaders divided the Municipality into Municipality of Opolje, which was northern part of the Municipality Dragash, and the Municipality of Gora. In all cases, ethnic Albanian political
policies and decisions reduced the Gorani political influence to determine their own destiny. The Gorani dominance over their land, as much as it had existed previously, waned even further.

In addition to the political division of the Gorani lands is the threat of migration. Other ethnic groups, e.g. the Kosovo-Albanians and the Bosniaks, have come to populate the Gora Region and outnumber the Gorani in certain areas. Of the two groups, the Kosovo-Albanians and the Bosniaks, the Kosovo-Albanian have posed the single most pressing threat to the Gorani control of their own land. Albanianization of the Gorani settlements started in 1960s. After the creation of the Municipality of Opolje, there was an increase in the Kosovo-Albanian population moving into the area. The Gorani again lost land and influence as the Kosovo-Albanian surged.

The fear of losing territory to the Kosovo-Albanians was a real threat to the Gorani. This fear of losing territory became an important element, a symbol of ethnic unity, among the Gorani. During the Kosovo War, the Gorani took such a position in which they could protect their historical heritage from the Kosovo-Albanian encroachment of the Gorani lands.

According to the Gorani’s position during the Kosovo War can be comprehended that the Gorani aimed to protect their territory and maintain their native language. However, if the Gorani had strictly sided with the Serbs, they would have been persecuted by the nationalist KLA soldiers. The consequences of openly siding with the Serb would have likely been even more repressive, even more brutal than that which did actually occur. Therefore, during the war, the Gorani people shaped their political identity selectively and politically mobilized accordingly, first placing primacy on protecting their homeland and on the uniqueness of their language.

From a theoretical perspective, the Gorani case expands and clarifies Kaufman’s explanation of the role of Symbolic Politics in understanding ethnic mobilization. The Gorani
case shows that a group may choose to place different emphasis on the elements around which they have their political symbols depending on which other ethnicity they want identify as the out-group. In their shaping their identity vis-à-vis the ethnic Serbs, Bulgarians and Macedonians, the Gorani place greater emphasis on their Muslim heritage, an element which unifies them with their Bosniak neighbors. However, in shaping their identity in their relations with ethnic Albanians and, even the Bosniaks, the Gorani place greater emphasis on the uniqueness of their language. The third element, defense of their territory, remains the common thread in their relations with all ethnic groups. However, in terms of being the single unifying element of the Gorani political symbols, defense of territory is not sufficient in and of itself. The most likely explanation, one for further research, is politically mobilizing based solely in regaining or protecting territory is not practically feasible. Doing so would place them at odds simultaneously with the Bosniaks and the Kosovo-Albanians. Being relatively so few in number, the Gorani could not pursue policies, violent or non-violent, to protect their lands in the face of a unity of Kosovo-Albanians and Bosniaks against them.

The political symbols for an ethnic group are not constant, contrary to what Kaufman asserts. Political symbols, at least the relative importance of elements composing a people’s ethnic identity, are fluid relative to which out-group poses the greatest threat to an in-group’s continued existence. A political myth used to define identity and to mobilize against one threat do not suffice against a different threat.
APPENDIX A:

![Venn Diagram]

**Figure 1:** People’s Mobilization based on rational or emotional choices.
APPENDIX B: MAPS

Figure 1: Political Map of Kosovo (2009)
Figure 2: Map of the Gora Region
Figure 3: Physical Map of Gora Region (2009) (Not including regions annexed by Albania in 1912).
Figure 4: Kosovo Ethnic Diversity Map (Published January 2008)
Figure 5: The Municipalities of Opoje and Dragash

Figure 6: The Municipality of Prizren and The District of Prizren
Works Cited


Cufta, Muharrem. Interview via E-mail. 30 October 2017


Harrison, Mike. Interview via E-mail. 20 October 2017.


