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STALEMATE IN SERBIA-KOSOVO RELATIONS OR SMALL STEPS TOWARDS RECONCILIATION?

Changes of narratives of the politicians from Serbia and Kosovo
after signing the Brussels Agreement in 2013

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ABSTRACT

Nataša Vučetić: Stalemate in Serbia-Kosovo relations or small steps towards reconciliation? Changes of narratives of the politicians from Serbia and Kosovo after signing the Brussels Agreement in 2013.

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The war in Kosovo and its aftermath has been studied by many researchers, as well as the presence of international missions that have been engaged in peacekeeping and peacebuilding in Kosovo. There has been much emphasis on the institution building and implementation of democratic principles. However, even 20 years after the war, there has not been much research on reconciliation between the two nations engaged in the Kosovo war- Serbs and Albanians.

Therefore, I want to shed light on the topic of reconciliation between Serbs and Kosovo Albanians. This research focuses on a top-down approach to reconciliation and the role of the key political figures in the reconciliation process. The influence of the leaders on the general public is enormous and their statements are extremely important for the improvement of relations of Serbs and Albanians.

The aim of this research is to find out whether politicians have changed their narratives about “the other” since the end of the war and whether they are making small steps towards reconciliation or not. The method that is applied on the collected data is qualitative content analysis. The analysis is divided into three parts according to the certain research periods. First, I focus on the discourse they used in 2005 as a starting point for the comparison of the changes. As a result of the dialogue process between Belgrade and Pristina that started in 2010 the Brussels Agreement was signed in 2013. The importance of that agreement is tremendous for both parties since its purpose is the normalization of relations. Therefore, in the second part of the analysis I am looking at the immediate changes in the narratives of the politicians that happened in one-year period after the signing of the agreement. Finally, I am studying their statements from 2015-2018 in order to find out what are the long-term changes and results of the dialogue process.

The obtained results do not show significant changes in the narratives compared to the 2005 and now, only in 2013 we could notice slight progress and somewhat different topics the politicians were focused on. The reason for that is willingness to show to the international community that the Brussels Agreement had an impact on the improvement of relations. However, after some period of time and inefficient implementation of the agreement, relations have started to deteriorate. They have degraded so much, that by the end of 2018 all forms of dialogue between the parties stopped. Such sequence of events confirms that reconciliation is not a linear process and needs constant dedication of both parties.

If politicians from Serbia and Kosovo want to lead their people towards reconciliation first they have to open a discussion about the past and deconstruct myths and stereotypes. Moreover, they have to work on strategies that would promote reconciliation and abstain from hate speech and accusations of the other side. However, the analysis shows that without reaching the final agreement, the one that would define the status of Kosovo, the chances for improvement of relations are minor.

Keywords: Kosovo, Serbia, top-down reconciliation, political leaders, dialogue, Brussels Agreement, qualitative content analysis, narrative changes.

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1. Introduction

Kosovo, the topic that has been widely researched after the war in 1999 and the first NATO intervention on the European soil, is also at the center of my research. For some, this region might not be at the center of their interest since many other civil wars have burst out in the last couple of years and the conflict in Kosovo receives less attention. However, for us, who are from the Balkans and who live in Serbia and Kosovo the conflict in Kosovo is still our main concern. That can easily be concluded by only watching the news every day; one of the first news is always about the events in Kosovo. Therefore, I would like to address this unresolved issue once again, but probably in a different light than most of the researchers.

A great majority of the researchers have focused on peacekeeping or peace-building in Kosovo, or on the other hand on history of ethnic relations between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo. I would like to go one step further and concentrate on the possibilities for reconciliation between Serbs and Albanians. There hasn't been given enough attention to the concept of reconciliation in the literature and its importance is tremendous when it comes to conflict transformation. There are different understandings and definitions of the concept itself, but I am going to use the one proposed by many authors (Ackerman, 1994; Kreisberg, 1998a; Phillips, 1998; Arthur, 1999; Gardner-Feldman, 1999; Kelman, 1999a; Bar-Tal, 2000b in Bar-Siman-Tov, 2004, p. 4) "In its simplest form, reconciliation means restoring friendship and harmony between the rival sides after conflict resolution, or transforming relations of hostility and resentment to friendly and harmonious ones."

Serbs and Albanians should find the strength and take the path that will lead them towards reconciliation. However, there are still many obstacles on that road and these will be addressed in my thesis. Besides different language and religion, it seems that the biggest stumbling blocks are ethnic myths and different narratives of history. Moreover, the lack of will of political leaders to wholeheartedly work on the strategies for reconciliation and stop reproducing myths and stereotypes is actually one of the main problems.

However, there has been some changes in the relations between these two nations since the end of the war in 1999. The most important one is the beginning of the dialogue process between Belgrade and Pristina in 2010, mediated by the EU. The Brussels agreement signed in 2013 was the

biggest outcome of these dialogues. The full name of the agreement is The First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalisation of Relations; from the name itself it is obvious that it does tackle some important issue that both sides have agreed on and that could lead to the normalization of relations. However, it is important to examine what happens after the year 2013 and focus on the implementation of that agreement in order to see if something has really changed.

The aim of this thesis is to examine the changes in the relations between Serbs and Kosovo Albanians over time, while focusing on the top-down level examining statements and messages of the key political leaders. In addition, I want to find out whether these relations are moving towards the reconciliation or not. Moreover, I am interested to know whether dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina and its outcome the Brussels agreement have brought some changes in the right direction.

Therefore, the main research questions are:

How Serbian and Kosovo Albanian political leaders are depicting each other's people?

Have political leaders changed their narratives over time?

Have the dialogue and the Brussels agreement made politicians change their narratives towards each other in the direction of reconciliation?

What stands on the road towards the reconciliation?

In order to respond to these questions, I am going to apply qualitative content analysis on the statements of the key political leaders. The main reason I am focusing just on the leaders is the power they hold and the ability to resolve the disputes, as well as the control of the media, since there is not a real freedom of media yet in Serbia and Kosovo. I argue that politicians are the key to changing the perspectives of the people towards "the other". They have the means and the power to influence the general public, if they would have had the will to work on the process of reconciliation there would have definitely been some improvements in the relations between Serbs and Albanians. To clarify, I don't want to undermine the complexity of the problem by blaming the politicians of the bad relations full of hatred; I just want to focus on their role amongst many other factors.

As my primary sources, first, I am using the book of interviews conducted by Serbian journalist Dragan Banjac and Albanian journalist Fahri Musliu "Untying the Kosovo Knot". This book is a valuable collection of interviews with key political leaders, journalists and professors from both

Serbian and Kosovo Albanian side. It was written in 2005 and it is relevant for the research since there are two important questions asked: “Is there the possibility of reconciliation between Serbs and Albanians? and Who has to apologize for the tough recent and ancient history?”. Secondly, I am focusing on their statements during one year after the signing of the Brussels agreement in 2013 extracted from the Balkan Insight website that focuses on Kosovo-Serbia relations; as well as on the first official reports about the implementation of the Brussels agreement. Finally, I am focusing on the messages given by politicians from 2015 until the end of 2018 examining the news on official website of the President of Kosovo and the Prime Minister of Kosovo, as for the Serbian side I am using the official website of the Office for Kosovo and Metohija.

The analysis of these materials helps us find patterns that politicians constantly use in their speeches. Comparing their statements in these different time periods help us uncover how their narratives about each other have changed over time and in different political context. From their speeches we can understand whether they are directing the people in the way towards the reconciliation and improvement of relations, or they are just recycling the old myths and creating even deeper hatred.

In structure of this thesis starts with historic facts that are important to know in order to understand the deeper roots of the conflict and the speeches of the politicians that often refer to those key historic events in the relations of Serbs and Albanians. In the following chapter I am presenting the theories of reconciliation that serve as a lens through which the data is analyzed. The third chapter presents the methodological framework which has been applied, it describes how content analysis has been used on a collected data. The analysis part is divided to three sections and each of the sections present a certain period of time, first there is the analysis of the data from 2005, then from 2013 and finally from 2015 to 2018. Finally, there is a discussion and conclusion where all the key findings from the analysis are summed up.

2. Background

In order to understand the underlying causes of any conflict we have to take a closer look at the history of relations between groups in conflict. Therefore, it is important to present the key events in the history of relations between Serbs and Albanians from the beginning up to the present days that have shaped the perspectives about each other we have today. One has to be aware of the fact that there are two different narratives of history, the Albanian one and the Serbian one. I do not want to claim that any of those versions of history is more truthful than the other. In this chapter I will present both versions, citing both Albanian and Serbian authors as well as some foreign authors. The aim of this chapter is for readers to understand how each of those two nations think about history of their relations and how later on they create their current relations based on their versions and understanding of history.

In this chapter I will describe different historic events or periods that I consider important for the relations between Serbs and Albanians. Amongst many, the most important being the debate over the question of who came first, the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, the outcomes of WW1 and WW2, the period of socialism in Yugoslavia. Furthermore, I will put more emphasis on the war in Kosovo in 1990s, the NATO bombing in 1999 and its end. Moreover, the recent history can't be forgotten and by that I think of all the events after the signing of the Kumanovo agreement on the 9th of June 1999 including escalation of violence in Kosovo in 2004, the Declaration of Independence of Kosovo and finally the beginning of the dialogue process between Belgrade and Pristina and its outcome the Brussels agreement.

What I want to achieve in this chapter, as well, is to portray the ethnic myths and stereotypes through the narratives of history. The reason for that is that politicians are still using those myths and stereotypes in their speeches, which is one of the key obstacles in achieving reconciliation.

2.1. Who came first?

The never-ending debate over the question of who came first to Kosovo is present in both Serbian and Albanian narratives. However, most of the scientist agree on the fact that Albanians are the autochthonous population in the Balkans (Imami, 2017, p. 9) as well as on the fact that Slavs migrated to the Balkan peninsula during the 6th and 7th century (Nakarada, 2015, p. 28).

The main argument in favor of Albanian claims is that the ancestors of Albanians are the ancient Illyrians, for what they have philological and archeological clues (Imami, 2017, p. 9). The book *Serbs and Albanians through centuries* written by Petrit Imami gives a nice overview of the literature written about these contesting questions in Serbian and Albanian histories. He is citing different authors, Serbian, Albanian and foreign ones, who speak in favor of this thesis giving different arguments, such as the language similarities. However, the Illyrians themselves haven't left any written documents about their past and history. (Imami, 2017, p. 10). Whatever the truth is, for Kosovo Albanians Kosovo is "considered to be the cradle of pre-roman Dardania where Illyrian and probably Thracian tribes lived together since 8th century B.C." (Hofbauer, 2009, in Nakarada, 2015, p. 27) Therefore, as they consider themselves as the descendants of Illyrians, they consider Kosovo as their territory.

On the other hand, as Dušan Bataković points out, for Serbs Kosovo is the cradle of their holy land, often compared with Jerusalem; it is the center of Serbian Medieval state and church whose progress was stopped by Ottoman conquerors (Bataković, 2007, in Nakarada, 2015, p. 26). To support that point many authors (Nakarada, 2015; Tim Judah, 2008; Derens, 2006;) emphasize that majority of toponyms have Slavic roots which points to the fact that Slavs have mostly built the today's network of towns and villages (Derens, 2006, p.34). Even the word Kosovo comes from the Slavic name for a blackbird called "kos" (Judah, 2008, p. 50). More precisely, Serbs call that region Kosovo and Metohija; Metohija comes from the old Russian word that refers to the monastery estates and comes from the Greek word "metoxion" (Imami, part II, 2017, p. 18). That word gives importance to Serbian Orthodox Church and a huge number of old Serbian monasteries built there.

Whatever the truth is about this question, the fact is that Serbs and Albanians for a long period of time have lived together in Kosovo and shared that territory.

2.2. The battle of Kosovo 1389 and Kosovo myth

It is very important to say that there is a little factual knowledge about the battle of Kosovo; a few things are certain, but most parts of the story that people take as truthful are based on a myth.

For Serbs the most important period in their history was the creation of the first Serbian state by Stefan Nemanja who came into power in 1166 and was the founder of the Nemanjić dynasty (Marjanović Dušanić & Šujica, 2002, p. 135). The rulers from this dynasty had the tradition of building monasteries and some of the most important ones are located in Kosovo, including Pećka patrijaršija

where was the center of Serbian Orthodox Church. The Serbian state was at the peak of its power in 1346 when Tsar Stefan Dušan has conquered a huge territory including the whole Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia, northern parts of Greece and some parts of Bulgaria. However, when Tsar Dušan died in 1355 the Empire began slowly to dissolve and soon the Ottoman Empire has conquered it.

On the 28th of June 1389 the most important battle in the history of people living in Kosovo has happened. Especially, in the history of Serbs, who dared to fight against much larger army and they lost, but as heroes. (Nakarada, 2015, p. 34) In that battle both leaders died, Lazar Hrebeljanović and sultan Murat. After that battle the Ottomans have conquered the territory of Kosovo, even though both sides had huge losses. Nevertheless, the Kosovo myth was born and the battle's importance depicted in many songs and stories, which contributed to the creation of Serbian national identity (Derens, 2006, p. 38). On the other hand, some Albanian authors claim that Albanians have given a huge resistance to Ottoman army even claiming that their hero has killed sultan Murat. Whereas, some authors such as D. Bogdanović (Nakarada, 2015, p. 38) claim that Albanians were fighting on the side of the Ottomans against the Christian coalition.

It is almost impossible to know for sure all the details of the battle and one should be careful with different interpretations. What is certain is that after the Battle of Kosovo all the people living in Kosovo and other Balkan regions were under the rule of Ottoman Turks for the next five centuries.

According to Čolović, at the beginning of 19th century this battle and its heroes have been connected with the idea of nation, it was presented as a battle for national state and national liberty (Čolović, 2016). The nation became the value in whose name the Kosovo battle was fought, but at the same time the nation became responsible for preservation of the memory of that battle. The key elements of the "memory" are revenge and restoration of the Empire that includes Kosovo and is claimed to belong to Serbs (Ibid.) This myth was used as the means of political propaganda since the time Aleksandar Karađorđević was in power. During the communist rule there was no space for the Kosovo myth since they have created their own myths based on the battles in the Second World War. However, this myth resurrected again when Milošević came into power. He used the 600th anniversary of the Kosovo battle in 1989 to hold his speech in Gazimestan when he revived the myth and present himself as a leader that calls for fight for renewal of Serbia with Kosovo as the heart of it. At that time, Yugoslavia was in a deep crisis and his idea was to unite Serbs and prepare them to fight by using myths in his political propaganda.

2.3. National awakening

The national awakening of Serbs and especially Albanians has happened pretty late compared to other European nations (Derens, 2006, p. 45). One of the reasons for that might be the way the Ottoman Empire was functioning; more specifically “they haven’t recognized the “nations”, but they were protecting official religious communities, such as the Orthodox Christians” (Derens, 2006, p. 39). Therefore, for Serbs the church was the only “national” Serbian institution at that time, which was actually located in Peć in Kosovo (Ibid., p. 39).

When Serbia has gained its independence in the first half of the 19th century, the importance of the Battle of Kosovo gained its huge ideological importance and was connected to the political pretensions (Derens, 2006, p. 41). When Ilija Garašanin “the Serbian Bismarck” wrote the strategic blueprint “Načertanije” where he suggested the expansion of the Serbian state towards the South, the territories of the Old Serbia (Kosovo), it seemed that that achievement became an obsession for the Serbs (Ibid., 41). Glorification of the Medieval Serbian state, the Nemanjić dynasty and church regained a central position in the Serbian narrative (Ibid., 42). After the Balkan wars in 1912-1913 Kosovo was again a part of Serbia and Serbian Patriarchy in Peć was reestablished in 1920 and played a very important role (Ibid., 42) As Jean-Arnault Derens correctly notices the Kosovo myth has “an important ideological role in the building process of the Serbian identity”. According to him “every nation needs myths that talk about their past, in order to be aware of who they are and to strive towards the future”, however, unfortunately “the central myth of the Serbian nation has deep roots in the region that is shared with one another nation” (Derens, 2006, p. 42).

The main characteristic of the Albanian nationalism is that it was developed very late, when all other nations in the Balkans had it developed for a few decades and it was basically a response to their nationalisms (Derens, 2006, p. 45). One of the reasons for that was the fact that Albanians haven’t had the same religion, but they belonged to three different religions: Catholic Christianity, Orthodox Christianity and Muslim religion (Imami, 2017, p. 181; Derens, 2006, p. 45). They needed to overcome that problem which was standing on their way to unity; their famous ideologist Pashko Vasa was putting a huge effort to overcome these religious differences and create the unique national consciousness (Nakarada, 2015, p. 41). His famous saying is “the Albanian faith is the Albanianism (to be Albanian)” (Endresen, 2011, p. 39).

To understand from where the idea of Ethnic Albania came from and why it is so much present today we have to take a look of the historic facts. The first open expression of Albanian nationalism happened with the formation of the League of Prizren in 1878 (Derens 2006, p. 48). According to Albanian sources, the League of Prizren had as its goal the freedom, independence and defense of the regions where Albanians lived (Hoxha,1982, in Nakarada, 2015, p. 34). They feared that the other Balkan states would take the regions where they lived and they had to do something about it. (Judah, 2008, p. 54) Their main request was to gain the autonomy of the four regions where Albanians mostly lived (Ibid., 54). However, the Turks have ignored their requests, as well as the European powers (Derens, 2006, p. 49). Moreover, according to Petrit Imami the Albanians had the worst outcome of the Congress of Berlin in 1878 (Imami, 2017, p. 185), whereas it was approved to Serbia, on the other hand, to expand its territories towards the South (Derens, 2006, p. 48). The major problem, according to Derens was the decision of the major forces of a time to draw the map of the Balkans on the Congress of Berlin, without the solid knowledge of the region (Ibid., 48). The outcome of this Congress has resulted in strengthening the recently awakened Albanian nationalism and tendency to unify all the regions where Albanians live to one country- the ethnic Albania.

2.4. The Balkan wars, First World War and Second World War in the Balkans

It was obvious that the Turkish Empire had many deep problems, so the nations in the Balkans (Serbia, Bulgaria, Monte Negro and Greece) saw it as the opportunity to mobilize in September 1912 and declare a war against Turks (Derens, 2006, p. 51). At the same time, on 28th of November 1912 in Vlora Ismail Kemal has declared the independence of Republic of Albania, which was later confirmed at the Conference of Ambassadors in London in 1913. Since the Empire has lost all the battles in the First Balkan War it had to give up its territories that have been divided between the Balkan allies, guaranteed by the peace agreement signed in London in 1913 (Imami, 2017, p. 302). According to Petrit Imami Serbia, Greece and Montenegro have occupied most of the territories populated by Albanians (Ibid., 302). In addition, he argues that “Serbia couldn’t come to terms with the fact that in its neighborhood was created an independent state of Albania (Ibid., 306)”. Moreover, he even mentions that Greece and Serbia were making secret deals to divide Albania between themselves (Ibid., 308). As for Kosovo, he claims that the Albanian rebels have already liberated Kosovo before the Balkan War has even started, but that has not been mentioned in Serbian sources (Imami, 2017, p. 286).

The outcome of the Balkan Wars was the division of Kosovo between Serbia and Montenegro, “who did not even have time to establish the control over Kosovo, since the First World War has started shortly after” (Derens, 2006, p. 51).

The First World War brought tremendous suffering to all the people living in the Balkan region, but especially for Serbs who were defeated and had to flee through Kosovo and Albania running from the Austrian soldiers (Ibid., 51). According to Radmila Nakarada, in Serbian narratives about the war Albanians have been presented in the negative light, as the people who didn't help and support Serbian army against the Austro-Hungarians, but instead have taken advantage of the situation, expanded their territory and at the same time assaulted Serbian soldiers who were withdrawing from the front (Nakarada, 2015, p. 37). On the other hand, Petrit Imami presents some examples when Albanians were helping Serbian army go through the tough Albanian terrain, such as help of Esad-pasha Toptani (Imami, 2017, p. 351). Unfortunately, he was killed in 1920 by an Albanian student in Paris because of his willingness to collaborate with Serbs and was remembered in Albanian history as a traitor (Nakarada, 2015, p. 42). Nakarada gives us three main perceptions about the war mentioned in Albanian narratives: first, Albanians were helping Serbian soldiers fight the Austro-Hungarians; second, some wrongdoings done by Albanians are just the reactions to Serbian crimes against them and finally, this war has given them the opportunity to unify and get rid of Serbian influence (Nakarada, 2015, p. 37-38).

Since Serbia was on the side of the winners it had certain advantages when it comes to the division of territory, having a lot of support from France on the 1st of December 1918 the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians was founded under the rule of Serbian dynasty Karađorđević (Derens, 2006, p. 52).

The Second World War in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians started on the 6th of April 1941 when Germany bombed Belgrade (Derens, 2006, p.56). The Italian forces have occupied Albania and attached Kosovo to one united Greater Albania under the rule of Italian King (Ibid., 56). According to Nakarada, Albanians have been celebrating that since it was in accordance with their interests of creating the Greater Albania and have perceived the occupation as liberation from Serbs (Nakarada, 2015, p. 38). Derens agrees and adds that Albanians in Kosovo were free to put Albanian national flag and started opening the schools in Albanian language (Derens, 2006, p. 56). For Serbs this period was very difficult, since they were constantly terrorized and many of them had to move out of Kosovo (Ibid., 57). Serbs perceive Albanians as non-loyal people who have supported the

fascists (Nakarada, 2015, p. 38). On the other hand, Imami gives some examples of Albanians who helped Serbs (Imami, 2017, p. 459). In addition, he emphasizes that Albanians have also fought on the side of Partisans during the 1942-1943 (Imami, 2017, p. 460). Moreover, he states that by the end of the war there were 50000 Albanians in the National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia (Ibid., p. 462). As a symbol of joint struggle Imami gives an example of one Serb Boro Vukmirović and one Albanian Ramiz Sadiku who were executed by Italians while hugging each other before and during the execution (Ibid., 462). The Partisans came out as the winners of the war and the Socialist Yugoslavia was formed, including Kosovo as a part of Serbia (Derens, 2006, p. 59). However, "Albanians haven't perceived the new Yugoslavia as their homeland" (Nakarada, 2015, p. 38), since they felt betrayed by the Partisans who have promised to the Kosovo Albanians unification of Kosovo with Albania if they fight together against the occupation (Ibid., p. 38).

2.5. Serbo-Albanian relations in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (latter Kingdom of Yugoslavia) and in Socialist Yugoslavia

The number of Albanians and Serbs living in Kosovo has been a subject of manipulation and it is hard to find a reliable source. Therefore, I will not engage in the discussion about numbers. However, it is important be aware of the fact that Kosovo's history was very turbulent, which as a result had a mixture of different ethnic groups living there. (Derens, 2006, p. 53). Due to many factors, such as migration of Serbs in 1690 and many others, Albanians have become undeniable majority in Kosovo at the beginning of 20th century (Ibid., p. 54).

In the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians Kosovo lost its administrative identity and has been divided between three other administrative entities (Ibid., p. 54). According to Imami, "the life of Albanians was very tough and without any national rights" (Imami, 2017, p. 380). He further writes that the worst kind of people were settling in Kosovo and they were not treating Albanians equally (Ibid., p. 380-391). As a priority of the state at that time he emphasizes strategic populating of Kosovo with Slavs, because Albanians were majority at that time and that had to be changed (Ibid., p. 399). Actually, the state launched the program of agricultural colonization of Kosovo where mostly families with Slavic origin have been granted the land for free as well as many other benefits (Derens, 2006, p. 55). However, that specific program had only partial success, since only 60.000 Serbs have settled in Kosovo in that period (Ibid., p. 55). Nevertheless, that process has created tensions and dissatisfaction amongst Albanians living in Kosovo (Imami, 2017, p. 399). In addition,

Imami condemns the nonexistence of schools and ban of books in Albanian language and attributes it to the “fear of authorities of Albanian intellectuals” (Imami, 2017, p. 415). The worst of all was a belief that the state wants to remove all Albanians from Kosovo, as a confirmation of that sources (Derens, 2006, p. 55; Imami, 2017, p. 400-402) give example of a project called “Expulsion of Albanians” written in 1937 by Vasa Čubrilović, a Serbian historian, where he elaborates the ways how Albanians should be expelled from Kosovo. However, that project was never implemented and as Derens indicates it was written in a time when “expulsion and exchange of population was a legitimate mean to achieve national homogeneity” (Derens, 2006, p. 55). That means that besides the project of agrarian colonization that did cause discomfort amongst Albanians, there was no strategy of systematic removal of Albanians from Kosovo at that time.

At the end of the Second World War, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia came out as a winner of the war with Josip Broz Tito as its leader. In 1945 some key officials of the party were discussing the issue of Kosovo, to whom it should belong; Edvard Kardelj suggested that it might join Albania, if Albania creates a federation with Yugoslavia (Imami, 2017, second part, p. 23). The same year in Prizren it was voted that Kosovo and Metohija become part of Serbia (Imami, 2017, second part, 25) it got a status of “autonomous region” (Derens, 2006, p. 60). At that time Yugoslavia and Albania had relatively good relations because they were aiming to achieve the same political ideals, however in 1948 they went their separate ways and the relations were very unfriendly. Therefore, the politics towards the Albanians in Kosovo has changed as well, as precocious measures the school programs were cleared from national content and they could not learn much about their history (Imami, 2017, second part, p. 28). Besides that, the secret police UDBA (State Security Administration) was keeping a close eye on great majority of Kosovo Albanians (Ibid., p. 34). The overall atmosphere of the first 20 years of socialist regime was very repressive in Kosovo (Derens, 2006, p. 60).

The unfriendly climate towards the Albanians has changed when a new Constitution was adopted in Yugoslavia in 1963. The most important element of that constitution has been the changed status of Kosovo, from “autonomous region” to “Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija” (Derens, 2006, p. 61). In addition, the officials have decided to work on development of economy, culture and school system, since Kosovo was behind compared to other Yugoslavian federal units (Imami, 2017, second part, p. 36). In 1968 Metohija was excluded from the name, according to Imami because of “practical reasons” (Imami, 2017, second part, p. 72) and Kosovo gained the right to have its own Constitution (Ibid., p. 71). Kosovo Albanians remember these times as cultural and economic

revival, the times when language equality was accepted in the public life, when they were occupying high position and had a saying (Ibid., p. 36-38). On the other hand, Serbs were not pleased with the situation and many fled from Kosovo at that time (Ibid., p. 38).

Even though, the life of Albanians in Kosovo has changed for the better in 1968 there were huge demonstrations in Pristina and several other places in Kosovo because Albanians wanted Kosovo to gain a status of a Republic (Imami, 2017, second part, p. 72). According to Imami even Kosovo high officials were not aware that these demonstrations were going to take place and it was not discovered what has triggered these demonstrations and under whose influence (Ibid., p. 73). However, it is not hard to guess that Albania had the highest influence on Albanians living in Kosovo. Even Imami writes about “the intensification of cultural and ideological propaganda” that Albania was carrying amongst Kosovo Albanians and deteriorating their relations with Yugoslavia, especially after 1976 (Imami, 2017, second part, p. 39). Some of the propaganda stories circling around were that the huge injustice was caused to Albanians at the Congress of Berlin in 1878, that Yugoslavia intentionally doesn’t want to help Kosovo develop and talking about Albania as an ideal place (Ibid., p. 39).

Despite all of that, Yugoslavia has adopted a new constitution in 1974 in which Kosovo and Vojvodina gained the status of constitutive element of federation and had a full legal legitimacy and the same jurisdiction as other republics (Imami, 2017, second part, p. 77; Derens, 2006, p. 61). The contradiction of that constitution was that Kosovo’s representatives could influence the politics in Serbia, but Serbia did not have any right to interfere in their affairs (Derens, 2006, p. 61). The period from 1974-1981 was called “the golden ages” for Kosovo, since Albanians took advantage of such wide autonomy and have developed cultural life, including art, theatre, film and publishing many books in Albanian (Derens, 2006, p. 62).

However, it seems that only autonomy wasn’t enough for Kosovo Albanians and since they never identified themselves as Yugoslavs (probably because they did not have Slavic origin) they wanted Kosovo to gain the status of a republic, because then it would be possible to gain the independence. Very unfortunate thing, as Derens correctly notices, was that the communist regime prevented the discussion about two World Wars and roles that Serbs and Albanians played to happen (Derens, 2006, p. 63). Therefore, these narratives have been preserved in the private spheres and have probably glorified only the one side’s heroic acts, while mystifying the other side. That became evident when these narratives became a part of public discourse during the period of dissolving of

Yugoslavia. The nationalism has not been destroyed during the period of socialism; it has just been silenced and came back on the scene louder than ever after Tito's death.

2.6. The war in Kosovo and NATO bombing

The nationalist propaganda in Albania has increased significantly after Tito's death in terms of glorification of historic figures and events, but mostly putting into the spotlight the idea of injustice done to Albania for not getting all the territories populated by Albanians (Imami, 2017, second part, p. 82). These ideas have spread without any difficulties to all Albanians living outside of the borders of Albania, especially in Kosovo. The economy in Kosovo wasn't doing well, the unemployment rates were high especially amongst students, and dissatisfaction with the current situation was obvious (Ibid., p. 87). In such conditions Kosovo was a fertile ground for implementation of nationalist ideas.

The student demonstrations that have started in 1981 have grown to political demonstrations with the most recognizable parole: "Kosovo republic!" (Derens, 2006, p. 74). The reaction of police towards protestors was very brutal, many were incarcerated and some were even killed. Therefore, because of such inappropriate use of force in the eyes of Kosovo Albanians the state lost its legitimacy (Ibid., p. 74).

In Yugoslavia, nationalism was highly unwonted element, however soon after Tito's death communism was changed with nationalism in all republics. In the Republic of Serbia Slobodan Milošević was the leader of such ideology and more importantly he had the intellectual elite on his side (Derens, 2006, p. 76). With the help of media, who were under the control of government, he was promoting nationalist ideas and manipulating the public. At the same time "the others" especially Albanians were criticized and portrayed in a very negative way. Some of the frequently seen attributes in newspapers were irredentists, criminals, terrorists, chauvinist and others (Derens, 2006, p. 83).

The 90's, the years of dissolution of Yugoslavia were the hardest for all its citizens, but especially for those living in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Kosovo since the war has erupted in these republics. The declaration of independence of Slovenia and Macedonia went relatively smooth, without major incidents. However, that couldn't be said for other republics and Kosovo that is still until this day unresolved issue. Unfortunately, due to many reasons, but most importantly the bad politics that has been in place at the time, these wars took lives of many people and have left deep scars in the memories of all the people involved which have been transferred to the youth

as well. The topic of the wars in Yugoslavia is very broad and I will not be further elaborating on it; however, it is important to keep in mind the context in order to better understand the events in Kosovo.

In 1989 Kosovo's autonomy was suspended and all the rights Albanians had before have been annulled (Derens, 2006, p. 77). We cannot say that Serbs and Albanians had very intertwined lives, however even further segregation begun when Serbian and Albanian children have been physically separated in schools in 1989 (Ibid., p. 78). According to Imami "the life of Albanians in Kosovo was day to day harder and harder", they were suppressed by police and state security and many of them, even 70%, have been fired from their job (Imami, 2017, second part, p. 194). The life of Kosovo Albanians was disrupted in all its spheres and it is not surprising that in 1990 Albanian members of Kosovo's Parliament have voted for Kosovo to become a republic in Yugoslavia and in 1992 they held parallel elections where Ibrahim Rugova was elected as a president of independent Republic of Kosovo (Derens, 2006, p. 82). He became president of the LDK (Lidhja demokratike e Kosovës- the Democratic League of Kosovo) when the party was formed in 1989 by Kosovo Albanian intellectuals (Ibid., p. 81). They have created parallel society in the fields of health, culture, media but most importantly education (Imami, 2017, second part, p. 196). As Derens correctly notices, the relations between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo became less and less frequent since they were not sharing any common spaces any more (Derens, 2006, p. 84).

After the immediate success and euphoria created around the parallel institutions, talking about that period, Imami evaluates that "the parallel system begun to atrophy year by year" (Imami, 2017, second part, p. 202). Albanians wanted internationalization of the Kosovo problem and it was evident that the tactics of peaceful resistance was not effective enough when even after the Dayton conference that topic was not brought up (Ibid., p. 202). Therefore, Albanians turned to violence and UÇK/KLA (Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës- Kosovo Liberation Army) came into scene. It was founded by the end of 1994 and it came out of People's Movement of Kosovo, the party that was founded in 1982 and supported by Albanian secret services, having the social system of Albania as a model (Imami, 2017, second part, p. 202). They have operated as the small guerilla units organized in seven loosely connected headquarters (Imami, 2017, second part, p. 204) and their first official appearance in the uniforms was on 28th of November 1997 on the funeral of one teacher killed by Serbian police (Derens, 2006, p. 87). Due to the internal instabilities in Albanian in 1997 a lot of weapons were transferred to Kosovo and the major financial sources of UÇK/KLA were

donations from Diaspora (Derens, 2006, p. 89-91). It is hard to evaluate UÇK/KLA and its actions; for Albanians they are heroes and for Serbs they are terrorists (Nakarada, 2015, p. 42). However, not all Albanians share the same opinion, Veton Suroi who is well known journalist and civil society activist was very much criticizing UÇK/KLA, its leaders and especially Hashim Thaçi in his book *Snake's legs*.

UÇK/KLA was formed to attack the Serbian police forces, however they were also killing Albanians who were not on their side and who they believed that collaborate with Serbia (Imami, 2017, second part, p. 204). Serbian police were fighting back and attacking places where they believed that UÇK/KLA fighters were hiding. Attacks were very frequent in 1998, when one of the most tragic ones has happened and that is the attack on the whole family of Adem Jashari, one of the leaders of UÇK/KLA. It lasted three days and 59 members of Jashari family were killed, amongst them 18 women and 10 children (Derens, 2006, p. 93; Imami, 2017, second part, p. 216). There is no justification for such a brutal act and therefore it was used as a symbol and a one more reason for fight against Serbs. In addition, Adem Jashari is celebrated as a hero, as a legend; the story about him was included in the school history books, many songs about him can be found as well as monuments.

It is a common knowledge that USA has supported UÇK/KLA, it is hard to uncover all the reasons why that was the case, definitely not out of altruism, but because of their own interests. With the help of such a powerful ally and a lot of journalists located in Kosovo the topic of Kosovo was finally internationalized. As for the journalists, Derens writes critically about those journalists who did not speak any of the languages spoken in Kosovo and were fully dependent on their translators who were under the influence of UÇK/KLA and therefore their objectivity is doubtful (Derens, 2006, p. 98). By the end of 1998 Richard Holbrook has informed Slobodan Milošević that the plan for NATO intervention was ready (Ibid., p. 99). As a final straw for initiation of NATO bombing was a massacre in Račak, where Serbian forces killed 51 people at the beginning of 1999. Without diminishing the victims, the events in Račak were never fully uncovered. (Ibid., p. 100-101). After the unsuccessful peace talks in Raboulliet, where some proposed clauses were completely unacceptable for Serbia (such as the free movement of NATO forces on the territory of Yugoslavia) Milošević denied signing of the agreement and the NATO bombing was inevitable.

On 24th of March 1999 NATO bombing has started, without the approval of UN Security Council. This unnecessary intervention lasted for 78 days both in Kosovo and in Serbia. They were targeting

military objects but also destroying the infrastructure of the country and even hospitals. Many Serbian and Albanian civilians have died, and according to NATO officials they were “collateral damage” (Imami, 2017, second part, p. 295). However, NATO did not want to risk the lives of their soldiers and hasn’t been considering the war on the ground, but kept destroying the country from the air. Writing from the stand point that peace cannot be achieved by war, it is very sad that in Albanian sources the bombing was perceived as positive and liberating. On the other hand, Serbs see it as an aggression on a sovereign state. Before the intervention NGOs and journalists of course left Kosovo, it was easier for the military to fight UÇK/KLA and also force people to flee from Kosovo towards Macedonia and Albania (Jean-Arnault Derens 2006, 103). After the signing of Military Technical Agreement in Kumanovo the war has finally ended and many Albanian refugees have returned. However, a lot of Serbs have migrated from Kosovo because of fear of retaliation.

2.7. International presence and Declaration of Independence of Kosovo

After the war Kosovo became UN protectorate and UNMIK has started its temporary mission, but at the same time respecting the resolution 1244 adopted by the UN Security Council that guarantees the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Yugoslavia (Derens, 2006, p. 183). As Derens correctly notes, that situation is not satisfying for any of the sides; Albanians haven’t achieved independence, Serbia just has theoretical sovereignty and international community has to fund an expensive mission (Ibid., p. 183).

UNMIK structure was organized in four pillars: UNHCR was dealing with the humanitarian assistance to the refugees; civil administration, police and justice were run directly by UNMIK; OSCE was in charge for institution building and democratization and finally economic reconstruction was under the jurisdiction of EU (Judah, 2008, p. 113). At the same time Kosovo institutions were slowly developing (Derens, 2006, p. 183). The opinions on the achievements of the mission are divided; Tim Judah believes that UNMIK has achieved a lot, such as creating and overseeing institutions, creating Kosovo Police Service, giving people documents and “giving the people the means to live as much of an ordinary life as possible” (Judah, 2008, p. 114). This oversimplified evaluation goes hand in hand with the belief that a blueprint created by Western powers can successfully bring peace after such a complex conflict. However, Judah forgets that the mission was there to re-establish the whole society and introduce it to multiculturalism or as they name it multiethnicity, not just to help Kosovo Albanians to get rid of Serbian rule, or so they claim. Judah’s, undeservedly

widely cited book “Kosovo: What everyone needs to know” is very much one-sided and full of oversimplified evaluations, however it does represent one of the classical books written by foreigners who are believed to be objective experts in a certain region, but actually see it through dichotomies and blueprints and don’t quite understand its history, culture and relations. Derens also criticizes the lack of experience of UNMIK staff whose main incentive to come to Kosovo was lucrative position within the UNMIK system (Derens, 2006, p. 189-190). Furthermore, some of the main critiques of UNMIK work are connected to its inability to effectively restore the justice system, to democratize the region emphasizing their failure regarding media, reforms of education system and lack of civil society, inability to privatize companies that would allow the economic prosperity of the region and finally showing great tolerance to the organized crime that has boosted since the representatives of international community arrived in Kosovo (Derens, 2006, p. 197-212). Dušan Janjic adds a few more critiques mostly regarding relations between UNMIK and Kosovo Serbs (Janjic, 2007, p. 127-128). Namely their slow bureaucratic administration is very much criticized especially regarding their unwillingness to start the decentralization process. (Ibid., p. 127-128). Even more important critique is that it didn’t really try to reconcile Serbs and Albanians and “the hypocrisy of international administration is that it publicly supports the illusion that multiethnic society is being built in Kosovo, when in reality Serbs are living in enclaves without any respect of human rights” (Ibid., p. 320). Furthermore, Simona Mameli adds that “Kosovo obviously isn’t a multiethnic paradise, and that reconciliation between Serbs and Albanians seems as a distant utopia” (Mameli, 2007, p. 27). Mameli and Albin Kurti agree that multiethnicity hasn’t been achieved and that actually led to even further ethnic segregation emphasizing the differences between them (Kurti, 2007, p. 170; Mameli, 2007, p. 40). Kurti, as well as Janjić share the same views on UNMIK officials regarding the wide list of privileges they have and colonial elements that this administration has (Janjić, 2007, p. 237; Kurti, 2007, p. 170). Their opinions are once again the same when it comes to the economy of Kosovo that is worse than ever, despite a lot of foreign financial aid, the lack of development means the lack of future (Janjić, 2007, p. 315; Kurti, 2007, p. 171-172). However, Mameli does acknowledge that UNMIK had positive results when it comes to institution building, but these institutions have monoethnic character and only Albanians have enjoyed benefits (Mameli, 2007, p. 36).

The worst failure of UNMIK’s mission is their inability to protect Kosovo Serbs at the outbreak of violence on 17th of March 2004 when 19 people were killed, many injured, a lot of Serbian houses

and churches destroyed (Imami, 2017, second part, p. 345; Janjić, 2007, p. 332). Kosovo Albanians have been frustrated with inertness of internationals and wanted to push them to resolve the status of Kosovo, while attacking the symbols of Serbian and international presence (Mameli, 2007, p. 33). UNMIK was tolerating low intensity repression by Albanians and hasn't tried to reconcile communities; it seemed that supports Albanian pretensions towards independence, but passively (Janjić, 2007, p. 287). UNMIK and KFOR were ineffective in protection of security of Serbian community and unable to confront Albanian extremists (Janjić, 2007, p. 255, 263). How is it even possible that neither UN police nor 20.000 KFOR soldiers couldn't control the situation and stop the violence? According to Derens these "unrests have been planned and well organized, secret services were aware of them and political decision was made not to show resistance" (Derens, 2006, p. 178).

Once again violence proved to be effective tool since international community speeded up the process of defining the status of Kosovo. The Assembly of Kosovo has adopted the Declaration of Independence on 17th of February 2008 and declared the independence of Kosovo (Imami, 2017, second part, p. 355). EU mission EULEX (European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo) came to replace the mission of UN right after the independence was declared (Ibid., p. 355). According to EULEX official website "EULEX Kosovo was launched in 2008 as the largest civilian mission under the Common Security and Defense Policy of the European Union. "EULEX's overall mission is to assist the Kosovo authorities in establishing sustainable and independent rule of law institutions" (www.eulex-kosovo.eu). Serbia hasn't reacted well to this situation and has stated that the declaration is nothing more than unilateral secession of its territory and that it will not have consequences neither in Serbia nor on the international scene (Imami 2017, second part, p. 357). While in Pristina Kosovo Albanians were celebrating in Serbia people have organized massive protests against this decision shouting "Kosovo is Serbia". Some kind of a solution had to be found even tough Serbian and Kosovo Albanian standing positions were completely opposite.

2.8. The EU facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina

"The history has proved that violence doesn't resolve problems but creates new ones, so the most effective response to violence is politics and the most powerful means for successful politics is a dialogue." (Janjić, 2007, p. 248). In March 2011 Serbian and Kosovo Albanian officials were finally ready to engage in a mutually beneficial dialogue process facilitated by the EU and popularly called the Brussels negotiations (Burazer, 2015, p. 1). The engagement in a dialogue itself was extremely

important because it shows the willingness of both sides to go towards the normalization of relations and resolution of numerous issues including the final status.

The first phase of negotiations was labeled as “technical dialogue” and lasted from March 2011 until February 2012 (Burazer, 2015, p. 5). Belgrade was represented by Borislav Stefanović the Political Director at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, while Edita Tahiri, the Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo, was representing the Negotiating Team of Pristina (Ibid., p. 5). The EU facilitator of the dialogue was Sir Robert Cooper, counselor at EEAS (Ibid., p. 5). There were 9 rounds of dialogues and there were a few important agreements reached namely the agreement on freedom of movement, civil registry, custom stamps, cadaster, the recognition of university diplomas, integrated border/boundary management and regional representation and cooperation (Ibid. 5-6). This phase of the dialogue ended at the beginning of the 2012 because of parliamentary and presidential elections in Serbia and the establishment of the new government (Ibid., p. 6).

The dialogue was continued on October 2012 and it was elevated on a level of a political dialogue led by two Prime Ministers, Ivica Dačić and Hashim Thaçi with the help of EU mediator Catherine Ashton. There were 23 rounds of negotiations in this phase of the dialogue (Ibid., p. 7). The outcome that was expected from this phase of the dialogue was to finally reach a political agreement which would enable the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina. On the 19th of April 2013 the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalisation of Relations or better known as the Brussels Agreement was signed (Ibid., p. 8). The agreement was of a major importance for both sides since they have finally been able to agree on the 15 fundamental points. The Guardian called this agreement “historic” and a big success of the EU diplomacy (The Guardian, 30 April, 2013). Catherine Ashton has stated that “it is very important to see this as distancing from the past and a step forward the EU for both sides” (B92, Tanjug, 19 April, 2013). However, it is very important to follow the implementation of the agreement, because the signature itself without the implementation has only symbolic effect but doesn’t really change the things on the ground. The important outcome of this phase of the dialogue was the local elections in Kosovo in 2013 when North Kosovo municipalities for the first time held elections according to the laws of Kosovo (Burazer, 2015, p. 9). Once again, this phase of the dialogue was ended in March 2014 because of parliamentary elections in both Kosovo and Serbia.

The third phase begun in March 2015 and the main negotiators were again Prime Ministers, on the Serbian side Aleksandar Vučić and as a representative of Kosovo Isa Mustafa. New mediator and the

new High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy was Federica Mogherini. The fourth round held in August 2015 was the most important one since four important agreements were reached, namely on the Association/Community of Serb majority municipalities in Kosovo, telecommunications, energy, and freedom of movement (the issue of the Peace Park on the bridge) in Mitrovica (Burazer, 2015, p. 13-14).

Since then there has been no further major progress in the dialogues, on the contrary the relations between Belgrade and Pristina have been strained. The implementation of the agreements reached in Brussels was not going smoothly. It is important that the agreement has been reached, however its implementation and contribution to the improvement of the relations on the ground is what makes the agreement effective and not just a dead letter. In the second and third part of the analysis I will be focusing on the impact this agreement had on the relations between Serbs and Kosovo Albanians as well as about its implementation.

2.9. Appendix 1 - Brussels agreement

Brussels Agreement -The First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalisation of Relations

1. There will be an Association/Community of Serb majority municipalities in Kosovo. Membership will be open to any other municipality provided the members are in agreement.
2. The Community/Association will be created by statute. Its dissolution shall only take place by a decision of the participating municipalities. Legal guarantees will be provided by applicable law and constitutional law (including the 2/3 majority rule).
3. The structures of the Association/Community will be established on the same basis as the existing statute of the Association of Kosovo municipalities e.g. President, vice President, Assembly, Council.
4. In accordance with the competences given by the European Charter of Local Self Government and Kosovo law the participating municipalities shall be entitled to cooperate in exercising their powers through the Community/ Association collectively. The Association/Community will have full overview of the areas of economic development, education, health, urban and rural planning.

5. The Association/Community will exercise other additional competences as may be delegated by the central authorities.
6. The Community/Association shall have representative role to the central authorities and will have a seat in the communities council for this purpose. In the pursuit of this role a monitoring function is envisaged.
7. There shall be one police force in Kosovo called the Kosovo Police. All police in northern Kosovo shall be integrated in the Kosovo Police framework. Salaries will be only from the KP.
8. Members of other Serbian security structures will be offered a place in equivalent Kosovo structures.
9. There shall be a Police Regional Commander for the four northern Serb majority municipalities (Northern Mitrovica, Zvecan, Zubin Potok and Leposavic). The Commander of this region shall be a Kosovo Serb nominated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs from a list provided by the four mayors on behalf of the Community/Association. The composition of the KP in the north will reflect the ethnic composition of the population of the four municipalities. (There will be another Regional Commander for the Municipalities of Mitrovica South, Skenderaj and Vushtrri). The regional commander of the four northern municipalities will cooperate with other regional commanders.
10. The judicial authorities will be integrated and operate within the Kosovo legal framework. The Appellate Court in Pristina will establish a panel composed of a majority of K/S judges to deal with all Kosovo Serb majority municipalities. A division of this Appellate Court, composed both by administrative staff and judges, will sit permanently in northern Mitrovica (Mitrovica District Court) Each panel of the above division will be composed by a majority of K/S judges. Appropriate judges will sit dependent on the nature of the case involved.
11. Municipal elections shall be organised in the northern municipalities in 2013 with the facilitation of the OSCE in accordance with Kosovo law and international standards.
12. An implementation plan including time frame shall be produced by April 26. In implementing this agreement, the principle of transparent funding will be addressed.

13. Discussion of Energy and Telecoms will be intensified by the two sides and completed by June 15.

14. It is agreed that neither side will block, or encourage others to block, the other side's progress in their respective EU paths.

15. An implementation committee will be established by the two sides, with the facilitation of the EU.

3. Theoretical framework

Conflict transformation is a very complex process that involves different strategies, but the most used ones are peace-building and state-building which have as premises that re-building institutions, democracy, security, rule of law and free markets will bring peace to the societies. However, we shouldn't forget that the relationships among people are fundamental for a state and just restoring the above-mentioned things will not restore the relations (Lipschutz,1998, in Bar-Tal&Bennink,2004, p.17). Structural elements are important for creating an overall framework for peace, but that doesn't mean that reconciliation among people will happen (Wilmer, 1998, in Bar-Tal&Bennink,2004, p. 16). Reconciliation requires an active effort and strategy in order for people to overcome negative beliefs, attitudes and emotions (Bar-Tal&Bennink,2004, p. 13). Therefore, I will be using the theories of reconciliation in an attempt to verify if Serbian and Kosovo Albanian political leaders are making effort to reconcile the societies they represent.

3.1. Peace-building and State-building

Both peace-building and state-building have been applied in the case of Kosovo after the war. Even though, this thesis is not using these two theories as primary theories for the analysis it is important to briefly explain the effects they had on the ground.

These theories are often used as synonymous (Franks&Richmond, 2008, p. 81), however in the case of Kosovo the term that was used was peace-building. The use of the term state-building would have been problematic since it couldn't be proclaimed that the aim of a mission is to build a state because its status had to be a subject of a discussion. Even though, this was the most ambitious UN peace-building project it didn't produce a stable liberal polity, as the international actors hoped (Ibid., p. 81-82).

The liberal peace-building includes democracy, rule of law, free markets and development and usually UN or other international actors are in charge of the process that aims to achieve self-sustained peace within liberal governance framework (Ibid., p. 82-83). As it was mentioned in the background chapter a lot of international actors have been involved in peace-building in Kosovo: UNMIK, OSCE, KFOR, UNHCR,EULEX. Franks and Richmond argue that "Peace-building is caught in a contradiction that supports liberal democracy and pluralism in Kosovo and the region more broadly, but also offers the very institutions that Kosovo's monoethnic independence might rest upon" (Ibid., p. 83). Therefore, the conclusion that could be drawn from this is that it doesn't really contribute to

the multi-ethnicity and reconciliation in Kosovo, as it should. In addition, Serbs and Albanians have different understanding of this peace-building project; Kosovo Albanians see it as a state-building project and they are willing to adopt the liberal democratic agenda just to have the internationals on their side and achieve their exclusive ethnic agenda (Ibid., p. 89). Because of that the whole project has mostly been resisted by Kosovo Serbs. According to Franks and Richmond instead of dealing with the root causes of conflict the peace-building project has enhanced the differences between Serbs and Albanians failing to reconcile them it has polarized the communities even further (Ibid., p. 89).

There won't be further analysis of the failure of liberal peace-building project in Kosovo in each aspect, since I would like to focus on the reconciliation processes. that is the topic of the thesis. In the following pages I will be discussing the meaning, ways and importance of reconciliation.

3.2. Defining reconciliation

In the last few decades the concept of reconciliation has emerged as a specific area of interest of peace studies, since practitioners realized that conflict resolution is not enough for stable peace (Bar-Siman-Tov, 2004, p. 4). "The word reconcile means to come back together into council, that is to work harmoniously together" (Santa-Barbara, 2007, p. 174).

There are two main approaches to the concept of reconciliation, the maximalist and the minimalist approach (Maddison, 2016, p. 48). The minimalist approach is rather similar to peace-building, since its focus is on transformation of sociopolitical institutions and processes (Ibid., p. 48). On the other hand, "the maximalist approach focuses on the interpersonal reconciliation drawing on either religious or medical (therapeutic) paradigm, and is associated with language such as healing, forgiveness and apology" (Ibid., p. 48). The standpoint of this thesis is closer to the maximalist approach, however not that much focused on the healing, forgiveness or formal apology, but rather on the change of the mindset of people towards reconciliation. The definition that I am going to use here is in its simplest form "reconciliation means restoring friendship and harmony between the rival sides after conflict resolution, or transforming relations of hostility and resentment to friendly and harmonious ones" (Ackerman, 1994; Kreisberg, 1998a; Phillips, 1998; Arthur, 1999; Gardner-Feldman, 1999; Kelman, 1999a; Bar-Tal, 2000b, in Bar-Tal&Bennink, 2004, p. 4). That means that "reconciliation is a psychological process, which consists of changes of motivations, goals, beliefs, attitudes and emotions of majority of society members" (Lederach, 1997; Shonholtz, 1998; Wilmer,

1998; De Soto, 1999; Kelman, 1999a, in Bar-Tal&Bennink, 2004, p. 17). It begins when these changes start to happen (Bar-Tal&Bennink,2004, p. 26).

Opinions are divided whether reconciliation is a process or a goal. In this thesis I argue that it is both a process and a goal. As Villa-Vicencio argues, reconciliation as a process is about finding the ways to connect people and overcome historical barriers, prejudices and inequalities (Maddison, p. 46). It is important to acknowledge that it is not a linear process that continuously moves towards peace, but it has regressions and advances (Bar-Tal&Bennink,2004, p. 27). Those who consider that reconciliation is a process say that it has different goals during the process, for example at the preagreement stage the goal is to bring parties together to negotiate and in the postsettlement phase the goal should be the normalization of relations through well-established institutions and practices (Hermann, 2004, p. 46). On the other hand, reconciliation as a goal includes change of values and attitudes towards the other as a basis for addressing structural challenges (Maddison, p. 46).

Reconciliation can be studied both at micro and macro level. The micro level includes studying the reconciliation of individual and interpersonal processes, whereas on the macro level its focus is on ethnic groups, nations or states (Maoz, 2004, p. 225). In this thesis it is obvious that the focus is on the macro level since the topic is reconciliation between two ethnic groups, Serbs and Albanians.

Some may question why we even need reconciliation. The answer is that we need it, because it is important to achieve stable peace after violent conflict and in order to do that changing the structural elements is not enough, we need reconciliation (Bar-Siman-Tov,2004, p. 72).

Stable peace is characterized by mutual recognition and acceptance, invested interests and goals in developing peaceful relations, as well as fully normalized, cooperative political, economic and cultural relations based on equality and justice, nonviolence, mutual trust, positive attitudes and sensitivity and consideration for other party's needs and interests. (Bar-Tal&Bennink,2004, p. 15)

Most of these elements are achievable only with the process of reconciliation, therefore it is important to study it and apply it in the specific cultural context.

3.3. Preconditions for reconciliation

“Societal beliefs in conflict determine how each side perceives itself and its rival in the conflict, as well as the sides’ conflictual relations” (Bar-Siman-Tov,2004, p. 73). Bar Tal suggests five changes in societal beliefs that have to be changed in order to achieve reconciliation: societal beliefs about the group’s goals, about the rival group, about one’s own group, about relations with the past opponent and about peace (Bar-Tal, 2000, in Bar-Tal&Bennink,2004, p. 20). To change the societal beliefs about the group’s goals means that the group has to change those goals that represent the basis and justification for the conflict and replace them with the goal to maintain peaceful relations with the former enemy creating symbols and myths that will support the new goal (Bar-Tal&Bennink,2004, p. 21). The second change is connected to the perception of “the other” that is dehumanized, the change should include legitimization that gives humanity to “the other”, personalization that makes us see the opponent as a human individual and finally acknowledging that the other group’s victims and suffering (Ibid., 21). Besides that, the group has to take responsibility for its own actions in the conflict and not to censor the negative information about them. Moreover, beliefs have to change in direction of cooperation and friendly relations. Having that in mind, the collective memory about the past has to be revised by learning about other group’s collective memory and through negotiating processes creating new narratives (Bar-Tal&Bennink,2004, p. 18,22). Finally, parties have to realize costs and benefits of life in peace and try to strive for it (Ibid., 22).

Some authors emphasize the importance of policies that will create inclusion and integration of all groups in the society, in order to achieve that, new inclusive identities should be created and discrimination abolished (Horowitz, 1993; Charif, 1994; Saidi, 1994; Corr, 1995; Kriesberg, 1998a; Murray and Greer, 1999, in Bar-Tal&Bennink,2004, p. 24). These policies “must be reflected in formal acts that symbolically communicate to society the change in the relationship with the past rival”, such as meetings between the leaders, economic or cultural acts. (Bar-Tal&Bennink,2004, p. 28)

Besides these, there are six other factors that affect the process of reconciliation. These are: peaceful resolution of the conflict, parties involved, leaders, involvement of individuals and organizations, society’s institutions and international context (Bar-Tal&Bennink,2004, p. 35-36). The importance of parties and leaders will be discussed in the next chapters since they are in the focus of this thesis. Considering the other factors, peaceful resolution of the conflict that brings satisfactory results to both parties can most definitely help the process of reconciliation. Some argue

that is even a necessary condition and that otherwise the process would fail (Bar-Tal&Bennink,2004, p. 35). Furthermore, the support, strength and activism of individuals and organizations is extremely important because it influences the others who are not that committed to the process of reconciliation or who do not believe in it (Ibid., p. 36). In addition, all institutions have to be committed to the process, especially military, social, cultural and educational institutions (Asmal et al., 1997; Thompson, 1997; Zalaquett, 1999 in Bar-Tal&Bennink,2004, p. 36). Finally, the interest and involvement of the international community and its economic assistance are sometimes crucial for the success of the process of reconciliation.

3.4. The role of the parties

Both parties that have been involved in a conflict have to embrace the change of societal beliefs that have been discussed in the previous chapter and to create a common framework to promote the process of reconciliation. Some scholars argue that the groups should form a new common outlook of the past; however, I am more in agreement with those who say that it is enough to at least acknowledge the existence of two different narratives about the past (Kopstein,1997; Hayner, 1999; Norval, 1999 in Bar-Tal&Bennink,2004, p. 18).

Besides the change of beliefs, in order to see that things are moving in the direction of reconciliation both parties have to perform conciliatory acts. These acts might be small and symbolic, but they are the indicators of a good will and intention to change the relationship after years of hatred and mistrust (Bar-Tal&Bennink,2004, p. 35). However, the ripeness for reconciliation of both parties is important for appreciation and reciprocity of conciliatory acts. If that is not the case, these acts could be misinterpreted as a weakness of one side and make the other side increase their demands (Kriesberg,2004, p. 97). Therefore, it should be aware of the right timing for reconciliation and readiness of both parties to commit to it.

What may stand on the way of achieving the ripeness for reconciliation are parties' biases in perception of information (Maoz, 2004, p. 228). These cognitive biases can be categorized in solution-centered biases and relationship-centered biases (Maoz, 2004, p. 228-229). The first category of biases can stop the parties to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. On the other hand, relationship-centered biases are more resilient and can persist even after the agreement was signed, "these biases involve the way the sides perceive and relate to each other" (Maoz, 2004, p. 229). These can be divided in two groups: negative images of the opponent and the ingroup

favorability bias. The first group of biases presents the negative representations and images of the opponent which is depicted as evil, inferior, immoral, etc. (Bar-On, 1999; Bar-Tal, 2000b in Maoz, 2004, p. 230). However, studies have shown that each group likes to perceive itself in a positive light; attributing only positive descriptions such as moral, fair, peace-seeking etc. and that can only sustain dichotomies and prevent the one group's members to acknowledge the identity of the members of the other group (Maoz, 2004, p. 230-231). Unfortunately, these biases are transmitted to the members of the society from a young age by socialization, school text books and mass media (Bar-Tal, 1990, 2000b, 2001; Bar-Tal and Bennink, 2004, in Maoz, 2004, p. 232).

To understand and counter these biases one should be aware of "the power of framing-the manipulation of how events, processes and issues are presented" in political communication (Maoz, 2004, p. 232). Media play a big role on how things will be presented and people have to critically evaluate what has been presented to them. However, things can be framed in a positive way that promotes reconciliation; negative perceptions should be changed to ones complementary with the process of reconciliation. That would be one of the ways to diminish mutual biases. However, it is not only up to the people to understand all those strategies themselves; the process of reconciliation depends very much on the leaders of the groups and therefore in the next chapter I will examine the role of a leader in promoting reconciliation.

3.5. The role of a leader

In this chapter I am going to focus on the top-down approach towards the reconciliation that involves national political leaders and their ability to influence the process. The role of a leader is tremendous when it comes to reconciliation, since they are the ones who are involved in negotiations of a peaceful resolution and they should be the leaders of the process of reconciliation (Bar-Tal&Bennink,2004, p. 27). Reconciliation cannot depend on the external side such as mediator that can impose the peace agreement for example. Reconciliation depends on the willingness of both sides' leaders to engage in the process and strive for it (Bar-Siman-Tov,2004, p. 5). When defining leadership Hogan, Curphy and Hogan (1994) say that "it involves persuading other people to set aside for a period of time their individual concerns and pursue a common goal that is important for the responsibilities and welfare of a group" (Bargal&Sivan, 2004, p. 131) The leader has to have legitimacy and to be chosen by the majority of the population, preferably not one of the military leaders, but that does happen in some cases such as Kosovo (Bar-Tal&Bennink,2004, p. 24).

Using his legitimate power and charisma the leader can initiate the process of reconciliation (Bargal&Sivan, 2004, p. 130). He will most probably face the opposition within their own group, those who are not willing to embrace reconciliation; however, the leader should be determined to follow the path of reconciliation (Bar-Tal&Bennink,2004, p. 35). The reason why the majority of the group members follow the leader's directions is because of their social identity; they see themselves tied to the group and their prosperity depends on a group's prosperity (Ross, 2004, p. 2015).

One particular type of leadership is the most suitable for the process of reconciliation and that is transformational leadership (Bargal&Sivan,2004, p.131). There are four elements of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1997, in Bargal&Sivan, 2004, p. 131). Firstly, idealized influence means that leaders are admired as role models because of their trustworthiness, commitment and ethics. Secondly, to be an inspirational motivator means that the leader is able to present appealing vision of the future and get the support for it. Thirdly, intellectual stimulation represents leader's ability to question the existing stereotypes and beliefs and to encourage the new ones. Finally, individualized consideration means that the leader is capable to see other as individuals (Bass, 1997, in Bargal&Sivan, 2004, p. 131).

Important tools that the leaders have in their disposal for the change of beliefs of the general public are based on informational and legitimate powers (Bargal&Sivan, 2004, p. 132). The definition of informational power is "persuasion that is based on the information or logical argument that the influencing agent may bring to the attention of the targeted audience so as to achieve change" (Raven, 1990, in Bargal&Sivan, 2004, p. 132). Basically, that means that the leader is in a position to reframe negative beliefs and stereotypes about the former enemy. On the other hand, legitimate power gives to the leader "the power to use authority that derives from the political leader's position as head of the system" and he is able to initiate political, economic or cultural steps that will bring the parties closer together (Bargal&Sivan, 2004, p. 132).

There are three phases of change towards the new relations between former enemies and in these phases I will highlight the role of the leaders in each one. These phases are: unfreezing, movement and refreezing (Lewin, 1947, in Bargal&Sivan, 2004, p. 133). The first phase involves opening to the new information and changing the status quo. In that phase the role of a leader is to "use beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge that advocate peace-building and normalization between the conflicting groups" (Ibid., p. 133). During this process people may feel ambivalent feelings towards the process

because it leads to the unknown, but the role of the leader is to deal with this ambivalence towards the process of change (Bargal&Sivan, 2004, p. 134). In the phase of movement people start to change their beliefs and stereotypes with the new ones. However, the resistance to change towards the attempts of leaders to reframe the attitudes appears among some groups, but the leaders must cope successfully with these restraining forces (Watson, 1969, Klein 1976 in Bargal&Sivan, 2004, p. 135). In order to cope with these forces leaders should continuously emphasize the importance of change and use the channels of communication such as television, radio and newspapers to spread their message. Moreover, they should mobilize their supporters to actively take part in the process and initiate relations between the groups in different spheres (Bargal&Sivan, 2004, p. 135). The final phase is refreezing and it includes institutionalization of the things that have changed, the concrete projects and change of beliefs and in manifests in the relationship of mutual respect and cooperation between former enemies (Bargal&Sivan, 2004, p. 136). It is important to note that that is a long-term process that adjusts to the new circumstances (Ibid.).

There are different outcomes on how the population receives the reconciliatory messages that leaders are sending (Kelman, 1961 in Bargal&Sivan, 2004, p. 136). These outcomes are categorized in: compliance, identification and internalization. Compliance is the lowest level of acceptance of reconciliation, it happens when people want to superficially change their beliefs or say that they have changed their attitude just to gain approval from the leader (Ibid., p. 136). Identification refers to the acceptance of the changes because the members of the society esteem their leader (Ibid., p. 136-137). The highest level of acceptance and the most desired one is internalization when people accept the changes in beliefs and attitudes towards “the other” because these changes are in accordance with their own system of values. It is important to note that this happens even without the influence of the leader (Ibid., p. 137).

To sum it up, the role of the leaders is extremely important since their attitudes and behavior influence the population they are leading, therefore this thesis will primarily focus on them and the top-down approach towards the reconciliation.

3.6. Methods of reconciliation

The role of this chapter is to present several different methods that facilitate the reconciliation process proposed in the literature. I am going to use three broad terms proposed by Kriesberg under which I will classify different methods. These are actions promoting truth (Kriesberg, 2004, p. 98),

actions promoting justice (Kriesberg, 2004, p. 100) and actions promoting regard (Kriesberg, 2004, p. 102). The main focus of this thesis are the actions promoting regard, therefore more space will be reserved for the methods that fall under that category, while the other two will be briefly explained.

Actions promoting truth are taken to uncover the truths that have been hidden during the conflict (Kriesberg, 2004, p. 98). One of the examples is the formation the official commissions of inquiry whose task is to uncover certain conditions of violence and write a report about their findings. One such commission was formed in Kosovo to uncover the violent events in Račak led by the medical examiner Helena Ranta (Derens, 2006, p. 101). Furthermore, truth commissions became very popular especially after their success in South Africa. The role of truth commissions is to let the perpetrators and the victims speak about their experiences in the conflict. The point of it is for the wider public to uncover the truth and not let such atrocities to happen ever again. Its aim is usually not to punish the perpetrators but the increase the mutual understanding between groups in conflict (Kriesberg, 2004, p. 98). Even though Hashim Thaçi proposed the initiative for formation of truth commission, this still hasn't been applied in Kosovo.

Actions promoting justice can be classified in three categories: criminal trials, monetary payments and policies and institutional arrangements (Kriesberg, 2004, p. 100). Criminal trials are there to punish those who have done wrong. In the case of Kosovo, a lot of people have been prosecuted for their misdeeds in the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). It is questionable whether the justice was served, however some of the key leaders have been brought to trials. The monetary payments represent a form of compensation for the injustices that people have suffered during the conflict; however, I don't consider it to be such effective method since suffering cannot be alleviated by money. Finally, policies and institutional arrangements represent the change of unjust policies and abolition of any type of discrimination. That is a part of peace-building process in Kosovo that has been led by the UN and now EULEX, so it has been worked on that segment of the reconciliation process.

Actions promoting regard is a broad term that includes expressions that recognize the humanity and identity of the other people (Kriesberg, 2004, p. 84). For instance respectful recognition of the other, friendly social interaction, apology, forgiveness, celebration of diversity, expressions of remorse all fall under this category (Kriesberg, 2004, p. 102). Therefore, I will write about those that are represented the most in the literature and can be classified as the actions of regard.

Acknowledgement “involves recognition that a group or individuals have suffered past injustices while remaining ambiguous about one’s own connection to those actions” (Ross, 2004, p. 208). It is basically recognition of existence of the other group and its narratives of past injustices. It can take different symbolic or ritual forms and its importance lies in the symbolic component that it holds that helps reorient the perception of the groups about each other (Ross, 2004, p. 209,215). It can be in a verbal form or an action (Ross, 2004, p. 209).

Apology is a formal acceptance of responsibility for the misdeeds carried out during the conflict and an appeal to the victims for forgiveness” (Bar-Tal&Bennink,2004, p. 28-29). Apology allows the victims to heal and eventually change their negative feelings towards the perpetrator which would lead to the reconciliation. In the English-speaking world apology is connected to Christian ethics of reconciliation, since it seeks forgiveness that is one of Christian values (Cohen, 2004, p. 186). Apology can be one-way process, but it is more effective if it is mutual (Ross, 2004, p. 206). In the interpersonal level it is clear how apology can be given and received by perpetrator and victim. However, when we want to look at the apology at the level of state it becomes more complicated since it is not clear who has to apologize. The key officials are the ones who are supposed to apologize but that doesn’t mean that the actual perpetrators would have the same intentions. Other problem is that in many cases the actual perpetrators are already dead and cannot apologize. Despite, apology by a state official means a lot when it comes to the improvement of the relations between two states although it may not result with the forgiveness of majority of the people (Cohen, 2004, p. 193-194). However, leaders are reluctant when it comes to apologies since the act of recognizing national mistakes would undermine national myths about their virtue (Cohen, 2004, p. 187). It is important to note that apology is not the necessary method for reconciliation and that has been proven by analyzing the cases where deep antagonisms have been overcome without apology (Cohen, 2004, p. 187). In the case of Kosovo, the official apology is still missing and it seems that it will not come any time soon.

Forgiveness is expression of love and mercy and adds spiritual-moral element to reconciliation, it is prevalent in Judeo-Christian culture, but it is mostly connected to Christianity (Auerbach, 2004, p. 153). It means overcoming the hatred that one feel towards the perpetrator, a step away from revenge and belief in repair of relations (Auerbach, 2004, p. 154). Some argue that the most important element of forgiveness is its healing effect that victims may feel (Auerbach, 2004, p. 156). As in the case of the apology there is a question of who can forgive. If those who suffered are dead

as well as perpetrators should the descendants ask for forgiveness and survivors of the atrocities forgive? There is also a problematic relationship between forgiveness and past and memory. If atrocities are forgiven and one is liberated from the difficult past that might mean that he is giving up an important part of history of collective suffering. (Auerbach, 2004, p. 155) However, in my opinion forgiving doesn't mean forgetting; one might be able to forgive and is willing to give second chance to the members of the group considered to be the enemy even though they would be aware of the history, but also of the fact that the times have changed and so the members of the group. Whether forgiveness is the necessary condition for reconciliation the opinions are divided, however even if it is necessary condition it is not sufficient (Auerbach, 2004, p. 157).

“Symbolic actions are behaviors whose significance lies less in the actions themselves than in the meanings individuals and groups ascribe to them” (Ross, 2004, p. 211). One of the examples might be a handshake (Ibid.). These actions are important because they are easier than the apology, but might be very effective, since these represent the good will to move towards the reconciliation. (Ibid.).

Writing a common history includes recreating past that would involve engagement of historians from both sides who would agree on the content. This is very useful method since myths and unfounded accusations would not be included in such common history. Such a newly created narrative should also be a base for school textbooks, so that the children in schools would learn history that is exempted from unnecessary myths. In the case of Kosovo unfortunately there are no indications that such a project might be launched. One of the biggest issues standing on the way towards reconciliation are those myths, stereotypes and unfounded accusations reproduced in the history textbooks.

Mass media can promote the process of reconciliation and spread the messages of the leaders about peace and reconciliation and in that way influence the general public. Media are a very powerful tool that can construct reality by framing the news in wanted direction. (Bar-Tal&Bennink,2004, p. 32)

Meetings between leaders and **joint projects** serve to bring the parties closer together. The official meetings between leaders should be presented by media for people to see that the relations are changing in the right direction. Join projects are important for bringing closer together different levels of society such as elites, professionals and grass roots. (Bar-Tal&Bennink,2004, p. 33) In that

way more personal connections will be formed out of which some fruitful joint projects might emerge.

Tourism and **cultural exchange** are equally powerful methods in achieving reconciliation. First of all, the decision to visit country or a region inhabited with the former enemies means that some psychological changes have already happened, because people don't travel to places where they feel threatened. Moreover, it provides the opportunity to learn about the culture and customs and it can even indicate whether those people are ready for changed and better relations. (Bar-Tal&Bennink,2004, p. 34) As for the cultural exchange the translation of books, visits of artists, exchange of films and exhibitions help people learn more about each other and overcome stereotypes about certain groups. (Bar-Tal&Bennink,2004, p. 34-35) In the case of Kosovo such exchanges are present in the forms of exhibitions, theater plays, films as well as some book translations.

When analyzing the data, I will first try to find out whether the precondition for the beginning of the reconciliation have been fulfilled. Afterwards I will present what kind of reconciliation methods politicians have been using. Finally, there will be a discussion about Serbian and Albanians politicians as leaders and their capacities to work on reconciliation.

4. Methodology- Content analysis

4.1. Definition and classification

The method chosen for the analysis of the collected data for this thesis is qualitative content analysis. Since the beginning of the 20th century content analysis has been a widely used method of analysis of media material, different documents, pictures, audio-visual recordings and other forms of written or verbal communication between people (Branković, 2014, p. 158). Since I am analyzing the statements of politicians, this method suits well to the analysis of the collected data. The reason why I chose this method is because it helps me achieve the three main goals that this method is used for: description of the content, classification and explanation and understanding of the data in the specific time and context (Ibid., p. 158).

There are two main types of content analysis quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative content analysis was not considered to be best method in this case, because it is used “to count manifest textual elements” (Zhang&Wildemuth,2009, p. 1) and as its final outcome produces numbers (Zhang&Wildemuth,2009, p. 1-2). Since I am not trying to count the words politicians are using, but rather find patterns in their speeches and find out what their messages in the certain periods of time are I have chosen to use qualitative content analysis.

Qualitative content analysis is “a research method used for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh&Shannon, 2005, p. 1277). A looser definition is the one proposed by Patton that states that qualitative content analysis is “any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings” (Patton, 2002, p. 453). This method “allows the researcher to understand social reality in a subjective but scientific manner” (Zhang&Wildemuth, 2009, p. 1). The samples for this method are texts purposively selected by the researchers and its main outcome is the production of typologies and descriptions with the subjective reflections (Ibid., p. 2). That is exactly what is going to be the outcome of this thesis.

There are two approaches to analyzing qualitative data: the deductive and inductive approaches (Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure &Chadwick, 2008, p. 429). The inductive approach fits the aim of

this research the best, because it “involves analyzing data with little or no predetermined theory, structure or framework and uses the actual data itself to derive the structure of analysis” (Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick 2008, 429). Even though, I am using the theory of reconciliation to try to uncover if politicians are moving in that direction, I am not using any predetermined categories extracted from the theory in the analysis. “Deductive approaches involve using a structure or predetermined framework to analyze the data” (Ibid., p. 429) and they are used for testing different categories, concepts or hypotheses (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, cited in Elo&Kyngas, 2008, p. 111) which is not the aim of this thesis. This method has not been chosen because its main limitation is the inflexibility of the coding framework which is created in advance (Ibid., p. 111). I wanted to let the categories emerge from the data, because that is the only way to respond to the research questions and find out what is the focus of these political leaders.

The inductive approach is more time-consuming (Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008, p. 429) and needs good organization of the collected data. Therefore, the process of data analysis using this approach will be further explained in the next chapter.

4.2. The process of inductive qualitative content analysis

In the process of analysis there are no strict rules, however content analysis assumes that a lot of text will be “classified into much smaller content categories” (Weber ,1990, Burnard, 1996, cited in Elo&Kyngas, 2008, p. 109). There are three main phases of the analysis: preparation, organizing and reporting (Elo&Kyngas, 2008, p. 109).

In the first **preparation phase** a researcher must choose the unit of analysis (McCain 1988, Cavanagh 1997, Guthrie et al. 2004 in Elo&Kyngas,2008, p. 109). When using qualitative content analysis, the unit of analysis is usually a theme (Zhang&Wildemuth, 2009, p. 3). By using themes, one is primarily looking for the expression of an idea (Minichiello et al., 1990, cited in Zhang&Wildemuth, 2009, p. 3) and these expressions might be found in single words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs or whole documents (Zhang&Wildemuth, 2009, 3). According to Graneheim and Lundman (2004) the most suitable ones are “the whole interviews or observational protocols that are large enough to be considered as a whole and small enough to be kept in mind as a context for meaning unit during the analysis process” (cited in in Elo&Kyngas,2008, p. 109). As units of analysis I am using the whole interviews or short texts published on the official pages of the key politicians. Starting from there I am uncovering their ideas and opinions.

After the researcher has familiarized himself well with the collected data he is able to proceed to the **organizing phase**. This phase consists of open coding, creating categories and abstractions (Elo&Kyngas, 2008, p. 109). "Coding refers to labeling and systematizing the data" (Tracy,2013, p. 186). Moreover, "coding is the active process of identifying data as belonging to, or representing, some type of phenomenon that may be a concept, belief, action, theme etc." (Ibid., p. 189). Manual approach to coding is the one that I used to classify the data and therefore I will explain it further. Open coding starts with marking the text with different pencils and markers and then writing notes and headings while re-reading the text material (Elo&Kyngas, 2008, p.109, Tracy,2013, p. 186). These cods are descriptive and show the basic activities and processes in the data (Tracy,2013, p. 189). Once the headings are written on the margins these are collected in a codebook or just other sheet of paper for coding where all the headings are written down (Ibid., p. 190).

After this open-coding or primary-cycle coding, as Tracy names it, comes the secondary-cycle coding or the creation of categories. "In secondary-cycle coding, the researcher critically examines the codes already identified in primary cycles and begins to organize, synthesize, and categorize them into interpretive concepts" (Tracy,2013, p. 194). The data is grouped under higher order headings and that serves to the reduction of categories that are similar and fall under the same heading (Burnard,1991, Downe-Wamboldt,1992, Dey,1993 cited in Elo&Kyngas, 2008, p. 111). "The purpose of creating categories is to provide a means of describing the phenomenon, to increase understanding and to generate knowledge" (Cavanagh,1997, cited in Elo&Kyngas, 2008, p. 111). The researcher has the freedom to use his interpretation to classify the codes under the specific categories (Dey ,1993, cited in Elo&Kyngas, 2008, p. 111).

Reporting includes achieving the balance between description and interpretation (Zhang&Wildemuth, 2009, p. 5). The description is important because it gives background and context to the readers and interpretation represents researcher's personal and theoretical understanding of the phenomenon (Ibid, p. 5). Since qualitative content analysis uncovers themes, patterns and categories not numbers or statistics the best way to increase the trustworthiness of the study is to use authentic citations from the data (Elo&Kyngas, 2008, p. 112), which I only used. All in all, according to Kyngas and Vanhanen (1999) "successful content analysis requires that the researcher can analyze and simplify the data and form categories that reflect the subject of study in a reliable manner" (Elo&Kyngas, 2008, p. 112).

4.3. Limitations of the method and materials

There is no perfect method of analysis, therefore whichever method a researcher chooses has certain limitations.

Qualitative content analysis has been criticized for being “an over simplified method” (Elo&Kyngas, 2008, p. 113). Even if it might seem so at first, the lack of strict rules and standardization make it very difficult to conduct (Ibid.) According to Hoskins and Mariano (2004) since there are no strict guidelines the results depend on the style, skills and analytical abilities of a researchers (Ibid.). The process itself is actually very demanding and time consuming.

There is also the question of verifiability since the interpretation of the data is subjective. Those who stick to using quantitative methods of analysis often criticize such interpretations claiming that somebody else would describe the social world differently using the same data, so that the findings can't be taken straightforwardly. (Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008, p. 431). As much as we try to be objective when analyzing the data, we are still looking at it through certain theoretical lens. Except that limitation, the analysis always depends on the researcher and a researcher as a human is always at least partially subjective.

The materials that I have used are mostly texts that have been published on the official pages of political leaders. Each of these texts contains a lot of quotations to direct statements of those politicians. I am using only these statements and not any interpretations made by journalists. From the texts that I am using from Balkan Insight I am only extracting the direct statements, so in that sense my data is pretty unified. It is exactly the same with the book that represents the collection of interviews, again only the direct statements are used. One of the limitations, but also important finding is the fact that all these statements are found on the websites of these politicians, so their administration chooses what is going to be published. However, that is important for my findings because I want to find out what kind of information they want to be put on their websites. Another possible limitation might be that the timeframe of these materials is different, but that also shows how their statements change depending on the political context. All other specific limitations for each of these materials will be presented in the following chapter.

4.4. Realization of the research

4.4.1. The concept of the analysis

My research analysis consists of three parts. The first part includes the analysis of two interview questions key leaders of both Serbian and Albanian society were asked and published in 2005 in the book *Untying the Kosovo knot- the view from both sides* by Fahri Musliu and Dragan Banjac. The second part consists of the analysis of the statements of key officials on the news collected from the Balkan Insight website that is a part of BIRN (Balkan Investigative Reporting Network) - starting from the signing of the Brussels agreement on 19th April 2013 until 19th April 2014 – as well as the analysis of the most recent Progress Reports on the Dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. The third and the most demanding part consists of the news published by the Office for Kosovo and Metohija of the Republic of Serbia on their website starting from the first news that can still be found in the archive published on 14th August 2015 up until 31st December 2018; as well as the official news published on the website of the President of Kosovo and the website of the Prime Minister of Kosovo starting from 15th August 2015 until 31st December 2018.

Since the main goal of this thesis is to examine what kind of messages political leaders that are in power send to society about each of these two nations and how these messages change over time, I will be examining only their direct statements and not interpretations made by journalists. That is why in the third part I am examining just their official websites because the messages that they have chosen to be published and that represent their views the best could be found there.

Each part will be examined separately, the findings will be presented and the analysis with the conclusion will be included after each part. Then in the discussion these parts will be compared and merged in a comprehensive comparative chapter of the phenomenon analyzed through time from which the final conclusions will be drawn.

4.4.2. The first part

The book *Untying the Kosovo knot- the view from both sides* by Fahri Musliu and Dragan Banjac published in 2005 is a valuable collection of interviews with the key political figures, members of civil society, journalists and intellectuals from Serbia and Kosovo. It consists of 24 interviews with Serbs conducted by Serbian journalist Dragan Banjac and 19 interviews with Kosovo Albanians conducted by his colleague Kosovo Albanian journalist Fahri Musliu. They have all been asked almost the same 11-13 questions which differed in small details, but the general meaning and idea of the questions was the same. After reading all the interviews several times, I have decided to use two questions as units of analysis: The first one is: *There are two conflicting views about Kosovo: the*

Albanian and the Serbian one. Do you see the possibility of compromise and historic reconciliation between these two nations? And the other one is: Is it possible for Serbs and Albanians to continue living together in Kosovo and who has to apologize to whom for the misdeeds committed in recent and further past? The reason I have chosen these two questions is that it gives me the possibility to find out what they think about reconciliation and apology. These answers are directly connected to my main research questions and uncover the opinions of the key political figures about reconciliation, apology and what stands on the road towards reconciliation.

Since I have defined the unit of analysis I used manual approach for primary-cycle coding and then I did the secondary-cycle coding exactly as I have written in the section that describes the process of qualitative content analysis. When I identified the main categories I revised these categories once again constantly thinking of my research question and created appropriate categories with subcategories for both Albanian and Serbian interviewees separately. Thus, I will be comparing the answers of both groups in the analysis part.

Possible limitations of this particular material could be that one may say that these interviews have been collected 15 years ago and that all those leaders have changed their opinions due to the changed political context or are no longer in power. However, that can also be an interesting point for the analysis because my goal is to see whether things have changes over time. It is true that some leaders have been replaced, but many of them are still in power especially the Kosovo Albanians. In this thesis the focus is not so much on who the leader is, but how the person which holds power in Serbia maintains relations with the person who is in the same position in Kosovo and what messages are sent from these key positions in the country to the people. Other possible limitation is that the units of analysis are only those two questions. I justify that choice using my research questions and the aim of this study. Other questions like: *What does Kosovo mean to you?* or *What do you see as a solution for Kosovo?* or *Are "the standards for Kosovo" achievable and is there a need to change the UN Resolution 1244?* are not in focus of my research since I do not want to deal with the issue of status of Kosovo or presuppose final political solution.

4.4.3. The second part

The second part of the analysis, on one hand, helps us measure the immediate consequences of the Brussels agreement. Following the statements of politicians during the one-year period after the signing of the agreement will clearly show whether there are some changes in discourse when it

comes to the relations between Kosovo and Serbia. On the other hand, examining and comparing the first Progress Reports on the Dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina will help us realize whether the implementation of this important agreement is happening according to the plan.

Among many newspapers available in Serbian and Albanian I have chosen to follow the statements of both Serbs and Albanians through an international website Balkan Insight. "BalkanInsight.com is a product of the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) and is committed to providing balanced, fair, ethical and accurate reporting to the highest standards."(<https://balkaninsight.com/balkan-insight/>) "BIRN, the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, was established in 2004 as a network of non-governmental organizations promoting freedom of speech, human rights and democratic values in Southern and Eastern Europe" (<https://balkaninsight.com/about-birn/>). The reason why I have chosen this particular website is its reputation of "the most comprehensive, professional and independent source of news in the Balkan region" (Ibid). Besides that, it has different topics in its focus and one of those is Serbia-Kosovo relations, where one can find all the relevant news regarding these relations. Therefore, it wasn't difficult to find all the relevant news for a certain timeframe and select relevant articles.

In the analysis process, I have read all the news published on the above-mentioned website starting from the 19th of April 2013 until 19th of April 2014. In the selection process, I have been copying articles that include direct statements about Brussels agreement, peace, reconciliation or any other change in relations between Serbs and Albanians and creating a separate document that consists of all selected articles. After thorough analysis of the content of these articles I have classified the data into four major categories. Unlike the first part of the analysis where I did the analysis for both groups separately, here the statements of both groups fall under the same categories.

The major limitation of this part of the analysis is that I am not using an official source of communication of the key political figures, but an international news website that focuses on this region. Therefore, some statements that could be found in other sources might be overlooked. Moreover, when not following their official news websites one might say that I might not grasp what kind of messages they wanted to be sent to the public or how they would like things to be presented. However, in this case, in one-year period after the signing of the Brussels agreement I had enough data to come up with the conclusions about the behavior of the politicians and the messages they are sending as well as to identify the most important obstacles and acts of progress on the way towards the reconciliation.

In this part of the analysis I will compare the first Progress Reports on the Dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina one written by the Serbian side (in April 2015) and other by Kosovo Albanians (in January 2014). I will not be analyzing in depth all the particular points that have been implemented, but I will focus more on the tone of the report as well as on the progress achieved on the ground and identified obstacles. Comparative analysis of the reports will give us insight whether the two sides are identifying the same problems and making mutual effort when it comes to the implementation or are just being one-sided and blaming the other side for the issues emerging during the process. In total there are six published reports by the Serbian side and five by the Albanian side. I will not analyze each of them because that would be more important for someone who closely monitors just the implementation process and not the particular acts or statements that lead towards reconciliation, such as I do. However, in the third part of the analysis I am going to compare the last published reports in order to find out whether something has changed for better or worst compared to the first reports.

4.4.4. The third part

The data collected for the third part of the analysis contains hundreds of articles published during the three years period, starting from August 2015 until the end of the year 2018, on the official websites of the key stakeholders in Kosovo- the President and the Prime Minister, as well as the numerous ones collected from the official website of the Serbian governmental Office for Kosovo and Metohija.

I have selected articles that are relevant for my research and printed out three different collections of articles for the three different websites I have used. That helped me code the data and later on categorize it according to the themes that have emerged. Such as in the first part of the analysis I have coded separately the data collected from the Albanian and Serbian sources. For the Serbian side I have collected the data only from one source where opinions of almost all relevant stakeholders could be found, however for Kosovo I have used the websites of the Prime Minister and the President. Since their visions of things are not the same it was challenging to code the data collected from both websites under the same themes. However, I was able to classify them, but the differences will be stated clearly in the analysis.

This is the key part of the analysis since it will depict the current situation regarding reconciliation and the quality of relations between Serbs and Kosovo Albanians. Such as in the other two parts of the analysis I will be comparing the statements of these two groups and give an overall conclusion.

Finally, I will be looking at the last two official Progress Reports on the Dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina in order to present a clearer picture of what has been achieved out of the commitments they have both agreed on when signing the agreements. That is important to be looked at because even the minor changes can contribute to the reconciliation process, however if they are unwilling to change the situation on the ground that is a clear indicator that the process of reconciliation is not moving forward or it is even deteriorating.

5. Opinions of the politicians and intellectuals about reconciliation in 2005

In the process of analysis quite interesting categories emerged about reconciliation, apology and the spoilers that are standing on the way to achieving these two. Even though, the Serbian and Kosovo Albanian interviewees had some very similar patterns of thoughts I have still decided to separate these two groups for the better understanding of their views. However, in the analysis part I will be discussing the similarities and differences of their opinions and connecting them to theories of reconciliation and their methods.

5.1. Serbian politicians and intellectuals-findings

Table 1. Categories and sub-categories of the statements of Serbian interviewees

Main category	Subcategories
Reconciliation	Pro reconciliation
	Not possible
	Normalization
	In terms of EU integrations
Apology	Meaningless
	Reasonable
The status	Compromise
	New status
The role of the elites	
Past/History	
Emancipation	

There are six main categories that emerged from the analyzed data: reconciliation, apology, the status, the role of the elites, emancipation and past/history. The first three have specific subcategories. All of these are presented in the table above.

5.1.1. Reconciliation

Since the first question directly asks participants about their view on reconciliation between Serbs and Albanians it is not surprising that this is the first main category. However, based on their answers there are four subcategories: pro reconciliation, not possible, normalization and in terms of EU integrations.

5.1.1.1. Pro reconciliation

There were only two participants who said explicitly that reconciliation will happen and that they believe in it without giving any further explanation on how that can be achieved or which preconditions would be necessary. More specifically, Goran Svilanović former Minister of Foreign Affairs said: "The reconciliation between people will come; I do not have any dilemma about it" (Musliu & Banjac, 2005, p. 19). When Svetozar Stojanović, a sociologist and philosopher was asked the same question he said: "Of course (he sees the possibility for reconciliation), I am an optimist... it can't be solved over night, but it can in stages." (Ibid., p. 95). There were many other participants who believe in the process of reconciliation as well, but have given further explanations on how it can be achieved, and therefore their answers have been grouped in different categories.

5.1.1.2. Not possible

There were three participants who were rather pessimistic when it comes to the question of reconciliation. They have all stated that reconciliation between these two nations is just not possible.

Zoran Živković former Prime Minister of Serbia, and today the president of the New Party that is in opposition had rather pessimistic view:

The history of these two nations tells me that reconciliation and historic compromise are not possible. The divisions and hostilities are so deep that the minority of intellectuals, which exist on both sides, don't have enough power to change anything. (Ibid., p. 42)

Dušan Bataković, professor at the University of Belgrade, historian and former ambassador, has very similar views. However, he goes a step further in his explanation why the reconciliation is not possible and expresses his nationalistic point of view. According to him:

There are no conditions for reconciliation, because the open or hidden ethnic cleansing of Serbs is still happening, their security is severely disrupted, their existence is jeopardized, normal life is distant and for now unfulfilled aspiration. (Ibid., p. 72)

Desimir Tošić who was politician and intellectual criticizing political culture of Serbs and Albanians said:

“Reconciliation in the Balkans, as it seems, is possible only in the graves. We haven’t reached, not just Albanians but also we Serbs, the political and cultural level needed for reconciliation between us Serbs and Albanians.” (Ibid., p. 105)

5.1.1.3. Normalization

One participant thought that the concept of reconciliation is too strong of a word, and rather preferred to talk about the normalization of relations. Živorad Kovačević, specialist in international relations, who was holding many important political positions, one of them being the position of a Mayor of Belgrade and later on the president of European Movement in Serbia stated:

Personally, I don’t like big words such as “reconciliation” or “historic compromise”. The ambitions in this phase have to be more realistic- normalization of the relations between institutions, economy, culture, media and people... (Ibid., p. 82)

He also adds that he would rather talk about “the restoration of understanding and trust then about reconciliation” (Ibid., p. 84) Having in mind that this was stated in 2005 just 6 years after the war it was reasonable that he and probably some other officials have shared his opinion that it is too soon for reconciliation and that first comes normalization.

5.1.1.4. In terms of EU integrations

Since both Serbia and Kosovo aim to join the EU the whole process of integration is something that they have in common. Having that in mind it is understandable that some participants have mentioned that the process of EU integrations can help the process of reconciliation, or on the other hand that the striving of both sides to join EU will result in better relations for the sake of gaining the membership.

Well known professor at the Faculty of Political Sciences at the University of Belgrade and former ambassador Predrag Simić explains the process of reconciliation in terms of EU integrations. He

believes that reconciliation will come, but not at that point when he was interviewed. He sees Serbs and Albanians as partners in the future because they live in close proximity to each other in this region. Simić adds:

The whole building of EU integrations lies on compromises between former rivals, who have, even after many wars between each other, decided to change conflicts with cooperation and I don't see the reason why that couldn't happen between Serbs and Albanians. (Ibid. 88) Further on he explains: "That is why I think that the process of reconciliation and historic compromise of two nations is not just possible, but it is a precondition for EU integrations of the whole region." (Ibid., p. 88)

Živorad Kovačević talking about the normalization of relations also adds that "mutual European future has to be the key factor" for normalization (Ibid., p. 82). As well as Rada Trajković, active member of Serbian community in Kosovo, when talking about the necessity of functional cooperation between Serbs and Albanians says that mutual trust will be built over time "based on the European principles" (Ibid., p. 127). Mileta Prodanović, University professor, talking about the necessity of civilizational growth of both nations said that "the tensions will ease under the European hat" (Ibid., p. 111).

On the other hand, Dušan Mihajlović, former Minister of Interior Affairs, is not talking so positively about the international community and believes that it would be better that Serbs and Albanians resolve their issues themselves without the international community as their tutor. He even evaluates that the international community equally dislikes Serbs and Albanians (Ibid., p. 128). However, he acknowledges that both nations have to look towards the future and that "the only thing Serbs and Albanians have in common is their striving for European future" (Ibid., p. 129).

5.1.2. Apology

The second question that has been analyzed directly asks the participants who has to apologize to whom for the misdeeds done in the past. The answers have been classified in two subcategories: meaningless and reasonable.

5.1.2.1. Meaningless

Most of the participants do not believe in collective apologies made by politicians, since these are not sincere but rather a part of political protocol, according to them. Their views are different when

it comes to interpersonal apologies. However, there is an overall impression that they do not give so much importance to the issue of apology.

Čedomir Antić, historian and political activist, believes that “collective apologies are meaningless, and in this case even mutually offensive” (Ibid., p. 29). However, he does acknowledge the importance of interpersonal apology saying:

...if you believe that the apology would mean a lot to someone in Kosovo and Metohija who lost the closest members of the family, I am ready to personally apologize to each of them, even though I haven't contributed to their misfortune. (Ibid., p. 28)

Historian and politician Milan St. Protić is categorically against apologies, because he thinks that such apologies are not honest (Ibid., p. 40). According to him, what we need to do instead of apologizing is:

At this moment we don't have to force that, we should let the time do its thing, and we have to work on ourselves and on the respect towards each other. Even though, at this moment, we don't like or don't understand, let's at least respect the other. (Ibid., p. 41)

Oliver Ivanović, who was an important political figure for Kosovo Serbs and was killed in January 2018 in still unresolved circumstances, believed that instead of insincere public apologies one should show with actions that one has understood his mistakes (Ibid., p. 49). He also said that he personally doesn't feel the need to apologize because he wasn't responsible for what happened (Ibid., p. 49).

Zoran Živković shares Protić's and Ivanović's opinion about the meaningless of the apologies and adds somewhat cynically:

“If we would start giving apologies today for the misdeeds done in the recent and further past in Kosovo and Metohija, many generations in the future would be dealing just with that.” (Ibid., p. 44)

Latinka Perović, historian and political figure agrees that “in the Balkans the apology is banal; it became a part of political protocol”. (Ibid., p. 79) Svetozar Stojanović has the same opinion saying: “I am a philosopher; I don't hold much to these declarations. That is something that politicians love, but in my opinion, that is not serious enough.” (Ibid., p. 99)

5.1.2.2. Reasonable

There were a few participants that believe the apologies are important and meaningful. They have acknowledged that there are reasons for apology on both sides.

Dušan Janjić, an expert on the topic of Kosovo and president of the Forum for Ethnic Relations in Belgrade, replies:

There are reasons for apology on both sides, but the apology will come in the circumstances in which both Serbian and Albanian leaders will change their policy, from conflict to cooperation. (Ibid., p. 66)

Predrag Simić believes that an apology is important, especially because it releases us from the heritage of the past. More accurately he states:

We do indeed have a lot in recent history to apologize for to each other and the sooner it happens the sooner we will be released from the heritage of past and will find the possibilities to live together. (Ibid., p. 93)

5.1.3. The status

The future status of Kosovo was an important topic in 2005 especially because at that time Kosovo still hasn't declared its independence from Serbia. In that period different solutions for the status of Kosovo were proposed. Even though, I am not dealing with the status of Kosovo in this thesis it has emerged as an important category on the road towards reconciliation. It is as well a part of the first question analyzed, since that question combines reconciliation with the solution for Kosovo. This category has been divided in two categories the predominant one- compromise and the other one- new status.

5.1.3.1. Compromise

It is understandable that Serbia and most of its politicians and intellectuals at that time wanted some kind of compromise as a solution for Kosovo. Even until today, Serbia hasn't recognized unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo. For every country in the world the issue of sovereignty is very sensitive, and there is no difference in this case.

Čedomir Antić, politician and historian, believes that "the historic agreement between Serbs and Albanians is the only way towards the permanent and just solution" (Ibid., p. 27.) Professor at the

faculty of Political Sciences at the University of Belgrade, Slobodan Samardžić shares Antić's opinion saying:

Historic compromise, and reconciliation based on that, is the only possible approach that guarantees peaceful future, coexistence and good relations between Serbs and Albanians in the future. (Ibid., p. 54)

Dušan Janjić and Dušan Bataković emphasize the importance of dialogue between two sides through which a mutually acceptable agreement will be reached, but both sides will have to make some compromises (Ibid., p. 61,66,69). Latinka Perović says that "the compromise is inevitable" (Ibid., p. 76) and Dušan Mihajlović emphasizes how important is "to make sure that compromise will be durable" (Ibid., p. 129).

5.1.3.2. New status

There was just one participant, who explicitly said that there won't be any compromises, but that Kosovo will have new status, and that is the status of an independent country (Ibid., p. 19). Čedomir Jovanović, leader of LDP (Liberal Democratic Party) said that Serbs have lost Kosovo because of the pure politics that was in place at that region (Ibid., p. 103).

Milan St. Protić expressed an interesting and critical view towards the issue of independence and importance to create new national states. He said:

"I think that political elites in all the Balkan nations are slaves of one basic prejudice, and that is that fulfillment of national interests means creation of national state which represents the highest achievement of national development. While on the other hand, neglecting other elements of the process of national emancipation." (Ibid., p. 34)

It is important that he raised such question because in the era of European integrations does it even matter to create new independent states in this region. However, it seems that it still does.

5.1.4. The role of the elites

Many interviewees have acknowledged that the role of the elites in the process of reconciliation is highly important. Therefore, a separate category was created for that matter. Some just emphasize the importance of commitment and involvement of the elites, while others critically assess Serbian and Albanian elites.

Dušan Proroković stresses the need for elites to do everything that is in their power to bring the nations together and not separate them (Ibid., p. 23). When talking about reconciliation, Dušan Bataković says:

Political will is needed for reconciliation, and that comes from the elites who negotiate in the name of people and take courageous initiatives, having in mind difficult past and national interests... (Ibid., p. 69)

To overcome multi-ethnic conflicts, according to him, “reasonable and moderate political leaders have to appear on both sides in order to implement what has been agreed” (Ibid., p. 69).

When it comes to the critiques of the elites, Milan St. Protić just characterizes the members of elites from both sides as “immature political elites” (Ibid., p. 34). While Dušan Janjić characterizes these elites as “nationalist elites”, and their politics as negative, focused on “internal colonization, ethnocide and genocide” (Ibid., p. 65). Čedomir Antić criticizes both elites using harsher words and accusations. He states that Serbian politicians in fact don’t care about Serbs who live in Kosovo and they just use them for manipulations. On the other hand, according to him, achieving independence is the only cohesive element for Albanian politicians, if it wasn’t for it the internal tensions would even lead to conflict (Ibid., p. 28).

5.1.5. Past/History

It is almost impossible to talk about reconciliation without mentioning the past. Therefore, the participants have been mentioning the issue of the past, some hoping that Serbs and Albanians will come to terms with the past and discuss it, while others believed that they will never agree about the past.

For instance, Oliver Ivanović believes that talking about the past is difficult and impossible for Serbs and Albanians to agree on (Ibid., p. 49). On the other hand, Predrag Simić says that the belief that between Serbs and Albanians is some kind of “pristine hatred” is not true, because “they lived together for centuries and shared the destiny of Balkan nations” (Ibid., p. 93). Furthermore, he states that:

The differences and arguments came a lot later, especially at the time of creation of national states in the Balkans, and often under the influence of other foreign powers,

but I believe that there is a lot that directs Serbs and Albanians towards each other and towards living together. (Ibid., p. 93)

Svetozar Stojanović advocates for the importance of analysis of the genesis of the problem by Serbian and Albanian intellectuals together (Ibid., p. 99). Continuing on that note Mileta Prodanović emphasizes the importance of knowing the history. He criticizes the leaders on both sides calling them nationalist who “stick to the almost caricature version of history” (Ibid., p. 111). He expresses his wishes to:

... live long enough to see the time when Serbs will begin to study Albanian history and tradition, and when they will discover that that is one big small nation, exactly like Serbs, and that our histories and suffering are a lot more similar than anyone is ready to admit. (Ibid., p. 111)

5.1.6. Emancipation

A great majority of the participants have notices that the lack of emancipation and development of the region is another factor that stands on the way towards reconciliation. Janjić has also emphasized the problem that both nations are living in “undemocratic state and society” (Ibid., p. 64). When talking about reconciliation as a long process Latinka Perović emphasizes the need for maturity, growth and catharsis of each individual on both sides for which “faith, commitment, education and laws” are needed (Ibid., p. 79).

Milan St. Protić explains this need for emancipation of the region with the most details. He says that the only thing that connects our two nations at this point is “mutual primitivism” such as listening to turbo-folk music or watching Mexican TV serials (Ibid., p. 36). He sees development and personal growth as a solution. Moreover, finding common ground when it comes to the emancipation of our nations will bring us closer together (Ibid., p. 36).

5.2. Albanian politicians and intellectuals- findings

As we can see in the Table 2 some categories are the same or almost the same as the ones extracted from the statements of the Serbian participants. However, there is a category that never appeared on the Serbian side and that is extreme statements towards the other nation. Besides that, Albanians reject any way of compromise when it comes to the future status of Kosovo. Finally, a lot of them said that Serbs are the only ones who have to apologize.

Table 2. Categories and sub-categories of the statements of Albanian interviewees

Main category	Subcategories
No compromise over the status	
Reconciliation	Pro reconciliation
	Preconditions
	Not possible
Apology	Needed from both sides
	Only Serbs to apologize
Past/History	
Elites and emancipation	
Extreme statements towards Serbs	

5.2.1. No compromise over the status

As you had the opportunity to read in the background chapter more about the history of this conflict it is obvious that for a long time Kosovo Albanians wanted to achieve independence. Therefore, their responses shouldn't come as a surprise. Each of them believes that independence is inevitable result of this conflict, some of them emphasize it more than others, but that is their main focus.

Rexhep Qosja says up front "... I do not see the possibility of compromise when it comes to the future of Kosovo." (Ibid., p. 217) He adds that "Albanians do not agree with other solution for Kosovo, except the independence" (Ibid., p. 217) Politician Bjam Kosumi has absolutely the same view on that issue but emphasizes the importance of the will of people who want Kosovo to be independent. According to him, the will of the people cannot be neglected and there is no compromise about that (Ibid., p. 151). The former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo and Deputy Prime Minister from 2017-2019 Enver Hoxhaj believes that "Serbia has to give up his pretensions towards Kosovo and recognize it as a state respecting its borders" (Ibid., p. 173). Furthermore, Gjergj Dedaj emphasizes as well the importance of the vision and will of the citizens of Kosovo who are the ones deciding about the status of Kosovo (Ibid.,p. 190).

There are also some more extreme evaluations of the conflict itself and the future of Kosovo given by Edita Tahiri, politician and later on the leader of Pristina's negotiating team with Belgrade. She believes that there are winners and losers in every war, and that Kosovo and its project for freedom won this war. Therefore, it is just to recognize Kosovo's independence (Ibid., p. 208).

5.2.2. Reconciliation

Many participants have expressed attitudes in favor of reconciliation. Most of them have thoroughly explained their standing points and emphasized the importance of reconciliation. However, there were also the ones who do not believe that reconciliation with Serbs is possible. There were some that stressed the importance of fulfillment of certain preconditions in order to start the reconciliation process, but who do believe that it is achievable. Therefore, this category has three subcategories: pro reconciliation, preconditions and not possible.

5.2.2.1. Pro reconciliation

Most participants have indeed been positive when it comes to the process of reconciliation. However, a lot of them expressed the need for fulfillment of certain preconditions, especially the recognition of independence of Kosovo. Therefore, under this subcategory will be classified the answers of those who haven't been mentioning preconditions.

Bajram Kosumi said that he believes that the historic reconciliation between people in Kosovo and Serbia will come. On that note he says:

It is in interest of both nations and countries to create good neighboring relations, to help and support each other, to overcome the past and, as states and region, keep up with Europe and minimize the losses created during long conflict. (Ibid., p. 151)

Rexhep Qosja is very optimistic about reconciliation and compares it to the one achieved with Turks, even though they were occupying the Balkans for five centuries in the end reconciliation came pretty fast. He says that reconciliation has to come. More accurately he states: "Reconciliation between Serbs and Albanians is necessary, it has to come for the sake of today and tomorrow of both nations. I believe that it won't take long." (Ibid., p. 217)

Based on the experiences of other nations who had conflicts and then reconciled, Fadil Maloku believes that this process will come in the future (Ibid., p. 240). Making the same comparison with other nations, Shkelzen Maliqi, thinks that reconciliation is theoretically possible and very useful,

but not easily achievable in practice, because both sides have been investing a lot in hatred, especially Serbia (Ibid., p. 282-283).

Beluj Beqaj states that “reconciliation is needed, because lack of compromise causes war”. Furthermore, he argues that after war the possibilities for reconciliation are even smaller (Ibid., p. 247).

5.2.2.2. Preconditions

The most frequent precondition that emerged from the data is the recognition of independence of Kosovo (that at that time hasn't even declared its independence).

Hashim Thaçi, the today's President of Kosovo, said that there are a lot of preconditions to be fulfilled for reconciliation. The first one is the need for Serbian society to face the truth about atrocities done in Kosovo. Then, acknowledging the will of the citizens of Kosovo for independence and finally, creating an encouraging strategy of relations towards each other. (Ibid., p. 160)

According to Enver Hoxhaj there is just one precondition for reconciliation that has been proved efficient in other conflict situations and that is the change of agenda that has created the conflict. In this case Serbia would have to recognize Kosovo as an independent state (Ibid., p. 172-173). He adds that Serbia and Kosovo also have to deal with the questions of the past and engage in a dialogue on all levels of society (Ibid., p. 178).

Bujar Bukoshi mentions three preconditions for reconciliation, and all three regarding Serbia and what Serbia has to do, not mentioning what officials in Kosovo could change themselves. These preconditions are: suppression of Serbian fascistic ideology, abandoning the old Serbian political thought and reconsideration of the past. (Ibid., p. 197)

Albin Kurti, the leader of Vetëvendosje movement, was the only one who connected reconciliation and forgiveness. The way towards reconciliation, according to him, starts with the request for forgiveness from a sincere repentance or basically an apology from Serbia. However, reconciliation is not possible without forgiveness that has to come from people from Kosovo. (Ibid., p. 264)

5.2.2.3. Not possible

Most of the participants who had negative answers when asked about reconciliation were not negative towards the reconciliation itself but towards the lack of conditions necessary to achieve it.

However, a few participants did say that they do not see reconciliation as a possibility. One of them being Esat Stavileci, who simply said that he doesn't see the possibility for reconciliation (Ibid., p. 225).

Pajazit Nushi said that "it is not very likely that two nations, Albanians and Serbs, in a near future could find strength for reconciliation and historic compromise." (Ibid., p. 252)

Mehmet Kraja states: "We can live without that reconciliation until the Serbs get healed from their own madness." (Ibid., p. 276) He further explains that Serbs and Albanians don't know each other and that Serbs have to give up their "fascist" ideology and fake myths about Kosovo (Ibid., p. 276). His views are extreme, but it is important to acknowledge that there are such views as well.

5.2.3. Apology

Almost all of the participants recognized the importance of apology for reconciliation and believe that it is needed. However, there are those who believe that both sides have the reasons to apologize, while others believe that only Serbs have to apologize to Albanians. Therefore, this category has been divided to two subcategories: needed from both sides and only Serbs to apologize.

5.2.3.1. Needed from both sides

One of the statements in favor of this view is given by Bajram Kosumi:

Apology is just one human gesture that, in any case, should be done between Serbs and Albanians, but creating friendly relations between two politics is something different.
(Ibid., p. 154)

Although, he does say that apology should be given by both sides, he doesn't believe that it is the only means to reconciliation. He emphasizes the need for change of politics where apology can give just a small contribution to the process of change.

Bujar Bukoshi argues that both sides have to apologize, but that the initiative should come from Serbs. However, even if it would come from the Albanians, he argues, that would show their maturity and willingness to look towards the future. (Ibid., p. 200)

Pajazit Nushi has similar view; he thinks representatives of Serbian institutions have to apologize at least for what has been done in the near past. He adds that Albanians also have to find the strength

to apologize to Serbs. (Ibid., p. 255) On the other hand, Azem Vlasi goes a step further saying that Albanians have to apologize, but only to those Serbs to whom they have done any harm after the war ended while Serbs have to apologize for all the atrocities they have been doing since 1912 (Ibid., p. 273).

Finally, Ramush Haradinaj, the current Prime Minister of Kosovo has the most detailed and optimistic answer to the question about apology. He believes that mutual apology is necessary. Talking about the borders that will become less important in the future, he presents an idea, a nice gesture or reconciliatory act of putting flowers by Serbs and Albanians at the border as a memory to those who lost their lives in the war. He emphasizes the importance of cooperation with Serbia as Kosovo's big neighbor. (Ibid., p. 164) When asked if he is capable to apologize to Serbs he replied: "I think that we are capable to do something like that and I will be personally with flowers on the border...We will have the courage and that is how we are going to act." (Ibid., p. 165)

5.2.3.2. Only Serbs to apologize

The opinion that Serbs have to apologize is prevailing amongst the interviewees. Even when they are mentioning that both sides have to apologize, they stress more Serbian responsibility to initiate that because its misdeeds are worst, according to them.

Some, like Enver Hasani are saying that Serbs are the ones who have to apologize because "for the whole century they have caused suffering and tragedies to Albanians" (Ibid., p. 235). Moreover, Adem Demaqi extends the time period even more stating:

Serbs have been invaders since their migration to the Balkans, that is well known. True and sincere apology to the conquered and oppressed people from their side would mean the acceptance of their freedom and independence. (Ibid., p. 260)

It seems that according to him Serbs have to apologize even for the migrations of all Slavs that happened in the 7th century, which is a little bit delusional, but that is his opinion and representation of how far people can go in misinterpretations of history.

Whereas, Fadil Malloku thinks that in order to achieve the stability of the region Serbian representatives not only have to apologize to the Albanians, but also to the Bosniaks (Ibid., p. 244).

There are those as Rexhep Qosja and Esat Stavileci who think that question of who has to apologize to whom is very offensive for Albanians, because according to Stavileci "Serbian regime has been

constantly repressing Albanians until genocidal proportions” (Ibid., p.228). Qosja explains that “it never happened in history that conquered have apologized to conqueror, because they haven’t been in a historic position to conduct misdeeds for which they would have to apologize” (Ibid., p. 221).

5.2.4. Past/History

There are different contexts in which past was mentioned and different perspectives towards history. However, there is a constant repetition of views that the conflict in Kosovo wasn’t in fact an ethnic conflict.

History can’t be changed, but Hashim Thaçi advocates for the choosing a different future. He insists that:

The conflict in Kosovo wasn’t a conflict between nations, but the conflict of majority nation- Albanians with Serbian regime... This regime has used Serbian nationalist mythology to justify arbitrary rule in Kosovo and oppression of Albanians. The time has come to separate the politics from mythology and to turn to the democratic values.
(Ibid., p. 157)

Enver Hoxhaj shares his opinion and states:

I think that Albanians and Serbs, as the biggest nations in the Balkans, have never been in conflict and that Kosovo conflict was from its start a conflict for territory and hegemony between Serbian state and the majority Albanian population in Kosovo.
(Ibid., p. 172)

He does believe that Belgrade and Pristina have to reassess many questions regarding past, such as abolition of Kosovo’s autonomy, human rights violations and many others for the sake of reconciliation (Ibid., p. 178).

Albin Kurti evaluates that the problem in Kosovo isn’t of an ethnic nature and the war wasn’t an ethnic war. He adds: “KLA/UÇK wasn’t fighting against Serbia because of Serbs, but because of its occupation forces that were carrying out terror and genocide”. (Ibid., p. 262) As well as Hoxhaj, Kurti believes that discussion about past has to be opened (Ibid., p. 264). He argues that “if there is no dialogue about the past, then there will always be a lot of extreme monologues about future. It is a rule that when things are frozen, the heads get heated. “(Ibid., p. 265)

There are those who believe that their versions of history are the absolute truth, like Esat Stavileci who said:

...Kosovo is neither a cradle of Serbian people nor a cradle of Serbian state. Albanian project is the reality that is in its creation and is justified with a lot of historic, political and legal arguments that make it achievable. (Ibid., p. 225)

5.2.5. Elites and emancipation

These two categories were very much intertwined in the answers of Albanian participants; therefore, these two are combined in one category. These are intertwined because emancipation is mostly connected to the elites that have to change and become emancipated as a precondition for reconciliation.

Bujar Bukoshi talking about the problems standing on the way towards the reconciliation, such as manipulations done by political elites, lack of political culture and others (Ibid., p. 197) states that “the idea of reconciliation is an expression of intellectual, political and cultural emancipation” (Ibid., p. 200).

Gjergj Dedaj believes that reconciliation has to happen, but that political elites have a key role in it, because people are kinder and prone to forgive, but politicians are the ones from whom the reconciliation has to be demanded or initiated (Ibid., p. 190).

Beluj Beqaj criticizes the political elites of having a “backward mentality” (Ibid., p. 247) and these societies being in general in moral and institutional crisis and that blocks the process of reconciliation (Ibid., p. 249).

Once again, we have a position that “everything depends on the collective political self-awareness of Serbian people and its political elites” according to Adem Demaqi.

All these statements indicate the need for change in the approach of political elites, the necessity for their emancipation and modernization as well as looking towards the future and not just manipulating with past and mythology.

5.2.6. Extreme statements towards Serbs

This category includes negative statements about Serbs or Serbian regime that go from the less extreme to the very extreme categorizations.

The less extreme are the ones that as a focus of a negative rhetoric only have the Serbian regime as its main focus and not Serbs as nation. For instance, the statements by Edita Tahiri that Kosovo finally defeated the plan of systemic oppressions and ethnic cleansing of Albanians by Serbs or the barbarian state torture and similar (Ibid., p. 208).

Esad Stavileci talks about “genocide against Albanians”, as well as “ethnic cleansing and complete destruction of Albanians that live in Kosovo” (Ibid., p. 229), which seems exaggerated and such rhetoric definitely doesn’t contribute to the improvement of relations. Categorization of Serbs as “occupiers” since the time they came to the Balkans by Demaqi (Ibid., p. 260) doesn’t sound very appropriate in this context.

The most extreme statements were found in the interview with Mehmet Kraja , who even states that “the spirit of Serbian nation is in its essence fascist” (Ibid., p. 279) In addition, he characterizes Serbian intellectuals as “chauvinists who have only changed rhetoric” (Ibid.,p. 279). Moreover, he is convinced that Serbs have raised the hatred towards the Albanians on the level of ideology and that they see Albanians as “cannibals and deviant race that has to be erased from the face of earth” (Ibid.,p. 276).

Such extreme statements represent a huge obstacle to the process of reconciliation. Its existence indicates that there is still a huge gap in understanding and perception of each other.

5.3. Discussion and comparison of the views of Serbs and Albanians

The results provided us valuable insights about the ways important figures on both sides think about reconciliation. In this chapter I am going to analyze the results by each category and compare the results of these two groups- Serbs and Albanians

The findings show that very similar categories emerged from the answers of both groups. More importantly they have both identified some of the methods of reconciliation. For instance, they have recognized the importance of political elites, opening a discussion about the past and a need for a final solution for the Kosovo problem. Their answers are valuable because we found out more about what they are saying their intentions are and what are the ways of changing things on the ground in order to try to achieve reconciliation. Since these statements were taken 15 years ago, these can serve us as a base for detecting the changes in their speeches and acts compared to those given after the signing of the Brussels agreement in 2013. When comparing these data, we will find out

whether they acted according to what they have been saying in these interviews. That applies especially to the politicians from Kosovo since most of them who participated in these interviews are still important political figures. More accurately, Hashim Thaçi is the President of Kosovo, Edita Tahiri was the key negotiator for the dialogue in Brussels, Ramush Haradinaj was the Prime Minister until 2020, when Albin Kurti replaced him. These key politicians have been important 15 years ago and are still important because they are holding all the leading positions in a state.

When analyzing the categories that have emerged from the data we can start from the opinions about reconciliation because that is in the focus of this thesis. It is obvious from the data that most of the interviewees had positive attitudes towards it and wanted it to happen. That indicates their willingness to engage in the process of reconciliation. For some Serbs the word reconciliation was too strong, so they preferred using the term normalization of relations instead of reconciliation. It might be that in 2005 it was too early to talk about reconciliation, so normalization sounded more reasonable. Some believed that external factors will influence and help the process such as membership in the EU. There were also a few skeptics who believed that it is difficult to imagine reconciliation between Serbs and Albanians. Albanian participants were all emphasizing an important precondition and that is the status of Kosovo, basically the independence of Kosovo as a country. That is an important revelation, because it seems that if the sovereignty of Kosovo isn't recognized there wouldn't be real conditions for reconciliation. It indicates that the final solution for Kosovo has to be concretized.

When it comes to the final solution for Kosovo the opinions of Serbian and Albanian politicians are completely different. For Albanians Kosovo's independence is a must, there is no discussion about the status. On the other hand, for majority of Serbs some kind of compromise would be the best option for resolution. However, there were a few participants who said that Kosovo should be independent. These opposite views on Kosovo's status represent a major problem in the relations between Serbs and Albanians and a major obstacle to the process of reconciliation.

They both see that there is a necessity to talk about the past and revise or accept each other's history. Some Serbs are even indicating that their history is not so different and that they have a lot in common. However, there are still different views about the history and what has happened. Albanians emphasized that they don't have the problem with Serbs as a nation but with the regime. However, there were those who were not ready to accept any other point of view besides their own.

As for the apology as a method for reconciliation, most of the Serbs don't believe in collective apologies as means to achieve reconciliation. Some do think that apologizing to each other is a nice gesture and a sign of willingness to improve relations; however, according to them it is not necessary for the reconciliation process. On the other hand, almost all Albanians said that apology is important and that both sides should apologize. However, most of them said that Serbs are actually the ones who have to apologize for everything.

Participants of both nations saw the lack of emancipation as a spoiler in the process. Mostly Serbs were emphasizing that the region has to work on its development, education and emancipation in general in order to move forward. Albanians were mostly mentioning emancipation in terms of Serbian elites who have to change in order to change the relations towards the Albanians. They were less self-critical putting the blame on the other side only.

The other spoiler could be very negative perceptions of Serbia and Serbs in general expressed by some of the Albanians. In the case of Serbian participants such negative perceptions were not found in the data. Calling Serbs fascists as a nation sounds inappropriate and exaggerated. Such statements and way of thinking are the major spoilers in the process towards the reconciliation. If elites have such perceptions and send such messages, what can we then expect from the rest of the people who are constantly exposed to such narratives?

Elites have been criticized by both sides, although Albanians only criticize Serbian elites once again avoiding self-criticism. Serbs have criticized mostly both elites, but some have also emphasized how important is the role of the elites and how they should be the leaders of initiatives for reconciliation.

5.4. Conclusion

This first part of the analysis is important for the research because it shows what elites on both sides think about reconciliation and what they have identified as means to achieve reconciliation. Many of them are still holding important positions in Kosovo and Serbia, such as Hashim Thaçi and Ramush Haradinaj, the President and the until recently the Prime Minister of Kosovo. Therefore, it is important to see what they have stated in 2005 and compare with what they have done and stated until now. In Serbia the key political leaders have changed since then, but many other intellectuals who were interviewed are still very relevant in the society. In the other two parts of the analysis I will examine their points of view and their engagement in the process of reconciliation.

To sum up, this valuable data will serve me for comparison and further analysis of the more current events and relations between Serbs and Kosovo Albanians. It will help me determine in which direction the relations are moving and whether something of what has been mentioned in these interviews has been changed or implemented.

6. One year after the signing of the Brussels Agreement in 2013

Analyzing the data collected in a one-year period after the signing of the Brussels agreement provides us with valuable information about the immediate changes in relations between Serbia and Kosovo. These changes are not expected to be dramatic, but there must be at least some small changes that show the effect of the signed agreement. The four major categories that emerged from the data are: making progress, elections, obstacles and one-sided discourse.

6.1. Making progress

Right after the signing of the agreement both Prime Ministers had positive evaluations of the agreement itself. Dačić said: “This is so far the most favorable text for the Serbian side”, and Taçi was certain that the agreement “will help us heal the wounds of the past” (BIRN, 19 April, 2013).

The next important step was the approval of the deal by the Serbian Parliament, despite of disapproval of certain political groups as well as Kosovo Serbs, Dačić was able to convince the deputies that they could not get a better deal (BIRN, 27 April, 2013). Despite openly being against the deal, Kosovo Serbs have very quickly come to an agreement with Serbian officials on the implementation of the agreement (BIRN, 13 May, 2013). That might be an indicator of realization of Kosovo Serbs that the agreement will actually bring improvement of their complex living situation; however, it also indicates their willingness to accept anything that Serbian officials have agreed on since they don't even take part in the dialogues and are basically passive spectators of the whole process.

It seems that the progress in the first month after the signing of the agreement is quick, since by the end of May both sides have agreed on a plan of the implementation of the deal (BIRN, 23 May, 2013). The source reminds us that the implementation of the agreement is the condition for Serbia to obtain a start date for opening of accession talks with EU while Kosovo might obtain Stabilization and Association Agreement (Ibid.). What I find problematic is that conditionality, maybe both sides want to implement the deal just because that would help them come closer to the EU membership and not because they are fully aware of the fact that they have to reconcile for the sake of the people living there and the prosperity of the whole region. It seems to me that the “carrots” EU is giving are the only real incentive that both sides see when it comes to improvement of their relations. It is hard to imagine if there would be any progress if there wasn't for these promises from the EU.

Nevertheless, naming liaison officers in Belgrade and Pristina who will facilitate communication and monitor implementation of the agreements is also a step closer to improvement of relations (BIRN, 17 June, 2013). In addition, Serbian parallel structures are closing down as agreed what Thaçi confirms by saying: “All police points and police stations that belonged to the parallel structures are now closed”, adding that parallel courts will be closed soon (BIRN, 18 July, 2013). Reaching the agreement on telecommunications and electricity is also a step into the right direction (BIRN, 9 September, 2013).

On 11th of July 2013 the Amnesty Law was adopted in Kosovo’s parliament. Thaçi describes it as “a political act which leads to the reconciliation of people” (BIRN, 10 July, 2013). That law will in fact help integration of Serbs into Kosovo’s institutions, because it ensures that they cannot be prosecuted for resistance to Pristina’s authorities in the past and therefore will be able to work in the public sector (Ibid.).

An important example of unification of Serbs and Albanians happened on the Day of the Disappeared, when Serbian and Albanian families gathered together to raise awareness about the unresolved cases of 1,726 missing people during the war (BIRN, 30 August, 2013). Although they are united because of their pain, this joint action shows that it is possible to overcome ethnic distance and fight for the same goal, in this case to find their loved ones. This also shows a respect to all the victims no matter of the ethnicity. This is indeed a said reason that brought people together, however it does show that people are able to put aside ethnic differences and unite for mutual goal. If only would people realize that we do have the same goals in many other areas and would be able to overcome ethnic problems achieving reconciliation would have been much more probable. The question is does that depend on the politicians and policies they are trying to impose? Does everything start from the politicians or people are the ones who can make a change without following the state policy? Although, there are evidences of friendly relations and mutual understanding of certain groups of people from Kosovo and Serbia, the systemic reconciliation still has to start from the top so that it would be accepted by the majority.

Finally, it is encouraging that both Aleksandar Vučić (Serbian Deputy Prime Minister at the time) and Hashim Thaçi (Prime Minister of Kosovo at the time) give importance to the whole process of the dialogues and normalization of relations. Vučić said on one occasion that Serbs want peace and negotiations with Kosovo Albanians and there is nothing better than negotiations (BIRN, 8 January 2014). While Thaçi, on the occasion of marking of the sixth anniversary of Kosovo’s declaration of

independence said that: “the sixth anniversary marks a new chapter for Kosovo-one of normalizing relations between Kosovo and Serbia” (BIRN, 17 February, 2014). Even in the UN report it is stated that Serbia and Kosovo have made “remarkable progress”, mostly because of strong leadership, mutual confidence, direct communication and commitment (BIRN,11 February,2014). These assessments might seem as overstatements at that point in time, but also seem promising and give some hope that the relations are really changing in the right direction.

6.2. Elections

The first elections held in Kosovo where both Serbs and Albanians participated together was definitely one of the greatest achievements of both parties’ officials at that period of time. Because of its importance and frequency of appearing in the data I am looking at it as a separate category. The other reason for that is that in my opinion the organization of these elections does not show only progress in the relations, but shows some obstacles that emerged in the process.

Thaçi describes the agreement to hold local elections in the whole territory of Kosovo as “an extraordinary success” (BIRN, 26 June, 2013). In line with that assessment Kosovo’s Deputy Foreign Minister Petrit Selimi said that holding the unified elections throughout Kosovo “could be a key moment for the stabilization of relations in the Balkans” (BIRN, 2 August, 2013). The official date for the elections was set on 3rd of November (BIRN, 3 July, 2013).

Since Kosovo Serbs have always boycotted elections organized by Kosovo institutions their participation in these elections was vital for the success of the implementation of what has been agreed in Brussels. Serbian officials were aware of that and they were constantly sending messages to Kosovo Serbs to vote in the elections. Even the Patriarch of Serbian Orthodox Church, who was always encouraging Serbs to boycott the Pristina-run elections, for the first time urged Serbs to vote (BIRN, 14 October, 2013). Kosovo officials appreciated these efforts, an example of that is the statement of Foreign Minister Enver Hoxhaj who said that “call [of the state leaders] to the Serbs [to vote] shows that Serbia is keen to normalize relations with Kosovo...” (BIRN, 15 August, 2013).

The outcome of the elections was that most of the Serbs have actually voted in the elections and “Srpska lista”(Serbian list), supported by the Serbian government, won most of the votes in Serb-dominated municipalities (BIRN, 15 November, 2013).

However, despite the effort politicians made to make these elections a success story not everything went so smooth. There were many obstacles that emerged on the way, the major one was the issue of Kosovo's statehood. Since Serbia doesn't recognize it as a state, it didn't want to accept anything that would have the symbols of the Republic of Kosovo to be used in the elections. Serbian Prime Minister Dačić made clear that "Serbia cannot allow Kosovo statehood to be promoted in the implementation of the agreement reached in Brussels" (BIRN, 15 July, 2013). The problem emerged around the coat of arms of the state of Kosovo as well as the logo that would appear on the ballots, which was not acceptable for Serbia (BIRN, 13 August, 2013). Serbia wants to maintain position of status neutrality and Marko Đurić clearly stated that "the symbols of the false state of Kosovo must be removed from the ballots" (BIRN, 26 August, 2013). Before and during the elections there were also serious eruptions of violence, such as explosions in the Serbian part of Kosovska Mitrovica (BIRN, 14 October, 2013) and attacks on the polling stations (BIRN, 5 November, 2013).

Even though the elections were held, and Serbs participated and got their local representatives, that still doesn't show a real progress in the relations with Albanians, it is an evidence of the attempt of steady integration of Serbs into the Kosovo's society. Its impact on the improvement of inter-ethnic relations will be known after certain period of time. However, making these elections possible is a step forward made by the politicians who urged people to vote. Calling Serbs to vote is a systemic decision made by politicians, which contributes to normalization in Kosovo and in that sense can be seen as a small step towards reconciliation.

6.3. Obstacles

Despite the efforts of politicians to show the agreement as the most favorable outcome and make people believe it, there were a lot of them who were very vocal against it. For example, Aleksandar Vulin the Director of the Office for Kosovo and Metohija at the time (now Minister of Defense) resigned because of the deal (BIRN, 24 April, 2013). The far-right party Dveri described the deal as treason and questioned its legality (BIRN, 25 April, 2013). Even the Kosovo Serbs were against it, according to the source they believe that it is a political agreement signed by force; it represents the first step towards Serbian recognition of Kosovo's independence (BIRN, 8 May, 2013). Moreover, there were a lot of people protesting in Belgrade against the deal, led by Kosovo Serbs and Serbian Orthodox Church (BIRN, 10 May, 2013). The opposition in Kosovo was also against the deal, the

Vetëvendosje movement even set alight copies of the agreement and organized massive protests on the day of the ratification of the agreement in Kosovo's parliament (BIRN, 28 June, 2013).

Besides the incidents revolving around the reached agreement, there are other incidents which show us that the overall sentiment of people towards each other hasn't changed yet. Throwing stones on the busses that were transporting Serbs is definitely not demonstrating a good will for change and improvement of relations (BIRN, 28 June, 2013). Neither writing anti-Serbian slogans on the churches such as "The only good Serb is a dead Serb" (BIRN, 27 February, 2014) nor attacks on Serbian police officers (BIRN, 1 April, 2014) are going to contribute to anything positive.

The major problem is that the agreements reached might have some impact and improve some aspects of everyday life, but are certainly not sufficient method for changing people's beliefs and prejudices towards each other. At least that cannot be detected in such short timeframe, but the third part of the research will show whether something has changed after longer period of time and whether politicians have stick to the implementation plan, as well as what kind of messages they have been sending about each other.

6.4. One-sided discourse

What goes against the efforts for normalization and reconciliation is the public discourse of key politicians. When analyzing their statements, it is obvious that they are always emphasizing the benefits their nation gains from the deal forgetting how important is to stress mutual benefits as well as the effects the agreement will have on the improvement of relations between Serbs and Albanians. That one-sided discourse will be illustrated with examples extracted from the data.

Hashim Thaçi, knowing what Kosovo Albanians would like to hear, said that the agreement "seals the extension of Kosovo's sovereignty, legality and constitutionality in every corner of its territory" (BIRN, 22 April, 2013). For Kosovo Albanians it is crucial to always emphasize Kosovo's independence and confirmations of its statehood. For Serbs on the other hand it is also important to preserve at least a part of that land; the Serbian Prime Minister's statement is in line with that claim "...we know that we do not have Kosovo for a long time now, but we have one small part of it and we preserved that part" (BIRN, 27 April, 2013).

When the liaison officers started working, they were presented by the Kosovo's officials almost as chiefs of a diplomatic mission and Thaçi even said that "this represents a strengthening of Serbia's

recognition of the reality in Kosovo” (BIRN, 17 June, 2013). However, Serbian officials have rejected these statements and have described them only as “facilitators” of the implementation of the agreement (Ibid.). Once again, the unresolved issue of Kosovo’s status forms an obstacle causing constant disputes. Therefore, it is very doubtful if relations can improve without solving the issue of status.

The elections were presented as important by both sides but with a completely different message regarding statehood; one side wanted to emphasize their independence and the other sovereignty. Therefore, Thaçi said that “holding local elections on the same day in the whole territory of Kosovo marks the greatest success in the process of normalizing relations and the integration of the north” (BIRN, 26 June, 2013). On the other hand, Dačić emphasized that Serbs are going to vote with Serbian documents and have their own representatives (Ibid.). Nowhere in their discourse does a sentence appear that would actually show or encourage cooperation between Serbs and Albanians and not just a competition over territory.

Not showing the effort to overcome the ethnic differences is evident from the statement of Serbia’s Prime Minister, Ivica Dačić, who said: “Unless Serbs vote in the elections, their mayor will be an ethnic Albanian. Good luck to them!” (BIRN, 7 November, 2013). If there is good democracy and the rule of law in Kosovo the ethnicity of the mayor should not be important. However, this statement points to the fact that there is still a huge ethnic distance and even serves as a warning or threat to the Serbs of what might happen with them if an Albanian would become mayor. During the elections similar messages were sent to Serbs; one reason for that might be to make them vote in the elections and not boycott them as they did in the past, however, that is not the appropriate way of doing it. Although it might serve the cause and have an immediate effect, in the longer term, this will just create deeper animosity and segregation between Serbs and Albanians.

6.5. Overview of the official Progress Reports

To complete this part of the analysis I will be reflecting on the official Progress Reports on the Dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, the first one written by Kosovo officials in 2014 and the first report written by Serbia in 2015. At the beginning of both reports, parties state their full commitment to the implementation of the Brussels agreement and continuation of the dialogue (Office for Kosovo and Metohija, April, 2015; Government of the Republic of Kosovo, 16 January, 2014). Kosovo’s report recognizes three levels of progress regarding implementation:

achievements, issues with limited progress and the issues where progress is pending (Government of the Republic of Kosovo, 16 January, 2014, p. 4-5). It has recognized as main achievements the elections, inauguration of new municipality authorities, Amnesty Law, implementation of the Agreement on customs revenue collection and opening of the liaison offices. (Ibid., p. 4). In the report presented by Serbia the same achievements have been listed (Office for Kosovo and Metohija, April, 2015) and that is something that has also come up as a conclusion of this analysis. It seems that both sides also agree when it comes to the issues with limited progress such as security regarding integration of Serb police in the Kosovo police; justice especially the planning on implementation of the agreement as well as limited progress in Telecommunications and Energy (Government of the Republic of Kosovo, 16 January, 2014, p. 5; Office for Kosovo and Metohija, April, 2015).

Although everyone agrees about the areas where the progress has been made, both sides tend to blame each other and request further involvement of the EU when it comes to the issues that still haven't progressed at all. Besides that, each of the sides gives priority to different issues that need to be resolved. For instance, in the Kosovo's report as the two main areas that need to be resolved are the closure of so called 'civil protection' structures and the integration of Serb judges and prosecutors in the Kosovo judicial institutions (Government of the Republic of Kosovo, 16 January, 2014, p. 5). On the other hand, Serbian official report recognizes the lack of agreement about the nature of Association/Community of Serb majority municipalities and the lack of action on its formation as the major obstacles when it comes to the implementation of the Brussels agreement (Office for Kosovo and Metohija, April, 2015, p.27).

Overall conclusions that could be drawn from the Kosovo's report are: the emphasis on the need for Serbian side to deliver what has been agreed, further clarifications of the Brussels agreement by the EU and insisting on the confirmation and acceptance of its status (Government of the Republic of Kosovo, 16 January, 2014, p. 5-6). On the other hand, the Serbian report emphasizes that despite the evident progress the dialogue process is still negatively influenced by four issues: the inability of the other side to stick to the implementation plan, lack of leadership on the ground of the key facilitators and other international missions in Kosovo, the issue of Kosovo's status frequently brought up by representatives of Pristina and lack of incentives to the parties involved in the dialogue, especially the present uncertainty about the EU integration processes (Office for Kosovo and Metohija, April, 2015, p. 2).

6.6. Conclusion

From the analysis and overview of the Official Reports about the progress of the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina it is evident that some progress has been made. One of the major achievements in this period were the elections held in Kosovo where both Serbs and Albanians have participated. However, it would be wrong to conclude that that is a result of sudden willingness of the two nations to overcome their issues and reconcile. These achievements are actually made because of the EU, and the integration processes that would move forward if the parties implemented the Brussels agreement. From one point of view it is good that there is an incentive for the parties, that is pushing them to action, however I would prefer to see the parties realize for themselves that they do not need other incentive than the one which is obvious and that is inter-ethnic reconciliation. It is said that they don't realize the benefits of improving their relations rather than the process of the EU integrations. They are both striving to become EU members and part of the EU community; however, they do not see the necessity to improve relations with their own neighbors and contribute first to the regional stability and help each other on the way towards the EU.

According to Slobodan Samardžić, EU doesn't have the means nor interest to accept the new member states before resolving their own complex internal issues (Samardžić, 2018, p.22). It seems that parties are becoming aware of that, in the Serbian report it is explicitly stated that there is an uncertainty about the EU integration processes. If the EU is really not ready for the enlargement, would the parties even want to proceed with the dialogue if they see as its only gain the EU membership. However, if we follow Samardžić's logic there is no need to worry about that, because EU constantly keeps giving prospects for membership and as a part of its geopolitical strategy wants to have influence on the Western Balkan countries (Samardžić, 2018, p.24). However, even if the EU keeps its politics of carrots and sticks, at some point the two societies will become too tired of these games and will lose interest in the dialogue. Therefore, it is important for them to realize that the dialogue is needed no matter of the incentives given by the EU, the dialogue is important for Serbs and Albanians to overcome their differences, talk about wounds from the past and try to resolve all the issues that are standing on the way to reconciliation.

In conclusion, despite of some areas that have improved in relations between Belgrade and Pristina, the two parties are still on the way to realize the purpose of the dialogue and the ways to make the

best possible mutually beneficial outcomes out of it without just relying on the promises given by the EU which should only play a role of a facilitator in the dialogues.

7. Opinions of the Albanian politicians from 2015-2018

In this part of the analysis I have classified the data collected from the official websites of the President of Kosovo and the Prime Minister of Kosovo into five categories that summarize the best the massive data and that are the most relevant for this research. The categories are: peace and reconciliation, Kosovo’s statehood, implementation of the Brussels agreement, against Serbian actions and role of the leaders.

Table 3. Categories and subcategories of the statements made by Albanian politicians from 2015-2018

Main category	Subcategories
Peace and reconciliation	
Kosovo’s statehood	Evidence of statehood
	Final agreement
	Kosovo’s army
	History and myths
Implementation of the Brussels agreement	The role of the EU
	Positive outcomes
	Conditioning
Disapproval of Serbian actions	
Role of the leaders	Recognizing their importance

7.1. Peace and reconciliation

During the three years period, most of the time the role of the President of Kosovo was given to Hashim Thaçi, just in the first 8 months of the time period that was researched the President of Kosovo was Atifete Jahjaga. Both of them were emphasizing the importance of the reconciliation; however, Hashim Thaçi seemed to be the most vocal about it. According to the data, he is definitely the political figure that advocates the need for reconciliation more than anyone else. If we would draw conclusions just according to his statements published on the official website we would have an impression that he truly is a person committed to regional peacebuilding and reconciliation. Whatever the truth is behind his statements, his statements give a good example to the politicians on how to speak and influence general public to embrace the changes in ethnic relations between Serbs and Albanians.

Soon after he became a president he participated in a Brdo-Brijuni summit and emphasized that “reconciliation, trust, friendship, cooperation and integration make the future of the region” (Official website of the President of Kosovo, 29 May, 2016). When laying down the wreath at a memorial dedicated to Serbian victims killed right after the war he emphasized the importance of justice to be served and stated that “with justice being served reconciliation will happen, and reconciliation will occur in the near future, because there is a will for that” (Ibid., 20 July, 2016). This statement is very important because it emphasizes the importance of justice for reconciliation, which is according to the theory very important step in the reconciliation process. Besides that, he is very certain that it will happen and that there is a political will for something like that. The political will is the crucial element; however, I wouldn’t be so certain, as Thaçi was, that it exists.

He is also supportive of the young people who are actively engaged in the process of reconciliation, such as the ones from CSO YIHR (Youth Initiative for Human Rights) and he considers them as an example of reconciliation (Ibid., 4 November, 2016). When talking with that group of young people he expressed his hope for the peace treaty to be signed, which would be the next important step after signing of the agreement for the normalization of relations in 2013 (Ibid., 4 November, 2016).

What also contributes to the reconciliation is remembering and honoring the victims of both nationalities, which he has done on numerous occasions. When visiting Suhareka he stated: “We have placed flowers at this memorial for 84 Serbian citizens of Kosovo to commemorate the victims, regardless of nationality. We are here to search for the truth and seek reconciliation.” (Ibid., 12 December, 2016).

Another initiative that came from the president Thaçi is formation of the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation, which is one of the methods of reconciliation that promotes truth (Kriesberg, 2004, p. 98). He justified his initiative by saying that “the Kosovar society cannot build a better future if it remains a hostage of the past” (Ibid., 1 March, 2017). This initiative will contribute to the creation of the internal dialogue among the communities as well as to the acceptance of the truth that will help the justice, according to him (Ibid., 1 March, 2017). Moreover, he believes that this commission would contribute to the creation of a unified narrative about the past (Ibid., 13 December, 2017). According to the theory agreeing about the past is very important for reconciliation; however only creation of this commission is insufficient for achievement of that goal, but it could be a good start.

Even though Thaçi seems to support reconciliation and gives some good examples to the public, the Prime Minister is not mentioning reconciliation that often. There were only five occasions that the reconciliation was mentioned in his statements, which clearly indicates that the person holding that position doesn't have peace and reconciliation as its primary focus. Ramush Haradinaj has supported the establishment of Truth and Reconciliation Commission proposed by the president and on that occasion, he said “reconciliation is the highest human value and the virtue of all those, whose wounds were not healed”. (The official website of the Prime Minister of Kosovo, 13 December, 2017). However, this statement seems very confusing and gives impression that Haradinaj has mixed up the terms reconciliation and forgiveness. As a confirmation that he is not really familiar with the concept of reconciliation serves his statement given at the conference “Love Your Neighbor” in Tirana, where he said:

In our country, in Kosovo, I am convinced that we are not only committed to peace, but we are aware of how important it is to live in peace and reconciliation. (Ibid., 26 May, 2018).

This sentence doesn't make much sense, because one cannot live in reconciliation. Therefore, it is unclear what did he mean by that “to live in reconciliation”.

However, he did say something that is understandable, true and important for achieving reconciliation and that can serve as a conclusion of this chapter: “Balkan countries need more to talk to each other than to talk about each other” (Ibid., 18 May, 2018). That is a strong message indeed, and hopefully Kosovo and Serbia will both embrace it in the near future.

7.2. Kosovo's statehood

This category is the most present one in the discourse of Kosovo's officials and it is without any doubt their number one priority. I have classified this category into following four subcategories: evidence of statehood, final agreement, army and history and myths, according to the ways they are trying to prove their statehood.

7.2.1. Evidence of statehood

Kosovo's officials use every occasion to give evidence of Kosovo's statehood. In the analyzed material there are plenty of examples that confirm that claim.

The ones who are the most vocal about it are the people who are holding the position of the Prime Minister-Isa Mustafa and the Minister for Dialogue- Edita Tahiri. Right after the summit in Vienna, Isa Mustafa, the Prime Minister of Kosovo at the time, emphasized that Kosovo was treated as any other equal country identified with their own flag and state identities (Official website of the Prime Minister of Kosovo, 28 August, 2015).

When addressing the Brussels agreements, he likes to emphasize that all of the agreements are in accordance with the Kosovo's Constitution and laws (Ibid., 28 August, 2015). In addition, when Kosovo obtained a telephone code he presented it as a "country calling code" (Ibid., 28 August, 2015). When Serbian Civil Protection was dismantled as a result of the Brussels agreement, Tahiri considered that as a "progress achieved in extending sovereignty in the northern part of the country" (Ibid., 11 January, 2016). Almost every outcome of the Brussels dialogues has been presented as extension of Kosovo's sovereignty or Serbia's acceptance of Kosovo's independence. Even the agreement on mutual recognition of certificates for the transport of dangerous goods ADR was presented by Tahir as "agreement which confirms that Serbia has recognized Kosovo in the field of transport of dangerous goods" (Ibid., 20 April, 2016). The emphasis here is on the word recognition. As a result of the Agreement for Free Movement reached in Brussels most of the Serbs living in Kosovo have obtained Kosovo IDs, and according to Tahiri "finally became part of the state system of Kosovo" (Ibid., 21 April, 2016).

Another important confirmation of statehood is membership in the international organizations. The officials in Kosovo celebrated when Kosovo got admitted to FIFA (Ibid., 13 May, 2016). They have also tried to become members of UNESCO and Interpol; however, they still haven't achieved that goal.

Besides these subtle evidences of statehood, Kosovo officials are not hiding that in order to achieve peaceful relations with Serbia the recognition of Kosovo's statehood is the primary condition. The Minister for Dialogue, Edita Tahiri, has stated that "basic condition for peaceful relations is mutual recognition between both countries" (Ibid., 27 October, 2016). Ramush Haradinaj shares her opinion by saying "there is one finale, and that is mutual recognition, which must happen" (Ibid., 5 April, 2018). Haradinaj used the method of imposing the 100% tariff on goods that come from Serbia to force Serbia and said that such measure "will remain in force until the recognition of Kosovo by Serbia" (Ibid., 18 December, 2018). Such decision of the Kosovo politicians, to condition and impose measures is completely inappropriate and against the spirit of the dialogue and improvement of the relations between Kosovo and Serbia.

7.2.2. Final agreement

On many occasions the President of Kosovo has been mentioning the need for final agreement between Kosovo and Serbia to be reached. Since the Brussels agreement isn't in fact the final peace agreement, but just the first agreement that as its goal has the normalization of relations.

Thaçi is convinced that "the time has come for a grand political and historical agreement between Kosovo and Serbia" (Official website of the President of Kosovo, 5 April, 2018). According to him, relations have deteriorated in the last two years and there is an "urgency to reach legally binding agreement", which would include mutual recognition (Ibid.). He fears that if the status quo is maintained "forces of extremism, nationalism and external dangers" would ruin everything that has been achieved so far, and therefore he advocates for the final permanent solution (Ibid., 30 May, 2018). He emphasizes that such agreement is a "necessary condition for EU membership for both Serbia and Kosovo" (Ibid., 20 June, 2018).

For Kosovo, this final agreement is so crucial because they want Serbia to recognize it as a state. Thaçi said that "without recognition, this agreement or any other agreement will not have a meaning" (Ibid., 31 October, 2018). When talking about the benefits of that agreement he lists the following ones:

Serbia will be recognizing Kosovo. Kosovo will become a UN member state and the European perspective of both countries and for the region will strengthen. (Ibid., 1 December, 2018)

Therefore, it seems that Kosovo officials want the final agreement just as a confirmation of their statehood, not necessarily because of importance of peace and reconciliation with Serbia. As evidence of that there we have the following statement by President Thaçi: “At the end of the process a mutual recognition must take place. Otherwise, these negotiations would be meaningless.” (Ibid., 28 June, 2018).

7.2.3. Kosovo’s army

Transformation of Kosovo Security Forces (KSF) into the Army of Kosovo has been an aspiration of Kosovo officials for quite some time. Having an army is another important element of a state. Kosovo’s President has explained that he, as a Supreme Commander of KSF, can take an initiative to amend the Law on the KSF and transform it to the Army of Kosovo (Official website of the President of Kosovo, 5 March, 2017). He explains the formation of army as a necessary condition for Kosovo to join NATO and claims that such an army would have “protective character” (Ibid.). The fact that this is important for confirmation of Kosovo’s statehood is evident from Thaçi’s statement where he said that “the establishment of the Kosovo Army is one of the most important moments and developments for the statebuilding process since the declaration of the independence of Kosovo” (Ibid., 4 April, 2017). Moreover, he is so certain that this is an unstoppable process and claims that “no one can veto this process” (Ibid., 1 November, 2017). Since Serbian population is worried because of that transformation, Thaçi tries to present it as something beneficial for all the communities and stresses its common value and multi-ethnic character. (Ibid., 5 March, 2018). Moreover, Haradinaj stated that “Kosovo’s future army is the strength of every citizen living within the country and a partnership for peace” (Official website of the Prime Minister of Kosovo, 15 May, 2018). On 14th of December 2018 Kosovo’s Parliament voted for the transformation of KSF into the Kosovo Armed Forces.

7.2.4. History and myths

For every country it is important to be proud of its long history; that is especially important for the newest country in Europe, as Kosovo likes to present itself. The history that Kosovo likes to present is the one connected to the Kosovo Liberation Army or UÇK, and the events that have happened during the war in Kosovo in the 90’s. The way they see the events and the way the Serbs see it are completely different. Although, I don’t think a unified history could ever be made, the presentation of history is something that has to be discussed in a dialogue between Serbs and Albanians, since

these different narratives create further misunderstandings and hatred even between the generations that haven't been involved in the war at all.

Celebrating UÇK fighters as people who haven't done anything wrong and refusing to acknowledge their crimes is not contributing to reconciliation in any way. One of the examples is the glorification of Adem Jashari by the Prime Minister Isa Mustafa:

Adem Jashari, with his immortal life and work, entered the pantheon of outstanding men of the nation, who led the people of Kosovo towards freedom. Adem Jashari, together with the legendary Jashari family from Prekaz, gave everything for Kosovo, for freedom, independence and statehood.” (Website of the Prime Minister of Kosovo, 28 November, 2015).

Besides such glorifying description of UÇK fighters Kosovo officials are generally defending them in every way, because most of the current leaders were a part of that formation and don't want to ruin its reputation as freedom fighters. Kosovo's officials are opposing any arrest of the former UÇK fighters without even questioning whether they are really guilty or not (Ibid., 18 February, 2016; 15 March, 2016). The best example for that is when Ramush Haradinaj was arrested in France based on the warrant issued by Serbia the government of Kosovo expected the French justice to release him because according to them “the basis on which Haradinaj was arrested are totally illegal, unjust and with clear tendencies to create tensions and conflicts.” (Ibid., 12 January, 2017). That is an obstacle towards justice, which cannot be served if the officials have such attitudes towards it. The fact that the officials do not let any of the UÇK fighters be prosecuted is a major step back on the way towards the reconciliation.

Another problem with the representation of history is the still vivid perception of Serbia as the enemy. One out of many speeches that can serve us as evidence is the speech of Edita Tahiri on a peace conference, where she has mentioned a lot of times the syntagma “Serbia our enemy” (Ibid., 20 September, 2016). Such epithets should not be used in any circumstances and even less on a peace conference.

Finally, the fear of creation of the Ethnic Albania and erasing the borders between Kosovo and Albania is always present. In a lot of the speeches by Kosovo officials the tight relations with Albania are mentioned in a romanticized way. Haradinaj stated “the blood, language, and flag have kept us united and will always do so...” (Ibid., 23 November, 2017). Such narratives show the close

connection between Albanians who live in Kosovo and those who live in Albania, because they share the same ethnicity. However, they do not share the flag as Haradinaj mentions because they live in different countries, and that statement is problematic because it might be an indication of his wish of sharing the same flag and becoming one country. The act of removing border crossing point between Kosovo and Albania and creating Kosovo-Albania integrated border management is “a point that unites us”, according to Haradinaj (Ibid., 29 December, 2018). It is questionable whether such moves should be taken at the point in time when Kosovo and Serbia still have to come to the final agreement and try to improve their relations. Such moves are perceived in Serbia as moves towards creation of Ethnic Albania, which represents a threat to Serbia and to the region.

This category shows that history does make an important part in the public discourse of the key officials, and their interpretations of history have enormous effect on improvement or worsening of the relations with Serbia.

7.3. Implementation of the Brussels agreement

This category shows what has been implemented, and how the process of implementation looks like, what are the incentives for implementation and what kind of obstacles have been recognized by the Kosovo officials. There are three subcategories recognized from the data: the role of the EU, positive outcomes and conditioning.

7.3.1. The role of the EU

Implementation of the Brussels agreement is seen as condition on Kosovo’s EU path and that is something Kosovo officials often mention in their speeches (example President Jahjaga, Official website of President of Kosovo, 17 December, 2015). During Thaçi’s mandate he was often talking about the final stage of the dialogue; on one occasion after meeting Vučić and Mogherini in Brussels he stated:

It was a common conclusion that only the normalization of full inter-state relations, only the reconciliation between our countries and people represents more peace, stability for both countries, for the region, the safer and faster European future of our countries. (Ibid., 3 July, 2017).

Once again it is obvious that he is emphasizing that the dialogue has to move forward in order for the final goal to be achieved, and that is the EU membership. Even more convincing statements of that claim are the following Thaçi's statements:

If any of the two sides, Kosovo or Serbia, for whatever reason, refuses the dialogue or pretends to withdraw unilaterally from this process, will be facing serious consequences on its Euro-Atlantic integration process" (Ibid., 3 August, 2018)

Moreover, Thaçi sees as a consequence of the decision to refuse the participation in the dialogue "losing EU support and the support of our other international partners, and to remain isolated and hopeless in realization of our aspirations for EU, NATO and UN membership". (Ibid.). He also mentions the "international pressure" for reaching the final peace agreement (Ibid., 1 December, 2018), which all shows the importance of external factors for continuation of the dialogue. The representatives of Kosovo's Government also keep emphasizing how beneficial the dialogue has been for Kosovo's progress towards EU membership (Official website of the Prime Minister of Kosovo, 16 June, 2016).

Edita Tahiri emphasized that "Kosovo remains committed to the dialogue because we are aware that condition of good neighboring relations with all countries bring Kosovo closer to the European Union" (Ibid., 27 October, 2016).

An example of another wrong perception and misunderstanding of the dialogue process is depicted in Hoxhaj's statement: "... if Kosovo does not get the visa liberalization after completing its tasks within 2018, this dialogue will lose its meaning..." (Ibid., 8 February, 2018). It seems that Kosovo's officials see the dialogue as means to fulfill their own state's interests and nothing else besides that.

All these statements make us conclude that without the existence of the EU and constant striving of Kosovo to join the EU it would be hardly any chance for the existence of the dialogue with Serbia and not to mention the effort to start the reconciliation process and implement what has been agreed in Brussels.

7.3.2. Positive outcomes

Even though the implementation process doesn't look to be going smoothly, there has been some progress in certain areas and the following statements are the evidence of these positive outcomes.

On the occasion of beginning of the implementation of the Agreement on the removal of the barrier from the bridge of Mitrovica, Edita Tahiri stated:

Thanks to the dialogue in Brussels, our goal was achieved, in the spirit of the dialogue and peaceful way. Henceforth the Iber Bridge will be like any other bridge in the world, synonym of the union. (Ibid., 19 October, 2015)

Another positive outcome is dismantling of the Serbian “Civil protection” and its integration into Kosovo’s institutions, which is also a result of the dialogue process in Brussels (Ibid., 11 January, 2016). In addition to that there has been progress in consolidation of state institutions (Ibid., 20 July, 2016) and establishment of the unitary justice system in the North (Ibid., 1 August, 2016). According to Tahiri, it is important that security situation has improved (Ibid., 27 October, 2016).

One of the conclusions of the periodic report on the state of play on implementation of the Brussels Agreements was that the dialogue has brought considerable achievements because numerous agreements have been reached and implemented (Ibid., 25 November, 2016).

Even though, there has been some improvement in the relations regarding implementation of the agreements and signing of the new ones, there hasn’t been almost any statement of the officials regarding the effect of the implementation of the agreements on the improvement of relations between Serbs and Albanians.

7.3.3. Conditioning

This category refers to the frequent use of reciprocity measures by Kosovo officials. They often use that tactic in order to make Serbia change certain unpopular measures regarding Kosovo.

There are numerous examples of claims about the reciprocity measures that will be taken. One of the examples is connected to freedom of movement, where Kosovo expressed intention to impose reciprocity measures if Serbia does not remove “test” plates for Kosovo vehicles with “RKS” plates. (Ibid., 30 September, 2015) Similar example is when Serbia wanted to ban the textbooks sent to Albanians of Preshevo Valley from Kosovo, Tahiri was threatening with reciprocity measures. (Ibid., 10 October, 2015)

Kosovo’s Minister of Trade and Industry established reciprocal measures against Serbia “by not recognizing certificate of ADR for vehicles and ADR certificate for drivers issued by Serbian authorities for carriers.” (Ibid., 23 March, 2016). This is just one of the examples where reciprocal

measures were actually applied. Similar conditioning measure was taken by the Kosovo authorities when they wanted all the people in Kosovo to obtain identification cards issued by Kosovo's institutions, they have banned the entry to or exit from Kosovo for everyone who had identification cards issued by Serbian parallel structures in Kosovo (Ibid., 15 April, 2016). Conditioning goes even further, when Kosovo authorities openly said that they will not establish ASM as agreed in Brussels, unless Serbia agrees about the telephone code that will be given to Kosovo and removes all the parallel structures (Ibid., 27 May, 2016).

Both countries have to work on the implementation of the agreements, however conditioning and reciprocal measures are not the proper way to achieve the goals. Such measures obstruct the dialogue process and solving the issues through mutual agreements.

7.4. Disapproval of Serbian actions

This category is the most frequent category that has appeared on the official website of the government. There have been many actions taken by the Serbian side that were disapproved by the Kosovo's officials. That clearly shows the discrepancy in the way of thinking and the level of disagreement between the two sides. Besides that, there is a tendency of each side to present itself as a party that tries its best to implement the agreements and progress in every way. On the other hand, they try to discredit the efforts of the other side in all possible ways. That is also very obvious in the progress reports submitted by Kosovo officials (Official website of the Prime Minister of Kosovo, 7 October, 2015).

Whenever Kosovo wants to become a member of certain international organization Serbia would launch a campaign against it. When Kosovo applied for becoming a member of UNESCO, Serbia has responded with an active campaign against Kosovo's membership. The characteristics of that campaign were numerous negative statements made by Serbian politicians. For instance, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dačić stated that "Kosovo joining UNESCO is the same as Islamic State applying for membership" (Ibid., 31 October, 2015). The President of Serbia at the time, Tomislav Nikolić, characterized Kosovo Albanians as "barbarians" (Ibid.). Kosovo officials have characterized the whole campaign as racist (Ibid., 9 November, 2015). Moreover, they have accused Serbia for being "far from European values" (Ibid., 27 November, 2015). They believe that it is unacceptable for Serbia to emphasize the importance of the dialogue on the one hand, while on the other to advocate against Kosovo's membership in international organizations (Ibid., 18 November

2017). For instance, they blamed Serbia when their membership in INTERPOL was rejected (Ibid., 20 November, 2018).

There have been several escalations in relations because of provocative statements made by Serbian officials while visiting Kosovo. Therefore, one of the measures Kosovo representatives have taken was canceling the permission to visit Kosovo given to Marko Đurić the director of Office for Kosovo and Metohija (Ibid., 18 April, 2016). Similar incident happened when Serbia banned the former President of Kosovo Atifete Jahjaga to enter Serbia which triggered Edita Tahiri to comment the incident in such a harsh way:

The act of rejection by Serbia clearly shows that Serbia is not ready to face its aggressive and genocidal past on Albanians and this also shows that they are not ready for peace, justice and neighborly relations between the two states, Kosovo and Serbia (Ibid., 2 June, 2017).

On one occasion when Edita Tahiri visited northern Mitrovica and had a coffee at one of the cafeterias there, the rhetoric of Serbian officials was so strongly against her visit that somebody has decided to burn down the cafeteria where she was sitting earlier that day (Ibid., 1 September, 2016). Tahiri accuses Serbia of “returning to the old mentality and withdrawing from the dialogue” after bomb attack against government buildings in northern Mitrovica where members of former civil protection are employed as civil servants (Ibid., 11 January, 2017).

The same problem replicates to the sport events. For instance, the handball match between women’s team of Kosovo and Serbia couldn’t even start because of nationalistic provocations coming from the audience (Ibid., 23 March, 2018). Two months later, Serbia prohibited Kosovo karate team to enter Serbia and participate in the European Karate Championship, which was characterized by Kosovo officials as “inadmissible, unprecedented and terrible act...” (Ibid., 10 May, 2018).

In the third periodic report about the progress of the implementation of the Brussels agreement Kosovo once again has expressed their dissatisfaction with Serbian actions and accused it of “lacking the political will to respect the agreement” and not wanting to make any progress, while still maintaining the parallel structures (Ibid., 16 June, 2016).

One of the most media covered incidents was launching a train line from Belgrade to Kosovska Mitrovica. Even though, it does seem as a great idea that would contribute to easier transport of

people and goods, the train was perceived as provocation by people in Kosovo. In fact, what has provoked Kosovo Albanians was the way the train looked, more specifically on the train there was written in several languages “Kosovo is Serbia” and inside the train there were photos of the Serbian monasteries located in Kosovo, representing Serbian cultural heritage. The response of Kosovo politicians was immediate and negative towards Serbia. Edita Tahiri stated:

...Serbia has come out openly with aggressive policies that threaten the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Kosovo and its national security. (Ibid., 13 January, 2017).

Isa Mustafa has commented on the incident by saying that “Serbia has bad intentions” and its goal is “to go back to the dark years of unpredictable conflicts” (Ibid., 14 January, 2017).

President Thaçi gave a statement that “Serbia has unfortunately undertaken a campaign of constant provocations which aim to produce tensions in Kosovo and the region” (website of the President of Kosovo, 15 January, 2017). He is generally not pleased with the Serbian “propagandistic campaign”, which according to him, “evokes fear and interethnic hatred among the Serb community living in Kosovo”. He believes that Serbs living in Kosovo are manipulated and victimized, and such practices have to stop because do not serve in any form to the reconciliation (Ibid., 2 February, 2017). The reason why they are boycotting Kosovo’s institutions is because of propaganda coming from Serbia, and he emphasizes that “Kosovo is also the state of Kosovo Serbs” (Ibid. ,16 March, 2017)

The fifth progress report serves as evidence of deterioration of relations; it is written in a negative tone and it doesn’t mention even the smallest progress in certain areas. The report mentions which ones of the agreements reached in Brussels have been blocked or disrupted by Serbian unwillingness to improve the relations (Official website of the Prime Minister of Kosovo, 21 July, 2017). Hashim Thaçi has also emphasized the pure progress of the negotiations in one of his speeches saying that “full normalization of relations remains an unattained goal” and called the conflict a “frozen conflict”. (Website of the President of Kosovo, 17 August, 2017). However, the deterioration of relations reached its peak when Kosovo has decided to impose 100% taxes on imported products with origin from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (Website of the Prime Minister of Kosovo, 21 November, 2018). After that the dialogue has officially stopped and still hasn’t been reestablished.

7.5. The role of the leaders

One of the main arguments of the thesis is that the leaders are the ones who influence the most the relations between the two sides, because they are the power holders and they are in position to make a change. They are aware of that fact but are not doing much to change the current situation.

Ramush Haradinaj on one occasion said: “Kosovo-Serbia dialogue is still not closed? Kosovo has not been missing, that is for sure, so who? In this case, decision-makers are missing.” (Ibid., 5. April, 2018). He has been referring to big powers such as European Union and the United States, since they are not doing enough to facilitate the dialogue and speed up the process of reconciliation. However, the leaders in Kosovo and Serbia are the ones who have to come up with a solution and not always to expect from the big powers to solve the issues in other regions. They have to take the lead and show a good example to the people that it is possible to reconcile. President of Kosovo Hashim Thaçi on one occasion has correctly pointed out that “achieving the end goal is extremely difficult for both countries and it requires brave and smart leadership” (The official website of the President of Kosovo, 17 August, 2017).

The major problem is that leaders are just focused on accusing each other of who is readier for dialog and who is not. As evidence of that claim Hashim Thaçi said at the conference “Scenarios for the Grand Finale between Kosovo and Serbia” that Kosovo’s leadership has always been ready for reaching the political agreement with Serbia, but there is the absence of political will of Serbia’s leadership. (Ibid., 5 April, 2018).

It is obvious that the leaders are aware of their major role in the reconciliation process and they are emphasizing it in their speeches, but unfortunately most of their actions are not moving the relations in the direction of reconciliation.

8. Opinions of the Serbian politicians from 2015-2018

When analyzing the articles published on the official website of the Office for Kosovo and Metohija the content of these articles could be classified to six categories. These are: Kosovo is not a state, peace and reconciliation, bad relations with Albanians, extreme rhetoric, implementation of the agreement and role of the leaders.

Table 4. Categories and subcategories of the statements made by Serbian politicians from 2015-2018

Main category	Subcategories
Kosovo is NOT a state	Current diplomatic means
	History and myths
Implementation of the Brussels Agreement	Evaluation of the agreement
	The role of the EU and international community
	ASM- Association of Serb Majority Municipalities
Peace and reconciliation	
Albanians are guilty for lack of improvement of relations	
Extreme rhetoric	
The role of the leaders	

8.1. Kosovo is not a state

What remains in focus in all speeches of Serbian politicians is official state policy that is followed regarding Kosovo's status. That means that according to the official policy Kosovo is a part of Serbia and cannot be seen by any means as a separate state. There are different methods that Serbian officials use to discredit the existence of Kosovo as a state. The two main subcategories defining this category are current diplomatic means and history and myths.

8.1.1. Current diplomatic means

First of all, whenever Kosovo wants to join an international organization, Serbian politicians fight against Kosovo's membership by all possible diplomatic means. In the time frame defined in this research there have been two examples of very vocal campaigns against Kosovo's membership in two prestigious international organizations- UNESCO and INTERPOL. Serbia justifies that by emphasizing that Brussels agreement does not have any provision that would implicate that Kosovo can join international organizations, but in fact it only defines their participation in regional organizations, as Marko Đurić said (Official website of the Office for Kosovo and Metohija, 22 November, 2015).

The main argument is that Kosovo is not a state and therefore should not be accepted as member of any of those organizations since only the states should be the members. Besides that argument around which everything revolves, Serbian officials like to use harsher rhetoric with plenty of description and comparisons. One of the examples is Ivica Dačić's comparison of the acts of Kosovo Albanians with the ones done by ISIS. He stated:

Destruction of cultural and religious heritage done by ISIS in the Middle East is classified everywhere in the world as terrorism, while those who destroy Serbian cultural heritage in Kosovo, as award for their acts, want to become members of UNESCO (Ibid., 21 August, 2015).

He has also presented a lot of numbers that speak in favor of his claims such as:

At the territory of Kosovo and Metohija there have been 174 religious objects destroyed, 33 cultural-historic monuments, 10.000 icons and other religious objects stolen. 5.261 destroyed or damaged tombstones in 256 Serbian cemeteries... (Ibid., 21 August, 2015).

Ivan Tasovac, Serbian Minister of Culture at the time, was also against Kosovo joining UNESCO and stated that such decision "would cause enormous damage to the reconciliation process, and cultural heritage in Kosovo and Metohija" (Ibid., 26 August, 2015). Although he hasn't elaborated his statement further or given any valid argumentation on why and how that would damage the reconciliation process, we can conclude that all Serbian officials are on the same page when it comes to this topic.

Darko Tanasković, Serbian ambassador to the UNESCO, explained that Serbian cultural heritage is in danger because of Kosovo Albanians who now want to join UNESCO in order to strengthen their

position in international relations. Besides that, he concludes that “this is a part of greater Albanian ideological engineering that aims to create synthetic cultural identity of Kosovo” (Ibid., 27 August 2015).

Tomislav Nikolić, President of Serbia at the time had very inappropriate comments on this topic when presenting the issue to ambassadors of other states saying:

Imagine that the cultural heritage of your states is given to those who haven't created it and who have always tried to destroy it. That is the same as giving the lamb to the wolf to take care of it (Ibid., 16 October, 2015).

On 9th of November 2015, after voting in UNESCO Kosovo's membership was not accepted, they lacked only 3 votes (Ibid., 9 November, 2015).

Serbian officials have the same standpoint about Kosovo's request to join Interpol. Nebojša Stefanović, the Minister of Interior, stated that “the initiative is not legitimate and is harmful” (Ibid., 17 August, 2015). Marko Đurić added that “it is unacceptable that Kosovo joins Interpol having in mind that some of their politicians are on Interpol's arrest warrants.” (Ibid., 18 August, 2015). He is against it, because he believes that their goal is just to confirm their sovereignty and “achieve their separatist goals” (Ibid., 5 August, 2017). When Kosovo withdrew its request for membership, Nebojša Stefanović attributed it to successful efforts of Serbian diplomacy, that left Pristina without enough countries that would support its membership (Ibid., 29 September, 2017).

Another way of denial of Kosovo's statehood is the fact that everything that is agreed on in Brussels that in fact contributes to independence of Kosovo is presented differently in Serbia. For example, when Kosovo was given an international dialing code, to the Serbian public it was explained that Kosovo did not get the international dialing code, but the code for geographic region written with asterisk and in line with the Resolution 1244 (Ibid., 20 August, 2015).

In public discourse of Serbian politicians, we can always find a lot of examples of how they try to deny Kosovo's statehood in many different ways. For instance, when Ivica Dačić says “the ones who want to have a state do not have the full sovereignty over the territory they consider as their state. It is very difficult for Thaçi to visit North Mitrovica” (Ibid., 21 October, 2015). Đurić says “the recognition of independence of Kosovo by Serbia will always stay a dream of separatists from Pristina” (Ibid., 10 March, 2016). Although these statements are in line with Serbian official policy,

the way these are being said don't leave a lot of space for reconsidering the current official policy regarding Kosovo's independence.

On the other hand, we are left with the impression that Kosovo officials want nothing but recognition by Serbia, which makes dialogue very complicated. According to Đurić, they have been trying to convince other Western countries that the dialogue is not going anywhere and therefore they should pressure Serbia to recognize the independence of Kosovo (Ibid., 16 September, 2016). Dušan Kozarev, commented Tahiri's statement that relations between Belgrade and Pristina could only improve when Serbia recognizes the independence of Kosovo as being "her unilateral announcement of cancellation of the dialogue process" (Ibid., 26 October, 2016.).

Finally, one of the most current methods that Serbia uses is convincing other countries who have recognized Kosovo to revoke their recognition. One of the most symbolic ones was the withdrawal of the recognition of independence of Kosovo by Burundi, which Ivica Dačić presented on 17th of February 2018, on a tenth anniversary of Kosovo's declaration of independence, as a great success of Serbian diplomacy (Ibid., 17 February, 2018).

8.1.2. History and myths

If there wasn't for history and myths, that evoke a lot of emotions in people, the whole campaign that revolves around negation of Kosovo's independence would be less powerful. That is why Serbian politicians use them frequently in their speeches. In this part we will find out which myths have been mostly used and how history is being manipulated to fit current goals. However, Marko Đurić would say that by talking about history "we defend our right to know the truth about ourselves" (Ibid., 2 October, 2015). The question is which truth and what is the truth when it comes to Kosovo's history?

There has been a lot of statements about history when Kosovo wanted to become a member of UNESCO. Regarding that issue, Dačić said:

This is not any organization, and that is why this is a difficult question for Serbian state and people, because it directly affects identity and core of existence of our nation. Here, we talk about Serbian Patriarchy, the place where Serbian church and state has been established. If that becomes Kosovo's cultural heritage, that is a direct attack on identity of Serbia and its people. (Ibid., 8 October, 2015)

Serbian politicians are very vocal when it comes to changing history by Albanians in their school textbooks, Aleksandar Vučić said that he „cannot and will not accept that the monastery Visoki Dečani has been built by Gashi tribe for the dynasty Nimani” (ibid., 8 October, 2015). In Serbian history it is well known as a fact that monastery Visoki Dečani has been built by Nemanjić dynasty. Tomislav Nikolić adds that “renaming the Serbian Nemanjići dynasty to Albanian name Nimani is shameless falsification of history” (ibid. 16 October, 2015). The problem of different histories thought in Serbia and in Kosovo has to be addressed as one of the major obstacles towards reconciliation and that hasn’t been done at all. In fact, both sides have just used history to prove that they have more rights to the territory of Kosovo.

History is especially problematic when we talk about the numbers of Serbs and Albanians who lived in Kosovo through centuries. Each side wants to prove that they have been the majority. Talking about history and numbers, Đurić stated:

The history of Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija is the history of braveness, chivalry, spirituality, but also suffering and migrations... regarding demographic balance the most dramatic century was the 20th century, when ethnic structure in Kosovo and Metohija was changed by force, so the number of Serbs, who at the beginning of that century were half of the people who lived there, is reduced to historical minimum. (Ibid., 17 March, 2016)

There are historians who wouldn’t agree with this statement, some consider the Great Migration of Serbs from 1688-1690 as the key moment when the number of Serbs was less than the number of Albanians living in Kosovo (Marijana Toma, lecture, February 2020).

When it comes to the history of Kosovo there is a very thin line between history and myths. That is something that is very mixed up in the speeches of Serbian politicians. For instance, on the Orthodox Christmas eve Marko Đurić reminds Serbian people that they have to learn history and understand how their ancestors lived and what they have done for us so that “we today have our Jerusalem our Kosovo and Metohija” (Ibid., 6 January, 2016). He is referring to one of the greatest myths according to which Serbs have won the battle of Kosovo in 1389. Besides that, the metaphor that Kosovo is Serbian Jerusalem is very used, but it brings a lot of questions, is it so just because of religious meaning for Serbian people or there are some other meanings as well.

Another way of showing that one nation is present at the certain territory is to leave material evidences of their existence and presence, the most used ones are the memorials. That is another method that Serbia uses. During the researched time frame Serbia has put a few monuments of their prominent individuals.

In the center of Zvečan, Marko Đurić has attended the ceremony of opening of the memorial that represents the Serbian King Milutin. On that occasion he held a speech praising the history of Serbs and their kingdom saying that Serbs have persisted and stayed in Kosovo for more than 700 tough years despite different conquerors and “we have gathered today around the holy king, and I am convinced that this generation will find the strength to restore and get back what others have lost before us” (Ibid., 17 November, 2015). This statement is very disturbing because it somehow calls for preservation of Kosovo inside Serbian borders, but it can be interpreted as a call for war.

Just a few months later, another monument dedicated to King Lazar, was placed in Kosovska Mitrovica on 28th of June, which is the date when the battle of Kosovo happened and a religious holiday Vidovdan dedicated to the King Lazar who died in that battle. On that occasion Đurić expressed following messages to the public:

If we could, we would build the monument high enough to touch the sky, so that everyone could see it from every spot of the Earth, but it is big enough so that nobody can remove it from here and also beautiful and shiny so that nobody could ever leave it here. Lazar is here to stay, and so are the Serbs. (Ibid., 28 June, 2016)

Our people wouldn't exist if they have not been paying attention to our history, we build our future on the foundation of our old fame, with Kosovo on our lips and in our heart. (Ibid., 28 June, 2016)

The monument of Lazar is facing Gazimestan, as a sign, to remind us in which direction we are going, to guide us and stress that we had many victories as people, because we haven't forgotten the Kosovo's lesson and without that lesson there cannot be any future victories. (Ibid., 28 June, 2016)

There is a lot of symbols and elements of myths in his speech. First of all, trying to build the largest monument indicates that presence of Serbs in Kosovo is a fact and has to be visible to everyone, it is a symbol of dominance and greatness. Encouraging Serbs to build future always having in mind Kosovo, once again indirectly calls for people to fight to regain it. That interpretation is confirmed,

when Đurić mentions Gazimestan as a sign towards where we should go, and that is the place where the battle of Kosovo happened. As a conclusion of interpretation of his speech I'll use his statement articulated on another occasion: "I want to send the message that Serbia without Kosovo and Metohija does not have a meaning!" (Ibid., 21 September, 2016)

While Serbia is building new monuments in Kosovo showing that the history of Serbs is connected to that territory, at the same time Serbian politicians are emphasizing that Kosovo's officials are trying to delete all the traces of existence of Serbs in Kosovo. One of the examples for that is the decision of municipality of Uroševac/ Ferizaj to change the name of the village Srpski Babuš to Babosh. Đurić commented this decision as "political manifestation of chauvinism and open hatred" (Ibid., 3 July, 2016). Serbia has also reacted when Albanian officials put the lock on the Orthodox Temple of Christ the Savior. Đurić characterized that event as „aspiration of authorities in Pristina to erase all the evidence of existence of Serbian people “and „Pristina showed, that without a doubt has anticivilization and anti-European value system” (Ibid., 21 December, 2016).

The most well-known incident that is connected to reviving of Serbian history in Kosovo, is "the train incident". Serbia wanted to launch the first train line after the war that would connect Belgrade and Kosovska Mitrovica on the day of Orthodox New Year. That sounds as a positive step towards reconciliation, however that train was fully decorated with motives depicting Serbian cultural and spiritual heritage in Kosovo inside the train, besides that on the outer part of the train it was written in 21 languages "Kosovo is Serbia" (Ibid., 8 January, 2017). However, the train has never reached Kosovo, it was stopped by the Prime Minister Vučić because Albanians have sent their special forces to the North of Kosovo wanting to stop the train. If the train wasn't stopped it might have caused a conflict, Tomislav Nikolić the President of Serbia said "we were at the edge of conflict, the Albanians want war" (Ibid., 15 January, 2017). Moreover, he said:

We do not want the war, but we will send our army if we have to protect Serbs from being killed. If they start killing Serbs we will send the army, we will all go there including me, it wouldn't be my first time. (Ibid., 15 January, 2017).

This incident shows how dangerous this war over history could be. Therefore, we have to urge our politicians to start dealing with the past and to start talking about history with each other. Besides that, we cannot let the history define us, the context has changed and we have to adapt to it.

Finally, there is a problematic relationship between Serbia and Albania, because of the fear that Kosovo could become a part of Albania in the future. Since in Albania and in Kosovo live Albanians it seems natural that they have extremely good relations and support each other. However, when Edi Rama stated that he doesn't exclude the possibility of unification of Albania and Kosovo, Đurić responded and said "I would like to let Rama and Taçi know that Enver Hoxha is dead and together with him the idea of Great Albanian, that belongs to dark fascistic past, is buried forever" (Ibid., 18 April, 2017). He added that "it is inappropriate to have pretensions to the territories of other states, keep your hands-off Serbia" (Ibid., 18 April, 2017).

However, just two years ago the historic visit of two Prime Ministers happened in Belgrade when Edi Rama met with Aleksandar Vučić. Such meeting showed that both of them are ready to work on improving of the relations between Serbia and Albania. On that occasion Vučić said that "Albanians often had racist attitude towards Serbs and vice versa, but in the last few years that has started to change." (Ibid., 1 September, 2015). At the same press conference Rama was asked if the myth about "Great Albania" is still alive in Albania, he stated that young people do not think about that, but "the dream of Albanians to live together is legitimate. That dream has to be realized as part of Europe and European community where we will all live together." (Ibid., 1 September, 2015). Vučić replied that "dreams for some, can be nightmare for others". (Ibid., 1 September, 2015).

Essentially, high level visits between Serbia and Albania are a symbol of progress and improvement of relations. However, one has to be very careful before making conclusions, because what has been said during that visit was ambiguous. From one hand, they are both emphasizing improvement of relations and EU as their final goal, and on the other there are still very deep disagreements about Kosovo's status and interpretations of history combined with provocative statements which show that they still have to work on the improvement of their relations.

The conclusion of this first category is simple, both Serbia as well as Kosovo are trying to show that the territory of Kosovo is theirs. Each of them is proving that with different means, but the largest disagreement lays in the status of Kosovo. If that is not resolved, I do not see the how the real progress can happen when it comes to the reconciliation between Serbs and Albanians. The constant fight over territory and history and constant involvement of myths just creates even deeper gap between those two nations.

8.2. Implementation of the Brussels agreement

This category shows us which key elements connected to the implementation of the Brussels agreement are brought to the forefront in most of the speeches of Serbian politicians. What is the key factor that influences the implementation, what is the most important thing that Serbia wants to be implemented and did the agreement bring any changes on the ground. All the answers to those questions can be found in many speeches of the politicians. This category can be classified to three subcategories: evaluation of the agreement, the role of the EU and international community and the Association of Serb majority Municipalities in Kosovo (ASM or ZSO in Serbian or AKS in Albanian).

8.2.1. Evaluation of the agreement

After the First agreement on normalization has been signed in Brussels in 2013, in 2015 there has been progress in negotiations when four more agreements were signed: the Agreement on Association of Serb majority Municipalities, the Agreement on energetics, telecommunications and the bridge on Ibar in Kosovska Mitrovica. Vučić has stated that “these agreements are good and guarantee security and survivor of Serbs in Kosovo” (Ibid., 26 August, 2015).

Đurić’s evaluation of the dialogue reveals important progress that has been made during the dialogue process itself. He stated:

The fact that we look at the dialogue differently causes problems in the ways the dialogue functions, nevertheless having in mind all the downfalls of the dialogue and its limited results, it produced one remarkable success, important both for Serbs and Albanians, and that is peace. It gave us a feeling that there is a channel of communication through which we solve our problems (Ibid., 21 September, 2016).

I would agree with him that the dialogue has created a channel of communication, which is important for reconciliation. Having any kind of dialogue is better than not having one at all. However, when Đurić mentions peace as a result of the dialogue, it seems that he refers to negative peace or the absence of violence. However, both sides still have to work a lot more on creating long-term solutions and achieve positive peace as a result of a continuous dialogue.

On the fifth anniversary of signing of the First agreement on normalization Đurić recapitulated the results achieved and once again he emphasized that “the greatest achievements are peace and better security situation for Serbs” (Ibid., 19 April, 2018). However, he said that after five years there

is a failure in implementation of what has been agreed and that all sides are losers for that (Ibid., 19 April, 2018).

By the end of the year the situation worsens when the officials in Kosovo first impose 10% taxes on all goods coming from Serbia to Kosovo and after that increased taxes to 100%. This was characterized as “trade war” and Đurić said that “the Brussels dialogue is impossible to continue until they withdraw this illegal decision” (Ibid., 6 November, 2018). That was the moment when the dialogue has stopped and it hasn’t continued until this day and besides that, the decision on taxes hasn’t been withdrawn.

We could conclude that the dialogue was heading into the right direction at first, however, over time it was obvious that both sides were not implementing everything that has been agreed in Brussels and finally the dialogue reached its lowest point when it was not possible to even continue.

8.2.2. The role of the EU and international community

Even though Serbian officials mention the correlation of progress in dialogue with the progress of the EU integrations, that aspect is not so much in focus in their speeches. What is mostly in focus is criticism towards the EU and international community.

Vučić acknowledges that “the stakes are high both in Belgrade and in Pristina, the dynamic of progress on the way to the EU depends on their mutual agreement...” (Ibid., 25 August, 2015). However, Đurić emphasized that „ it is wrong to believe that the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina is important to Belgrade only because of the EU accession process “(Ibid., 9 December, 2015). It is a well known fact that the EU is a major incentive in the dialogue process, however it is important for both sides to realize that the dialogue is first and foremost important to them.

Serbian politicians are vvery vocal when it comes to criticism of the involvement of the EU and other actors of international community. On one particular occasion, when Đurić was surprised by the lack of reaction, he stated:

The snow does not fall to cover the mountain, but for the wild animals to show their footprints. We could see from this case that the international community or EU have not acted in the dialogue in a good faith. (Ibid., 4 February, 2017).

The most common problem is lack of reaction of the international community when Serbs in Kosovo are in danger or are being threatened. “The international community was quiet”, stated Đurić when

Haradinaj's brother was threatening Serbs (Ibid., 3 May, 2017). "If the international community had reacted, they wouldn't impose 100% taxes" stated Đurić when Kosovo imposed 100% taxes to imported goods from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. (Ibid., 21 November, 2018). When special forces of Kosovo's police were present around lake Gazivode, protecting Thaçi during his visit, the whole situation created tensions and the reaction of the EU lacked once again Đurić said "that we should not expect anything from the representatives of the EU" (Ibid., 29 September, 2018).

Detailed description of how the international community reacts when Serbia tries to seek their support or raise awareness about certain issue given by Aleksandar Vučić could serve as conclusion of this chapter:

Whenever you call them [the representatives of international community], you always get the same answer. "We are very surprised, we were not aware of that. Thank you for letting us know, we will react in line with our capacities." After that you get one big nothing. (Ibid., 30 December, 2018).

The narrative which emphasizes that international community does not react when Serbs are somehow provoked by Albanians, is portraying the international community as supporters of the other side. Such narrative creates aversity towards representatives of the EU and in that way indirectly affect the dialogue in a negative way. Since the dialogue is facilitated by EU, if one side does not trust the facilitator then it is questionable whether it could be successful.

8.2.3. Association of Serb majority Municipalities in Kosovo

The importance of formation of ASM in Kosovo is crucial for Serbia and it has been in focus ever since the Brussels agreement has been signed. Đurić made clear that "we made compromises even when it wasn't easy. Everyone should be aware that, if we want agreements on other issues, no other agreement can be a condition for formation of ASM" (Ibid., 20 August, 2015).

However, the formation of ASM was not smooth and in fact it has not been formed yet. Since it was portrayed in Kosovo as a threat to the state Kosovo officials tried their best to thwart its formation. According to Đurić authorities in Pristina are just trying to find excuses not to form ASM and at the same time they launched campaign that portrays ASM as a threat to Albanians. (Ibid., 12 February, 2017). Serbian politicians are emphasizing all the time the importance of formation of ASM and unwillingness of Kosovo authorities to do it. When Kosovo's Constitutional Court temporarily suspended the Agreement on formation of ASM because it was not in accordance with the Kosovo's

Constitution, Đurić stated that “Pristina kills the dialogue and mutual trust” (Ibid., 10 November, 2015). The whole situation triggered him to say the following:

If ASM does not exist for Pristina as part of the Brussels agreement, does the Brussels agreement exist for Pristina at all and do they have any ambition or plans to implement the things that their officials have guaranteed to implement by putting their signature (Ibid., 10 November, 2015).

The tense situation continues in the following years, and in 2017 Pristina has threatened that there will not be formation of ASM, which was characterized by Serbs as “escalation of verbal hysteria”. Vučić commented that “it is good that they have finally admitted it, but we have already known it for four years” (Ibid., 7 June, 2017).

Since nothing has happened after more than nine months, in one interview Vučić made his conclusion why the ASM has not been formed yet:

Serbs are waiting for five years for ASM to be formed, and it has not been formed not because Serbs did not want it to be formed, but because Albanians and international community did not want it to be formed. (Ibid., 30 March, 2018).

Unfortunately, the ASM still has not been formed, therefore the most important part of the Brussels agreement for Serbs has not been implemented, which is a major obstacle to successful continuation of the dialogue.

8.3. Peace and reconciliation

Under this category fall all the statements that indeed show some progress towards reconciliation of these two groups, whether these are positive statements about each other or positive statements about the outcomes of the dialogue process or change of the ways to communicate a message.

Although there are many negative statements about each other in the public discourse of politicians on both sides, it is promising that there is some progress and that occasionally they do say something positive about each other that contributes to peace and reconciliation. The question is just which narrative prevails?

To start with, the existence of the dialogue process is the most important step towards reconciliation. That is the fact with which both sides without a doubt agree. Insisting on the

continuation of the dialogue is very present in most of the speeches of the Serbian officials. Even after certain incidents that have happened, Serbian politicians wanted to make sure that they are committed to the dialogue as the only way for solving their mutual issues. Farid Zarif former Chief of the UNMIK mission in Kosovo assessed that situation on the ground has drastically improved in four years time, comparing the situation in 2011 when the tensions were high and contacts between the communities were almost nonexistent, with the situation that we have in 2015 where the dialogue is held on a high political level and the need for dialogue is acknowledged in public discourse (Ibid., 21 August, 2015). Đurić said that “all of us who are participating in the dialogue form the Belgrade team are considering the dialogue to be the means that will bring Serbs and Albanians closer together”(Ibid., 20 August, 2015).

However, Đurić has correctly noticed that “it is a shame that besides the agreement on the paper, as a result of a dialogue, we never have a better atmosphere” (Ibid., 27 August, 2015). He added that “if you would just interpret our statements after each round of dialogues it would seem that the distance between us becomes larger and relations become even worse” (Ibid., 27 August, 2015). That is the core of the problem. Politicians should think more about the messages they are sending to the people, because the people cannot know what has happened behind the closed doors. The job of politicians who represent us is to think about mutual communication strategy and to agree on what they are going to say to the public. Whenever a round of dialogues is over in Brussels both sides try to present just the results as a one-sided win for their side, which is wrong for many reasons and nurtures the atmosphere that we have now. Đurić has acknowledged that just agreements do not reconcile people and that “it is extremely important that besides of “what is on the paper”, both sides send positive political messages about each other and to each other” (Ibid., 30 September, 2015). The key point of his is the following statement: “If we come out to the public after each round of the dialogue with different messages and the messages that will not improve communication between people, then the time we are using for the dialogue is not used well.” (Ibid., 30 September, 2015).

Even though, both sides have to work on the ways of communicating the messages to the public, there still are very visible results that the dialogue produced.

Probably the most important one is decrease in number of violent incidents between Serbs and Albanians. Vučić emphasized that the Brussels agreement is not a “dead letter” as one of the

journalists has called it, but that even though its implementation does not go as planned it gave important results. He said:

...we have considerably less incidents between Serbs and Albanians annually than we have in Belgrade between Serbs. That can be attributed to the fact that the dialogue produced results and people know that only by using peaceful means through dialogue we can solve our problems” (Ibid., 19 July, 2016)

In 2017, Đurić stated that as a result of the dialogue “we did not have any Serb nor Albanian killed in the last three to four years” (Ibid. 2 July, 2017). In 2018, five years after signing of the Brussels agreement he stated that the key results of the agreement are peace and improved security. (Ibid., 19 April, 2018). Although these results are important, these mostly contribute to negative peace and at this point in time, 20 years after the war, we should aim to achieve positive peace through dialogue.

What serves more as an example of moving towards the positive peace is very good cooperation of Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Kosovo’s Chamber of Commerce that at the same time contributes to the normalization of relations and economic development. The Minister of Economy of Serbia Željko Sertić said that “entrepreneurs are the ones who are the most powerful contributors to the improvement of relations” (Ibid., 21 December, 2015).

Another positive example is the announcement made by Aleksandar Vučić that the construction of the new highway Nis-Pristina is about to start, he called it “the highway of peace” stating that “that highway is a good way to connect Serbs and Albanians” (Ibid., 22 February, 2016).

It is also important that occasionally we can hear some positive statements about Albanians, such as the one that came from Dušan Kozarov, the Deputy Director of Office for Kosovo and Metohija, that “we know the real Albanians, our neighbors and friends, as honest people, for whom the completion of the given word is a matter of honor and trust” (Ibid., 2 August, 2016). However, such statements are not so much present in the public discourse. On the other hand, the predominant narrative is the one that in the same sentence emphasizes how great Serbs are and how awful the Albanians are. For instance, statement of Aleksandar Vulin:

Serbia does not threaten to anyone and especially not to its southern province, if it wasn’t for the politics of peace led by the President Vučić, the criminal Taçi would have burned the whole Balkans long ago. (Ibid., 9 April, 2018)

When it comes to the apology as one of the important elements of the reconciliation process, there is not a discussion about it, it is a topic that has been avoided by Serbian politicians. On one occasion, when giving an interview to the Kosovo Albanian TV station RTK, Đurić said “we cannot play with the victims and fake the reconciliation process and apology, these should be sincere and should come as a result of the dialogue” (Ibid., 21 September, 2016). Therefore, it is obvious that they have not planned to apologize, deal with the past and change the narrative, which would as a result give at least some comfort to the victims.

I would conclude this chapter with the statement given by Marko Đurić that I agree with:

If we come to an agreement about two open questions- status and territory, if we manage to shake hands, I am more than certain that relations between Serbs and Albanians in the Balkans are going to improve. (Ibid., 18 October, 2018)

The ways on how we believe is the best to solve these open questions depend on our own ways of thinking, but whichever method we take, the fact is that without solving these two main issues the relations will not essentially change.

8.4. Albanians are guilty for lack of improvement of relations

This category is the most present one in the majority of speeches. What characterizes this category is constant narrative that Albanians are guilty for lack of improvement in the relations, while on the other hand Serbia is doing everything on its part. Additionally, Serbian politicians are making sure that people in Serbia hear that because of the Albanian side the implementation of Brussels agreement is so slow and, in some cases, even nonexistent. Besides that, there is a constant narrative that Serbs in Kosovo are in danger and that their security is not assured. Some sporadic incidents that happen on the ground are portrayed as a threat to the whole Serbian nation. Finally, the North of Kosovo is seen as a territory which Albanians should not even visit, and every visit by some of the officials is seen as a threat.

Đurić claims that “Kosovo Albanians do not consider the dialogue to be the means of normalizations and reconciliation, but the means for achieving their goals they were not able to achieve by other means”. (Ibid., 23 August, 2015). This shows that Serbian officials do not trust that Albanians are engaged in a dialogue in a good faith, such trust issues are not a good indicator of successful dialogue process. He does not miss a chance to blame Pristina for lack of improvement of the relations. For

instance, he blames Pristina for not trying to make better atmosphere on the ground, because after each meeting they have with Serbs they just talk about independence and not about what has been agreed (Ibid., 27 August, 2015). He also accuses them of profiting from the current situation by saying that “unfortunately in Kosovo and Metohija we have today those who want new instabilities, because that is the atmosphere from which they politically profit the most” (Ibid., 21 September, 2015). Pristina is also making some moves that have not been agreed on in Brussels, such as banning the entry to Kosovo to all those people having Serbian license plates. Đurić said that “Pristina is not dedicated to the implementation of the agreement in good faith” and assessed that such actions take us three steps back from the normalization (Ibid., 29 October, 2015). He stated that “Pristina does everything to postpone the implementation of the agreement, because it seems they are not satisfied with it” (Ibid., 29 October, 2015). What is important in normalization of relations is trust and Đurić stated that “every time Pristina does something unilaterally, that was not specified in the Agreement it breaks our trust” (Ibid., 17 March, 2016). One of Đurić’s conclusions is “that Albanian politicians do not approach the dialogue constructively, because they are participating only because the international community has forced them” (Ibid., 9 December, 2015).

Besides many statements that create mistrust in the other side involved in the dialogue, there are statements that actually cause fear and constant insecurity for Serbs living in Kosovo. Whenever an interethnic incident happens it becomes major news in Serbia, if it was not done by Albanians it would probably not be considered a news at all. There have been several attacks on Serbian churches in Kosovo. One happened in Orahovac, when 4 Albanian young men were throwing stones on the church, Đurić commented that “there is still an atmosphere of fear and lawlessness, in which there is no security for Serbs and Serbian sacred places” (Ibid., 15 October, 2015). The largest Serbian temple of Christ the Savior in Pristina was lit on fire, such act was characterized by Ivica Dačić as evidence of “growing Albanian extremism and chauvinism” (Ibid., 10 September, 2016).

There have been fights between Serbian and Albanian boys, which in Serbian media have been portrayed as attacks on Serbs; all the relevant Serbian politicians have commented such incidents. When Albanian youth were throwing stones on a bus full of Serbian high school students Đurić stated:

I do not want to blame young Albanians, that have been radicalized and fed by hatred for years, because the responsibility for today’s act lies on those who have taught them

that throwing stones on Serbs is a nice and socially acceptable act. (Ibid., 12 January, 2017)

Incident in Gornje Kusce was condemned by the Office for Kosovo and Metohija in an announcement saying that “such incidents are consequences of the atmosphere of hatred that naturally escalates to violence. Therefore, Albanian politicians in Kosovo and Metohija should change their narrative” (Ibid., 25 October, 2015). Similarly, the attack on one house in Goraždevac was characterized by Aleksandar Vučić as “attack on the whole Serbian population living in Kosovo and Metohija” and as a „terrorist act “by Đurić (Ibid., 7 December, 2015). Dačić even talked about radical Islam in Kosovo saying that “compared to the number of citizens of Islamic religion in the region, the majority of people who left the Balkans to go to fight in Syria and Iraq are from Kosovo and Metohija, and that represents a high level of threat from terroristic acts” (Ibid., 1 March, 2016).

Attack on journalists of Serbian TV Most was condemned by Serbian officials, but besides that they have interpreted the attack as representation of social climate that promotes “constantly opened hunting season on Serbs” (Ibid., 10 May, 2016).

In his author text, Đurić talked about all the attacks that are happening in Kosovo and questioned whether security of Serbs in Kosovo can be guaranteed. Besides that, he said:

Deepening the ethnic distance between Serbs and Albanians is today's unofficial program goal of many political parties and movements in Kosovo and Metohija, that have its roots in chauvinistic idea that Serbs and their culture have nothing to do on that territory. (Ibid., 17 March, 2016)

In another interview, Đurić stated that “Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija are the most endangered national community in Europe “, as a reason for that claim he mentioned several factors out of which I would emphasize restriction of movement, everyday physic attacks, illegal seizure of property, damaging of the cemeteries and churches. (Ibid., 4 November, 2015).

Serbian officials see as a threat every visit to north of Kosovo by Albanian politicians. When Edita Tahiri visited North Mitrovica, the Office for Kosovo and Metohija described that visit as “provocation and an attempt to cause incident” (Ibid., 30 August, 2016). They have described that she came with a lot of armed bodyguards and police and that they have occupied a café next to river Ibar (Ibid., 30 August, 2016). That café was later burned and that news was not one of the news selected for the website of Office for Kosovo and Metohija. Thaçi's visit to Jarinje was also seen as

“planned action that as its goal had causing incidents and violence” (Ibid., 31 August, 2016). The comments were similar when Isa Mustafa visited north of Kosovo, the exact words were “Isa Mustafa has been smuggled by NATO to the north of Kosovo through migrants’ route, through woods” (Ibid., 2 December, 2016). According to Đurić the goal of this visit was political propaganda and provocation of Serbs (Ibid., 2 December, 2016). The situation was even worse when Hashim Thaçi was visiting lake Gazivode and came surrounded by special forces of Kosovo’s police ROSU. Đurić described that visit with the following words:

Thaçi and his armed terrorists came so that Thaçi could freely walk, take selfies and go on a boat ride on lake Gazivode. In order for that to happen, they had to arrest everyone on the road. In the Center for ecology and development of sport they have been tying up and arresting people aiming to frighten them. (Ibid., 29 September, 2018)

After all of these claims and emphasis on constant attacks on Serbs and their property I do not see how the Office for Kosovo and Metohija wants to convince Serbs that they should go back to live in Kosovo as they were living before the war. From the articles that constantly appear on their website one that reads them would definitely feel that there is lack of security in Kosovo and that Serbs are in danger, facing constant attacks. However, the problem is what kind of news you want to select and what kind of image you want to create. The image they are creating is not in line with promotion of reconciliation and positive stories that do exist on the ground. Milovan Drecun notices that “great-Albanian nationalism is increasing, especially among youth”. (Ibid.,16 May, 2016). In the same interview he also claims that such nationalism does not exist among Serbs and that Serbia is a factor of stability in the region that disintegrates extremist nationalist plans. (Ibid.,16 May, 2016) Such claim helps me prove my standing point, once again we see that only the other side has been accused, while on the other hand Serbs are portrayed as perfect. Let’s try to be critical of our actions and be honest about our wrongdoings. Maybe Drecun is right about Albanian nationalism that is caused by many different factors, but he is definitely wrong when he says that Serbia is a factor of stability, not guilty of any nationalism. Quite contrary, all the statements collected in this thesis show how deep Serbian nationalism is. That is something that both Serbs and Albanians have to work on and try to find a common narrative that would overcome nationalistic one which is present in both societies.

Another huge problem that is still not tackled by either Serbian nor Kosovo officials is acknowledgement of the victims and recognition of what has happened. Both sides stick to their own side of the story and do not admit their crimes. When Taçi expressed his intentions to sue Serbia for committing genocide against Kosovo Albanians, Đurić's response was "if anyone in Kosovo has committed a genocide then it was KLA and their ex-commandants" (Ibid., 30 July, 2016). Taçi has negated crimes committed by KLA after the international forces came to Kosovo. (Ibid., 30 July 2016). Office for Kosovo and Metohija condemned the act of Kosovo officials to put billboard in the village of Mušutište representing the crimes of Serbs committed during the war, the village was severely damaged during the war and most of the Serbs have left. (Ibid., 21 August, 2016). Putting billboards that represent war crimes is not the appropriate strategy for making the other side recognize their actions, it is also questionable what kind of message such billboards are sending and to whom. Another inappropriate act was done when some Albanians destroyed memorial that was built in honor of Serbian victims who were killed during harvesting in 1999. Đurić said that such act is "evidence of general political climate of hatred towards Serbs" (Ibid., 2 September, 2016).

Another problem is that not many people were convicted for all the crimes that happened in Kosovo. Whenever someone who was convicted for war crimes is released for lack of evidence or any other reason, that is perceived as absence of justice to the victims and their families. The court in Pristina has released Lirim Jakupi, known by the name "Commandant Nazi"; Đurić expressed huge disappointment in such decision saying that "judicial authorities in Pristina have shown once again that they are just an instrument that serves to the politics, which does not intend to stop its practice of covering and relativization of crimes." (Ibid., 28 July, 2017)

What made security situation even worse was when Kosovo authorities arrested or tried to arrest the Director of Office for Kosovo and Metohija Marko Đurić twice. The first time was in 2016 when they asked him to leave Kosovo because according to them he did not have the right permit to be there. However, in the end they let him continue his visit. Đurić commented that such situation was "insane" (Ibid., 22 September, 2016). One of the representatives of Serbian List (Party of Kosovo Serbs) Dalibor Jevtić said that "the goal of attempt of an arrest of one high representative of Serbia is to humiliate him" (Ibid., 22 September, 2016). Đurić commented the whole incident by saying that he does not understand that as an attack on him personally, but "as an attempt to humiliate Serbia and threaten to our people" (Ibid., 22 September, 2016). On 26th of March 2018 Special Forces of Kosovo's police arrested Marko Đurić who was attending a round table discussion with local Serbs

in Kosovska Mitrovica. (Ibid., 26 March, 2018). That has triggered a lot of negative comments in Serbia. Although he was not detained more than couple of hours, the way how he was taken was inappropriate and it is not surprising that it led to deepening of mistrust at the high political level. The comments about this incident will be mentioned and explained further in the following category.

From the end of 2016 relations with Kosovo started becoming more strained and we can freely say that the relations that have been developed through Brussels dialogue started to deteriorate. Tomislav Nikolić, the President of Serbia at the time, said “the current relations between Belgrade and Pristina are at the lowest possible level” (Ibid., 12 October, 2016).

When Kosovo’s Parliament adopted the “Resolution about protection of KLA’s values” that meant that Pristina as well does not want to deal with the past and condemn the actions done by KLA. On the contrary, they want to protect values of KLA. Office for Kosovo and Metohija reacted on this news by saying that it seems that for some Albanian politicians “the crime is a positive social value” (Ibid., 28 October, 2016). Đurić added cynically:

It is not familiar to me that any Parliament in the world, except maybe during the Second World War, has adopted the resolution that glorifies crime, but the Parliament in Pristina once again showed its uniqueness. (Ibid., 28 October, 2016)

Similar situation happened when Kosovo officials were openly defending Ramush Haradinaj who was wanted by Serbia for war crimes. Kozarev said that “national pride cannot be built on glorification of crime and criminals” (Ibid., 6 January, 2017).

In March 2017 the Parliament in Pristina voted for Resolution about formal interruption of the dialogue with Serbia. (Ibid., 9 March 2017, str 176) Such decision was a huge step back in the relations of Belgrade and Pristina. When replying to the messages from Pristina that the continuation of dialogue with Serbia depends on the outcome of the prosecution of Ramush Haradinaj, Kozarev said that “the officials in Pristina do not understand what is the meaning of the dialogue and what is its purpose” (Ibid., 12 April, 2017). He added that “prosecution of war criminals is a part of normalization of relations”, and besides that “linking the dialogue to the destiny of just one person shows that in Pristina there is no awareness about the need for creating stable and prosperous environment in our region”. (Ibid., 12 April, 2017)

Đurić was talking about increased violence threats and attacks on Serbs in the first months of 2017 and commented that:

The dialogue today is in crisis, because of the fact that on the table in Brussels there was no something Pristina has expected, that is recognition of unilaterally declared independence. One-sided blockade of the dialogue by Pristina proves that the interest of their representatives in negotiations was never normalization of relations and democratization of society. (Ibid., 20 April, 2017)

It seems that any trust that existed between the parties has gone, and that confirms Đurić himself by saying “we cannot believe in any of the word of politicians in Pristina” (Ibid., 2 July, 2017). Both sides have been accusing each other for lying, which also shows a high level of mistrust. For instance, Edita Tahiri accused Marko Đurić for lying and then he replied that she is the last person who can express such accusations since she is the one who does not share the accurate information after each round of the dialogues. Besides that, he characterized her as “a hardliner and the most extreme politician in Pristina”. (Ibid., 23 August, 2017).

In such a bad climate of mistrust between the parties it was very difficult for the dialogue to continue. However, on the day both parties came to Brussels to talk, something even worse has happened. A well-known Kosovo Serbian politician Oliver Ivanović was killed on 16th of January 2018 (Ibid., 16 January, 2018). Serbian delegation immediately went back to Belgrade. Đurić just shortly commented that “this is an attack to the whole Serbian nation and there has to be punishment for this terroristic act” (Ibid., 16 January, 2018).

The situation got even worse after arrest of Marko Đurić in Kosovo and according to President Vučić there is no more trust in the other side (Ibid., 31 March, 2018). He said that the dialogue can only continue if what is agreed is implemented first, everything will depend on fulfillment of the already agreed terms (Ibid., 31 March, 2018). Meanwhile Pristina presented their new dialogue platform where according to Đurić is written that the goal of the dialogue is membership of Kosovo in UN and mutual recognition. He asked “is it possible to negotiate if we have predetermined outcome of negotiations” (Ibid., 21 April, 2018).

At the end of May 2018 there still was no indications that the dialogue will continue. Đurić said that “the campaign of violence shows that the other side does not want normal relations, but instead

they want to live in this situation from which they have profited the most.” (Ibid., 31 May, 2018). On another occasion Đurić stated that “the decision of Pristina not to participate in the dialogue is dangerous and irresponsible” (Ibid., 6 Jun, 2018).

At the same time in Pristina they have been planning to form the Army of Kosovo. The opinion of Serbian officials is clear about that and can be illustrated with Đurić’s statement:

I want to emphasize with pride that we are against the formation of Army of Kosovo, me, President Vučić and the Government of Serbia urge all the Serbs not to participate in that formation, because its only purpose is to generate more conflicts. (Ibid., 6 July, 2018)

Some of the solutions that have been proposed years ago on how to find a compromise solution for solving Kosovo’s status have emerged in the public discourse once again. One of the most popular solutions is to change the borders of Kosovo, so that Serbia could take the north of Kosovo where majority of Serbs live. However, Albanians in Kosovo had their own understanding of border changes. Taçi’s advisor Rexhep Hoti wanted the region of Sandžak and south of Serbia in exchange for north of Kosovo. Vučić was very clear about that saying that “there will not be any discussion about that, that is not going to happen” (Ibid., 19 Jun, 2018). The Chief of Pristina’s team for negotiations Avni Arifi stated that “the war is inevitable if anyone thinks about changing borders in the Balkans, so that partition of Kosovo is not an option” (Ibid., 27 July, 2018). Ramush Haradinaj has agreed with such statement saying that “partition of Kosovo means war” (Ibid., 27 July, 2018).

The relations became very strained, and on top of all the threatening statements Haradinaj announced that “after the new year there will be no borders between Kosovo and Albania” (Ibid., 20 September, 2018). In Serbian public that was immediately perceived as creation of Great Albania. Đurić said that that was not the first time that Kosovo officials talk about removing the borders with Albania, and that with such claims they just want to “see Serbia defeated and humiliated” (Ibid., 20 September, 2018). Ivica Dačić stated that “Albania and Kosovo do not hide anymore that they are creating one state” commenting support of Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama to Kosovo in creation of Great Albania (Ibid., 26 November, 2018).

To make the things even worse Pristina increased taxes for 10% for all the goods coming from Serbia on 6th of November 2018. After that Đurić said that “the Brussels dialogue is impossible to continue

before the authorities in Pristina revoke this unlawful decision” (Ibid., 6 November, 2018). The final straw was the decision of Pristina to increase taxes to 100% for all the goods from Serbia. This was perceived as severe attack on Serbia, its people and its economy. Đurić stated that “the goal was to humiliate Serbia and force it to some sort of capitulation, political or some other and the second goal is expulsion of Serbs and disruption of the survival of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija” (Ibid., 21 November, 2018).

Threats that Pristina can take even worse measures which came from Ramush Haradinaj showed how deep the disruption of the renewed relations between Belgrade and Pristina is. Đurić reacted by calling the representatives of international community to react because “craziness and irresponsibility from certain circles in Pristina does not have limits” (Ibid., 8 December, 2018).

On top of all these negative acts, Pristina decided to officially form the Army of Kosovo on 14th of December 2018. Serbia saw it as “an act of political aggression on our state” (Ibid., 14 December, 2018).

In such climate of severely damaged relations it was not possible for dialogue to continue. Five years after the First Brussels Agreement has been signed the relations between Belgrade and Pristina returned to where they were or even worse. In the following chapter there will be more examples that prove how bad the relations have become and what kind of narrative is used for Albanians especially in the last year when the situation escalated.

8.5. Extreme rhetoric

This category represents a very important finding of this study and that is the existence of the extremely negative rhetoric directed at Albanian officials. It seems quite inappropriate and harmful that such a narrative still exists when Serbia and Kosovo are actually trying to find a solution through dialogue and solve numerous technical and political questions.

The most frequently used elements of this negative rhetoric are inappropriate and rude epithets directed at Albanian politicians, cynical comments and a constant effort to make their politicians look stupid or uneducated. Throughout the years these have been used from time to time; however there is a dramatic increase in the use of such rhetoric in 2018 when the dialogue was actually stopped.

Statements about the supposed lack of education or knowledge of Kosovo politicians is problematic in the sense that such statements give Serbian politicians superiority. They are the ones who criticize, so it means that they must be superior to Albanian politicians. Such statements are harmful for the dialogue process and reconciliation itself because both parties in the dialogue have to consider each other as equal partners.

One of the examples is when Thaçi stated that ASM will not be given executive powers, Vučić replied “Thaçi does not even know what the executive powers are” (Ibid., 24 August, 2015). On another occasion when the President of Parliament in Pristina, Kadri Veseli, commented that Vučić was reading a speech, Đurić immediately replied that maybe Veseli “should start reading, if he even knows how to read, because their politics and behavior is not very literate” (Ibid., 8 July, 2018). As for Haradinaj, the Prime Minister of Serbia Ana Brnabić said that “he only uses the language of violence and he does not understand that his manners of a bouncer are not acceptable in the civilized world”. She also added that “he simply does not recognize the distinction between rights and non-rights” when talking about the blockade of trade (Ibid., 25 December, 2018).

Cynical and ridiculous comments are also a very common part of the rhetoric of Serbian politicians that help them present the other side as inferior. Starting from the statement that Vučić gave when several employees in Brezovica were arrested, he explained that arrest by saying:

It seems that Thaçi is mad because I said that as a Prime Minister I have the obligation to talk to him in Brussels, but I do not want to go with him to the parties and football games, and that is why they have arrested the innocent people that work in Serbian public company. (Ibid., 8 October, 2015)

When Isa Mustafa stated that there will not be any further dialogues with Serbia unless Kosovo obtains visa liberalization, Đurić replied by saying cynically that “Mustafa must be a very powerful man when he can condition the institutions in Brussels” (Ibid., 5 January, 2016).

Edi Rama posted a picture on his Facebook profile from the joint government session of Kosovo and Albania with the caption “Same land/state-same people-same dream”, Đurić commented that “it is good that it will remain just a dream, and won’t become a nightmare of the whole region”. (Ibid., 8 January, 2016).

When Đurić wanted to explain that Thaçi and Haradinaj are not welcome in the north of Kosovo and that they are not allowed to go there because Serbian people do not want to see them, he described that with the following quote:

The furthest Thaçi and Haradinaj can go in the north of Kosovo and Metohija is to a tall building in the southern part of Kosovska Mitrovica, from where, when they climb, they can see the movement of Serbian flag on the fortress of Zvečan. That is the closest they can go in the north. (Ibid., 29 March, 2018).

This particular statement shows how far they are from reconciliation. If Kosovo politicians are not even allowed to go to the part where Serbs live how are they going to get along then or try to work on the normalization of relations? Such provocative statements are unnecessary. In addition, if Kosovo is part of Serbia, as Đurić says, then Haradinaj and Thaçi are the citizens of Serbia and can move freely throughout the country.

Finally, here you can find some of the many negative epithets that are used the most in speeches. Albanians have been called “vandals” for throwing stones at Serbian church (Ibid., 16 October, 2015). Albanian politicians have been called “the ideologists of hatred and extremism” (Ibid., 28 August, 2016). When French authorities decided to release Ramush Haradinaj, Đurić was very upset by that decision and said that that was disrespectful to the victims and their families. He said that Haradinaj committed “horrible crimes, decapitated nine-month-old babies, raped, burned and robbed” (Ibid., 27 April, 2017). He added that his release “encourages crime, chauvinistic euphoria, the sense that slaughtering, killing, robbing and burning everything that is Serbian in Kosovo and Metohija will not be punished” (Ibid., 27 April, 2017). These accusations might seem too harsh and inappropriate for a politician to say without all the evidence of all those crimes. However, it also shows how problematic it is to have in power politicians who have been combatants in the war and who most definitely have participated in the atrocities. Đurić also called Albanian politicians “separatists and terrorists in disguise” (Ibid., 12 May, 2017). When Haradinaj stated that one of the key goals of his Government is taking the Presevo Valley, that triggered Đurić to say that Haradinaj “is ripe for hospitalization”, indicating that he is out of his mind (Ibid., 24 May, 2017). Vučić has also stated that “Haradinaj is a criminal who has raped Serbian, Albanian and Roma women and decapitated them” (Ibid., 7 June, 2017). Thaçi has been mentioned by his “terrorist nickname “snake”” and has been attributed to have “deviant moral system” (Ibid., 30 December, 2017).

When Marko Đurić was arrested in Kosovska Mitrovica that incident triggered many negative comments about Albanian politicians. Vučić stated that they are a “terroristic gang”, in addition to which he described the incident with the following words “50 terrorists have been dragging Đurić through the streets while others were whistling” (Ibid., 26 March, 2018). Đurić has described the incident himself saying that while they were discussing the possible solutions for Kosovo with the citizens “hundreds heavily armed terrorists entered and started biting barehanded innocent people” (Ibid., 27 March, 2018). He continued by saying:

They started biting citizens, women, kicking them and throwing shock bombs, dragging me as a dog on the ground holding my tie, trying to humiliate me, thinking they can humiliate Serbia that way...they have been making selfies while holding my head down and threatening me with knife and Kalashnikov...driving through streets of Pristina and finally putting me in the basement. (Ibid., 27 March, 2018)

He concluded that “these animals should be sent to mental hospitals or sentenced to prison for a long period of time” (Ibid., 28 March, 2018). This incident has ruined the dialogue completely, taking one of the participants in the dialogue to prison in such circumstances is absolutely inappropriate. They claimed afterwards that Đurić had not obtained on time a permit to enter the territory of Kosovo. Even if that was the case he should not have been prosecuted in the way they did it. This also shows that politicians in Pristina are not ready to take the dialogue seriously and negotiate with the other side as they should.

Vučić showed a lot of mistrust towards Albanian politicians saying “they are lying all the time, I know them very well. Whatever they say they lie” (Ibid., 30 March, 2018). Đurić called them „liars and scammers “. He added „there is not even the smallest chance for negotiations with the representatives from Pristina, after all the detestable things they have done, I do not even want to see them “(Ibid., 7 September, 2018). Vučić summed up the future of the dialogue by saying “ they are going to lie that they want the agreement, but they will be working on humiliation of Serbia. Do not have illusions that it is going to be otherwise.” (Ibid., 29 September, 2018).

When Pristina imposed taxes on goods coming from Serbia, Đurić stated that the “trade war that Pristina started only exists in their sick heads who think that in that way they can change something in politics” (Ibid., 6 November, 2018). He also said that “fascism is rising” in Kosovo and as evidence

of that he mentioned the bonfires that Albanians lit for burning the goods from Serbia (Ibid., 27 November, 2018).

When Fatmir Limaj was appointed to be a chief of Pristina's team for negotiations with Belgrade that was a shock for all the politicians in Belgrade. Đurić stated that "appointing one of the most notorious commandants of terrorist KLA as a leader of negotiation team makes the idea of a dialogue a mockery" (Ibid., 15 December, 2018). It is not constructive for a dialogue to appoint anyone who has been accused of war crimes as a negotiator because the other side cannot have trust in that person. Aleksandar Vulin, the Minister of Defense of Serbia summed up everything with the following words:

When you put a killer as a leader of the team for negotiations, then it is clear that you want the dialogue to be killed. Putting Fatmir Limaj as a leader of the negotiations team is against any common sense and makes the idea of a dialogue pointless" (Ibid., 15 December, 2018)

After presenting all these statements it is obvious that by the end of 2018 the dialogue was nonexistent. In addition, the relations between politicians became worse than ever, they were calling each other names and showing disrespect and mistrust. In addition, their actions were inappropriate and against the productive continuation of a dialogue. Everything they were saying or doing was one-sided and usually provocative for the other side. There is definitely no spirit of dialogue in their rhetoric.

8.6. Role of the leaders

Serbian politicians, as well as the politicians from Kosovo, understand the importance of their role as leaders in reconciliation process. However, they both tend to just accuse each other for not doing anything to really change the current situation. They should be the ones who can influence the population by giving the example themselves by acting and speaking in a way that enhances reconciliation. As Đurić said "Kosovo and Serbia can be better places, if they have brave leaders, and that means they should speak more openly, instead of recycling the narrative from the past" (Ibid., 18 October, 2018).

There is the hypothesis that politicians are indirectly guilty for many acts of violence that happen between Serbs and Albanians, because they maintain the atmosphere of hostility with their speeches and acts. When Albanian youth was throwing stones on a Serbian buss Đurić said “I blame the politicians in Pristina, because they are indirectly responsible for creating the atmosphere of violence in Kosovo and Metohija” (Ibid., 12 January, 2017).

When talking about blaming the other side and not being critical about their own acts here is the quote of the statement that Marko Đurić gave about politicians in Kosovo:

The Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija are hostages of people that do not want to solve the important issues connected to the future, economy and the ordinary problems of people living there, those people consider Kosovo and Metohija as their prey, which they have divided among themselves according to the zones of influence each of them has, that match the zones of organized crime, they are the ones who only see profit, they see it even in the conflict between Serbs and Albanians. We do not think that way. (Ibid., 12 February, 2017).

This particular statement, besides blaming the Albanian politicians for everything, testifies how important are the politicians and how much of an impact they do have on the community and overall relations between different communities. According to Đurić’s statement their acts influence every aspect of lives of ordinary people. That is why they are so important in the process of reconciliation as well.

Besides the statements that politicians are giving we also have to follow what they are doing and how that changes the things on the ground. Can we trust each of their words? Ana Brnabić is skeptical towards politicians in Pristina and says that every day they say different and contradictory things. (Ibid., 12 October, 2018)

Whether we can trust their words or not, what they say is important and it influences people’s lives, because of the position they hold thanks to the people who gave them their trust through their votes and the fact that they are the ones who make all the important decisions. Therefore, the politicians have to be responsible and direct people in the right direction both with their words and acts. Such acts could be even the small ones, such as Haradinaj speaking in Serbian in the Kosovo’s Parliament (Ibid., 10 September, 2017, but those acts have a meaning and send the message of

friendship. When the ordinary people see their leaders sending such messages then slowly the hostilities will decrease and normalization would start to happen.

9. Discussion

Based on numerous statements by politicians on both sides it is not difficult to notice that in three-year time period, relations between Serbian and Albanian politicians have dramatically deteriorated. Since implementation of the agreement has not been going as planned both sides have just turned towards using the negative rhetoric about each other. Their discourse was mostly one-sided, without any attempts to create a mutual narrative and try to deconstruct the existing stereotypes and myths. Such behavior of the politicians resulted in refusal by both sides to continue the dialogue in Brussels.

The one who was mentioning reconciliation the most was Hashim Thaçi. The conclusion about his politics and rhetoric that I could obtain from the articles published on his website is that he tried to present himself as someone who is doing everything to make the reconciliation happen. Although, he does seem as the most moderate politician in Kosovo, the limitation of this study is that it does not include all Kosovo local media texts, so we do not have the data that shows what kind of narrative he uses when he addresses the audience in Kosovo. What we do know from his official website, that is in English, is that he tries to show to the international community that he is pro-reconciliation. He had several reconciliatory acts, such as visiting the memorial site of Serbs that have been killed during the war and in that way honoring the victims. In addition, he proposed formation of Truth Commission that would open a discussion about the past. He was the strongest advocate of the idea of reaching the final agreement with Serbia. The Brussels agreement is not a peace agreement, it is just a temporary solution that was necessary for the beginning of the normalization in Kosovo. However, the final peace agreement would have to include the issue of the status and both actors would finally have to agree on a permanent solution.

Once again, we have the major discrepancy in the way politicians see the resolution of Kosovo's status. For all the politicians in Kosovo, the independence of Kosovo is nonnegotiable. On one hand, they are trying to prove that they are an independent country, while on the other hand Serbian politicians are trying to contest that in every possible way. There is a constant battle of who is going to perform better when it comes to proving their standpoint regarding the status. In order to keep

that battle alive and have people's support they use the old myths and one-sided interpretations of history.

Kosovo politicians are creating a new myth that is based on suffering of Albanians and KLA as their only saviors. They talk about KLA in superlatives and do not admit that KLA is responsible for war crimes as well. Since they are trying to prove their statehood, and formation of a new state usually happens after the victory in a war, they are trying to present KLA as the winners who saved the nation from exodus. That history in the making affects the young generations who are going to believe in such narrative and will not look at KLA critically. The problem is that there is no discussion between the communities living in Kosovo about what happened. Politicians are not initiating that process. When there is no discussion about the past, myths and suitable propaganda prevail.

Serbian politicians are using more than ever the Kosovo myth, trying to prove that Kosovo was always Serbian and that Serbs have the right to that territory. Moreover, they are putting emphasis on Serbian medieval history glorifying the rulers of that period and reviving the memory of them by building the new monuments. Đurić sending messages that without Kosovo Serbia does not have a meaning shows enormous step back into the past and unwillingness to look at the future and once for all terminate with the usage of myths for political purposes. Unsuccessful attempt of sending the train, decorated with messages promoting Serbian standpoint that Kosovo is a part of Serbia, which was supposed to create linkages with the people and easier transport, was very cheap propaganda that just brought even more damage to already bad relations.

Both sides are doing absolutely nothing to stop this madness of renewal of the old myths and creation of the new ones. They are doing absolutely nothing to start a discussion about the past. Just occasional declarations that they are pro-reconciliation does not prove that they are doing anything for it to happen.

The dialogue that was held in Brussels seemed promising, especially after the Brussels agreement was signed. However, later on both sides have failed to implement it according to the implementation plan. There is no trust between the parties and the only thing they are doing is accusing the other side for failure of the implementation. While both sides see the EU as an incentive for continuation of the dialogue and implementation of the agreement, Serbia criticizes EU for lack of support to them and Serbian people living in Kosovo. Since there is also no trust in the facilitator it is very challenging to continue the dialogue in the same structure.

The last published Progress Reports by Kosovo and Serbia are written in a very negative tone compared to other reports. In a very short report submitted by Kosovo they listed eight agreements that are blocked or disrupted by Serbia and only two that have been delayed by Kosovo. In conclusion it is written that “it is obvious that Serbian side has been seriously failing in fulfilling its obligations” (Kosovo Progress Report, 6 July, 2017, p. 6). They have also put a comment that seems out of place stating that Serbia promoted changes of borders or exchange of territories “which seemed to have been influenced by Russia and its ambitions to return back its influence, lost after the end of Cold War” (Ibid., p. 6). Serbia was against exchange of territories and Kosovo officials have been mentioning that if Serbia takes the North of Kosovo, they want some regions in Serbia populated by Albanians. Mentioning Russia and their geopolitical interests, which Kosovo officials do not know for sure, seems as a way to show to the EU officials how dedicated they are to the EU and Western powers and distance themselves from Russia. All in all, the report does not show much, but that itself tells us much about the state of their relations with Serbia.

Progress Report submitted by Serbia is long as all the other reports submitted before, but compared to the Kosovo’s report it is just a longer and more detailed version of decayed relations with Kosovo. At the very beginning of the report it is stated that a dialogue is in crisis for a very long time, because of Pristina and their unwillingness to implement the agreement, as well as because of violence used against Marko Đurić (Serbia Progress Report, December, 2018, p.1). One of the conclusions of the report is that Kosovo is only pretending to be committed to the dialogue, while in practice it does everything to disrupt and stop the process (Ibid., p. 1) In addition, socio-political situation got worse as well as the security of people. The report lists all the incidents that happened during timeframe of this report (Ibid., p.7-9). The major complaint of the Serbian side is Pristina’s unwillingness to form ASM, which is the most important element of the Brussels agreement for Serbs. Furthermore, the lack of trust in politicians from Pristina, because of imposing numerous questionable measures, is a tremendous obstacle that makes the dialogue almost impossible (Ibid., p. 28). Finally, after imposing of the taxes to the Serbian goods, Serbs do not see the way or the reason for the dialogue to continue if authorities from Pristina do not revoke such measure.

From 2015 to 2018 there is increase in provocative actions done by both Serbia and Kosovo. Such actions include sending the train with provocative messages to Kosovo, banning the entry to the territory of Kosovo or Serbia, spreading of the negative rhetoric and propaganda etc. There are even more severe actions done by both actors that affected negatively the situation on the ground and

prevented the process or normalization and reconciliation to continue. From the Serbian side these are constant endeavors to discredit any attempt of Kosovo to join international organizations and a mission focused on persuading countries to revoke recognitions of Kosovo's independence. As for Kosovo Albanians, there is a constant focus on state-building rather than on development of the community and creating the conditions for sustainable peace. What was the most frightening for Serbs is creation of Kosovo's Army. In addition, lack of willingness to create ASM and constant prolongation of that process did create mistrust in Albanian politicians and their commitment to the implementation process.

Finally, it is very concerning that hate speech directed to "the other" is very common in the rhetoric of politicians who are supposed to be the leaders of change. On the contrary, they are using the same words that have been used before the war such as "chauvinists, fascists, terrorists", accusing each other for the war crimes and spreading negative propaganda which creates deeper hatred among people. We can conclude that Serbian politicians are the ones who use such rhetoric the most. Albanian politicians seem more moderate and some of them even focus on promotion of reconciliation in their speeches. That is an interesting finding, that might be connected to the sources that were analyzed. One of the reasons for that might be the awareness of Kosovo's politicians that the international community is watching closely their actions and speeches. Therefore, they want to present themselves as politically correct and moderate leaders who have embraced European values and deserve to become members of European family. At the same time, they are not doing much for implementation of the agreement or change of the dominate narrative about the past, or even opening of a discussion about the past. What we do not know is what are they saying for the local Kosovo media, since articles of the local media were not analyzed. On the other hand, analyzing exactly the same official press releases and articles published by the Serbian government we could immediately notice the trend of usage of provocative speech and so many negative stereotypes about Albanians. It is possible that their target group are mostly Serbs, since all the articles are written in Serbian. Their goal might be mobilization of people to support their government based on evoking of negative feelings about "the other" and finding the external enemy for internal problems. They have not shown the maturity to distance themselves from such rhetoric that in the 90s led us to war. Therefore, it is obvious that they are using Kosovo for their ultimate political goal- staying in power. There is no commitment and willingness to change and adjust their

words to the more moderate and appropriate narrative that would be one of the elements needed to proceed with normalization and eventually achieve reconciliation.

In conclusion, based on the facts presented, there is just one straightforward conclusion- the relations between Kosovo and Serbia have deteriorated from 2015 until 2018, due to the lack of implementation of certain provisions of the Brussels agreement and unwillingness of the political leaders to commit to the process of reconciliation.

10. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to discover whether there are changes in the discourse of the key political leaders after the signing of the Brussels agreement, the most important agreement after the end of the war, whose aim was to normalize the relations between Belgrade and Pristina. Moreover, I was trying to find out whether Serbs and Albanians are moving towards reconciliation. According to the theories of reconciliation peaceful resolution of the conflict or reaching an agreement represents one of the first key preconditions for achieving reconciliation. It seems that parties were able to overcome solution-centered biases in perception of information (Maoz, 2004, p. 228) and reach mutually acceptable agreement. However, nothing essentially changed because they were not working on overcoming the relationship-centered biases which are responsible for negative perception of the opponent and glorification of our own group (Ibid., p. 228-229). Signing of the agreement did show a small step towards reconciliation, however poor implementation and unwillingness to work on deconstruction of the myths and stereotypes has not changed the overall climate of such a deep division between these two nations.

In 2005 the opinions of politicians and intellectuals were divided when it comes to the possibility of achieving reconciliation between Serbs and Albanians. Some of the Serbs believed it is possible, for the others it seemed that the more realistic option was normalization of relations, while some were decisively claiming that it is not possible. The reasons they were mentioning proved to be the truth, at least until now, political and cultural level needed for the reconciliation to happen is still very low. As for the Albanians, the key precondition for reconciliation was recognition of Kosovo's independence. In 2013, after signing of the Brussels Agreement both sides were trying to show that

they are committed to the implementation. In addition, first time after the war Serbs have participated in the elections organized by Kosovo institutions. That seemed promising, however that was just formality and once again there was no fundamental change in the beliefs of people and understanding the importance of moving forward. One of the reasons for that is the narrative of the politicians, one sided discourse that presents the benefits of the agreement just for their people rather than presenting its importance in terms of mutual benefits for both nations and their further development of relations. Unfortunately, the development of relations never happened because politicians were not focused on that aspect, so from 2015-2018 the relations got worse. The politicians in Kosovo and Serbia took the wrong path and refused to deal with the past and influence the change of societal beliefs. They returned to the narratives they know the best, the narratives of old myths and stereotypes, the narratives of segregation and accusation of “the other”.

Interpretations of history and use of myths play a major role in inability of the leaders to move forward, stop reproducing the narratives of the past and try to look towards the future. They are still discussing the issue of who came first and who has more rights to the territory of Kosovo. Moreover, the Kosovo myth awakened in 19th century, resurrected in the 90s and widely used today shows very unfortunate use of propaganda for political purposes. Serbian politicians are using all the elements of the Kosovo myth, such as the need to regain the territory, revenge for the unjust seizure of the territory, symbolic visits to Gazimestan, the memorial site of the battle, and provocative speeches about Kosovo as “the heart of Serbia”. Building new monuments dedicated to the rulers of the Nemanjić dynasty and celebrating the „glorious history” of medieval states, that are presented as national, shows strong attachment to the past rather than striving for the future. The Albanian politicians are trying to create new narratives of history where KLA would have the central role as liberators and the ones who helped Kosovo become an independent state. It seems that we are very far from the future where all the historic myths are deconstructed and friendly relations with neighbors restored. Instead of moving towards the future, it seems that the politicians are taking us backwards.

According to the theory, reconciliation depends on the willingness of the leaders to commit to the process of reconciliation (Bar-Siman-Tov,2004, p. 5). In addition, they are the ones who have informational and legitimate power (Bargal&Sivan, 2004, p. 132) in their hands for changing the beliefs of the people. Once the phases of change start, the leader can use the informational power and slowly, but efficiently, change the beliefs and stereotypes people have. Unfortunately, neither

Serbian nor Albanian politicians have fundamentally engaged in any of the phases of change. They have been entering the unfreezing phase sporadically advocating for normalization of relations, but not enough in order to move to the next phase, the movement phase, where people start changing their beliefs (Lewin, 1947, in Bargal&Sivan, 2004, p. 133). When we talk about the methods of reconciliation that the leaders used, once again we have disappointing results. Except of the declarative statement by Hashim Thaçi of the idea of establishing Truth Commissions, the actions promoting truth have not been used. On the contrary, each side tried to promote their versions of truth. As for justice, there have been international trials in ICTY, as well as domestic trials in Serbia and Kosovo, but the number of people convicted is low, for instance there are only 2 KLA soldiers convicted out of 6 that were prosecuted in ICTY. When it comes to the actions promoting regard, that are the most important for the understanding of reconciliation described in this thesis, besides sporadic symbolic actions- such as Thaçi putting wreath on a memorial site of Serbian victims and official meetings between the leaders, nothing else has been applied. In 2005 when politicians were asked about their opinions on apology, for some Serbs apology was just meaningless formality, for some it was acceptable. In 2016 Đurić said that the apology should be sincere and come as a result of the dialogue (Office for Kosovo and Metohija, 21 September, 2016). The dialogue started in 2010 and there is still no apology. There is not even the acknowledgement of the suffering of the other group during the war.

There is the question of who are those politicians that have the legitimacy to represent both societies. On the Serbian side there is Aleksandar Vučić as a President of Serbia, and former Minister of Information in the '90s, who in '95 said "we'll kill 100 Muslims for 1 killed Serb". Is that the type of a leader that is ready to begin the reconciliation process? Are maybe Hashim Thaçi or Ramush Haradinaj, the President and the Prime Minister of Kosovo, who were both KLA combatants during the war and who are holding the same leadership positions still? The theory says that transformational leaders, the type of leaders that is the most suitable to begin reconciliation process, should not be someone who fought during the war. The four elements of a transformational leader, the one who is trustworthy, with a strong ethics, a motivator that has a vision of future, the one who questions the stereotypes and sees others as individuals (Bass, 1997, in Bargal&Sivan, 2004, p. 131), are not met in the politicians that are currently in power. Therefore, we need democratic change of the leadership for a transformational leader to appear. In Kosovo such change happened when Albin Kurti became the Prime Minister of Kosovo in 2020, however we

are still waiting to see what his political agenda is and whether the dialogues between Belgrade and Pristina will continue.

Finally, there is the question of ripeness for reconciliation and the preconditions that have to be met. From the data analysis we can draw a conclusion that there is still no ripeness for reconciliation. The importance of resolving the issue of status of Kosovo is evident even in the data from 2005, collected at the time when Kosovo still has not even declared independence. The data show that without resolution of that burning question there will be no sufficient preconditions for the substantial reconciliation process to begin. Peaceful resolution of the conflict is still not fulfilled condition, because Brussels Agreement aims to normalize some aspects of life of both communities in Kosovo, but it is not the final agreement that tackles hard political questions. Furthermore, there is no change in societal beliefs, including changes of goals of the group, perception of “the other”, taking responsibility for the actions during the war, change of collective memory about the past and finally realization of the parties about the benefits of living in peace (Bar-Tal&Bennink,2004, p. 20-22).

In conclusion, as Pavlović and Bajrami say “if we would only judge Serbian-Albanian relations based on the speeches of the current key political leaders and media we would get the impression that these two groups hate each other since time immemorial” (Pavlović&Bajrami, 2019, p. 3). However, there are many examples in the history where Serbs and Albanians had friendly and harmonious relations and lived in peace with each other. Therefore, in order to achieve reconciliation, defined as “transformation of relations of hostility and resentment to friendly and harmonious ones” (Bar-Tal, 2000b in Bar-Siman-Tov, 2004, p. 4) we have to start emphasizing the positive examples of friendship and cooperation. If politicians lack political will to begin the process, we can start it ourselves on the individual level and maybe bottom-up approach would give better results in the future.

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