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Toward A Psychoanalytic Theory
of Ethnic War:
Implications for War and Peace
In Kosovo/Kosova

Filip Kovacevic

**TOWARD A PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY OF ETHNIC WAR:
IMPLICATIONS FOR WAR AND PEACE IN KOSOVO/KOSOVA**

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Toward a Psychoanalytic Theory of Ethnic War: Implications for War and Peace in Kosovo/Kosova¹

Even though psychoanalysis has generally drawn its insights from the psychopathology of the individual, it has also sought from the very beginning to use these insights to explain the pathological behavior of the group. Freud, for instance, wrote on war as early as 1915. It is the guiding principle of this paper that psychoanalytic theories do shed a particularly illuminating light on the causes and intensity of war, and that as such they should represent a necessary component of any attempt to provide a coherent framework for understanding ethnic war as the most frequent “type” of war during the last decade of the 20th century.

This article is composed of four parts. Part I addresses briefly the main epistemological and methodological issues concerning the endeavor of applied psychoanalysis and psychoanalysis as a whole. Part II is a survey of psychoanalytic theories of war with an extensive but of course not exclusive focus on the theories of Freud, Glover, Fornari, and Volkan. Part III assesses the explanatory potential of these theories as applied to the ethnic war between the Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo/Kosova. Both Serbian and Albanian perceptions of their own and the “enemy” group are investigated under the guidance of psychoanalytic precepts. The information on this conflict has been gathered both from academic sources and news magazines from the region. The emphasis is on the reports from the front and the interviews of political leaders. Comparisons with the Cyprus conflict are made where appropriate. Lastly, Part

¹ This article is a revised version of a paper presented at the 1999 meeting of the Southern Political Science Association. I thank Robin Remington for her help.

IV presents the implications of the exploration of the Kosovo/Kosova war for a psychoanalytic theory of ethnic war.

Psychoanalysis and Truth

Modern philosophy admits of two types of scientific truth claims based on two fundamentally different assumptions about the nature of the world and its relation to human subjectivity. (Hanley 1992) The first type assumes that the facts of the world exist autonomously from the conceptual framework in which the scientist approaches them. It is precisely the task of the scientist to adjust her intellectual formulations – her theories – to the objectively existing configuration of facts. The value of the proposed theory is to be estimated by how well it does exactly that, how well it *explains* what really is: the principle here is one of *correspondence* between the theory and the fact. There is therefore only one correct explanation; the facts, if they are really out there, are unchanging, and can be structured solely in one way: they cannot both be and not be. This type of truth claims comes under the general philosophical heading of realism, and it has been associated with the theory construction and methodology in natural sciences. It is perhaps best exemplified by the attitude of Galileo: “No matter what you (the Inquisitors) say, think, or believe – *eppur si muove*.” (see Hanley, pp. 1-2)

The second type of truth claims takes the subjectivity of the scientist as its focus. As Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, argues in his Cartesian Meditations, all objects of the external worlds – the facts – acquire their significance from their relations with the intentional processes of consciousness. It is consciousness – the dynamic subjectivity of the scientist – that gives otherwise indeterminate objects their structural delineation. It pierces them by “a ray of meaning.” By its persistent efforts to deny the essential role

subjectivity plays in all scientific endeavors, the method of natural science, in Husserl's view, actually retards humanity's most fundamental quest – the quest for the meaning of human existence. By clinging firmly to 'objective' neutrality, science relinquishes a link which in ancient days bound it with ethics: it ceases to be able to judge right and wrong, good and bad. Instead of facilitating the individual's emancipation from the darkness of myth – “man's coming into adulthood” (Kant) – it becomes a blind tool for any purpose, including the wholesale annihilation of human beings under the direction of modern 'mythologies.'

However, once the importance of the scientist's subjective processes is taken into consideration – once the quest for meaning begins--it comes to be apparent that the content of these processes is extensively influenced by the economic, historical, cultural, and ideological factors. What one perceives a certain fact to mean, or (in other words) how one *understands* a fact, is shaped by one's general outlook on life, which in turn is constituted by the countless interrelationships between one's personal and social identity. What this means for the general theory of knowledge is that one is left with several interpretations, several ways of understanding the same fact: there now appear a rational choice, a Marxist, a hermeneutical, a Lacanian interpretation. How is one then to evaluate their 'correctness,' their truth value? There are some, like Wittgenstein in his later works, who assert that no evaluation is possible. According to him, these are all “language games” and one cannot judge the truth of one from the standpoint of the other. One has to enter a game to be able to say anything about it. But by the fact that one has now become a part of a specific game, one has abandoned all other games and therefore also a rightful claim to assess their truth value. Even Kuhn (1970) argues that one has to be “converted”

to a new paradigm: it seems that accepting an interpretation as true is (at least initially) an act of faith.

Yet some standards do apply, and this should calm those wary of the contact with extreme relativism. The foremost standard is that of coherence. The interpretation is to be accepted as valid if the scientist provides a coherent theoretical narrative in which all the facts known find their place. Thus the scientist must at all times strive to incorporate all emerging observations within her already existing theoretical body of knowledge, and must be willing to revise her stands if “anomalous” facts keep surfacing repeatedly. Of course frequent revisions do not mean the discarding of the theory itself: they mean only its refinement and more nuanced application to ever-expanding areas. The abandonment of the entire theory can only be occasioned by a rare event, which Kuhn calls the *paradigm shift*, and which (as already pointed out) cannot be accounted for in terms of the regular “normal” scientific procedure. Once the old theory is dropped, the scientist finds herself in *another world*, and entirely new normal scientific methods have to be constructed. That the experience of the world is theory-determined to this extent is one of the essential tenets of classical Kantian idealism, and the principle of coherence draws heavily on the tradition of idealist philosophy. The coherence based truth claims have in many ways made their home in modern social sciences, especially sociology and history.

The question arises at this point as to what kind of truth claims psychoanalysis is making? Those based on the principle of correspondence, or those founding their truth on coherence? Generally speaking, psychoanalysis is considered to take the side of the coherence theory of truth. For instance, according to a well-known historian Peter Loewenberg (1987), psychoanalysis puts forth hypotheses that on one hand seek to make

sense of the known facts, and on the other represent an extension or elaboration of the already existing psychoanalytic theories and hypotheses. Psychoanalysis makes the body of its theories into a systemic whole linked together by the logical procedures of deduction and induction. The goal of its theories is not so much to mirror what ‘really’ exists out there as it is to offer possible avenues of approaching and understanding the multi-layered forms of human existence. In Loewenberg’s opinion, the question is not “‘show me the location of the superego (as I can see a tubercle bacillus)’”, but rather ‘does the concept of the superego serve a useful . . . clinical and research function?’” (p.34) In this way, psychoanalysis engages in constructing what Max Weber calls the *ideal types* – theoretical entities which can guide and orient research, but can never be found in their ‘pure’ state in reality. Loewenberg asserts that the ‘ideal types’ or ‘models’ serve the psychoanalyst to uncover certain universal traits in the individuals or groups under consideration, but that, in addition, the psychoanalyst should not hesitate to use her intuition or unique life experiences to demonstrate how the cases under study differ from the general postulates of the theory. (p.37) Subjectivity of the analysts, or those analyzed (the analysands) should not be seen as an obstacle to a successful scientific endeavor. (1) (see also Lacan 1988 pp. 20-21) According to Loewenberg, blind adherence to the principle of ‘objectivity’ reveals an outdated 19th century understanding of science. (p.34) That the approach he proposes may lead to several interpretation of the same fact is not perceived as problematic by Loewenberg. Instead, he welcomes “competing paradigms” (Lakatos), claiming that their presence greatly enriches our understanding of the world.

Loewenberg has extensively employed the psychoanalytic concepts in his work (in the famous 1971 study of the Nazi youth cohort, for instance), and he draws an important

parallel between historical and psychoanalytic research: both require a thorough knowledge of the context of the phenomena under study. A well-thought out historical project depends on the wholesome understanding of the social, economic, and political factors of the time period which it seeks to examine, while a psychoanalytic investigation pieces together the family dynamic of one's early childhood. However, since the family is not a nomadic unit outside of society, the political, economic, and other factors impact upon its structure by shaping the attitudes and behavior of the parents (combined with the values and attitudes transmitted to them by their own parents). These attitudes are in turn passed onto the children, and, depending on the way they are assimilated, which is to some extent idiosyncratic, may in fact become a source of the child's future psychological problems.(2) Loewenberg claims that the understanding of both historical and psychological influences is necessary for the study of both the individual and the group: he suggests that the best of history and the best of psychoanalysis is nothing else but a *coherently* narrated psychohistory. (1995, p. 6)

This article takes its cue from Loewenberg's argument, and also assumes the principle of coherence as constituting the nature of truth. It grew out of a commitment to serious psychoanalytic research and the refinement and substantiation of its claims, and its aim is to offer persuasive evidence of the applicability of psychoanalytic theories to the skeptics within the scholarly community who doubt their scholarly potential. Convincing the skeptics is of course a long-term task, and I would like to be immodest enough to consider this paper as a small contribution toward its eventual completion.

Psychoanalytic Theories of War

In the introduction to this paper, I have stated that psychoanalysis has generally been perceived as the study of the psychological forces within the individual, but now, considering that I plan to examine several psychoanalytic theories very closely, the heuristic inadequacy of such a statement becomes apparent. In other words, no individual is a self-enclosed monad, and thus even in his or her inner psychological dynamic is most of the time engaged with others. It is true that these interactions with others can be colored by the individual's own fantasy to a smaller or a larger extent (hence, neuroses), or even severely distorted (psychoses), and yet the basic fact remains that the individual (starting a few months after her birth) is a social being. It may even be the case that, as Lacan points out, the very identity of an infant as a self-conscious being depends on her being recognized to be so by the others. Not surprisingly, these others are in the vast majority of cases the family members, especially the mother. Freud's structural division of the human psyche underlines the importance of parental influence. Thus, in addition to the *id* (the unconscious component) and the *ego* (the conscious self-aware component), there is also the *ego ideal*, which reflects the conditions, requirements, and values of the infant's immediate environment. (1922, pp. 69-70) Its function is essentially one of "censorship" or conscience, and its more 'punishing' variant is sometimes referred to as the *super-ego*. One feels guilty when what one has done does not accord with the standards of the super-ego; one feels proud when one's conscious ego-directed actions approximate the norms of success and happiness contained within the ego ideal. According to Freud, understanding the dynamic interaction between the individual's ego and ego ideal is crucial in trying to account for the workings of any social group.

Freud (1922) begins his exploration of the psychology of the group by observing that the individual's inclusion in a social group (e.g. ethnic, professional, revolutionary, etc.) affects and modifies the orientation toward life she has come to consider her own. A dramatic example of this modification can be seen in the actions of a member of a revolutionary or 'warring' group. She might for instance commit acts that she would have condemned fiercely when approached apart from the group. According to Freud, this is so because the individual's immersion into the group gives her a sense of limitless might, a sense of fearlessness to free the unconscious impulses – infused with hostile feelings toward all others, including the closest siblings – which had to be repressed for the sake of tranquil communal life and civilizational progress. (p. 28) Protected by the numerical strength and projective power of the group, the individual can act out her unconscious fantasies without fear of punishment. In psychoanalytic terms, the dissolution of the vigilant ego-ideal (one's own sense of responsibility) represents the dethronement of the restrictive parental authority, and is (therefore) a source of intense enjoyment to the ego. Yet once the 'magic' spell of revolution or war is over and the structures of the ego-ideal re-establish themselves due to the onset of tranquility, feelings of guilt of varying intensity begin to beset the former revolutionaries or combatants. It is thus not surprising that in many countries revolution "ate its own children," or that post-war psychological 'syndromes' are frequently 'resolved' by suicide: it is the individual's conscious and unconscious guilt feelings brought about by the re-installment of the ego-ideal that did her in.(3)

However, Freud claims that it might be easier to uncover the components making up the group dynamic in the study of groups which are more enduring structures of social

life than those forged in the midst of a revolution or war: in many ways, the former construct a platform from which the latter takes off. (Hernandez 1988; Mitscherlich 1978) Thus he turns his attention to the Church and the army. Freud contends that what holds these groups together is not their institutionalized power to ostracize and punish their members for non-compliance, but instead the “libidinal” bonds between the members and their leader, and between the members themselves. (p. 82) *Libido* is defined by Freud as life-enabling energy which acts as a force behind the emotions of love. (p. 37) It is essentially directed toward sexual satisfaction, but, in order to make possible the development of civilization, has been channeled into the accomplishment of non-sexual tasks. Freud calls this process of deflecting libido from its original goal *aim-inhibition*, and considers aim-inhibited libidinal impulses as the glue that holds groups together. He argues that only aim-inhibited impulses can lead to the establishment of enduring group bonds, because the actual attainment of their aims would result in a considerable decrease of libidinal energy, and in this way cause frequent group dissolutions. (p.78)

According to Freud, the members of the group direct their aim-inhibited libido primarily toward the leader who in his or her unrivalled power appears to them as an ideal “father [and mother] surrogate.” They *identify* with him or her, which means that the valued qualities of the leader as their chosen love object are incorporated into their individual psychological structures. In this way, the image of the seemingly omnipotent leader is *internalized* and “substituted” for what the individual egos of the group members want or consider ideal, but cannot reach. Thus, through having the leader’s image as an internal component of their own psyches, the members of the group come to possess the sought-after qualities indirectly. What is revealed in this way is that the

motivating force behind the whole process is *narcissism*, the love of oneself. In addition, it also happens that the ego-ideal of the group members (their conscience) in place before their identification with the leader is extinguished: the loved object (the internalized image of the leader) has assumed its place. The criticism of the leader therefore becomes impossible: he or she has “usurped,” or in military terms *occupied*, the critical faculty of the group members’ egos. As a result, the leader can do no wrong, he or she hovers omnipotently in the realm of supreme goodness, and as such is followed unthinkingly and happily. (p. 75) This process of the ego-ideal “replacement” is most frequently seen in the case of individuals whose ego and ego-ideal are not clearly separated due to disturbances in early childhood environment. They are easily persuaded to abandon their critical and reasoning powers for the blind obedience to the leader’s demands – the new *firmer* ego-ideal. (p. 102; see also Loewenberg’s study of the Nazi youth cohort (1971))

On the basis of their mutual identification with the leader, the group members also identify with each other though less intensely. On an unconscious level, they might all consider themselves sons and daughters of the same father (mother). Yet, as Freud points out, this does not make their relations free of conflict. In fact, Freud (1918) asserts that all lasting closely-knit human bonds create a certain amount of animosity – *narcissism of small differences*, or a willingness to protect (at least) a semblance of personal autonomy. (p. 199; 1930 p. 72) The way that the group deals with this slowly-burning hostility is to *displace* it onto an outside group, or an ‘external enemy.’ (1922 p. 18, fn. 1) As a result, the intolerance of the group toward the outsiders increases: it becomes more outwardly aggressive and conflict-prone.

The radical restructuring of Freud's view regarding the group intolerance and violence directed toward those who are not its members came about when in the 1920s he postulated the existence of the death instinct (Thanatos) in the psychological make-up of every individual. In Freud's view, this instinct works to undo the efforts of the libido (the life-instinct, or Eros) to bind all living beings together "into ever larger units." It seeks to rupture fundamentally all life-enabling bonds in order to hasten the organism's death and re-immersion into inanimate nature. (1930 p. 77; 1933 p. 90) According to Freud, instinctual energy propelling the death instinct finds its means of release in human aggression and destructiveness.

Originally (in earliest infancy) all aggression is directed toward oneself because in a first few months of her life the infant is not aware of the existence of others. Subsequently however aggression is *externalized* and oriented toward other persons in order to enable the life-instinct to proceed with the task of fueling growth and development of the individual. (1933, p. 92) It is the purpose of civilization to put a check on the individual's externalized aggressive instincts (drives) by the political community's appropriation of the right to use violence and the imposition of severe penalties on the individuals who commit actions forbidden by the laws. Only in the times of crisis and fragmentation of political authority, or, conversely, in the times of the political community's active and organized channeling of violence against the enemy within and without, are these destructive tendencies allowed to surge forward and perform their deathly deeds. Then it is truly revealed what has been only temporarily repressed by societal bonds – *homo homini lupus*. It is also revealed that to a large extent the uninhibited consummation of aggression is instinctually satisfying: it may be seen as

a derivative of the narcissistic (self-loving) infantile desire for the omnipotent control of one's environment. (1930 p. 81) Freud asserts that even though this wish for domination (or as Nietzsche calls it the will-to-power) may be tempered by libidinal energy (Eros) and to a certain degree repressed by the work of civilization, it can never be extinguished. Thus, in his view, periodic wars and outbreaks of aggression and violence seem inevitable.

However, Freud points to two possible sources of hope for humanity's peaceful future. The first he defines as "a strengthening of the intellect," while the second necessitates "an introversion of the aggressive impulse." (1933 p. 97) In other words, for this planet to become a less violent place, all societies should be built on the foundations of a rational and just administration. In addition, the development of a strong individual ego-ideal (conscience) should be facilitated in order to restrain internally and forcefully the individual's own aggressive drives. A step toward attaining these goals might be made by reducing the size of political units and by augmenting the importance of the family.

Edward Glover (1948 [1931]), a well-known English psychoanalyst, builds upon Freudian formulations on the innateness of individual aggressiveness to the study of war in more detail. He takes as his starting point the existence of infantile sadism (aggression projected outward) and infantile masochism (aggression projected inward). (p. 15) Aggression has to be projected in one way or another because the aggressive drive compulsively seeks its object. In the case of sadism, it results in a hateful attitude toward other individuals and objects accompanied by the love of oneself (narcissism). One look at the nurseries may be enough to convince anybody of the appropriateness of this

proposition. The infants kick and scream; they behave destructively toward objects given to them to play with, because of their instinctual desire to be in control of the environment and their frustration at being unable to do so. Yet the infants ultimately refuse to recognize that their tense and anxious feelings stem from their own inner demands, that is, from their irrepressible desire for instinctual gratification. They proceed to deposit the blame for their anxiety and anger onto the individuals surrounding them: the “inner enemy” is transformed into the “outer enemy.” (p. 19)

Since the bond connecting the infant and the mother (or the mothering person) in early infancy is extremely strong (one could even say unbreakable), the infant might also react aggressively when she feels that the mother is threatened by an external force (be it another family member, or possibly a stranger belonging to what the child will later learn to see as an antagonistic religious or ethnic group). This kind of infantile imagery (fantasy) is subsequently re-played in the situation of war between mature adults, when for instance phrases such as “protecting the motherland” are used to justify offensive or defensive actions. (p. 26) In addition, due to the intensity of outwardly oriented aggressive feelings, there begins to develop a certain level of guilt within the infant’s psychological dynamic. The feeling of guilt re-directs a portion of aggressive energy and focuses it on the infant’s psyche itself – it becomes a form of masochistic punishment with an implicit desire of putting the infant’s own existence in danger. (p. 39) As is well known, in the life of an adult the most extreme manifestation of masochism is suicide. Yet, as Freud has pointed out, a proper amount of inwardly directed aggression (masochism) is beneficial, because it paves the way for the formation of a strong super-ego, that is, a firm sense of individual ethical responsibility.

It is important to remember that both infantile sadism and masochism generally operate beyond conscious control: they belong to the realm of the unconscious, which is seen as a primeval and irrational part of the individual psyche infused with the energy of boundless and non-differentiated desire. (p. 138) It is exactly the energy contained in the unconscious that makes possible the life functions of the individual. Therefore, all conscious actions are to varying extents permeated by unconscious libidinal and aggressive instinctual demands. Only in the course of a psychoanalytic session can the vehemence of these demands be potentially modified through a fuller understanding of their dynamic. While psychoanalysis may provide a successful “cure” for pathological sadistic or masochistic tendencies, war, in Glover’s view, is an *attempt* at such a cure as well, but one that fails miserably. Brought about by the amplification of unconscious sadism and masochism through external tension, stress, and insecurity, war (just like madness) can be seen as an ill-fated contrivance to reduce the fury of internal aggressive demands. And, like madness, it results in more pernicious psychological (and physical) damage than would occur through any other “healing” technique. (p. 31)

Franco Fornari (1975 [1966]), an Italian psychoanalyst who has written extensively on the war phenomenon, also sees war as a sort of a socially instituted “therapy” for dealing with essentially psychological anxieties present in varying degrees in every individual. (pp. XV, XVII) Fornari put forth a metaphor of an iceberg to describe how these internal anxiety-driven processes motivate the war making. The tip of the iceberg (a small portion of the iceberg which can actually be observed above water) depicts the impact that the hostile actions of the ‘real’ enemy out there have on the behavior of the individuals combined in a social group, be it a tribe, a clan, or an ethnicity. However, the

violent response of the individuals is only in part motivated by the actions of the enemy: its primary instigator is to be found in that much greater, though submerged and obscured part of the iceberg – in the unconscious fantasies of persecution, connected to the existence of the ultimate danger, the internal “Terrifier.” (p. XVI) This “Terrifier,” which for heuristic purposes can be understood as an unconscious manifestation of the death instinct (Freud), cannot be faced directly – that would result in the sure annihilation of the individual's life. However, anxieties arising out of its presence within the psyche can be dealt with by externalizing and projecting the feelings of rage and hostility felt toward it onto an individual or a social group, which has customarily or historically been seen as the “bad influence,” or the enemy. Thus war can be seen as an attempt to destroy or eliminate the “Terrifier” indirectly. The “absolute” danger of death is exchanged for the “relative” one, because the violent conflict with the enemy may take one’s life away, but there is a chance that it will not. (p. XVIII) According to Fornari, external enemies generally exist only as substitutes for the “Terrifier,” and war is nothing else but the attempted alleviation or resolution of inner psychological conflicts through the interplay of events in the external world. (p. XXVI)

However, it is clear that if the “Terrifier” is a fact of psychological life, then it must exist not only in wartime, but in peacetime as well. This is acknowledged by Fornari, and he points to the existence of a “psychological readiness to fight,” which permeates all peacetime undertakings and is ever ready to explode into yet another violent conflict. (p. 17; Atkins 1971 p. 557) Yet can a psychoanalytic theory be more specific about the mechanisms, which transform this “war-readiness” into an actual explosion, an actual

war; can it delineate the path linking the evil thought to the evil deed? Fornari claims that it can, and refers to the psychological processes underlying the formation of the group.

As Freud before him, Fornari asserts that the group is founded on the basis of a mutual group identification with the same love object. (p. 36) This object may be either a person (a charismatic leader), or an idea (an ideology, or a national or ethnic belongingness). The object's safeguarding comes to be considered of utmost importance for the group's existence: it is a thread, which binds the group members together, and they are called on to sacrifice their own safety and even life if the love object is endangered. The group members generally do so in an enthusiastic manner, due to the unconscious parallels they have drawn between the security afforded them by the membership in the group and the security they had once enjoyed under the care of the mother or any other primary caretaker. The love object is the guarantor of this security; it is a "good" mother who used to offer food as a gift. (pp. 34-35)

However, there were times when the infant's needs were not taken care of: she was left hungry or cold. In the infant's psychic representation of reality, the "good" mother was transformed into the "bad" unfeeling one: she became the mother that the infant could justifiably be enraged at. Yet the "good" mother would eventually return, and the infant would be fed. Nevertheless, the infant was still aware of those hostile feelings: she now had to hide them for fear that if the "good" mother found them out, she would get angry herself and would never return. The only available psychic mechanism that the infant had in order to disengage herself from these feelings was their externalization onto other outside objects or persons. A sort of a paranoid reasoning developed as a result – 'I

am not a hating person; they are the hating ones; they hate both me and my mother; they are the ones who are “bad.”” (p. 23)

According to Fornari, the same psychological dynamic persists into the adult life when the group’s love object is concerned. The group members unconsciously cherish an ambivalent (love/hate) relation with it, but in order to eliminate this ambivalence – for fear that the love object may desert them or that other group members might ostracize them – they are compelled to project their destructive, hateful tendencies toward the love object onto the enemy group. Their perception of the hatred that the enemy might already hold against them is thus compounded manifold: the enemy’s hatred is now amplified through mixing with their own projected aggressiveness. (p. 36)

Some individuals may be especially anxious about ‘proving’ their allegiance to the love object, possibly due to the repeated bad mothering experiences in early childhood. They will have unconsciously accumulated a considerable amount of hostility and rage toward the love object, which they will seek to deny ever more vigorously and project onto the enemy group with obsessive scrupulousness. In this way, they will come to see the enemy in the darkest possible light, and the slightest possible threat to the love object (which may be so heavily infused with their fantasy as to lose any objective grounding) might be able to trigger a violent reaction. If in some cases such an individual attains a high leadership position, it is likely that her feelings will demonstrate the existence of a very low threshold for initiating a violent warlike action. She will seek to persuade or manipulate other members of the group (most frequently through propaganda) to come to see the issue at hand the way she sees it, the way which depicts the violation of the love object as assured, unless the forceful course of action is undertaken. (p. XXIV)

More likely than not, their own aggressive/protective feelings thus aroused, the group members will follow their leader into an actual war. Once in war, their reality-testing (the function of the ego) will be seriously impaired, due to the emerging close coordination between the id (what they fantasize to be the case) and the ego-ideal (how they should act on the basis of what is given, but now is substantially fantasized). (p. 15) In this way, actions will be undertaken and justified based on the psychic imaginings in which all 'badness' and cruelty is displaced onto the enemy, while one's own group remains pure, noble, and good. An obvious case of distorting and twisting reality in wartime, which seems to be perpetrated by all combatants across the board (pointing to general psychopathology), involves the reporting of casualties. One side may thus seek to underreport or even not report at all one's own, while the number of the enemy's dead and wounded will be inflated. (p. 73) After the war, especially for the sake of reparations, the argument might be reversed (one inflates the number of one's own casualties, while minimizing the number of the enemy's); but this only points to the continued persistence of war-induced pathological disturbances into peacetime.

Vamik Volkan (1979, 1988, 1997), a Turkish Cypriot – American psychoanalyst, examines in depth how political, historical, and cultural influences shape the ways in which the individual aggressive impulses are channeled. (see also Caspary 1993) He agrees with Fornari that the experience of infantile overdependence and helplessness leads to the accumulation of hostile and vengeful feelings against the primary caretaker – the mother. However, as already pointed out, since the mother is also a 'good' feeding mother, the infant strives to eliminate the angry feelings she harbors against the mother by externalizing her aggression onto the persons and objects in the outside world. (1986

pp. 18-19) Yet the question remains as to how these persons and objects are chosen.

What is it about them that makes them, as it were, ready-made and more or less successful “containers” of the infant’s own ‘bad’ feelings, of her own ‘bad’ self-representations?

According to Volkan, these external entities are made “suitable” through the historical, transgenerational experience of the group within which the infant is brought up. (p. 31) For instance, a Turkish Cypriot mother might manifest her own conscious and unconscious anxiety when encountering a Greek Cypriot, and then through the closely-knit intimate bonds linking her and her infant transmit her own feelings to the infant. As a consequence of repeated encounters with Greeks, the infant will come to associate their presence with the increased amount of anxiety (and possibly also with a threat to the ‘good’ mother), and will begin directing her own externalized aggression (stemming from the presence of ‘badness’ within her psyche) onto them. (1979 p. 45)

In Volkan’s view, these historically and culturally group-based externalizations are exactly what binds children to their specific national or ethnic identity, and are therefore the same for all children in the group in question. (see also Boyers 1986) Yet the extent to which they are made use of to assure the coherence and ‘goodness’ of the individual’s own ego (her own self) depends on the individual’s psychological development and the amount of aggression and feelings of injury it has generated in her psyche. (1988 pp. 32-33) Even the passage through adolescence, which entails the dissolution of many childhood attachments and the diversification of the objects of emotional investment, will nonetheless act to affirm and strengthen the individual’s feeling of belonging to a particular ethnic or national group. The individual will thus continue to draw upon the

group's "suitable targets" for externalizing her aggressive and hostile attitudes. The educational system and the peer pressure will also reinforce the individual's national or ethnic identity, but their influence will remain most successful within the psychological boundaries established by the primary childhood experiences. (pp. 38-39)

An important development in the context of these early experiences is the child's handling of what a famous English psychoanalyst Winnicott calls a transitional object (Winnicott 1953). A transitional object can be any object in the child's vicinity, and even a melody or a phrase to which the child directs the feelings of love and in some cases also the feelings of hate. It acts as a substitute for the intimate connection between the child and the (absent) mother. It may perform a "maladaptive" function, when it becomes a motivating factor behind an addiction or stealing, but generally it helps the child attain a coherent sense of self separate from that of the mother. (p. 44) It is a sort of a "protosymbol" endowed with magic and used by the child to externalize (and preserve) 'good' parts of oneself where they can be reached neither by the child's own 'bad' impulses nor by the hostile and threatening outside factors. (p. 46)

In the adult life, the place of a transitional object might be taken up by a national symbol, such as a flag or a coat of arms, or any other kind of object or even gesture linked specifically to one's belonging to the given ethnic or national group. (p. 75) For instance, the Palestinians living in the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip secretly shared objects, such as rings or songs, investing them with 'good' feelings, while meticulously hiding them from the Israelis. These objects helped keep firm the Palestinian group's stand of defiance toward the other enemy Israeli group, while strengthening its intra-group ties. (p. 77) Also, when the Turks of Cyprus were forced by the Greeks to live in small,

closed-off enclaves in the late 1960s, the hobby of taking care of parakeets became widespread among them. According to Volkan, the parakeets represented a symbol of freedom for the 'imprisoned' Turks. The Turks externalized their own needs for freedom and care onto the care of the birds, and hoped that their own lives would attain a similar degree of freedom and security. (pp. 78-80) It is interesting to note that the hobby all but vanished, once the Turks were granted a right to leave the enclaves.

Some symbols, such as flags, or locations and places such as cemeteries, religious objects, or even rivers and mountains are, through their repeated identification with the individual's sense of belonging to a specific ethnic or national group, strongly emotionally invested in and thus (as all love objects) *internalized* by the individuals. They come to form the inextricable components of the individual's inner self-representations: an aggressive action toward them represents an attack on the individual's own self (her ego) and her ability to function in a manner well-adapted to her environment. As a result, the individual's capacity for reality-testing might be diminished, and she may seek to retaliate mercilessly. For instance, the loss of the territory of one's state may represent such a "narcissistic injury," such a shock to the good psychic investment of the ego, that a violent reaction in a war-like manner may appear as the only option. (p. 128)

As Freud has pointed out in his elaboration of the phenomenon of the narcissism of minor differences, it is usually the case that the greatest hostility arises between groups, which have lived side by side for generations. According to Volkan, this is so because these groups have become the each other's "suitable objects" for externalization of all 'bad' and hostile feelings. As a result, they engage in daily "rituals" to maintain the

distance between them founded upon their small differences. For instance, before the start of the Cyprus conflict in 1963, the Turks and the Greeks would share promenade trails and gathering places, but would smoke different brands of cigarettes and wear differently colored sashes. In the months leading to the conflict, the need to cling to these minor differences and thus affirm the coherence of one's group identity became so great that a Greek would prefer death to wearing a red sash (a symbol of Turkish identity), while a Turk would suffer the same so as not to wear a black one (a symbol of Greek identity). (p. 108) A similar phenomenon can be observed in Northern Ireland: the Protestants paint their house doors green, while the Catholics paint them blue. (p. 110)

As can be seen in the Cyprus example, when the distance between the groups seems to be threatened (possibly due to economic or political instability), minor differences become extremely important. This is so because the opposing groups come to face the prospect of having to integrate their own externalized, unwanted, and hateful images and representations. In order to forestall such a turn of events, the groups step up the stereotyping and "dehumanization" of the enemy. (p. 120) As the conflict grows imminent, they seek to erect a firm psychological "boundary" between the group's values and the enemy's perceived failings: by the time the tanks start rolling, the enemy group will have been deprived of all human characteristics – it will become a 'monster,' a vermin which it is one's highest *ethical* duty to exterminate. (p. 125)

Once the war has begun, the loss of the dear ones is inevitable; casualties abound on both sides. Most significantly, the actual loss of somebody dear carries in its wake profound implications for the individual's psyche. Freud, for instance, notes that when faced with the loss of the loved one, the ego "splits" as it were into two parts. One part of

the ego denies that the loved one exists no more in order to avoid a paralysis in mental functioning, while the other part deals with the loss and tries to come to grips with pain. (p. 137) It takes a considerable amount of time for the “splitting” to be resolved, and the ego integrated once again.

The psychological process through which the ego strives to regain coherence fractured by the loss is called mourning. If mourning is not resolved or “worked-through,” it may represent an enduring source of intense psychic pain. On the other hand, sometimes the process of mourning is facilitated by the use of a “linking object,” which is an object in the outside world that connects the mourner with the loved one who has been lost (pp. 161-162) According to Volkan, linking objects are just as important in the process of a collective (group) mourning after a war or a natural catastrophe as they are in the individual mourning experience. (pp. 170-171) For example, monuments serve as “containers” of unresolved group mourning. Pain is externalized onto them, and the group is enabled to move on psychologically: it has freed itself of at least a part of its burden of grief. However, some monuments such as for instance the Vietnam War Memorial remain “hot” for a long time; they continue to provoke intense anger and pain. (p. 171) Horrific experiences of war suffering may transform even the living individuals into the memorials of suffering and pain. Volkan chronicles the case of a Turkish Cypriot who had to identify the mangled bodies of his wife and two young children. (1979 pp. 154-159) Shattered psychologically this man sank into psychosis: the only thing that kept him from committing suicide was the *idée fixe* of telling his children’s story to as many people as possible.

If the political environment in which the group finds itself after a traumatic

experience is not conducive to the resolution of mourning, and if the group's loss and injuries are not recognized by the outside parties, the radicalness within the group and the frequency of its violent actions against the outsiders will increase. (Mitscherlich and Mitscherlich 1975) Due to this "inability to mourn," the grief is likely to be passed onto the next generation, and the group history might easily become a transgenerational testimony of an unresolved trauma. (p. 176) Circumscribed by such a historical framework, it is probable that the group will repeat the traumatic experience – initiate another war – in order to master and extinguish the originally inflicted pain that was denied the chance of being soothed.

In his most recent book (1997), Volkan explores in depth the mutually reinforcing interplay between the group's traumatic experience and its ethnic identity. He sees ethnic identity as a large "canvas tent," which encloses all group members and binds them together through bonds of relative equality fostered by shared historical, cultural, religious, linguistic and other social factors. In addition, the group leaders act as the tent's poles enabling the structure to be functional and stand firm. (pp. 27-28) In times of tranquility and peace, one's group identity is as unnoticed as breathing; and just as in the case of breathing, one becomes aware of it most intensely when it is impaired, when its normal functioning is endangered. (p. 25) In such times of danger, the group members attempt to strengthen the scaffolding of their tent by amplifying the "minor differences" which make them distinct from other groups. For instance, they begin to display prominently their folk or traditional costumes, or to parade publicly the symbols of their past. (pp. 91-92) Some even begin to suffer of various psychosomatic disorders (e.g. headaches, stomach pains, etc.) (p. 114) Also, the group members augment their support

for the leaders, even to the point of conceiving of these leaders' rule as the only guarantor of the group's enduring strength and unity. Thus, the leaders' decisions, right or wrong, come to be obeyed unquestioningly. (p. 146; Post 1986)

That the group responds in such an intensely emotional manner to the perceived threats to its identity (the manner which most likely may not be "objectively" warranted) points to the existence of a psychological trauma haunting the group's historical representations of itself. (p. 43) The intensity of this trauma shapes the core components of the group's specific (ethnic) identity: the group history may be seen as a sustained effort at attempting to resolve the incurred pain. In a sense, according to Volkan, the trauma is thus "chosen"; the group identity such as it is would be impossible without it. (p. 48) The crushing defeats in medieval battles costing the group its independence and making it unable to be in charge of its own affairs for generations represent the most likely originators of the 'chosen traumas'. Also, tremendous loss of lives, or atrocities committed against the group members only because they belonged to the specific targeted group may lead to the formation of traumas just as powerful. (p. 44)

According to Volkan, the chosen trauma finds its counterpart in the group's 'chosen glory.' The latter stands for a collective triumph over the enemy group, which is passed down from one generation to the other and publicly celebrated: it represents an important emotional reservoir for strengthening the group esteem. (p. 81) However, the chosen trauma seems to exert more influence in molding the group's interaction with other groups than the chosen glory. The trauma contains within itself an impetus for the redress of grievances; it makes the group determined to 'reverse' reality, possibly by plunging into the conflict with the group that had wronged it in the past. (p. 82) Sometimes the

rhetoric of a charismatic leader (4), guided by his or her political designs or driven by a psychological need, may reactivate a trauma buried in the group's memory: he or she may incite the group to desire revenge and thus initiate a violent conflict. Such an interaction between the group's trauma and leadership will become important for the psychoanalytic examination of the Kosovo conflict, which follows below.

"Psychoanalyzing" Kosovo

I

"He who is Serb, of Serbian birth
of Serbian blood and Serbian race,
and battles not on Kosovo,
No children will his heart be granted,
Neither a man-child nor a maiden!
His hands will reap no harvest fruits!
No dark red wine, no silver wheat
His line be wretched until it dies!

a medieval Serbian epic poem

In psychoanalytic terms, the conflict between the Serbs and the Albanians in the part-mountainous part-flat region of Kosovo began in 1389. That was the year when the notables of the Serbian Empire, which at its height consisted of the territories of today's Albania, Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria, confronted the advancing Ottoman (Turkish) army on a vast field in central Kosovo. Even though both sides suffered tremendous losses, and the Ottomans did not advance further into Serbia for next two decades, the battle came to be seen as an awe-inspiring defeat on the part of the Serbs: it was perceived as signalling the end of Serbian self-rule, and the beginning of their subjugation to the Ottoman Empire, which was to last more than four hundred years. In this way, the battle could not but become what Volkan calls a 'chosen trauma,' the anchor around which the Serbian

ethnic identity was to be constructed. All traditional means of assuring the coherence of a medieval (Serbian) society, such as folklore and epic poetry, became infused with the motifs of the Kosovo defeat. They therefore served as discursive 'bottles' which could preserve and pass on the message of suffering, anger, and desire for revenge to the incoming generations.

A representative of this group of folkloric practices is the poem 'The Fall of the Serbian Empire.' It depicts the outcome of the battle of Kosovo in terms of a deliberate choice by the main commander of Serbian forces prince Lazar, which made the events that subsequently unfolded predetermined and under divine sanction. Specifically, the poem describes the encounter between prince Lazar and St. Ilija, the messenger of the Virgin Mary. St. Ilija questions prince Lazar as to "what empire [he wishes] to rule / to rule an empire most divine / or rule an empire here on earth?" (Devrnja-Zimmerman 1986 p. 183) If prince Lazar chooses the earthly empire, his victory in Kosovo will be assured, but his and his people's glory will be short-lasting, as everything else is in the human world. If, on the other side, he opts for the divine empire, his forces will be defeated by the Ottomans and he himself will be killed, but, as a result, he will assume the throne in the kingdom of heaven, where his glory and the glory of his followers will be "eternal." Enamoured of eternity, prince Lazar chooses the latter, and thus seals his own and his people's fate.

Two psychoanalytically-guided insights seem possible from the examination of this poem. First, implicit in the poem is the claim that the Serbs as a people and Lazar at their helm will be compensated for their earthly pain and suffering (martyrdom) by a glorious reception in the hereafter. They had not been abandoned by God in having to surrender

their political freedom to the Ottomans: actually, they were God's 'chosen people' to whom divine tasks were entrusted. This attitude of 'chosenness' will later become one of the driving forces of the 19th and early 20th century Serbian nationalists in their desire to liberate all peoples of the Balkans from the Ottoman rule, and establish one Balkan state under Serbia's auspices. (Hence one of the main reasons behind the formation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in 1918.)

Secondly, it is significant that the fateful choice concerning the course of action was presented as having been made by one individual, by prince Lazar, by the leader. The leader had made the decision single-handedly, and yet the enthusiastic approval on the part of the followers was assumed. The words of St. Ilija that "every hero will die" did not dissuade prince Lazar from opting for the divine realm: in *his* mind, the Serbs were worthy of the eternal kingdom.

Subsequently, all Serbian warriors willingly marched to their deaths, which they already knew were inevitable: they sacrificed themselves trusting the wisdom of their leader's decision. In Freudian terms (as has been pointed), blind submission to the leader points to the weak or non-existent individual super-ego (ego-ideal): the ability to trust one's own judgment when it goes against the decrees of the authority figures is negligible. In addition, the weakened super-ego may be transmitted transgenerationally. Thus, it may not be surprising to encounter it again in the relationship between Kosovo Serbs and Slobodan Milosevic in the late 1980s: at that time, Milosevic was extolled as another prince Lazar. (Novkovic NIN February 5, 1998) (5)

It is through the epic poems such as 'The Fall of the Serbian Empire' that every generation of Serbs growing up in the Ottoman-dominated regions encountered the

motifs of the battle of Kosovo and was socialized into the set of values these motifs contained. These poems were sung at the village get-togethers generally accompanied by a traditional instrument called *gusle*: they inspired intense emotions among the listeners. Various folklorists note that the performance of 'The Fall of the Serbian Empire' and other poems with similar thematic elicited weeping even well into the 20th century. (Devrnja-Zimmerman p. 167)

Even though strongly desired and spiritually longed for, the reclaiming of Serbian independence from the Ottomans remained a mere dream until the first part of the 19th century. At that time, after two great uprisings, the Serbs were able to attain first a limited autonomy, and then to expand it gradually until it turned into a *bona-fide* independence recognized by the Congress of Berlin in 1878. Yet, as early as 1840s, the officials of a newly established Serbian principality began to cast their eyes on Kosovo and devise plans on how to wrest it from the Ottoman control: the incorporation of Kosovo became the supreme object of Serbian foreign policy. In 1844, the Serbian minister of internal (sic!) affairs, Ilija Garasanin put together a program of action – *Nacertanija* – in which he detailed the measures that needed to be taken to obtain and also augment the Serbian control of Kosovo and surrounding areas. The term 'Old Serbia' was coined to reflect a psychological underpinning of such a course of action: every country worthy of its self-rule must have its 'cradle,' its most ancient part firmly under its administration. Yet the majority of the population in 'Old Serbia' were Albanians. (Skendi 1964 p.293)

Accordingly, Garasanin's *Nacertanija* included plans for their organized expulsion. (Institute of History, Prishtina 1995 p. 4)

It seems that there were two reasons motivating Garasanin to propose the expulsions. The first reason was that, being a virulent nationalist, he thought that Kosovo and 'Old Serbia' as heartlands of Serbian culture should be inhabited by Serbs only. The second reason was that considering that the Albanians living in these regions were Muslim, he claimed that their religious ties to the Ottoman region would make them disobedient subjects. (Poulton 1995 p. 64) In his view, Albanians were not significantly different from the Turks. In this way, Garasanin's program can be seen not only as the first time that the anti-Albanian sentiments were officially promulgated by the Serbian government, but also as a clear instance of a psychological link between the Serbian suffering at the hands of the Turks, the intense desire to avenge them, and the Serbian treatment of Muslim Kosovo Albanians believed to be closely associated with the Turks.

The first actual expulsions took place in 1878 after the Congress of Berlin (following the Ottoman defeat in the Russo-Turkish war of 1876-1878) granted Serbia large swathes of territory bordering Kosovo to the north. At this time, several tens of thousands of Albanians were expelled by the Serbian army, never to return again. (Banac 1984 p. 293) As time went on, Serbia consolidated its control in these areas and waited for the opportune moment to seize Kosovo itself. This moment came with the First Balkan War in 1912. After several weeks of fighting against the Albanian militias, Kosovo was conquered (or re-conquered, Serbian version), and has from then on to this day remained to a greater or smaller extent within the institutional framework of Serbia itself.

The Serbian administration of Kosovo was harsh from the very beginning: it aimed at erasing all traces of the Ottoman rule from this 'sacred' Serbian land: the presence of the enemy, of the Other, of the centuries-long antagonist had to be extinguished. As a result,

many mosques and Muslim cemeteries were destroyed, and the names of towns were changed. (Institute of History p. 16) The Serbian officials also took action against the 'living' reminders of the Ottoman administration and therefore of their own transgenerational suffering: the majority of population in Kosovo who were Muslim Albanians. A wave of expulsions and forced emigration to Turkey followed, and hostilities ran high on both sides. (Skendi p. 295)

The World War I put a temporary stop to the Kosovo expulsion campaign organized by the Serbian government, but, four years later, with the founding of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (renamed Yugoslavia in 1929), it resumed its full force. This time a sustained effort was made to settle in Kosovo (or to 'colonize,' in Albanian version) the Serbian families from other parts of Serbia. By 1941, and the onset of the World War II, close to 15,000 Serbian families moved to Kosovo, but the demographic structure did not change significantly: the Albanians still remained the majority. (Institute of History p. 18) Measures other than the Serbian settlements were proposed as well. The Serbian intellectuals, having historically considered themselves the guardians of Serbian culture and tradition, put themselves in the forefront of the effort to make Kosovo "once again" a genuinely Serbian land. Vasa Cubrilovic, a professor at the University of Belgrade in the 1930s, claimed that "the sole way and device for the expatriation [sic!] of the Albanians is the brutal force of the state-organized machinery . . . ruining villages by guns, by punishments, imprisonment, application of brutal police measures, cutting their forests, denying them ownership papers, extraloding them with taxes, forbidding them to sell live cattle, and by brutal behavior with their children and women." (1937, Institute of History p. 19)

Albanians were therefore to be compelled to leave Kosovo by any (preferably) brutal means at the disposal of Serbian police. They were supposed to be made too frightened to return; their presence in Kosovo was an ever present wound making the Serbs remember the years of their unfreedom and suffering under the Ottomans. In psychoanalytic terms, the Serbs had to eliminate the 'object' linking them with the past; a new and glorious (defeat-free) page of Serbian history was to be written. All 'badness' (including one's own desire for the bloody revenge against the Ottomans) was to be externalized onto the Albanians. Stigmatized as the enemy group, they were to be pushed out of Kosovo. It is significant to note that most expelled Albanians were exiled to Turkey.

When World War II came about, the kingdom of Yugoslavia (ruled by a Serbian monarch) was dismembered, and its policy on Kosovo was reversed. Under the Italian fascist auspices, a 'Greater Albania' was set up, and the recently settled Serbian families were expelled back to Serbia. This was the time for the Albanians to take *their* own revenge, to do to the Serbs what the Serbs had done to them in the preceding two decades. The Albanians sought to alleviate their physical and psychological pain and loss by making their victimizers (or those ethnically connected to their victimizers) suffer. In psychoanalytic terms, this is an unhealthy strategy because it does not genuinely resolve or 'work-through' any of the two groups' legitimate suffering: it only perpetuates the violence without attaining any kind of closure – one gets entangled into the "magic circle of evil." (Jevtovic NIN January 14, 1999)

It is therefore to be expected that as soon as the Serbs, now in the uniform of Tito's partisans, regained the control of Kosovo in late 1944 and early 1945, certain Kosovo policies of the *ancien regime* were re-instituted. First, an attempt was made to re-settle

the Serbian families expelled during the war as well as to encourage the establishment of new settlements. Secondly, the policy of 'expatriation' of Albanians to Turkey was continued even into the 1960s. (Institute of History pp. 29-31) The level of distrust between the Albanian population and the Communist government remained high throughout this time period (even though some Communist officials were in fact ethnic Albanians). Yet it was not until 1968 that the riots broke out.

The riots had started in a neighboring Yugoslav republic of Macedonia, which had a significant Albanian population inhabiting its western part, which borders on Kosovo and Albania. The immediate cause was the appearance of an ethnic Albanian flag in a shop window in a town of Tetovo. (Palmer and King 1971 p. 182) The psychological significance of an ethnic flag display as a foremost beloved symbol of one's ethnic identity has already been noted, and the Macedonians, whose relationship to the Albanians resembles that of the Serbs, were outraged. Clashes between the Macedonians and Albanians took place, and the riots soon spilled into Kosovo, where the Kosovo Serbs and the Yugoslav police were attacked by the Albanians. The brutal measures with which these riots were suppressed led to the downfall of a long-term Yugoslav interior minister Rankovic (who had continued Serbian nationalist policies in Kosovo beneath a superficial Communist disguise), and also to the significant re-thinking of the institutional framework of the Yugoslav federation as a whole. As a result of the pressure of other Yugoslav federal units on Serbia and Tito's firing of several high-level Serbian officials (in addition to Rankovic), Serbia signed on to a new Yugoslav Constitution – the 1974 Constitution.

This Constitution granted Kosovo significant political autonomy from Serbia and a seat with full voting powers on the Yugoslav Collective Presidency, which was to govern Yugoslavia after Tito's death. For the first time since the Serbian conquest of Kosovo in 1912, the Albanians (as a majority population) were in charge of Kosovo's political, social, economic, and cultural affairs. This state of affairs was deeply resented by the Serbs who feared that the Albanians were now going to use the powers granted to them to mistreat and discriminate against the Serb minority. In addition, the Serbs were also anxious about the prospect of the Albanian-controlled Kosovo government's letting the Serbian cultural heritage, numerous monasteries and cemeteries, decay through abandonment and even active destruction. It was during this period that hundreds of Serbs left Kosovo and sold their land and property to the Albanian families. (Janicijevic Duga June 7, 1997)

Even though the 1970s saw the cultural renaissance of the Kosovo Albanians, Kosovo still remain in political terms within the Serbian orbit. The 1974 Constitution did not give it a status of a republic (that is, an equal footing with Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, etc.), which would endow it with a right to self-determination, even to the point of secession. Instead, Kosovo was characterized as an autonomous province within Serbia. It is precisely because the Albanians desired a right to self-determination (to be once and for all 'freed' from all connection with Serbia) that they rioted once again in 1981 shortly after Tito's death. At that time, the Yugoslav Collective Presidency declared a state of emergency in Kosovo, sending in hundreds of police and military troops. The presence of these troops, the majority of which were Serbian, made it easier for Milosevic, when he came to power in Serbia in 1987, first to limit Kosovo's autonomy,

and then to abolish it altogether in 1989. From 1989 onward, the Serbs and the Albanians, already divided socially and culturally, were divided politically as well: the Albanians set up their own (semi-secret) governmental institutions, and boycotted the work of the Serbian-dominated *de facto* government.

Before examining psychoanalytically the extremely tense and conflict-ridden situation in Kosovo in the last ten years, it seems necessary to chronicle the development of the Albanian ethnic identity and its ties to Kosovo in the same way this subject has been approached in the case of Serbs. (See Kovacevic, 1998)

II

In contrast to the Serbs, the Albanians do not have a 'chosen trauma' (a glorious defeat) at the core of their ethnic identity. Instead, they celebrate the victorious exploits of a 15th century prince Skenderbeg. What is particularly interesting in the Albanian choice of Skenderbeg is that he was a Christian fighting against the Ottomans and Islam, while the Kosovo Albanians themselves are Muslim. (Skendi p. 471) This turn of events is strikingly similar to a case in recent history related by Volkan. (1997 pp. 81-82) Specifically, Volkan notes how during the Gulf War Saddam Hussein chose to associate himself with Sultan Saladin who in 1169 defeated the Crusaders, even though Saladin himself was a Kurd, and it is well known how brutally Hussein treated the present-day Kurds. What these cases reveal is that in times of crises ethnic groups and their leaders have a need to strengthen the confidence in their own physical and psychological capacity to prevail in the face of adversity. They do so by identifying or associating their own struggle with the struggle of a historical figure who had attained a favorable outcome when confronted with the situation similar to theirs. Hussein identified himself

with Sultan Saladin because Saladin was victorious over the forces of the West. Similarly, the Albanians identified with Skenderbeg and chose him for their chief national hero because, throughout his lifetime, he successfully fought against numerically stronger and better armed enemies, which surrounded his principality on all sides. This is exactly how the Albanians felt in the 19th century when they were faced with the expansionist desires of their neighbors, and especially the Serbs who (for reasons already noted) wanted to obtain Kosovo at any price. Not surprisingly, it was exactly at this time that the glorification of Skenderbeg reached its peak.

Yet it was not until 1878 and the Congress of Berlin that the Albanians were faced with the actual loss of some territories they inhabited to the state of Serbia. In order to voice their dissent to the decisions of the Congress and organize resistance to the decisions' implementation, a group of Albanian leaders met on June 18, 1878 in a Kosovo town of Prizren. (Skendi pp. 44-46) In this way, the first Albanian ethnic organization, the League of Prizren, was born. It proclaimed the existence of an Albanian ethnic identity separate from that of the Turkish: "... we are not and do not want to be Turks ... we want to be Albanians ..." declared the assembled leaders. (Skendi p. 45) They also formed numerous armed militias to resist the transfer of the assigned territories to Serbia. In the beginning, their efforts were tacitly supported by the Ottoman regime. But as Turkey was being pressured by the Great Powers of Europe to make good on its promise to implement fully all the Congress' decisions, its forces were increasingly drawn into the conflict with the Albanian militias. As a result, the Ottomans were compelled to send several military expeditions into Kosovo, which ultimately put an end to the League in 1881. (Zavalani 1969 pp. 67-68)

It is significant that the birthplace of the first Albanian ethnic movement is to be found in Kosovo. In this way, both the Albanians and the Serbs seem justified in perceiving Kosovo as the 'cradle,' as the place where it all began. This may explain at least in part the sacredness that the Albanians also attach to having Kosovo under their rule: this is why they were willing to fight (and die fighting) against the better armed Turkish, and later on Serb soldiers.

Even though the Ottoman forces were able to disrupt the activities of the League and arrest its leaders, they still were unable to disarm the highly mobile Albanian militias. Thus it was only a matter of time and an opportune political situation until another uprising against the Ottoman regime took place. This opportunity came in 1909, after the Young Turk revolution failed to rejuvenate the crumbling Ottoman Empire. (Poulton p. 68) Once the Albanian leaders realized that the new Turkish regime's offer to grant them a significant level of autonomy was nothing else but a delaying tactic hiding a desire for increased centralization, they called upon their followers to take up arms. In this, they were so successful that by 1912 all of Kosovo and a large portion of Macedonia came under their control. Yet before the end of the same year, they were fated to lose everything: they were overwhelmed by the advancing Serbian army – the First Balkan war had begun.

The Council of Ambassadors of the Great Powers met in London in 1913 to discuss the territorial expansion of Serbia and other Balkan states at the expense of the Ottoman Empire. The insistence of Austria-Hungary, which by all means wanted to prevent Serbia from acquiring an outlet onto the Adriatic sea, reinforced by the U.S. (Wilsonian) commitment to the national self-determination, led to the establishment of an independent

Albanian state. (Skendi p. 456) The borders of this state however encompassed only about a half of the total Albanian population in the region: Kosovo remained outside of it, under Serbian control. (Danopoulos and Chopani 1997 p. 171)

It has already been pointed out how harshly the conquering Serbian regime treated the Kosovar Albanian population. The Albanians responded by forming guerilla groups called 'kacaks' which fought the Serbian forces both prior to and during the 1914-1918 World War I. Some of these guerilla groups had more than 2,000 soldiers and close to 100,000 followers. (Banac p. 303) When it became apparent that the Albanians would not be granted any kind of autonomy in the post-WWI Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, the 'kacaks' continued and even intensified their attacks on the Serbian military and police targets. However, the SCS Kingdom's government sent significant military reinforcements into Kosovo, and all Albanian guerilla groups were either eliminated or driven out into Albania by the mid-1920s. (Banac p. 305)

It was only during World War II that the Albanians of Kosovo were able to re-unite with the Albanians from other regions into an Italian-backed Greater Albania. However, with the Italian defeat and the advancement of Tito's forces, this embryonic state collapsed in late 1944. Subsequently, Kosovo was once again incorporated into Serbia and Yugoslavia.

Considering that the Serb-Albanian relations in Tito's Yugoslavia have already been chronicled, it now seems appropriate to bring psychoanalytic insights to bear more closely upon the recent Kosovo situation.

III

In this respect, it is significant to note the existence of 'narcissism of small differences.' It can be seen even in the very name of the region. The Serbs, for instance, call it 'Kosovo.' This is also an internationally accepted name, and that fact may reflect the historically unequal (generally Serb-dominated) balance of forces in the region. The Albanians on the other hand call the region 'Kosova.' The difference is to be found in the ending vowel (it is either an 'o' or an 'a'), and may therefore appear irrelevant. Yet in none of the documents examined for the purpose of writing this paper did I find a Serb referring to 'Kosovo' as 'Kosova,' or an Albanian referring to 'Kosova' as 'Kosovo.' It almost seems as if calling one's region (the place one lives, one's homeland) the way that the other (opposing) group is calling it would mean giving up one's own version of events, one's own historical and transgenerational suffering and pain, one's own ability to be in charge of one's future, and in effect subordinating oneself to the Other, to the enemy group. This may help to explain for instance why the Kosovo Serbs react with intense hostility if the term 'Kosova' is employed in conversation. (Ranilovic-Jovic Duga June 21, 1997) It may also help to explain why the Albanians have persisted in using the term 'Kosova' even though the usage of 'Kosovo' as a valid designation for the region has been recognized internationally.

Another 'minor' difference with significant implications is the choice of salutes. The Albanian salute is a two-fingered victory sign: in an emotionally charged atmosphere, the Albanians infuse this salute with feelings of ethnic pride and defiance. (Novkovic NIN March 12, 1998) They show it to the passing Serbian police officers, and that action in turn engenders an angry response. It used to be a frequent occurrence during the 1990s

that the Albanians were beaten or arrested by the police just because of that two-fingered salute. Again the salute was not a mere salute, but carried an important psychological meaning in that it represented a refusal of the Albanians to play by the Serbian rules, and also their desire to be different and to be left alone. The two-fingered salute was to stand in a marked opposition to the Serbian three-fingered salute. It is with the three-fingered salutes that the regulars and reservists of Serbian (Yugoslav) army 'greeted' the Kosovo Albanian population when they were sent to reinforce the Serbian units already in Kosovo. The three fingers (with their implicit Christian Orthodox connotation (the holy trinity)) were meant to convey to the Albanians that Kosovo would remain under a firm Serbian (Christian) control, and that they were foreigners, aliens who have settled there illegitimately. (Kujundzic NIN August 20, 1998)

It is not only that the interactive interpersonal activities such as salutes (or 'rituals' as Erik Erikson calls them) were ethnically charged, but everything else in Kosovo was also divided along the ethnic lines. This division was apparent both in material and psychological realities, and was intensified after the revocation of Kosovo autonomy in 1989. The Albanians, for instance, set up their own governmental and educational institutions, which were semi-secret and in their work paralleled the 'official' Kosovo institutions now completely dominated by the Serbs. The Serbian and Albanian children were in this way institutionally segregated, and were therefore socialized into harboring mistrust, suspiciousness and hatred toward the other side. The other side was to blame for a general anxiety present in every aspect of daily existence.

The Serbian and Albanian children and youth spent even their after-school hours apart from each other. The Albanians went to Albanian cafes, which bore names of

Albanian ethnic heroes, or of other ethnic symbols (for instance, 'Fljamur' – Albanian flag). Once there they listened to patriotic and folk songs extolling the glories of Albanian history. The Serbs likewise went to Serbian cafes, named after prince Lazar, or the battle of Kosovo, or Serbian Orthodox saints, and listened to the music of their nationalist and folk singers. (Kujundzic NIN July 30, 1998) Through these songs, which brought back the images of past tragedies, each side accumulated rationalizations and justifications for their feeling of hatred toward the other side. Each side became extremely defensive and afraid – those atrocities might be repeated again. While the Serbs felt that the Albanian attitude toward them was that 'the only good Serb is a dead Serb,' the Albanians were treated as second-class citizens with no respect for their political and social rights by the established Serbian authorities. (Ignja NIN November 12, 1998)

These mutually reinforcing (and escalating) hostile feelings were captured clearly by U.S. Information Agency polls conducted in Kosovo in February and March 1996. (Biberaj 1998 pp. 262-263) While for instance 94% of the Albanians sampled believed that the independence of Kosova (sic!) was "worth dying for," 99% of the Serbs were firmly against the independence. The intractability of reconciling their stands was further underscored by their attitudes toward the autonomy of Kosovo within Serbia. Vast majorities of the Serbs and Albanians were *against* it (77% and 84% respectively). Both groups believed that Kosovo was either going to be wholly Albanian or wholly Serbian: no middle-ground solution was acceptable.

In psychoanalytic terms, a severe dichotomy of this kind points to the existence of a delicate psychological balance: the Other, the enemy group is perceived as infused with

'badness' or evil to such an extent that one cannot deal with it on an equal footing any more; one has to subordinate it to itself to keep its evil from 'infecting' one's own ('good') psychological structures, or one has to eliminate it altogether. Since this dichotomy cannot be resolved in a manner, which takes into account the psychological needs of both sides, frustration and aggressiveness are bound to increase; the situation becomes extremely tense. Violent means of resolution come to be perceived as the only option, and it seems that only a 'spark' is necessary to cause a wide-spread conflagration. In the case of Kosovo, this 'spark' might have been provided by the attitudes of the Serbian and Albanian leaders.

It seems plausible to state that the Serbian leaders in Kosovo regarded Slobodan Milosevic, the president of Serbia, as the only person able to deliver them from the increasing psychological and physical tensions that their coexistence with the Albanians was creating in the late 1980s. In a psychoanalytic view, Milosevic was for them a sort of a supreme father. They felt elated when in 1987, after complaining to him about the treatment they had suffered at the hands of the Albanian-led Kosovo government, he told them that "nobody will dare beat them" while he is in power. Two years later, on the occasion of the 600th anniversary of the Kosovo battle, almost all of the Kosovo Serbian population flocked to Kosovo Polje (the place where the battle took place) to hear Milosevic speak. In his speech, Milosevic promised them that Kosovo would remain forever under the Serbian control: after all, he had revoked its autonomy from Serbia and thus (in a way) annexed it only several month previously. (Stefanovic Duga January 17, 1998) The Kosovo Serb support for Milosevic soared, but, as can be expected, this only further antagonized their relationship with the Albanians. The link between the Kosovo

Serbs and Milosevic's repressive police and military was now established: the Albanians could not but compound their hatred toward the former with their hatred toward the latter --the flickering possibilities of a peaceful dialogue and reconciliation were rapidly being extinguished.

As has been pointed out, the Albanians reacted by forming parallel institutions. In 1990, they held a secret referendum on the Kosovo's independence from Serbia, which passed overwhelmingly. In addition, they set up their Parliament, schools, and social service centers. In effect, they began to operate a state within a state, and that demonstrated the ability of the Albanians to be entirely self-sufficient politically: they needed not depend on the Serbian regime for anything.

The Kosovo Serbs were dismayed: Milosevic's actions not only did not put an end to the Albanian aspirations to independence, but it was precisely the Albanian reaction to them that showed that the Albanians in fact could be in charge of their own affairs and were 'ready' for running Kosovo according to their own rules. A paranoid feeling of abandonment began to permeate the ranks of the Kosovo Serbian leaders. (Markovic Duga August 15, 1998) Momcilo Trajkovic, the leader of the main Kosovo Serb political movement, felt that Milosevic was preparing to betray them and "sell them off" to the Albanians. According to Trajkovic, Milosevic used the support of the Kosovo Serbs to consolidate his own power in Serbia in the late 1980s, but, after that was accomplished, he treated them like "a lemon, which when squeezed out of its juice, is discarded." (Petrusic NIN July 2, 1998) Another Serbian leader described the position of the Serbs in Kosovo as "we are all already dead, they [the Albanians] just bury us one by one." (Jevtovic NIN January 14, 1999) In psychanalytic terms, depressive anxiety and

resignation of this kind point to a sort of a preparation for something dramatic, which is inevitably fated to take place in a near future. The Serbian leaders felt that the time of the violent encounter was approaching, and, as defensive measures, they began to arm themselves and form neighborhood and village militias. (Anonimni Duga March 14, 1998)

It is interesting to note that the Albanian leaders also blamed Milosevic for what they perceived as the imminent onset of hostilities in Kosovo. Adem Demaci, a well-known Kosovo Albanian leader who later became a spokesman for the Kosova Liberation Army, claimed that the repressive and exclusionary policies of the Milosevic regime gave the Albanians no choice: they were compelled to fight because all peaceful measures they had proposed were trampled under the boots of Milosevic's police and military.

(Kujundzic NIN September 24, 1998) The same opinion was shared by Redzep Cosja, another noted Kosovo leader. (Djurdjevic-Lukic NIN December 1, 1999) In this way, the Albanian leaders projected hostile feelings they themselves held against the Serbs onto the actions of the Serbian regime: they denied any responsibility for them. Yet, in psychoanalytic terms, refusing to own up to one's own responsibility and face the bad, hating parts of one's self can only lead to the perpetuation of crisis. Violence is inevitable when both sides believe that they are 'all good,' and that the antagonist is 'all bad.'

Even more psychoanalytically revealing in this context was the statement of Fehmi Agani, the vice-president of the ruling Kosovo Albanian party. Agani asserted that it was no wonder that the Albanians could not live in Serbia when "it treated them like a bad mother, rejecting them as a foreign element." (Petrusic NIN January 15, 1998)

Psychoanalytically interpreted, on a deeper (unconscious) psychological level, Serbia was

identified with the mother that would not feed, and would thus endanger the life of the infant. And the infant, however painful and difficult that was for her, had to separate herself from such a mother in order to assure her own self-preservation.

The psychologically driven need for separation and independence found its means of realization in the wake of the massive influx of weapons into Kosovo after the melt-down of the state of Albania in 1997. The easy availability of weapons enabled the formation of the Kosovo Liberation Army, and a full-scale war was in the offing. The KLA attacks on the Serbian troops led to the progressively escalating response. All the suffering and hurt accumulated over the years of relative peace was now to be discharged violently and intensely: a possibility for the genuine resolution of the Albanian-Serb hostility and the attainment of psychological stability in the reciprocally tolerant coexistence of the two groups was pushed into the distant regions of the future, and perhaps lost forever.

Conclusion: Toward a Psychoanalytic Theory of Ethnic War

After examining psychoanalytic literature on war and investigating psychoanalytically the Kosovo conflict, it seems useful to gather up all the threads together and put forward several general propositions.⁽⁶⁾ These propositions can also be seen as addressing, from the standpoint of psychoanalysis, the question as to why ethnic conflicts have broken out in some regions, while in the others they have not. There seem to be four factors important in this respect. The first factor is the existence of a history of reciprocal traumatic experiences without closure or resolution. In the Kosovo case, for instance, violent conflicts and wars between the Albanians and the Serbs have occurred

every 30 to 40 years for the last 200 years. Therefore, every Albanian and Serb child growing up in Kosovo was socialized into expecting that at least once during her lifetime she would have to suffer through massacre, imprisonment, torture, destruction, expulsion, and loss of everything at the hands of the opposing group. Psychological defenses, which developed as a response to this way of life (intense suspiciousness, hostility, and outright hatred toward the other group), were particularly conducive to making the future a repetition of the deeds of the past--in a word, an endless cycle of violence.

The second factor is the existence of a disputed territory to which both groups are historically and psychologically attached. Kosovo for instance is considered the 'cradle' of both Serbian and Albanian ethnic identity. Even though this attachment may reflect a historically accurate fact (both the battle of Kosovo and the League of Prizren took place there), the general level of hostility between groups prevents its dispassionate consideration. One is unwilling to share one's 'cradle' with one's enemy: one in fact sees the enemy's presence there as very disturbing, and does not hesitate to use all means at one's disposal to eliminate it. The third factor is the existence of a narcissism of small differences. In Kosovo for instance names, salutes, and other minor gestures or behaviors denote ethnic identification. What seems irrelevant to the outsiders might in fact become a cause of an intense conflict, and therefore an outside-imposed conflict resolution process is likely fall short of its intended goal. The fourth factor is the presence of the leaders who seem intent on extolling the virtues of their own ethnic group, and care to work to realize only their own group's aims while rejecting compromise options. In Kosovo, both the Albanian and Serbian leaders refuse to take responsibility for and acknowledge the faults of their own group: all blame is to be laid on the other side.

In the end, it seems foolish to believe that unless these four factors are dealt with in a manner acceptable to *both* sides, in a manner that addresses their psychological needs and soothes their traumas, ethnic conflicts and wars will ever attain a durable resolution.(7)

NOTES:

1. In psychoanalytic terms, these subjective processes are called countertransference and transference respectively, and the understanding of their dynamic represents a crucial component of every successful analytic diagnosis. (Loewenberg 1995 p. 11)

2. In this respect, the concepts of neurosis and the Oedipus complex are very important. Neurosis is a psychopathological condition in which the patient develops intense anxious feelings on the account of imaginary (fantasy-infused) relationships with other people and the external world. (Lacan p. 117) The Oedipus complex occurs when around the age of three the male child begins to be stirred by sexual feelings toward his mother. In psychoanalytic terms, he invests libidinally in his relationship with his mother, and starts considering the father as a rival. Since the father is also perceived as all-powerful (omnipotent), the child is overcome with terror as to the possibility of the father's finding out – he fears nothing less than castration. Eventually the child realizes that the only way to subdue his fear is actually to identify with the father, and thus 'legitimately' share in the father's love for the mother. Once this is accomplished, the Oedipus complex is resolved, and the child can enter another stage of its psychosexual development. Also, the girls undergo a process similar in nature; only their object of

affection is the father. Psychoanalysis teaches that the roots of many adult psychological problems are to be found in the unsuccessful resolution of the Oedipus complex.

3. For a recent example of such a situation, see the case of Sara Jane Olsen and her ethical/psychological metamorphosis from being a member of a violent Symbionese Liberation Army to being “a mom, actress, volunteer.” Columbia Daily Tribune, January 9, 2000.

4. Charisma consists of a set of leadership qualities, which inspires devotion in the group members. It is interesting to note that it is often tinged with brutality. (Volkan 1988 p. 189; Aberbach 1995)

5. NIN is one of the best known Serbian weekly magazines. Over the last several years, it has been critical of the Milosevic’s regime. Duga is another Serbian weekly, the issues of which are made use for this study. Duga is closer to the regime than NIN.

6. Regarding the issue of the nature of truth examined in Part I, it is interesting to note that while the article proceeded under the assumption of coherence (presupposing multiple, equally valid interpretations), the subject matter under examination--the attitudes of the ethnic groups toward each other – revealed that both Serbs and Albanians subscribed to the view of truth which opposes coherence – the view of correspondence with its emphasis on the absolute correctness of one explanation.

7. What needs to be examined in future research is to what extent and in what ways the international factors helped or hindered the unfolding of the psychological dimension of the Serb-Albanian ethnic war investigated in this article.

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