The Western accounts on early Albanian-Serbian interactions and the Kosovo myth

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Abstract

For most of the last millennium, the Balkan region, has been associated with conflicts, wars and instability. Indeed, even today, the situation is very tense. Finding the causes of it, is imperative, but that still does not resolve the deep divisions that are ingrained. The aim of this study is to explore what the Western literature reveals about Balkan enmities, more specifically Albanian-Serbian hostilities throughout past centuries, by focusing at certain periods or events that had a great impact in historical context. The study focuses extensively on Kosovo myth, but also on other specific episodes of Albanian-Serbian interaction, namely Serbian Empire, 1389 Kosovo battle, the description event of Murat I death, and 1806 Serbian Revolution among others. One must bear in mind that Albanians and Serbs presented a united front in certain battles and fights (namely in 1389 and 1806), but later turned guns against each other, resulting in thousands unnecessary deaths. This occurred not because their respective citizens wanted so, but was largely incited through government myths and insincere propaganda. Taking exclusively the Western perspective in this context, whose exploration of events in the Balkans is pretty detailed, only enriches the quality of this study. This research concludes that the region should and must learn from past mistakes that living with myths, wars and propaganda leads to nowhere.
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The Balkan more than ever needs proactive and creative leaders that shift the minds of Balkan people towards elimination, or at least diminishing, of both physical and mental boundaries against each other.

**Key Words:** Albania; Kosovo; Ottoman Empire; Murat I; Serbia; War;

**1. Introduction**

The Balkan antagonism today, is, nearly everywhere, to be found. During the twentieth century almost all Balkan nations fought against their respective neighbours. Explore the causes for such enmities in broad dimension would be interesting, yet this research is limited to Albanian – Serbian hostility causes, in order to attempt to come, as close as possible to constructive recommendations, with a potential for long lasting solution.

History teaches us that wars and conflicts spur for a reason that is often subjective for one side, while objective for the other side involved. Conflicts often start, when one party (usually the strongest side) claims that it has reliable reason to enter the war, while that it may not represent the actual truth at all. Certain countries, may use economic and military might and invent a justification for territory expansion and respective economic gains. Often, conflicts arise due to nationalism whose claims are based on certain historical interpretations. Therefore, the role of historians is often critical conflict dimension and that in both, creating conflicts and/or contribute to peaceful environments for the people to live. What is somewhat unforgivable, is when historians interpret historical events in fictitious and misleading manner, ‘launching’ a time bomb, consequences of which humanity has witnessed several times in the past. The Balkans is no exception. Today’s Albanian–Serbian enmity, spurs from interpretations of Middle-Ages Kosovo associated episodes. The interpretations of these contentious events have resulted in deaths of thousands of innocent lives. Kosovo, now an independent country recognised by majority of states within the international community, yet is still often considered a controversial issue.

The particular episodes, especially those of the fourteenth century, notably the Serbian empire invasions, the 1389 Kosovo battle, and the execution of Sultan Murat I within the same battle, all of which explored through Western lenses, are the aims of this research. Interpreting history subjectively, usually by minimising or overlooking national failures and
maximising their respective successes, is considered by standards of many non-developed world, as patriotic act. For this reason, the study aims to focus only on Western literature, in order to present, as much as possible, an objective and qualitative research work.

2. Early non-Albanian rule of Kosovo and subsequent Serbian invasion of Balkan lands

"Most historians agree that present-day Albanians are descendants of the Illyrians, and ancient tribe that inhabited the western Balkans”
(Kind and Mai, 2008, p.28)

Reading contemporary medieval history by Albanian and Serbian sources, one sees great contradictions. The Albanian historians say that Albanians were critical factor in the area they lived. Albanians are generally considered to be the genuine descendants of Illyrians who occupied large parts of the Balkan Peninsula. Wiedenburg (1787) remarks, on the origin of Albania (in his eighteenth century book), confirming this claim when he describes Albania as “… the former Epirus and Illyria.“(p.108) They cohabited with other ethnicities in the region. Arrival of Slavs in the Balkans, however, is recorded to have happened somewhere between the early six century and mid seventh century. Forbes et al, (1915), remark that Slavs completed their penetration into the Balkans by the mid seventh century, and began interactions with local populations located in Macedonia, Greece, Thrace and Albania. According to Forbes et al, (1915), “The main streams of Slavonic immigration moved southwards and westwards. The first covered the whole of the country between the Danube and the Balkan range, overflowed into Macedonia, and filtered down into Greece. Southern Thrace in the east and Albania in the west were comparatively little affected, and in these districts the indigenous population maintained itself.” (p.20)

During these times, however, ethnicities of the region lived together and formed alliances against perceived outside threats. Among such alliances was also the alliance against Turkish forces in 1389 Kosovo battle (See Upham 1829, p.99 and Brewster 1832, p. 698), that will be discussed later.
Since the arrival of the Slavs in the Balkans, the territory of Kosovo, however, changed hands several times. The Western historical sources indicate that Kosovo was first invaded and ruled by Bulgaria, somewhere between the late 840s and the beginning of the 850s when the Bulgarian empire, extended its Balkan borders further. (Fine, 1991, pp.111-112). During the ruling of John Asen II (1218-1241), Bulgaria reached its zenith in terms of extended boundaries. (ibid p.42).

Map 1. The Mediterranean Land after 1204

Source: Shepherd (1911) p.73

A map developed by Shepherd (1911), displayed above, on the Mediterranean Land in 1204, shows Balkan settings, within which, Albania and Serbia are also pictured. Kosovo region as such, belonged to an enlarged Bulgaria empire who, during the tenth century reached the peak of expanding its territory by conquering a vast area of Balkans. (see Map 1 above). Later on, things changed with Serbian emperors conquering a substantial area of the Balkans, including Kosovo.

Indeed, the decline of Bulgarian empire and rise of Serbian supremacy, however, changed the situation in the region. By the end of the thirteenth century Serbian King Uros II (1282-1321) conquered a significant portion of southern Balkans from Bulgaria (Forbes et al, 1915, p.45), replacing the Bulgarian rule in this area.
The Serbian historians, however, on the other hand, proudly mentioned the Serbian empire and intentionally or unintentionally, largely overlook, particularly the fourteenth century Albanian factor in region. Stephan Dushan, a Serbian king, during the medieval times, conquered a large part of Balkans, where Albanians too found themselves occupied by his occupying forces. A number of Western sources of few centuries ago discuss this historic development offering insights on what really happened during Middle Ages in this area.

Among the important institutes of the time, the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, (1879), elaborates the growth of the Dushan Empire, through invasion of neighbourhoods in the region. The source notes that

“In 1336 Dushan invaded Northern Albania, and speedily appropriated the whole country except Durrazzo.” (Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 1879, p. 73)

An interesting book on nationalities in Europe written by Latham (1863), while noting that “…Albania is one of the pure-blooded districts of Europe” (p.112), highlights how this land was occupied around the middle of the fourteenth century, and similarly notes that

“[b]y 1350, however, the northern part of Albania is conquered by Stephan Dushan; though the Southern part goes with Cephalonia, it remains Servian till the time of the Ottomans.” (Latham 1863, p. 110)

Chambers (1868) describes these developments in analogous manner by elaborating that

“…Stephan Dushan (1336-1356), the greatest monarch of the Nemanja dynasty, it embraced the whole of Macedonia, Albania, Thessaly, Northern Greece, and Bulgaria.” (Chambers 1868, p. 630)

Even though the territories changed hands, the ethnicities still lived together, in tribes, but situation changed when Ottomans got stronger and wanted to spread their influence further in the region. Consequently, a number of battles took place, the most renowned of which is considered the 1389 Kosovo battle that is elaborated below.
3. The Kosovo Battle of 1389

Following the enlargement of the Serbian empire, the Turkish Empire had similar ambitions too. A few decades later actually, by the end of ninth decade of the fourteenth century, Ottoman Empire battles Balkan ethnicities of the time, within the Kosovo area. The Balkan nations, joined forces under the command of Lazar, the ruler of Serbian Empire, battling the Ottomans in 1389. The population of the region was scattered around the area, and ethnicities cohabited with one another, even though areas were ruled by different despotic rulers of the time. The religion of the region was, by vast majority, Christian. Lords of the time took part in the fighting too.

Chalcocondyles and Vigenère (1577) in their famous piece of work, discuss the initial Sultan Murat’s conquests in Europe, and mention Lords (Princes) of Europe at the time, among others Triballians,1Croats and Albanians. (pp.64-65). Ethnicities of the region, and their respective princes, lords or rulers joined forces together to fight commonly perceived enemy.

Murat’s I victory of the 1389 war, Coleridge (1854) explains as, “defeat of the Christian army of Albanians, Dalmatians, Hungarians and Wallachians” (p. 457) Similarly, Upham (1829) highlights the 1389 Kosovo battle as a battle of joined Balkan forces against Turkish empire when he says

“The confederacy comprised Hungary, Wallachia, Dalmatia, Servia, Croatia, and Albania; and the army thus supplied has been swollen to the estimate of five hundred thousand men, for it was, indeed, the great struggle of Christendom, many warriors having joined their forces even from Italy.” (p.99)

Similarly Brewster (1832) too, remarks that a

“…a powerful league war formed against him [Murat I], by the Wallachians, Hungarians, Dalmatians, Triballians and Arnauts [Albanians]…under the command of Lazzarus, prince of Servia… (Brewster 1832. p. 698),

The place where the battle took place, however, was near the Kosovo capital, Prishtina. Cooke (1876) notes that “[t]he historical Kossovopolje

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1Triballia was called an area incorporating a part of today’s Serbia and Bulgaria.
near Pristina belongs rather to Albania.” (p.75) Indeed, the impact of Albanians in the fourteenth century is widespread. Jameson (1849) notes that Albanians were a formidable force in the Balkans, prior and after 1389 Kosovo battle. He elaborates on the Albanian rulers of the time (Balza and Spata), and the 1383 battle with Turks when he says “[t]he Turks now commenced their invasion of Albania, although the first battle dates as far as back as the year 1383” (p.315) The importance of Albania in medieval times is explained also by Albrizzi (1685) in a seventeenth century book, where notes that “Bajazet, son of Amurat subdued Albania in fierce fighting in the year 1396” (p.36). This implies that Albania and Albanians, were a force to reckon with, and who played a great importance in developments of the time.

4. Ethnicity myth of Sultan Murat I assassin

Death of Sultan Murat I has been mythicised in the Balkan region. Even though it is fairly insignificant who killed Murat I, yet Albanian and Serbs claim that Milosh Obiliq was of their own respective ethnicity. Western old literature offers a number of description of the event of the death of Sultan. The most prevailing descriptions are that he was an Albanian, Serb or even a Croat. What is commonly agreed is that he was a Christian.

Mignot (1773) describes that event of Sultan Murat I death as following “…while he [Sultan Murat I] was yet speaking, a wounded Albanian, who was biting the ground near them, collected all his force, or rather all his rage, to strike at the Sultan, whom he knew by the magnificence of his arms, and great respect paid him by his followers. The assassin then was hacked in pieces on the spot, and the Sultan died about two hours later” (p.130)

At the end of the battle, however, Murat I was assured that the battle was over and manifested a noticeable surprise by remarking that most of the young faces of dead men are without beards. Within a short period of time, to his astonishment happened something that nobody believed there. Upham (1829) elaborates this as follows, “At that instant an Albanian, who lay biting the ground in the agony of death, being concealed among the dead, perceiving by the richness of his dress and the great respect paid Caratz to him by his followers, that he was the Sultan, animated by the thoughts of revenging his country,
suddenly started up, and plunged his dagger into the victor’s belly.” (p.100)

What happened next was expected. Upham (1829) explains further the event that unfolded, where,
“[t]he Albanian was instantly cut into minute pieces in the presence of Bajazet; and Amurath, dying, was borne to his couch, where he survived but two hours.” (p.101)

Similarly Catafago (1873) describes the death Murat I,
“on the plains of Cassova, [who] defeated the Christians. In this battle he was wounded by an Albanian soldier, and died the next day…”(p.354).

Some sources on the other hand describe Milosh Obiliq as a Serb. Among them is Coleridge (1854) who notes that the “[a]ssassination of Amurath [was committed] by a Servian prisoner” (p. 457). Gibbon (1837) too concludes the same when he says that “a Servian soldier started from the crowd of dead bodies, and Amurath was pierced in the belly with a mortal wound…” (p.264)

Jacob et al (1854) on the other hand highlights uncertainty of ethnicity by noting that “Amurath was mortally wounded towards the close of engagement by a Servian or Albanian soldier” (p.312). Similarly, Brewster (1832) remarks indicate uncertainty on the ethnicity of the assassin. Elaborating the event Brewster (1832) notes that while Murat I began

“surveying the slain, a Servian soldier, started from the crowd of dead bodies, and pierced him in the belly with a mortal wound. According to other accounts, however, he was stabbed in his tent by a Croat” (p. 698)

Other description include Bohun (1693) who notes that Amurath was killed by a Christian soldier (p.101), while Fontanieu (1733) states that “Amurath was kill’d by an unknown Warrior” (p.280)

5. The 1806 Serbian Revolution and the Albanian factor

The 1389 unified battle of the Balkan nations, against Turkish Empire was not an isolated case. Often, the issues between the Ottoman Turks and Balkan nations are painted with religious connotations. Albanian and
Serbian representation of a united front during the 1389 Kosovo battle, was also repeated in 1806, but in different circumstances and shape. Indeed, the Serbian unsuccessful attempts against Turkish headquarters in Belgrade in early nineteenth century obtained an unexpected but significant help. It was an Albanian, with the name Konda who commanded and guided the operation that led to the collapse of Turkish establishment in Belgrade. Ranke (1844) who explored Serbian archive documents of the time described in very detailed manner what actually happened on December 12, 1806. He remarks that, Konda, an Albanian of Orthodox Christian background, and who had a title Bimbascha (a high ranking title in Turkish military) and moreover, who at one time contributed to Belgrade defence against Serbian forces, later betrayed the Turkish authorities by joining and leading a Serb group to dismantle the Ottoman HQ in city. Ranke (1844) elaborates this as follows:

“…[it] was an Albanian of Greek religion, named Konda, who had, at the start of the contest, contributed significantly towards the defence of Belgrade against Serbs; but when the war had changed into contest between Turks and Christians, he had moved over to Serbian side, …[which] proved the most useful.” (p.151)

Konda who was brave, courageous and skilful, qualities that earned him the title Bimbascha, was

“accompanied by Usun Mirko, a Serb,…[and] on the 12th of December 1806, shortly before the day-break, approached the … the fortress...[k]nowing exactly in which direction they might make their way...” (ibid p.151)

This operation took by surprise the Turkish authorities in the city as they were preparing for religious feast. Konda’s strategic abilities and language skills proved determinable to the success of the operation, but the campaign was not without fatalities. (ibid p.152). This documented history shows, above all, that when push came to shove, Balkan nations joined the forces together in the past, to fight commonly perceived enemy. Today, though seems highly unlikely as the Balkan nations appear to have often different and or even opposing spheres of interest from another neighbour.

All in all, the Albanian factor was determinable in a number of occasions during the nineteenth century, and that not only in Serbia, but also in Greece (Gerhart and Schaff 1866, pp.25-26), and Italy (Shaw, 1901, p.458). Yet, the Albanians did little to advance themselves, and prevent breakup of
their already decreased territory. Indeed the Albanian territory was invaded, occupied while its population was also often subject to unscrupulous massacres exactly by those nations that were assisted by the Albanians decades ago. (See ‘Servian Army left a trail of blood’, 1912, p.3, ‘Greeks attack Albanians’, 1914, p.4 and ‘Action By Greece In Albania’, 1914, p.7) One must bear in mind that the Albanian assistance occurred at the expense of betraying the Ottoman administration trust, as is the case of Serbia (Ranke, 1844, p. 151) and Greece (Gerhart and Schaff 1866, pp.25-26).

6. Albanian-Serbian enmity

6.1. The period 1876-1878

The middle nineteenth century is an era identified with nationalism gaining momentum. The Balkans by no means was not untouched. The Turkish Empire was decaying, creating the optimism to its neighbours. The Balkan nations were waiting for such optimal conditions to ‘feed’ their ambitions. Serbia, with Russian support was major force to reckon with. The Serbian government of the time was aware of the general situation in the region and decided to go and occupy land as south as possible. Prior to undertaking such operations (in 1876) the map dividing the Albanian and Serbian territory was different. Indeed, Serbia’s border with Albanian territory was near Aleksinatz, during the mid 1876 as Map 2 shows below.

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2 The Albanian territory was administered by the Turkish Empire until 1912.
3 A city in Serbia, about 70 km away from today’s Kosovo border with Serbia
This period, therefore, was considered suitable by the Serbian government, whose army, led by Russian General, ordered troops to begin an offensive towards the Albanian region. The London Times of the time explains in great details these general mobilisations and developments that ensued, as follows

“The Servians crossed the frontier and commenced hostilities near Nish. They have 60,000 Regular troops and 60,000 Militia and Volunteers, natives and strangers, commanded by Tchernayeff, a Russian General…. The Servian students in Germany have left for Belgrade. “(‘The War’, 1876a, p.5)

The Serbian determination to occupy the Albanian lands, was not disputed, but what is striking is the level of mobilisation to achieve this goal. The London Times highlights the events taking place where

“Volunteers in great numbers are daily flocking to Belgrade to tender their welcome services. Russian officers and veterans from all of revolutionary wars of these last 20 or 30 years bring the aid of their swords and their experience to the support of a cause hallowed in their estimation by the profession of nation principles – many of these adventurers being attracted by the reputation of Tchernayeff, the Russian General raised to the command of the Servian army, “a hot-headed man,” as his countrymen describe him, “but certainly not deficient in ability, in
knowledge of his trade, or in high dashing courage.” (‘The War in Servia’, 1876, p.9)

The aim of Serbia was to re-occupy the territorial possessions that it held during the Middle-Ages. It appears that Serbia’s political appetite was not for conservation of the land it obtained during their 1806 revolution, but for massive growth and the expense of other nations of the region, as

“Servia being satisfied with a regulation of her territorial possessions such as they existed under Czar Lazar at the end of the 14th century.” (‘The War: The Servian Army’, 1876, p.5)

By mid-August 1876 Serbian army got “perfectly reorganised and ready to resume offensive” (New York Times 1876, p.1) The heavily Albanian populated region of Toplica was occupied in its entirety by around October 1876. (The War. Servia, 1876, p.3) By January 16, 1878 Serbs having completed occupation of Nish, moved towards cities of Vranje, Skopje and Prishtina (The Servians, 1878a, p.5) After days of intense fighting,

“the Servian Corps commanded by General Oreskovich, have captured the Kezalnik defile, which was defended by a body of Mahomedan Albanians. The only obstacle to the march of Servians on Prisrend and Skopolje is thus removed.”(The Servians, 1878b, p.5)

By the end of May 1878, Serbs occupied the area from Kurshumlia to Prishtina, to achieve their strategic objective. (The Congress, 1878, p.5) The 1878 developments generated a vast dissatisfaction all over Albania, especially due to ‘legalisation’ of the occupied land “by the provisions of the Treaty of San Stefano annexing portions of Albanian territory to Servia, Montenegro, and the new Bulgaria.” (‘Latest Intelligence. France’, 1878, p.5) The new territory of Serbia, as depicted by the map 3 (see below), shows the new boundaries of Serbia that contain the Albanian occupied lands during 1876-1878 conquering, and lasted up to late 1912.
Map 3: Balkan map. Approximately period June 1878-October 1912

Source: Calendar of the War, 1912, p.6

A number of Albanian refugees from the expatriated Toplica region have not been “received there again, as they left Servia at the expense of Servia, and their homes have since been occupied by Serbs.” (‘France. Servia’, 1879, p.5). This occupation meant that a hundred villages in the valley of Toplica will be transferred to Serbian rule. (‘Servia,’ 1876, p.5)

Furthermore, this occupied area, about a decade later was now to be repopulated. By 1889, the official Serbian government ordered settlements of thousands of Montenegrins, in the Toplica region. This development is underlined by the London Times who notes that

“…the Radical Cabinet has just advanced Peter Karageorgevitch’s interests considerably by allowing 1,200 Montenegrins families, making a total of 6,500 souls, to settle in the district of Toplitza, near the Bulgarian frontier.” (p.6)

The colonisation of this region marked the completion of the Serbian strategic aim of expanding its territory, while European powers’ unresponsiveness meant silent approval at the expense the Albanian detriment.
6.2. The period 1912-1915

The Serbian appetite to occupy more land, however, did not stop in 1878. The Albanian territory once again was the main target. The final stages of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, did not pass unheeded by the Serbia, who appeared pretty confident that it was strong enough to shape and radically influence the future of the entire region. What is striking during the period 1912-1915, is the role of Serbia in the most of the developments of the Balkans, who besides committing massive crimes against Albanian civilians, also had a significant impact on WWI. By late 1912, the Serbian government was confident that it can occupy further territory formerly held by the Ottomans, and consequently did not wait much, to proceed again with concrete actions.

Turkey was weak at this point, but also betrayed by the European powers. The Ottomans had “faithfully trusted in European treaties promising protection for Turkey against further division” (Stern 1912, p.14), but the contrary happened. The Albanians without consolidated government infrastructure were vulnerable to any attacks and territory seizure by well-organised and well equipped neighbours. The Austrians, however, had other thoughts for Balkans, arousing Serbian dissatisfaction. Austria was inflexible that “[c]annot concede Servia any Albanian territory” (Austria is inflexible, 1912, p.2).

Serbia, however, made other calculations. It started attacking Albanian territory, resulting in “thousands of men, women and children massacred in march to sea”, (‘Servian Army left a trail of blood’, 1912, p.3), and unimaginably,

“Servians did not only treacherously murder and execute armed Albanians, but their beast-like cruelty did not stop at falling upon unarmed and defenceless persons, old men and women, children and infants at breast” (ibid, p.3)

Austria confirmed this slaughter, and made “an appeal to the heart of Europe” (‘Serbs are killing Moslem thousands’, 1913, p.1). The massacres, however, did not stop. The December 1912 and the January 1913 were appalling months for the Albanians. In the town of Gjilan, there were

“only three Albanian Mohammedans over 15 years of age...where Albanians did not defend themselves. Almost the entire population fell by the fire or sword. Only a few fugitives survived. The Servian occupation of Pristina
was still more bloody. The Albanians estimate the number of their dead at 5,000” (ibid, p.3)

The Serbian invasion of Albania reached its peak during the 1915. (‘Serbian Invasion of Albania, 1915, p.7) Following the occupation of Belgrade by combined forces of Austria and Germany and the subsequent changes of capitals by the Serbian government4 during the WWI, Serbia began to show signs of weakness and decay. The Serbian refugees, as a result, were now looking for settlement and food in the region, even in Albania, a territory that was until recently attacked, its population massacred while the land occupied, by the orders of the their respective government. (‘Food for Serbia and Montenegro’, 1915, p.9). Remarkably, the Albanians, not that they did not retaliate but were very hospitable, to such Serbian plea for help and their “the friendly temper of the Albanians towards Serbia” (Serbia under invasion, 1915, p.9), was described nothing short of impressing. (ibid)

7. Balkans population census of the past

The population of Balkans nations changed from one period to another. It was rather difficult to provide detailed estimation of the ethnicities in the region, especially during the early time of Slavic arrival in the Balkans, (a period between 6th and the 7th century). The Balkan people, during this period were nearly homogeneously Christian, and even shared many names together, making it more difficult for ethnicity identification. Indeed, even today, many Albanian Christians share the same names with Serbian nationals.5

The nineteenth century differs from previous centuries as it offers several Balkan population data comparisons. Among the earliest and that can be considered reliable is by Boué (1840) who provided data on Turkish Empire in the Balkans. According to him by the year 1840 the Turkish Empire in the Balkans had a population of about 14.6 million inhabitants, of

4 The Serbian government capitals changed during the WWI, from Belgrade to Nish, then to Prizren (Kosovo), and finally to Shkodra (Albania) See ‘Marching through Serbia.’ (1915), p.10 and ‘The exodus of Serbia’, 1915, p.8
5 Such names, that are used by both nations for several centuries include Nikole, Kole, Aleksander etc.
which Albanians were 1.6 million, Greeks 900,000 and Serbs around 886,000. (see Table 1 below).

**Table 1: Balkan population comparison: year 1840**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>1840</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turks</td>
<td>700,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews</td>
<td>250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greeks</td>
<td>900,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgarians</td>
<td>4,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallachians (Wallachia and Moldavia)</td>
<td>3,821,132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenians</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albanians</td>
<td>1,600,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbs of Servia</td>
<td>886,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims in Servia</td>
<td>10,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosniens</td>
<td>700,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herzegoviniens</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatians</td>
<td>200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montenegrins</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vlachs</td>
<td>500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gypsy</td>
<td>150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreigners living in Europe</td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>14,577,532</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Boué1840, p.32

Brownell (1862), more than two decades later provides new population data, but that does not feature any major changes. He remarks that the population “of Servia [Serbia] is 900,000, the Bulgarians 2,000,000, the
Albanians 1,600,000, the Greeks 900,000” (p.75). By mid-1880, The New York Times reports, the Albanian population is approximately “3,000,000 which...perfectly decided to resist annexation to any foreign state.” (‘The situation in Europe’, 1880, p. 2).

8. Chronology of Kosovo rule by non-Albanian governments during the last millennium

The Albanians, as descendants of Illyrians that populated the Balkan region, are now generally acknowledged to have been here and witnessed the Slavic influx in the region. As sources indicated above they fought alongside the Balkan neighbours, at the time when they perceived their territory was threatened. The territory of Kosovo, in the past, was part of region called Dardania, a former Roman province. The term Dardania, that refers to identify this region was used also during the seventeenth century. Soranzo and von Heroldsberg, (1601) while describing the Dardania region, mentioned the Dukagjini area within region and highlight that the majority of the population of Dardania was Albanian, outnumbering the Serbs. (p.176)

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6 Dukagjini area is located in today Western Kosovo, and is still called Dukagjini.
Map 3: Map of Dardania during Roman times

Source: Droysens G. (1886), p.17

The map above detailed the geographical territory of former Roman province of Dardania. The Map 3 above depicts that even Scupi\(^7\) or Skopje was part of Dardania at the time.

Elsie (2011) too makes links between Dardanians, Illyrians and Kosovo when he says

“Dardanian and Illyrian tribes inhabited the Kosovo region in preclassical and classical times when important Balkan trade routes passed through the country. “ (p.30)

All in all, the Kosovo region for more than a millennium was ruled by non-Albanian governments. Indeed, a number of governments administered Kosovo, until 1999, when finally the country is being run by its own people. About six different governments (Bulgarian, Ottoman, Serb,

\(^7\) Scupi refers to the city of Shkupi as it is called in Albanian language, while Skopje in Slavic languages.

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Austrian, German and Italian), administered Kosovo from about the year 850 until 1999, and that at different stages in the history. The Table 1 below provided the chronology of non-Albanian Kosovo administration during period approximately from 850-1999.

### Table 2: Chronology of non-Albanian Kosovo rule during period 850-1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approximate years</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Number of years ruled</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>Start</td>
<td>End</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>850s*</td>
<td>1280s</td>
<td>430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>1280s</td>
<td>1389</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ottoman Empire</td>
<td>1389</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia (Kingdom of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs)</td>
<td>1919</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>1944</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia (Yugoslavia)</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:** (Forbes et al, 1915, 42, 45), (Fine, 1991, pp.111-112), (Elsie, 2011, pp. xxxvii, xxxviii, 90,289)

*Approximately between the year 846-852

**Note:** The foreign governments’ periods ruling Kosovo may not be 100% accurate due to insufficient reliable sources to complete this analysis.
As far as the length period of administering the territory of Kosovo is concerned, the Ottoman Empire is by far the power that governed Kosovo the most, (for more than five centuries), followed by Bulgaria by about a century less. Serbia is third with less than two century rule over Kosovo, while Germany, Austria and Italy ruled briefly Kosovo during certain periods of the WWI and WWII. Bulgaria was also part of Kosovo rule during both wars, WWI and WWII.

**Table 3:** Approximate longevity list of non-Albanian administration in Kosovo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Nr. of years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Ottoman Empire</td>
<td>523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Bulgaria</td>
<td>436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Serbia</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Germany</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Austria</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Italy</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In fact, the brief administration of Kosovo by Austrian-German coalition during the WWI period 1915-1918² delighted Kosovo Albanians. Austrians were treated as liberators, and moreover, during the period “1916 to 1918 they encouraged the opening of about 300 Albanian language schools, which had been forbidden under Serb rule” (Elsie 2011, p.289) During the WWII, the German-Italian coalition and Bulgarian administration ruled Kosovo during the period 1941-1944. (Elsie 2011, pp. xxxvii – xxxviii). Under German-Italian administration, Albanians were allowed to attend schools in Albanian. (ibid, p.90)

² Bulgaria too, invaded a part of Kosovo, during both wars WWI and WWII. (See Elsie 2011, pp. xxxvii,289)
9. Fabrication of historical facts to claim territory: Kosovo case study

Throughout history many states have had and (even today) have territorial pretensions. Some have strong reasons for it, others present half-truths, while many fabricate the past reality to make cases for territory claim. Even though history is not considered a major subjects that is conducive to national development, yet as mentioned above, history can play a major role in inciting hatred among nations that have contributed to hostilities and several big wars in the past.

Among such examples is undoubtedly Serbia too. As this research explored, Serbian territorial pretension resulted in concrete fighting several times during the period 1876-1999. In fact, Serbian territorial pretensions were broad, and they found vulnerable and poorly equipped Albanian territories an easy bite, to unscrupulously attack, and that not only within Kosovo but also further down to today’s Albanian territorial boundaries as well. History taught us that, Hitler too, had territorial pretensions and started WWII, while recently Russia fully occupied Crimea claiming it has been an historical injustice to Russian people.

The Republic of Kosovo, now fully independent country, is claimed by both, the Albanians and Serbians. As sources indicated above, mainly because of Kosovo claim (but also to revive the Serbian Empire of the Middle Ages), Serbia, during the period 1876-1915, attacked Albanians a number of times resulting in several thousands of deaths, mainly Albanians. Furthermore, later in the century about 10,000 Kosovo Albanians were killed by Serbian forces, from the total of about 13,000 deaths, during the 1998-1999 Kosovo war (Balkan Insight, 2014). Albanians, however claim that Kosovo is Albanian and should be administered by its own people. Furthermore, Albanians believe that they are among the oldest ethnicities in the region that have witnessed Slav invasion and settlement in the Balkans, and historically outnumbered Serbs in the region, (also proved by Soranzo and von Heroldsberg, 1601, p.176). Other rare data on the population census in the region, presented above, highlight that the Albanians outnumbered Serbs even in the nineteenth century.

Serbian territorial pretensions discourse coupled by well prepared and sophisticated propaganda proved a major weapon for Serbia to attain its goals, especially during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Serbian treacherous massacres, during their invasion offensive were often perceived as ‘justifiable’ by the European powers who remained idle (with
some exceptions) while defenceless people were being massacred practically in front of their eyes.

One must, however, make clear distinction between the Serbian government and Serbian people. Serbian state propaganda is the problem, not the ordinary people. Even during the 1998-9 Kosovo war, local Serbs were unaware of the manner Serbian government infrastructure mobilised the propaganda machine to attract sympathy worldwide. Yet this time, it failed miserably. What is striking in 1998-1999 Kosovo war is the event of Serbian youths killing in Peja city in Kosovo, in December 1998, during the height of Kosovo war. Serbian propaganda using media channels claimed that they were killed by Albanian terrorists, in which case it would attract international endorsements to resume further heavy crackdown on Albanian inhabited territories in Kosovo. Nearly two decades later, the news surfaced that the Serbian government of the time itself decided to kill its own Serbian fellows, in order to attribute this hideous act to the Albanians, with whom it was fighting. This case is still being investigated by Serbian courts but the facts point directly to the Serbian Government involvement in this shameful act. The former Serbian Prime Minister, now the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, at Government press conference, in 2015, fell short of fully admitting this act when he said

“I'm almost sure what happened at the cafe 'Panda' [in Peja] but I have no proof. I'm not sure that our government bodies can be proud of what they did then” (Vesti Online, 2015)

Imagine what would have been the consequences should this had been found to have happened in the USA, Britain or Germany for instance. Such developments would have very likely triggered major governmental shake up, and widespread local and international condemnation. Furthermore this would have fully mobilised the intelligence agencies until uncovering the full truths and identifying the respective culprits of such hideous deed. In Serbia, the uncovering of the truth in criminal case seem not very significant yet.

Governments worldwide have tendencies, to be insincere in war time periods, but not to the extent of killing its own fellows, attributing the opposing side, in order to proceed with terror on defenceless population. Serbian government insincerity and associated propaganda that occurred during the terror campaign against Albanians, through the last two centuries, is for every condemnation, yet the event of killing their own
fellow nationals, among others, may not be considered as unintended and isolated cases. There are strong suspicions that Serbian government insincerity is an innate attribute. This is confirmed by their respective renowned academic, and who was among the most popular names in the history of Serbia during the last century, Prof Dobrica Ćosić. He was also called “Father of Serbian nation” and was nominated for president of Yugoslavia in 1992. In his novel trilogy "Deobe", Cosic (1961) thoroughly detailed why the Serbs propagate untruths when he said,

“We lie to deceive ourselves, to console others, we lie for mercy, we lie to fight fear, to encourage ourselves, to hide our and somebody else's misery. We lie for love and honesty. We lie because of freedom. Lying is a trait of our patriotism and the proof of our innate intelligence. We lie creatively, imaginatively and inventively." (Ćosić, 1961, p.135)

The Balkans, however, for a long time has held a reputation of being an unstable region. Many unnecessary hostilities, wars, and thousands of deaths took place in the region, yet still there is vast instability. While the developing world advances, Balkan people live with myths and dreams of the past similar to those of our forefathers centuries ago. War wounds, and especially deaths and hostilities are not easy to heal, but at least attempts should be made to alleviate those pains. The Balkans need, people who are creative, imaginative and inventive not in insincere path, but in building trust and peace and who work in ethical direction. Therefore, more than ever, Balkan needs leaders that reconcile and unite the region not only physically but also mentally. Time will tell, when, and if such leaders will surface, and more importantly, will they be endorsed comprehensively across the region.

10. Conclusion

This study focuses on highlighting the roots of Albanian-Serbian hostility by underlining their respective interactions. A number of episodes that had great historical impact in the Balkan history have been chosen. The study finds that Albanians and Serbs, since they lived in common area, they presented a united front on collective perceived concerns that had a critical impact in their historical context. Yet by the end of the nineteenth century the situation changed completely when they considered each other
a staunch enemy, resulting in war and hideous deeds towards civilian population.

The sources used in this work are almost exclusively old Western literature, starting as early as sixteenth century. The study answers a number of Albanian – Serbian contentious issue that have been and still are prevalent even in today’s debates. This research explored various episodes in a hope to find appropriate answers. The study finds when Slavs came to the Balkans they found the Albanians here. As far as ruling the region is concerned, Bulgaria, respectively the Bulgarian Empire got the upper hand, during the ninth century and invaded (and held) the main part of Balkans, including the Albanian and Serbian inhabited areas for more than four centuries.

When Bulgarian empire weakened, Serbian Empire surfaced and more or less replaced the Bulgarian rule in the area by invading the Albanian territories too. The study confirms that this lasted until the 1389 Kosovo battle, where all the ethnicities in the region, among others, the Albanians, Serbs, and Croats, fought, but lost against the Ottomans. There is, however, uncertainty about the ethnicity of Murat I assassin. Some sources say he was Albanian, other say he was a Serb, but there is a source that points that he was a Croat.

This work also highlights that it was the Albanian factor that shaped and determined history of Serbia in 1806, who as skilful and capable operative of the Ottoman administration in Belgrade, betrayed the establishment and joined the Serbian forces to thrash Ottoman Head Quarter in the Serbian capital. Things changed, indeed, during the 1876-1878 Serbian invasion of Albanian territory. Serbian army led by Russian general and volunteers, occupied the Albanian territories, later colonising them with thousands of Montenegrins. Serbia was not content with this grab of land, went for further land invasion, again targeting the vulnerable Albanian territory whose population suffered enormously. During the 1912-3 Balkan wars, as the study revealed, the Western world saw some of most unimaginable crimes committed by the Serbian army against the Albanian civilians.

On the issue of the population census, according to Western led population data sources, Albanian outnumbered the Serbs, in Kosovo, during the seventeenth century, but also outnumbered them in Balkan area in the nineteenth century. On the chronology of Kosovo rule by non-Albanian governments during the last millennium is concerned, the study
finds that the Ottomans governed Kosovo the most, followed by the Bulgarians and Serbs.

This research argues that territorial pretension and fabrication of historical facts to claim territory, even though, initially or temporary may seem conducive, in long term it only generates frictions, hostilities and wars. The Balkan region, therefore, more than ever before should change the mission and vision by electing the right leaders that incite unity and not division among the Balkan citizens. This may seem difficult at these tense times, but at the very least, attempts should be made.

All in all, it is absolutely not important which Balkan nations had empires, who expanded territories in the Middle Ages, who fought against Turks, or even less important who killed the Murat I, and less so who had larger population size in the past. Yet, this by no means implies that data should not be explored. Historians, however, have a critical role to play. They should be sincere and professional with genuine ethics when presenting the historical facts. This region has suffered enormously, so the time is now ripe to look for leaders, who are fully committed and leave no stone unturned in exploring ways and means to unify the minds and the destiny of the Balkan peoples. Time will tell, whether nations in the region have learned the lesson that the myths and insignificant events of the past lead only to hostilities and wars.

A productive formula may be finding the comprehensive strategy to create the region as economic union - a formula that is likely to gradually heal the past history and injustices caused. We have the example of Germany and France reconciling through the process of the European Union, a constructive example how the Balkan formula should look like.

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