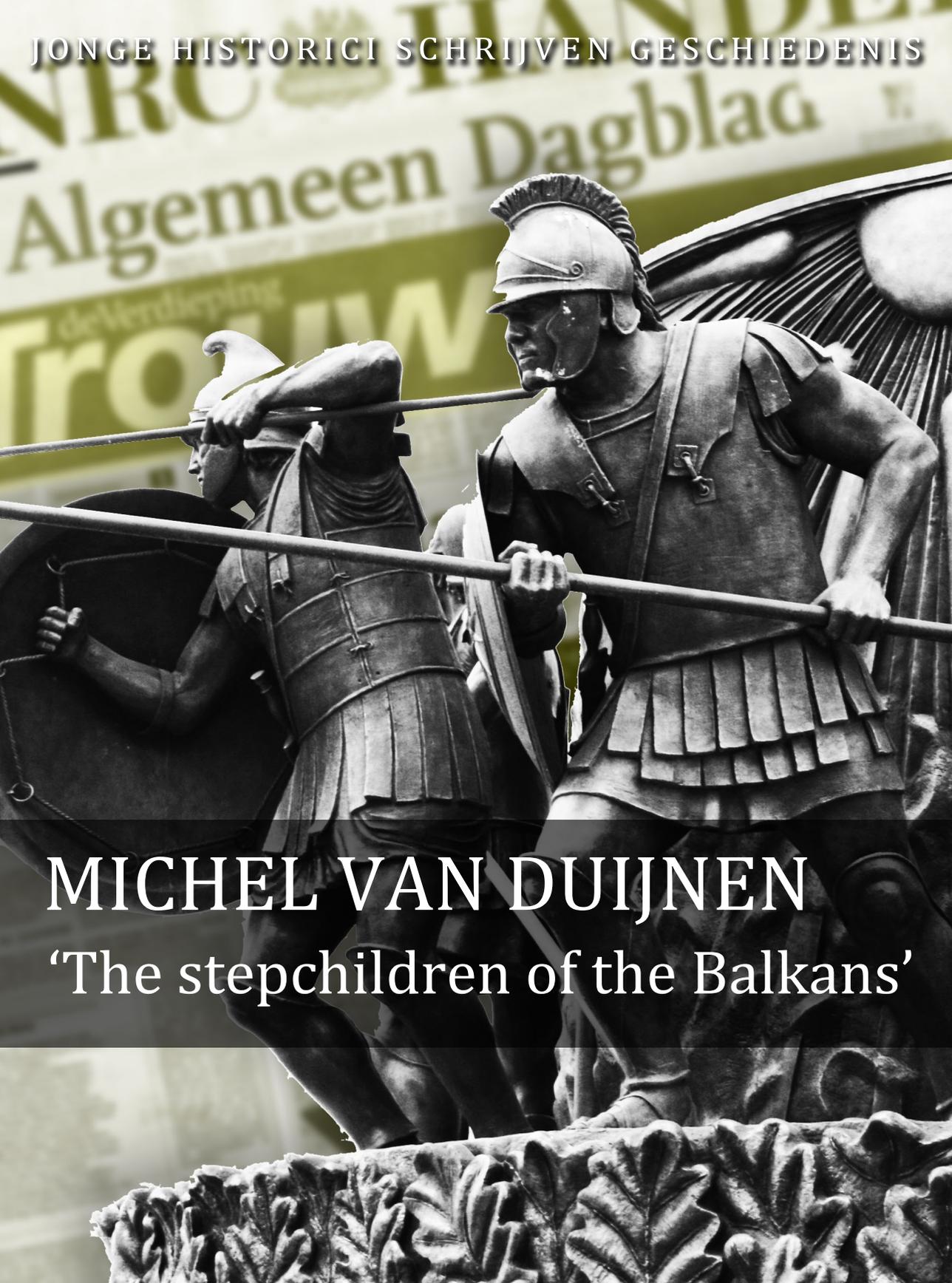


JONGE HISTORICI SCHRIJVEN GESCHIEDENIS



MICHEL VAN DUIJNEN

‘The stepchildren of the Balkans’



## ‘The stepchildren of the Balkans’

How nationalism affected the Dutch press coverage of Kosovo and Macedonia during the break-up of Yugoslavia, 1991-1995



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Uitgave van Jonge Historici Schrijven Geschiedenis, Amsterdam

Publicatienummer 35

Redactie: Roelof Hars

Afbeelding voorblad: Nationalistisch monument, Skopje / Krantenkoppen NRC, AD en Trouw

Ontwerp en opmaak: Daan van Schijndel

[www.jongehistorici.nl](http://www.jongehistorici.nl)

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	2
<b>1. Nationalism: beyond the face of the demon</b>	10
1.1 Defining nationalism and the nation	13
1.2 A short review of Billig's Banal nationalism	21
1.3 Nationalism as a universal ideology	25
1.4 The civic-ethnic and East-West distinction	32
<b>2. A historical introduction to Kosovo and Macedonia</b>	39
2.1 The Ottoman Balkans before the emergence of the nation-state	39
2.2 The Macedonian Question	43
2.3 The case of Kosovo	53
<b>3. The demise of Yugoslavia and the Dutch press</b>	60
3.1 The Western perception of the demise of Yugoslavia	61
3.2 The role of journalists and newspapers	68
3.3 A Balkan context?	72
<b>4. News coverage of Kosovo and Macedonia during the Yugoslav crisis</b>	73
4.1 Methodology	73
4.2 Usage of the terms 'nationalism', 'nationalistic', and 'nationalist(s)' in the news coverage of Macedonia	78
4.3 Unmaking nationalism in the news coverage of Macedonia	85
4.4 Usage of the terms 'nationalism', 'nationalistic', and 'nationalist(s)' in the news coverage of Kosovo	93
4.5 Unmaking nationalism in the news coverage of Kosovo	99
4.6 Within or against nationalism?	105
<b>Conclusion</b>	109
<b>Bibliography</b>	115

# Introduction

The repressed has returned and its name is nationalism.<sup>1</sup>

These words are the opening of the book *Blood and Belonging* (1993), written by the influential historian Michael Ignatieff. This book revolves around the characteristics of 'the new nationalism', its sudden emergence in the 1990's, the dangerous 'ethnic' element it contained and its inherently antidemocratic nature. If anything, this 'return of the repressed' was associated with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. The disintegration of Yugoslavia especially had shown 'the civilized world' the ugly face of a returning -ism: ethnic cleansing, large-scale violence, rape, and the reproduction of dangerous national myths.

In the end, the war in Bosnia was heralded as the final argument to settle once and for all that 'nationalism' was simply a recipe for disaster, a concept that would plunge the entire Balkans into gruesome warfare. A widely held view during the war was that once Bosnia would have been carved up between Croatia and Serbia, Kosovo and Macedonia would be next, either falling prey to internal ethnic conflict or the Serbian war machine heading south. But even as the ideology of nationalism was commonly blamed for everything which went wrong during the breakup of Yugoslavia, virtually no one in the West agreed with the oppressive Serbian policies towards Kosovo's Albanian population. For did the Albanians, as the ethnic majority in Kosovo, not have some inalienable rights by the grace of their existence as a nation different from that which constituted the Serbian republic? Even fewer were opposed to the independence of the Republic of Macedonia, a republic whose existence was grounded in the belief that there existed a Macedonian nation,<sup>2</sup> a Slavic population different from the neighbouring Serbs and Bulgarians. But even so, the architect of an independent Macedonia, president Kiro

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Ignatieff, *Blood & belonging: journeys into the new nationalism* (London 1993) 2.

<sup>2</sup> Preamble of the 1991 Macedonian constitution.

See: [http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/mk00000\\_.html](http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/mk00000_.html), retrieved on 07-02-2011.

Gligorov, was not referred to as a nationalist. In fact, a Dutch newspaper article from November 1992 refers to him as someone who 'has kept the nationalists [the 'nationalist' opposition] in check'.<sup>3</sup> In a similar vein, when there was a failed attempt on Gligorov's life in 1995, media reported about 'nationalists' being behind the attack, thus implying that Gligorov himself was not a nationalist.

These examples lead us to question the meaning of nationalism; they suggest that nationalism is an ideology which belongs to 'them', the unsympathetic introvert 'chauvinists', rather than to 'us', the rational Western cosmopolitans. This association of nationalism with extremism, violence and irrationality, is, according to sociologist Michael Billig, a way of making nationalism the property of 'the other'.

In his book *Banal nationalism* (1995), Billig argues that the term 'nationalism' is commonly used to describe 'hot nationalism'; that is, the nationalism of separatist forces, fascist bigots or exotic freedom fighters. 'Our' ('Western') nationalism, in contrast, is "a point-zero nationalism of established nation states", and is rarely described as being actually just that: a form of nationalism.<sup>4</sup> Billig introduces the term 'banal nationalism' to describe the subconscious reproduction of 'our' nation in a world of nations. Nationalism thus becomes more than a political principle: it is part of a wider ideology which can 'catch us unaware' and has 'seeped into the corners of our consciousness'.<sup>5</sup> Billig describes for instance how nations, national identities and "the [moral] world [order] of nations" have become 'natural' phenomena. This (subconscious) nationalist mode of thought is a way, not only of looking at oneself, but of looking at the world, internationalist and outward looking in its character and in possession of its own 'discourses of hegemony'.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, taking the concept of 'banal nationalism' as a point of departure, the study of nationalism in relation to the breakup of Yugoslavia can be formulated in several ways. We could, as has been done

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<sup>3</sup> Nicole Lucas, 'Gligorow: Kans op Balkanoorlog', *Trouw* 10-11-1992.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Billig, *Banal nationalism* (London 1995) 5, 6.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

by others before, take a look at nationalism as it was manifested in different groups inside Yugoslavia, for instance, the rhetoric used to propagate a Greater Serbia, or the ideological means which were mobilized to justify the founding of an independent Macedonian Republic.<sup>7</sup>

However, assuming that nationalism is indeed endemic in Western cultural and political life, it is equally relevant to study the influence of a nationalist consciousness in relation to the Western perception of nationalist conflict following the breakup of Yugoslavia. In other words: how has a nationalist frame shaped Western perceptions of the different nationalist discourses during the disintegration of Yugoslavia? It is the aim of this study to take the latter approach, to examine the possible influence of a 'banal' nationalism on a specific Western, in this case, Dutch, perception of the breakup of Yugoslavia.

To examine this nationalist framing in its totality, including all forms of media and public and political debates would, of course, not be feasible in this study. In order to break down the concept of banal nationalism to practical proportions, this study will have a twofold 'reduction' (apart from the delimitation in time), focusing on specific source material: three Dutch newspapers, and being restricted to two cases regarding the breakup of Yugoslavia, namely those of Kosovo and Macedonia.

The choice for the Dutch press is based on the premise that if nationalism is indeed embedded in Western societies, it should be visible in everyday aspects of our life, of which the mass media are a significant part.<sup>8</sup> More importantly, 'the news' can be understood in a sociological way -to quote sociologist Michael Schudson- as the "product of a set of

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<sup>7</sup> There are numerous studies which focus on the particular forms of nationalism that existed within Yugoslavia. Most works that deal with the demise of Yugoslavia include analyses of these different nationalisms. For some examples, see: Bogdan Denis Denitch, *Ethnic nationalism: the tragic death of Yugoslavia* (Minneapolis 1997), Misha Glenny, *The Balkans 1804-1999: nationalism, war and the Great Powers* (London 1999) and Loring, M. Danforth, *The Macedonian conflict: ethnic nationalism in a transnational world* (Princeton 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Billig, *Banal nationalism*, 109.

social, economic and political institutions and practices.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, assuming that banal nationalism takes an important place in our social, economic and especially political matters, its influence on the product called ‘news’ should be something worth studying. As Schudson points out, news is inherently ‘framed’ within those ‘little tacit theories’ which structure our world: “Consciously or unconsciously, every narrative makes assumptions about how the world works, what is important, what makes sense, and what should be.”<sup>10</sup> This framing represents an unintentional bias, the ways in which all human beings, not just journalists or editors, structure and select information.

This study takes banal nationalism to be one of those ‘little tacit theories’ that provided a frame of reference for the Dutch news coverage of the breakup of Yugoslavia. For if nationalism is indeed endemic in our cultural and political life, the language used in analysing the breakup of Yugoslavia in the Dutch press should reveal this endemic condition: its rhetoric, use of words and arguments should in one way or another revolve around a worldview that takes the world of nations for granted.

Following this interpretation of the workings of the media, we can conclude that researching the news coverage of the demise of Yugoslavia should (partly) inform us in which way nationalism was used as a framework for thinking about the breakup of Yugoslavia. It starts with the idea that (banal) nationalism is a given in our cultural and ideological frames of reference, and subsequently tries to examine the influence of this ‘framing’ on the news coverage itself.<sup>11</sup> In other words, this study treats news coverage as a possible ideological exponent of banal nationalism. Following this interpretation of the role of the press in this study, ‘news coverage’ is taken to stand for those articles written by both those on the payroll of the newspapers and those who are not, thus including letters to the editor and those articles written by specialists,

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Schudson, *The sociology of news* (New York 2003) 14.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>11</sup> For the importance of cultural and ideological frameworks for journalists, see: Schudson, *The sociology of news*, 34-3 and Nel Ruigrok, *Journalism of attachment: Dutch newspapers during the Bosnian war* (Amsterdam 2005) 24, 26-27.

politicians and activists on an incidental basis (so called LTE's: letter(s) to the editor). Both groups necessarily 'frame' their published articles, and as such these can both be analysed in regard to the usage of a nationalist framework.

Following Billig's view that nationalism is in possession of its own discourses of hegemony, this study can then best be characterised as a *discourse analysis*: an analysis of language and meaning in relation to topics concerning nationalism both as a descriptive term and a universal political ideology. Banal nationalism implies an endemic condition, and for that very reason it should transcend the diverse array of authors of news articles and their different backgrounds. Thus, regardless of the *pluriformity* of the different authors, their backgrounds and opinions, themes related to nationalism should show, to a certain extent, *uniformity*; it is this implied uniformity that leads this study to forgo an extensive introduction to the different writers, journalists and editors involved.

As of the second restriction: the breakup of Yugoslavia is too excessively large to study in all its facets. The choice to focus on Macedonia and Kosovo has several reasons. First of all, both cases are very much about the concept of nationalism. Self-determination was an important issue both in Macedonia, founded as a nation-state of the Macedonian people, and Kosovo, which served as a battlefield for the clashing of Serbian and Albanian nationalist claims. As mentioned before, both Kosovo and Macedonia were routinely cited as 'being next' in line for incorporation into a Greater Serbia if the west didn't stop Milosevic in Bosnia. Both the Albanians and Macedonians had a kind of 'underdog' status, being stuck between the larger, more powerful and 'hostile' nation-states of Greece (in the case of Macedonia) and Serbia. Els de Groen, a Dutch author closely involved with the Balkans, captures this mind-set perfectly in a LTE which was published in the Dutch newspaper *Algemeen Dagblad*. She sympathetically calls the Macedonians and Albanians 'the stepchildren of the Balkans': two oppressed peoples that

have been sullied with by their neighbouring nations and largely ignored by the European powers throughout history.<sup>12</sup>

Another argument for studying both Kosovo and Macedonia is the fact that the Macedonian Republic has a large Albanian minority and shares a border with Kosovo. As a consequence, the fate of a stable Kosovo and a peaceful Macedonia were commonly seen as being entwined and the news coverage mirrored this assumption. Finally, most Dutch literature on the breakup of Yugoslavia has focused on the wars in Bosnia, and specifically on the Srebrenica massacre of 1995, in which Dutch troops under the UN banner failed to protect the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica from being ethnically cleansed by Serb forces. As such, this study also tries to fill a 'geographic' gap in the current literature.

The third delimitation, the creation of a timeframe for both the news coverage of Kosovo and Macedonia, has been guided by the Macedonian case, starting a month before the Macedonian declaration of independence (which was on 8-9-1991), and ending in October 1995, when Greece lifted its embargo against Macedonia, instated as a response to the Macedonia name dispute. This dispute concerned the Greek protest against both the similarity of the newly formed country's name with its own Macedonian province, fearing territorial claims, in addition to the Greek cultural background that the term had in their eyes.<sup>13</sup>

Additionally, this timeframe shows a large overlap with the Bosnian war (April 1992, December 1995), and as such automatically covers the period in which Yugoslavia was a 'hot' news item. This also means that regarding Kosovo, the actual armed conflict of 1998-1999 is beyond the scope of this study. Thus, the news items on Kosovo are focused around a general view on Serbian interference with Kosovo, which started in 1989 and had been a permanent problem and periodically recurring news item during the period of the Bosnian war (1992-1995).

In conclusion, this study investigates the way in which the Dutch

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<sup>12</sup> Els de Groen, 'Macedoniërs en Albanezen: de stiefkinderen van de Balkan', *AD* 8-1-1994.

<sup>13</sup> This name dispute will be explained in greater detail in chapter 2.

press reacted in regard to Kosovo and Macedonia during the breakup of Yugoslavia. Did the news coverage use nationalism as a frame of reference, and if so, how? In what way are arguments and discussions framed *within* rather than *against* nationalism? In short, *whether and how did nationalism, both as a topic and as a frame of reference, influence the Dutch news coverage of Kosovo and Macedonia during the dissolution of Yugoslavia (1991-1995)?*

In trying to answer this question, the study will be structured as follows. It will consist of four chapters. The first one shall deal with the concept of nationalism and is divided in four parts. First of all, the terms 'nation' and 'nationalism' will be defined. Following this broad introduction will be a short review of Billig's Banal nationalism. The third part shall discuss the paradox of the universal and particularistic faces of nationalism. The fourth and final part will deal with the popular distinction between Eastern and Western-, and ethnic and civic nationalism in relation to literature on nationalism in the Balkans. The goal of this chapter is to create a theoretical framework which can be used to analyse the Dutch perception of 'other' nations and their associated nationalisms.

The second chapter will consist of a historical introduction to both Kosovo and Macedonia in relation to the project of nation-building, a project that has dominated Balkan politics since the late 19th century. We shall shortly discuss the pre-national Balkans and its structuring before the coming of the nation-state in order understand the tremendous change that nationalist ideology brought to the regions of Kosovo and Macedonia.

Chapter three will shortly introduce the Western perception of the demise of Yugoslavia. Drawing upon several studies that have dealt with the Dutch press coverage of the Yugoslav crisis, such as the extensive NIOD (Netherlands Institute for War Documentation, as of 2010, the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies) report on Srebrenica (2002), this chapter will look at the Dutch press during the fall of Yugoslavia more closely, and create a framework for the source material of this study.

The fourth and final chapter will concern the actual research, in which the news coverage of Kosovo and Macedonia will be examined in the light of the definition of 'nationalism' presented in chapter one. A methodological introduction will be given in order to discuss the theoretical means by which the source material was studied and interpreted. By looking at what *is*, and what *is not* considered 'nationalistic', a clear picture of the dominant views on nationalism appears. The conclusions should then be able to give us a satisfactory answer to the question whether and how the Dutch press was influenced by nationalism in relation to the news coverage of Kosovo and Macedonia.

# 1 Nationalism: beyond the face of the demon

## Cambridge dictionary on nationalism:

-the wish for and the attempt to achieve political independence for your country or nation

-a great or too great love of your own country. *The book documents the rise of the political right with its accompanying strands of nationalism and racism.*<sup>14</sup>

## Oxford English Dictionary on nationalism:

1.a. Advocacy of or support for the interests of one's own nation, esp. to the exclusion or detriment of the interests of other nations. Also: advocacy of or support for national independence or self-determination.<sup>15</sup>

Nationalism has become an ugly word. Usually closely associated with its 'blood brothers', fascism, Nazism and racism,<sup>16</sup> few would like to call themselves nationalists in the post-war West.<sup>17</sup> And this demonization

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<sup>14</sup> Cambridge Dictionaries Online:

<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/nationalism>, retrieved on 4-4-2011

<sup>15</sup> Oxford English Dictionary:

<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/125289?redirectedFrom=nationalism#eid>, retrieved on 4-4-2011.

<sup>16</sup> For a critique on the proposed relation with racism, see: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London 2006) 141. The common sense relation between fascism/Nazism and nationalism is all too clear when historian John Dunn thinks it necessary to point out the fact that: 'If we are most of us nationalists in some measure now, we are certainly not necessarily insensitive to claims of supranational human solidarities and we are still more certainly most of us not at all like Nazis.' See: John Dunn, 'Nationalism' in: Ronald Beiner ed., *Theorizing nationalism* (Albany 1999) 67-90, 72.

<sup>17</sup> The PVV, a large Dutch political party usually being denounced as a racist, nationalist party, does not in any way call itself 'nationalistic', nor does it founder, Geert Wilders, refer to himself as a 'nationalist'. The word 'nation' however, is something which is used by the party in a positive sense.

might not be confined to the Western world. Just recently, the ousting of the Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak led to some very interesting news coverage concerning the use (or disuse) of the word 'nationalism'. While demonstrators and sympathisers clearly used nationalistic rhetoric in their struggle against Mubarak's authoritarian regime, it was not deemed appropriate to call the uprising nationalistic of any sort. Protesters carried signs portraying Mubarak as a puppet of *foreign* regimes, those of America and Israel.<sup>18</sup> National flags were raised, waved, even painted on the angry faces of the protesters. The protesters claimed that the *Egyptian people* had the right to rule *themselves*. And who could deny that the Egyptian people had no rightful claims to such self-evident rights? Who would stand up and claim that it was morally just that *other* nations, such as those of America or Israel, interfered with the self-rule of the Egyptian people?

If we are to understand more of the elusive concept called 'nationalism', we have to be aware of these 'moral' and 'natural' aspects that partly determine what is commonly called nationalistic and what not. As Billig argues, this 'naturalisation' of aspects of nationalism (as in: making aspects of nationalism seem as a natural given fact as opposed to being constructed) is not confined to the non-academic world.<sup>19</sup> The second aspect, the 'moral' one, is also easily found in academic writings on nationalism. Anthropologist Benedict Anderson makes a valid point when he states, though slightly exaggerating, that he "must be the only one writing about nationalism who doesn't think it ugly" Continuing, Anderson lines up some of the more pessimistic writers: 'If you think about researchers such as Gellner and Hobsbawm, they have quite a hostile

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<sup>18</sup> Accusations of subordinating Egypt's interests to Israel were made graphic by showing pictures of Mubarak with the Star of David drawn on his forehead. See <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2011/02/01/world/main7304655.shtml>, retrieved on 20-10-2011.

<sup>19</sup> As a social scientist, Billig specifically focuses on the social sciences. See: Billig, *Banal nationalism*, 51.

attitude to nationalism.'<sup>20</sup>

Historian Eric Hobsbawm makes for an interesting case, since he sees 'the return' of nationalism in the post-communist East as a failure of modernity, the victory of the irrational ethnic past, in the form of the Versailles treaty,<sup>21</sup> over the modern rational present.<sup>22</sup> Is this reasoning a sign of Hobsbawm's Marxist roots? Sociologist Stuart Hall has remarked that the great discourses of modernity, Marxism and liberalism, promised the world that parochial loyalties would disappear with the ultimate victory of industrial society.<sup>23</sup> In addition, classical social theory had long treated nationalism as an earlier phase in social evolution, 'a transitory stage on the way to modern rationalized and individualized class society based on achievement.'<sup>24</sup>As anthropologist Cris Shore points out, Hobsbawm uses a discourse filled with metaphors concerning hierarchy and progress when it comes to the subject of nationalism.<sup>25</sup>

But leaving the grand discourses of modernity aside, the point is that in Hobsbawm's case, the study of nationalism seems highly influenced by his view, not on how the world works, but how it *should* work. Hobsbawm's fellow British historian Tom Nairn, rightly points out that Hobsbawm's 'acrimonious distaste' for nationalism seems to negatively influence his writing on the workings of nationalism: '...anything good turns out to actually derive from some other source of inspiration (quite often internationalism); everything bad is disdainfully highlighted as

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with Benedict Anderson, taken by Lorenz Kahzaleh in 2005,

<sup>21</sup> Hobsbawm characterises the wave of Baltic nationalism of the 90's simply as 'the old chickens of Versailles once again coming home to roost.' See: Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of extremes: the shorth twentieth century 1914-1991* (London 2009) 31.

<sup>22</sup> Cris Shore, 'Ethnicity, xenophobia and the boundaries of Europe', in Tim Allen, John Eade eds., *Divided Europeans: understanding ethnicities in conflict*, (Dordrecht 1999) 59.

<sup>23</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Our mongrel selves' *New Statesman and Society* 5 (1992) 6-8.

<sup>24</sup> Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller, 'Methodological nationalism and beyond: nation-state building, migration and the social sciences', *Global networks* 2 (2002) 301-334, 303.

<sup>25</sup> Shore, 'Ethnicity, xenophobia and the boundaries of Europe', 59

typical, suspect or ominous [of nationalism].'<sup>26</sup>

Thus, before beginning on any study revolving around the concept of nationalism, these two aspects should be kept in mind. First of all, the use of the term nationalism is usually restricted, leaving aside what might be called the 'common sense' aspects of nationalism, such as the 'logical' acceptance of the right of self-determination, manifested in the Egyptian people disposing a 'foreign backed' autocrat. Secondly, the widespread negative interpretations of 'nationalism' in both the non-academic and the academic and world, as for example, shown in works as Hobsbawm's *Nations and nationalism*,<sup>27</sup> clearly influences the question what should be called nationalism. Keeping these two observations in mind, we should be able to look beyond the 'ugly face' of the demon.<sup>28</sup>

## 1.1 Defining nationalism and the nation

Creating an all-encompassing definition of 'nationalism' is a somewhat problematic task. Most of the more successful writers on nationalism stress the political, state building element contained in the ideology. Thus, Gellner starts his famous *Nations and nationalism* with the remark that, '[n]ationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent.' As a 'sentiment', it is the feeling summoned by the violation of this principle.<sup>29</sup> Anderson also underlines this political aspect when he describes how the nation is imagined as being sovereign (ideally housed in a sovereign state), but claims it would be better if we treated nationalism as belonging to cultural systems such as kinship and religion rather than political ideologies, such

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<sup>26</sup> Tom Nairn, *Faces of nationalism: Janus reretrieved* (London 1997) 51

<sup>27</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism since 1870: programme, myth, reality* (Cambridge 1992).

<sup>28</sup> Nairn mentions how the cover of the *Time* magazine of 6 august 1990 represented nationalism as a fearful monster threatening Europe, the beast being crowned 'with a title of 72 point scarlet lettering: 'OLD DEMON''. Nairn, *Faces of nationalism*, 57.

<sup>29</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and nationalism: new perspectives on the past* (London 1983) 1.

as fascism and liberalism.<sup>30</sup>

The comparison with religion is interesting because the anthropological study on religion has largely moved beyond the idea that there is a 'correct', all-encompassing definition which catches all of what should be called 'religion'. The same mind-set might be useful in the study of nationalism. Not that we should be doing without any form of definition; using the words anthropologist Michael Lambek wrote on the study of religion, 'what is advocated is not the discovery of more precise definitions, but the acknowledgement of the contingency, provisionality, and implications of any definitions we choose to employ.'<sup>31</sup>

The subject of a study concerning nationalism will have a great influence on the definition used for nationalism. On which level is nationalism studied: local, national, global? What is the study's main focus: minorities, state building, identity? The creation of useful, fitting definitions as means to analyse processes deemed related to 'nationalism' should not be something problematic as long as we acknowledge the implications in choosing and forming these definitions. Returning to the question of creating definitions: sociologist Anthony Smith has presented an illuminating list of the most popular definitions of nationalism:

- (1) a process of formation, or growth, of nations;
- (2) a sentiment of consciousness of belonging to the nation
- (3) a language and symbolism of the nation
- (4) a social and political movement on behalf of the nation
- (5) a doctrine and/or ideology of the nation, both general and particular.<sup>32</sup>

Nationalism thus seems to refer to 'a process, a kind of sentiment or identity, a form of political rhetoric, a principle or set of principles, and a

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<sup>30</sup> Anderson, *Imagined communities*, 5

<sup>31</sup> Michael Lambek ed., *A reader in the anthropology of religion* (Oxford 2008) 12.

<sup>32</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, ideology, history* (Cambridge 2010) 4-5.

kind of social-political-movement.’<sup>33</sup> This study will largely concern itself with nationalism as a widely used, modern ideology of worldwide influence, both as a *process*, a *general* doctrine and ideology, and partly as *a form of political rhetoric*.

In this aspect, its definition will be close to that of sociologist Rogers Brubaker, who states that nationalism ‘is a heterogeneous set of “nation”-oriented idioms, practices, and possibilities that are continuously available or “endemic” in modern cultural and political life.’<sup>34</sup> The most important part of such a definition is that it does not confine nationalism to the periphery of the Western world, nor does it mould nationalism into something which takes place ‘incidentally’ in extreme surges. Billig’s theory on nationalism, which is one of the main pillars on which this study will build, almost mirrors that of Brubaker, though it is less clearly articulated. As Billig states, it ‘covers the ideological means by which nation-states are reproduced. [...] Nationalism, far from being an intermittent mood in established nations, is the endemic condition.’<sup>35</sup>

This ‘endemic condition’ makes sure that the world of nations is reproduced and kept alive. In short, this view treats nationalism as the force which has not only created the world of nation states, but also keeps it from falling apart. But while it might keep the world of nations ‘intact’, this does not mean that nationalism is something which only protects the current national status quo, the current national borders and the currently ‘recognised’ nations. It makes sure that even though borders might change, groups making claims to nationhood may succeed or disappear from the face of the earth, the world remains a world of nation states. Nationalism made the existence of a specific Belgian nation-state possible,

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<sup>33</sup> Wayne Norman, ‘Theorizing Nationalism (Normatively)’ in: Ronald Beiner ed., *Theorizing nationalism* (New York 1999) 51-65, 56.

<sup>34</sup> Brubaker, *Nationalism reframed*, 10.

<sup>35</sup> Billig, *Banal nationalism*, 6. The most important similarity is that both Brubaker and Billig use the term ‘endemic’.

and if Belgium falls apart tomorrow, nationalism will make sure that the territory that once was Belgium will still be part of the world of nations, whether it the form of a *Groot Nederland* (Greater Netherlands), a newly found Flemish and/or Wallonian nation-state, or any other given form.

Of course, this definition of nationalism as the ideological means by which nation-states are reproduced seems to require some sort of definition of the nation.<sup>36</sup> The question that usually follows is what a nation actually is, in objective qualifiers concerning subjects like language or history. However, we might, as Brubaker proposes, try to think about nationalism without actual nations, without the need to define nations as existing units defined by shared cultural, linguistic, historic, geographical, or ethnic ties.<sup>37</sup> Neither should we think of nations as being 'born' out of 'premodern nations', so called 'ethnies', a term and argument introduced by Smith.<sup>38</sup> Such a view carries the risk of 'retrospective ethnicization': simplifying the past in terms of ethnicity following a (ethno)nationalist present.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> And -obviously- it also requires a definition of the state. In this context, it should suffice to note that the state is a territory with clear boundaries in which violence is effectively monopolized by the state apparatus (in order to impose the 'order' desired by this state). However, as Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller rightly point out, nation and state have been linked so closely together in the rise of modern states that making a clear analytical distinction between the two carries the risk of disconnecting these concepts. As such, the political sciences have 'described the state as a neutral playing ground for different interest groups, thus excluding from the picture the fact that the modern state itself has entered into a symbiotic relationship with the nationalist political project.' Wimmer and Schiller, 'Methodological nationalism and beyond', 306.

<sup>37</sup> Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism reframed: nationhood and the national question in the New Europe* (Cambridge 1996) 16.

<sup>38</sup> Smith proposed the use of concept of ethno-symbolism to stress continuity of nations in relation to pre- existing ethnies and their associated symbolism. For an overview of Smith's thoughts on ethno-symbolism, see: Anthony D. Smith, *Ethno-symbolism and nationalism: a cultural approach* (New York 2009).

<sup>39</sup> Umut Özkirimli and Spyros A. Sofos, *Tormented by history: nationalism in Greece and Turkey* (London 2008) 9. For another attack on Smith's theses of ethnosymbolism in relation to nationalism in the Balkans, see Victor Roudometof, *Nationalism, globalization and orthodoxy: the social origins of ethnic conflict in the Balkans* (Westport 2001) 47-73. This argument against 'retrospective ethnicization' will be expanded in chapter 2.

Then, what is the nation if not a community held together by certain objective criteria? The nation as a concept is something which is created by nationalism as an ideology. Therefore, the nation can be defined within the parameters of nationalism, but not objectively outside of it. The nation as a category used in nationalist thought can be described by looking at what sort of rights are associated with the claim to nationhood. Roughly, a universal version of claims to nationhood will revolve around the sovereignty of a 'collective identity'.<sup>40</sup>

When a movement for national independence makes the claim that it represents a nation, 'it will', as Billig states, 'be demanding the political entitlements which are presumed to follow from being a nation.'<sup>41</sup> Smith summarizes these 'political entitlements', as follows: rights to national autonomy (inherently linked with the concept of a national homeland), national unity and national identity.<sup>42</sup> Thus, it might be useful to define the nation as a term used in nationalist thought that symbolises a community with a 'rightful' claim to this triple form of nationalistic sovereignty.

This definition of the nation has a certain flexibility; the concept of sovereignty is not fixed and can be interpreted in different ways (and it has shifted significantly over the years).<sup>43</sup> It might be compelling to reserve nationalism for those movements that go to extremes in their strife to attain the full realisation of this threefold nationalistic sovereignty.<sup>44</sup> However, that it is possible for national sovereignty to be

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<sup>40</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *The nation in history: historiographical debates about ethnicity and nationalism* (Hanover 2000) 69-70.

<sup>41</sup> Billig, *Banal nationalism*, 63

<sup>42</sup> Smith, *Nationalism*, 10.

<sup>43</sup> In the case of the Balkans, historian Mark Mazower accurately describes the changing substance of nationalistic policies as follows: '[a]s in the rest of Europe, then, the Balkans were seeing issues of nationalism and minority rights turning from a question of war and peace to one of borders, policing and urban coexistence.' Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: from the end of Byzantium to the present day* (London 2000) 141.

<sup>44</sup> Smith clearly breaks with the common link between national autonomy and the national state. '...it is not necessary, as we saw, for a nation to possess a sovereign state of its own,

interpreted in many different ways can be illustrated by some examples specifically related to this study. For instance, as mentioned in the introduction, the Macedonian Republic is described in its constitution as a nation-state of the Macedonian people;<sup>45</sup> it thus clearly relates to the idea of national autonomy. The Macedonian Republic also lobbies to make sure that Slavic speakers in Greece (and some in Bulgaria), which it perceives as being ethnic Macedonians, can safely express their Macedonian identity, an identity which relates to the national identity propagated in Skopje.<sup>46</sup> Following this claim that Slavic speakers in Greece are Macedonians, it presupposes a form of unity. These people are claimed to be united by aspects such as their common Macedonian language, a shared history, or national music and folkdances.

Despite these obvious claims to nationhood, the elected government of the Macedonian Republic, does not interpret these claims as being entitled to annexing Greek or Bulgarian land that is inhabited by 'the unified Macedonian people'. We could think about a dozen of reasons why this is the case, but the bottom line is that such an irredentist policy would not be feasible in today's world. The political, military and economical consequences would be harsh and relations with neighbouring states would be poisoned for decades to come. As such, the interpretation of nationalistic sovereignty is adjusted to the means to the

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but only an aspiration for a measure of autonomy, coupled with physical residence in its perceived homeland.' See: Smith, *Nationalism*, 13.

<sup>45</sup> Preamble of the 1991 Macedonian constitution. See:

[http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/mk00000\\_.html](http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/mk00000_.html), retrieved on 07-02-2011.

<sup>46</sup> That this claim to national identity and unity is not wholly unproblematic is clearly illustrated by anthropologist Anastasia Karakasidou. A Slavic speaker in Greek-Macedonia told her the following: 'I respect the Greek constitution, but they don't give me my human rights. I don't want to go over there [i.e. to FYROM]. But we cannot say that there is homogeneity [here]. I am not the same as the Skopians. But don't call me a gypsy because I speak that language. Do not discriminate against me. They [i.e. the Skopians] are worse. They ask for autonomy. I would become a Turk before I would become an autonomist.' See: Anastasia Karakasidou, 'Cultural illegitimacy in Greece: the Slavo-Macedonian "non-minority"' in: Richard Clogg ed., *Minorities in Greece: aspects of a plural society* (London 2002) 122-164, 149.

disposal of the Macedonian Republic and the ruling parties' goals in foreign and internal policies. It would be wrong to reserve the term nationalists to those wishing 'irrationality' to extend Macedonia's boundaries at any costs in order to create a 'Greater Macedonia', even though it might be said this interpretation takes the concept of national sovereignty the furthest. The concept of sovereignty is essentially a contested one, even within nationalist movements.<sup>47</sup>

The label 'nationalist' should therefore not be restricted to, let us say, the Serbian nationalist striving to construct a pure 'Greater Serbia' by the means of ethnic cleansing and territorial expansion. One can also be a Serbian nationalist without seeing the need to incorporate contested territories, thus believing in the rights of sovereignty for the Serbian nation and interpret these in such a way that there is no need for irredentist adventures or the cleansing of the homeland.<sup>48</sup> The wars in Yugoslavia might have discredited the idea of a Greater Serbia in the same way the Turkish war of independence has discredited the *Megali Idea*, but even though the boundaries of the autonomous national homeland have been contested and revised, both Greece and Serbia still exist as nation-states.<sup>49</sup> In this manner, the subjective nature of sovereignty can partly

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<sup>47</sup> The realisation of the *Megali Idea*, the 19<sup>th</sup> century blueprint for a Greater Greece which included the west coast of Asia-minor, was not supported by all Greek nationalists. There were those proposing to create a 'Greater Greece' (most notably the Venizelists), as well as those advocating a 'small but honourable Greece' (found primarily in the camp of the royalists). See: Richard Clogg, *A concise history of modern Greece* (Cambridge 1992) 87.

<sup>48</sup> Gellner, who sees nationalism as the principle that the political and national unit should be congruent, is right to point out that there is no clear number of foreigners which must be present in a national state in order for these to be perceived as a 'threat' to the nation. See: Gellner, *Nations and nationalism*, 2-3.

<sup>49</sup> The concept of 'lost homelands' can be seen as a consequence of the constant need to revise the feasibility of the imagined national homeland. When Greek Christians fled the area that is now the Bulgarian nation-state, the villages they abandoned got a place in the Greek nationalist imagining as 'lost homelands'. There is an acceptance that these lands will never again be 'Greek', and as such they are cast into a state of limbo; still considered 'homelands', but not part of the 'actual' homeland, which is the area comprising the Greek nation-state. Remembrance of these lost homelands is promoted by the state, for

explain the many different forms 'nations' and 'nationalist movements take and it will prevent us from needing to reserve the definition of nationalism to its most extreme variants.

However, nationalism is not just a political ideology as described above; as Smith's list of meanings of nationalism already showed, nationalism is both an ideology and a political/historical process. In fact, nationalism could only become such a powerful and versatile ideology because nationalism *as a historical process* proved to be so successful. Simply put, nationalism as a long stretched process of nation and state building, by which the world was turned into a world of nation-states, was accompanied by the spread and acceptance of nationalistic principles all around the globe. Both processes, the spread of the nation-state and the spread of nationalist ideology, cannot be seen separately, and both strengthen each other.

This study will primarily look at the (implicit) usage of nationalistic ideology in a specific and short timeframe (1991-1995), and as such it will rarely deal with nationalism as a historical process. Still, it's important to keep in mind that the nationalist principles which are treated in this study should be seen in the light of a longer historical process of state and nation building. It is this process that has made the principles of nationalism seem so natural and logical to us, the modern day citizens of nation-states.

A short conclusion: the definition used for nationalism will be the one Billig introduces: 'the ideological means by which nation-states are reproduced.'<sup>50</sup> But for this study, the definition can and should be refined. It is important to remember that this study is not concerned with a particular Dutch nationalism but with the use of nationalism as a frame of reference within the Dutch press when confronted with what was seen as

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instance by the naming of streets. See: Olga Demetriou,, 'Streets not named: Discursive dead ends and the politics of orientation in intercommunal spatial relations in Northern Greece', *Cultural Anthropology* 21 (2006) 295-321, 299-300

<sup>50</sup> Billig, *Banal nationalism*, 6.

nationalist conflict in Yugoslavia. At this point, we should take a closer look at Billig's work and his theory on banal nationalism. The next part of this chapter will serve that purpose.

## **1.2 A short review of Billig's Banal nationalism**

Since this study strongly revolves around Billig's *Banal nationalism*, a closer look will be paid to the context in which this book was written and published. This section will discuss the main points put forth by Billig, as well as the criticism and praise his work received in order to come to a well evaluated use of Billig's theories in this study.

Part of Billig's theory has already been presented in the introduction. To repeat shortly: Billig states that nationalism has often been reduced to instances of 'hot nationalism', the more obvious and extreme outbursts of nationalism. As such, nationalism has been conceived as 'extraordinary, politically charged and emotionally driven.'<sup>51</sup> In addition, these outbursts are often associated with the non-Western world, and within the Western world itself only with the extremist periphery (in the form of the IRA, ETA, Front National, etc.).

Billig argues that despite this popular view, nationalism has not disappeared in the Western world, but has instead manifested itself in more subtle ways which are not acknowledged as being 'nationalistic', that is to say, as being part of the ideological means by which nation-states are reproduced. These unnamed and unnoticed forms of nationalism are what Billig calls 'banal nationalism'. Hence instead of reducing nationalism to the political periphery and incidental outbursts (such as at sporting events), Billig claims that nationalism is almost omnipresent in modern day political and cultural life and serves as an important ideological framework by which 'we', the inhabitants of nation-states, view and understand the world around us.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 44.

*Banal nationalism* was published at a moment when nationalism was, more than ever, a hot topic. The year 1995 saw the final military offensives in the Yugoslav wars (which were to start again a few years later in Kosovo) and coincided with an ever growing academic interest in nationalism in general.<sup>52</sup> Pessimists saw the newly liberated Eastern Europe turn into a playground for nationalist demagogues in which ancient hatreds or previously 'frozen' nationalist struggles, stopped dead in the icy tracks of the Cold War, were free to wreak havoc. As such, the book was (partly) a reaction to the main body of literature on nationalism,<sup>53</sup> which focused on nationalism in the non-Western world more than ever, while continuing to ignore it 'at home'.

The literature to which *Banal nationalism* responded was mainly social scientific in character. The book, as Billig himself states, very much focused on deconstructing the way nationalism had been studied in the social sciences.<sup>54</sup> Thus, the book carries an outlook heavily influenced by the social sciences (Billig is a social scientist himself), and primarily revolves around critically engaging with literature from the field of the social sciences.

This social science outlook has certain drawbacks. As the social scientist Erwin H. Epstein remarks in his review of Billig's book, there is no explanation given for the persistence of the concept of national identity over longer periods of time.<sup>55</sup> While Epstein advocates the usage of social theories in explaining the persistence of this concept, the introduction of adequate theories will only get us so far. A specific *historical* outlook should in this case greatly enhance Billig's view on banal nationalism, and it is this view that seems to be missing at certain times.

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<sup>52</sup> Michael Skey, 'The national in everyday life: A critical engagement with Michael Billig's thesis of banal nationalism', *The sociological review* 57 (2009) 331-346, 335.

<sup>53</sup> Billig himself explicitly states this in the introduction of *Banal nationalism*. See: Billig, *Banal nationalism*, 10.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Erwin H. Epstein, 'Book reviews', *Nationalism and ethnic politics* 3 (1997) 131-132

As has already been argued in chapter 2.2, the success of nationalism as an ideology is bound up with its success as a historical process. However, Billig does not really explain how this 'banal nationalism' has become so convincing to 'us'. How can we explain its growth in a historic setting? Has banal nationalism always accompanied the concept of nationalism, or is it something which is only usable to describe the contemporary world? And if it is not, since when can we speak about the existence of 'banal nationalism'? That these questions were not addressed is understandable; they would have the author stray away from his main argument and require specific historic case studies to be understood properly. Still, this historical approach creates a theoretical gap in Billig's work.

Either way, the book was received very positively, is routinely cited as one of the more 'recent' influential works on nationalism and spawned several case studies which concentrated on the concept of banal nationalism.<sup>56</sup> The greatest value of *Banal nationalism* was that it showed the importance and academic neglect of everyday forms of nationhood. The incidental criticism Billig's work did receive is mostly related to his analyses of the media. Social scientist Michael Skey, who wrote a critical review which was published in 2009 (14 years *after* the publication of *Banal nationalism*), argues that Billig fails to see that 'the public' does not uncritically absorb information provided by the media. Skey is also critical of Billig's usage of British newspapers, which was selective and did not represent a 'national' press.<sup>57</sup> But the failure to cover the press in its national totality is not so much a problem since Skey contests the entire idea that the nation is a totality, instead focusing on the relative heterogeneity and dissent within nations.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> A. Law, 'Near and far: banal national identity and the press in Scotland' *Media, culture and society* 23 (2001) 299–322., M. Rosie et al., 'Nation speaking unto nation? National identity and the press in the devolved UK' *The Sociological Review*, 52 (2004) 437–458. and U. Ozkirmli and A. Yumul, 'Reproducing the nation; banal nationalism in the Turkish press', *Media, culture and society* 23 (2000) 299–322.

<sup>57</sup> Skey, 'The national in everyday life?', 335.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 341.

However, the value of Skey's review lies primarily in the fact that it was accompanied by a reply from Billig himself. In this response, Billig accepts the criticism on his take on the British media, which 'ignored Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and [...] exaggerated the extent to which English-based newspapers constitute a national press'.<sup>59</sup> But he also rightly points out that *Banal nationalism* never suggested that there was a homogenous audience for the national press as Skey implies. Neither did Billig claim that the media propagated a single conception about the content of the nation. Instead of a 'single coherent message of the nation', the media show 'continual controversies, debates, dilemmas.'<sup>60</sup> The ever disputed nature of 'the nation' is a given; what matters most is that these debates are 'likely to assume those general themes of nationalism that take for granted the naturalness of a world of nations.'<sup>61</sup>

It is this view that the media (but certainly not only the media) unproblematically assume the naturalness of 'the world of nations' on which this study focuses. But it will reverse the perspective and not so much revolve around the contested idea of 'the Dutch nation', but rather look at how several *other* nations are perceived in the Dutch press. For nationalism entails not only reproducing one's 'own' nation: it also means being able to reproduce the nations of 'others'. No nation can exist in complete isolation and there is no nation which 'imagines itself coterminous with mankind.'<sup>62</sup>

In order to imagine oneself living in a nation situated in a world of nations, one has to be able to imagine both one's own nation and the world of nations. Nationalism thus presupposes a certain way of looking at the world and as such it is both a particular and a universal ideology. If we want to study the influence of this form of nationalism as something which

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<sup>59</sup> Michael Billig, 'Reflecting on a critical engagement with banal nationalism – reply to Skey' in *The sociological review* 57 (2009) 347-352, 350.

<sup>60</sup> Billig 'Reflecting on a critical engagement with banal nationalism', 348.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Anderson, *Imagined communities*, 5.

is detached from one or another particular form of nationalism and used as a framework to think about 'other nations', it should be conceptualized as a universal ideology. The next part of this chapter will therefore deal with the universal aspects of nationalism, aspects that often have gained a positive touch or have become detached from the stigma that has marked nationalism.

### **1.3 Nationalism as a universal ideology**

Nationalism is usually seen as an inwards looking ideology, the polar opposite of internationalism.<sup>63</sup> However, claims to nationhood are made in relation to other established nations and those entities which are deemed unworthy of nationhood. In this way, nationalism is inherently relational and outward looking. All particular forms of nationalism necessarily revolve around the idea that their nation is one amongst others. While this idea might have a positive ring to it, the creation of a world of nations that comes with the advent of nationalism does not dictate how one should view those 'other nations'. Turkish nationalism has largely been constructed on the idea that Turkey was beset by its many enemies, those other nations trying to destroy it and dismember the Turkish homeland.<sup>64</sup> As such, Turkish nationalism has had its international and strong outward looking aspects; it imagined those other nations it bordered, but not all in a positive way: 'know thy enemy' rather than 'love thy neighbour'. If nationalism is inherently both a particular and a universal ideology, unrelated to moral judgement, the question that should be asked in the context of this study is how its universal aspects

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<sup>63</sup> Billig, *Banal nationalism*, 87.

<sup>64</sup> This state of mind has even earned its own name: 'Sèvres paranoia', the fear that foreign powers will tear the Turkish nation apart with the use of 'hostile' neighbouring peoples (Armenians, Kurds, Greeks) as was proposed in the infamous treaty of Sèvres in 1920. This treaty planned to seal the fate of the Ottoman Empire after its defeat in World War One, reducing it to a small state in the heartland of Anatolia

have been theorized and in what way they have influenced the structuring of our world.

An important part of nationalism as a universal ideology stems from the ways in which claims to nationhood are formulated. Political scientist Yael Tamir describes the way in which nationhood is proclaimed as a process which uses two discourses. First of all, there is the particular nationalist discourse. This discourse relates to the specific history of a nation which is created to support claims to its nationhood. In the case of Tamir's example, this is the nationalist discourse of Israel. It covers the particular way in which Zionists have argued for the creation of a specific Jewish nation-state.

The second discourse is the universal discourse which is needed to legitimize these Jewish claims towards 'others', the other nation-states, which are synonymous with 'the international community'. Zionists, in arguing that the Jewish nation has rights to a state of its own, are following the universal nationalistic rhetoric that all nations have a right to political autonomy. 'If Jews have right to self-determination it is grounded within in a universal principle stating that all nations have this right.'<sup>65</sup>

The creation of such a universal discourse which is used for thinking about nationhood and nation-states is of course part of nationalism rather than opposed to it. As Billig states, 'To claim to be a nation, is to imagine one's group to fit a common, universal pattern.'<sup>66</sup> A very good example of trying to fit into this 'universal pattern' would be the Vietnamese declaration of Independence of 1945. It begins as follows:

All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

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<sup>65</sup> Yael Tamir, 'Theoretical difficulties in the study of nationalism' in: Ronald Beiner ed., *Theorizing Nationalism*, 67-90, 72.

<sup>66</sup> Billig, *Banal nationalism*, 85.

This immortal statement was made in the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America in 1776. In a broader sense, this means: all the peoples on the earth are equal from birth, all the peoples have a right to live, to be happy and free. The Declaration of the French Revolution made in 1791 on the Rights of Man and the Citizen also states: "All men are born free and with equal rights, and must always remain free and have equal rights." Those are undeniable truths.<sup>67</sup> Thus, the declaration starts by formulating the universal rights of men and then deduces the rights of the Vietnamese people from these universal rights. This is a perfect textbook example of the ways in which nationalist thought is formulated within a framework of universal rights.

Another very interesting example is the way in which the United Nations have treated the concept of national self-determination. While nationalism has come to denote something negative and irrational, the reasoning behind the most basic principle of nationalism, self-determination or national sovereignty, is usually evaluated more positively. In our modern world of nation-states, it has become above all a very 'reasonable principle'.<sup>68</sup> The United Nations, usually seen as an organisation transcending nationalism, should be treated as one of the international movements that has accompanied the rise of nationalist movements.<sup>69</sup> Of course, a very obvious sign of these nationalist roots would be its name, the United *Nations*. But what is far more important is the charter of the UN, which states that one of the goals of the UN is:

2: To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace;<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Declaration of Independence, Democratic Republic of Vietnam, 2 september 1945. [http://coombs.anu.edu.au/~vern/van\\_kien/declar.html](http://coombs.anu.edu.au/~vern/van_kien/declar.html), retrieved on 28-02-2011.

<sup>68</sup> Billg, *Banal nationalism*, 87.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 83

<sup>70</sup> Charter of the UN, chapter I: purpose and principles,

As such, the UN charter imagines the world as a world of nations, ruled by the principles of self-determination and equal rights for all peoples. One of the most important aspects of this right to self-determination is the 'natural' and universal character it gets by elevating it to 'an inalienable right of all peoples'.<sup>71</sup> Louise Arbour, former UN high commissioner on human rights, makes the implications of the UN charter very clear when she states that: 'self determination [...] is a fundamental human right, expressed as such in Art. 1 of the United Nations Charter...'<sup>72</sup>

The UN resolution 1514 on the decolonization of the European overseas empires (1960) gives another very clear example of the nationalist thought propagated by the UN. Its composers are: '[c]onvinced that all peoples have an inalienable right to complete freedom, the exercise of their sovereignty and the integrity of their national territory.'<sup>73</sup> To have this conviction, one requires the idea that these 'peoples' exist, that their national territory exists, and that there are some objective qualifiers for being granted these inalienable rights. Resolution 1514 however, does not talk about qualifications; doing this would of course be very polarizing. If peoples and nations have rights, then asserting what is, and what is not considered a 'people' or 'nation' is determining who can and who cannot get these rights. At least one thing is made clear by the UN, and that is that self-determination should not necessarily result in an independent (nation) state. Aside from the right to self-determination, the UN also

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<http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter1.shtml>, retrieved on 22-02-2011.

<sup>71</sup> General Comment No. 12: The right to self-determination of peoples (Art. 1): 13-03-1984,

<http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/0/f3c99406d528f37fc12563ed004960b4?Opendocument>, retrieved on 23-02-2011.

<sup>72</sup> 'Louise Arbour on Self-Determination', <http://www.unpo.org/article/11810> , retrieved on 22-02-2011

<sup>73</sup> UN Resolution 1514, 'Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples', <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/independence.htm>, retrieved on 22-02-2011.

protects the territorial integrity of states,<sup>74</sup> and in this way it can mould self-determination into some form of autonomy within a state which belongs to 'another' nation. As mentioned before, this is just one form in which national sovereignty can be interpreted and not necessarily opposed to nationalist thought.<sup>75</sup>

This argument regarding the nationalist basis of the UN should make clear how the nationalistic concepts regarding sovereignty and national territory are made to appear universal and fundamental to the workings of the human race. The UN charter tries to make assumptions about the nature of human beings, their most basic and most important needs, and concludes that national sovereignty is one of them. More importantly, it stresses that the national sovereignty directly derives from that fact that a certain community can be identified as a nation. Rights associated with nationhood thus draw their legitimacy from the underlying assumption that sovereignty comes from within the nation itself; the nation has certain inalienable rights by the grace of its existence. In this way, nationalism becomes naturalized, detached from its localized historical growth in the modern world and is transformed into a universal and fundamental part of the human psyche.

The importance of these two examples is that they show the way in which nationalistic rhetoric based on the idea of national sovereignty is formulated within a framework of universal values. The rights deriving from 'true' nationhood have become fundamental to the division of our world, as the UN charter so clearly shows. The world as a world of nations is taken for granted; the only question is how this world should be divided among those nations which are recognised by the international community. As such, claims to nationhood are very often made within a universal framework which takes the existence and rights of all 'true' nations for granted. The same goes for counterclaims to nationhood.

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<sup>74</sup> 'Louise Arbour on Self-Determination', <http://www.unpo.org/article/11810> , retrieved on 22-02-2011.

<sup>75</sup> Smith, *Nationalism*, 13

Certain Israeli politicians have denied the existence of a Palestinian nation. In doing this, they are reasoning within a universal nationalist discourse: the implication underlying this argument is of course that if the Palestinians did constitute a nation, they would have had some natural rights which could interfere with the policies of these Israeli politicians.<sup>76</sup> The same reasoning has been used by the Turkish state, which denied until 1991 the existence of Kurds within Turkey, claiming those identifying themselves as Kurds were simply 'mountain Turks':<sup>77</sup> and if they are Turks, there is simply no question to which nation-state they should belong.

These universal aspects of nationalism have become detached from particular nationalist discourses. We might demonise the stereotype nationalist for believing in national 'fairy tales' and being a selfish creature in general, but it's harder to question the concept of what Gellner calls 'non-egoistic nationalism'<sup>78</sup>: the idea that all nations have the same rights and should co- exist in mutual recognition of their inherent sovereignty. One can oppose the irredentist policies proposed in the name of a Greater Serbia, but to seriously question the right of a Serbian nation to possess any form of statehood at all is to put oneself on the same line as an infamous stereotype nationalist such as Milosevic.

The conclusion here should be that while, as Billig rightly points out, 'we' in the West have tried to distance ourselves from the stereotype of nationalism - the narrow-minded view that the interests of one's own nation should be attained at all costs (especially at the costs of other nations) - the cultivation of the universal values contained in nationalist thought has continued as a means of reproducing the world of nations. In

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<sup>76</sup> Billig, *Banal nationalism*, 64.

<sup>77</sup> Amikam Nachmani, *Turkey: facing a new millennium: coping with intertwined conflicts* (Manchester 2003) 33.

<sup>78</sup> Gellner, *Nations and nationalism*, 2. Gellner writes that this 'non-egoistic nationalism' is a good abstract principle, but he claims that nationalism has never taken this form in practice.

this manner, the universal aspects of nationalism fall within the definition of banal nationalism: they are neglected and essential means by which the nation and the world of nations are reproduced.<sup>79</sup>

The definition used for nationalism in this study can now be made more clear. Nationalism, rather than just referring to the goals of particular nationalist movements, presupposes a way of thinking about nations in general, a way of reasoning about political justice, universal human values and historical continuity. Expressing these forms of nationalist thought may seem 'banal', non-nationalistic, since they are perceived as unrelated to the popular stereotype of nationalism as an exotic, emotional and irrational ideology of the other. 'But, if nationalism is a wider ideology, whose familiar commonplaces catch us unaware, then this is too reassuring. We will not remain unaffected.'<sup>80</sup>

However, in order to prevent any confusion in the use of term 'nationalism' between 'actual (or particular) nationalisms' (for instance, Serbian nationalism, Albanian nationalism, etc.) and nationalism as a universal framework which takes for granted a natural world order of nations, a clear distinction between the two must be made.<sup>81</sup> The first meaning, the particular form of actual nationalism, can simply be called 'nationalism' since this is the most common use of the term.

Nationalism as a universal and naturalized ideology can best be described, following Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller, as 'methodological nationalism'. Methodological nationalism represents 'the assumption that the nation/state/society is the natural social and political form of the modern world.'<sup>82</sup> The argument lying behind this terminology closely resembles that of Billig: the social sciences have ignored the national framing of modernity, naturalized the nation as the logical social unit in the modern world and uncritically used national territorial

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<sup>79</sup> Billig, *Banal nationalism*, 39.

<sup>80</sup> Billig, *Banal nationalism*, 12

<sup>81</sup> Thanks to Dr. Pál Nyíri for pointing out this crucial distinction.

<sup>82</sup> Wimmer and Schiller, 'Methodological nationalism and beyond', 301

limitations to create objects of study.<sup>83</sup> While this term specifically relates to the social sciences, its content is applicable to the more popular views on nationalism that will be reviewed in this study.

Methodological nationalism then comes to denote the usage of a nationalistic framework in relation to manifestations of actual nationalisms (in this study, Greek, Macedonian, Serbian and Albanian). While 'methodological nationalism' fits within the theory on banal nationalism, it would be better to use the term 'methodological nationalism' to describe an universalist and naturalized worldview on nationalism. Banal nationalism represents certain means by which particular nation-states are reproduced, whereas methodological nationalism can be more clearly specified as the worldview that accompanies this process of reproducing nation-states.

Now that two complementary definitions of nationalism have been given, one final theoretical topic should be addressed: the popular distinction between civic and ethnic, and Eastern and Western nationalism. During and after the disintegration of Yugoslavia, these two dichotomies would serve as an important framework for popular and scholarly analyses (and judgements) concerning the resurgence of nationalism in the Balkans. A closer look at these classifications of nationalism is essential if we wish to understand the perception of - and reaction to - nationalist struggle in Yugoslavia within the Dutch press.

#### **1.4 The civic-ethnic and East-West distinction**

As already noted, nationalism is known for the great diversity in its particular manifestations. It will come as no surprise that historians, sociologists, anthropologists and political scientists have created dozens of theories on how to classify all these different strains of the nationalist

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 306.

ideology. In the Western analyses of post-communist Eastern Europe, two classifications have become dominant: the civic-ethnic and East-West distinction. More importantly, as sociologist Dan Dungaciu notes, these two distinctions have become synonymous with each other and have created a framework for thinking in essentialist, unbridgeable geographical differences.<sup>84</sup> Consequently, it is important to ask how these differences have been theorized and what their importance has been in relation to the analyses of the disintegration of Yugoslavia.

Let us start with the East-West distinction. Basically, this is the oldest twofold classification within the study of nationalism.<sup>85</sup> Conceived by the historian Hans Kohn, this specific split is based on the idea that there is a liberal, inclusive and democratic form of nationalism, the Western strain, and an illiberal, authoritarian and exclusive form of nationalism: its Eastern, or in more general terms, its non-Western variant. In his work *The idea of nationalism* (1945), Kohn drew the line where the West ended and the East (or, the rest of the world) started parallel to the Rhine, effectively excluding Germany from the civilized Western world.<sup>86</sup>

This reasoning was aimed in particular at being able to make a distinction between the nationalism of the defeated Axis powers and that of the victorious Western Allied forces (thus excluding the Soviet Union), France, Great-Britain and the USA.<sup>87</sup> Whereas Western nationalism was conceived as a voluntaristic association of citizens, the Eastern variant imagined the nation in terms of culture and blood bounds, making it, as Smith describes Kohn's view, 'an organic seamless whole, transcending

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<sup>84</sup> Dan Dungaciu, 'East and West and the "mirror of nature": nationalism in West and East Europe -essentially different?' in: *A decade of transformation*, IWM Junior Visiting Fellows Conferences, Vol. 8 (1999) and Roudometof, *Nationalism, globalization and orthodoxy*, 17 n1.

<sup>85</sup> Andrew Vincent, *Modern Political Ideologies* (Chichester 2010) 320.

<sup>86</sup> Hans Kohn, *The idea of nationalism: a study in its origins and background* (New York 1944/2008).

<sup>87</sup> Vincent, *Modern Political Ideologies*, 320.

the individual members and stamping them from birth with a inedible national character.’<sup>88</sup>

This idea about moderate, civic Western nationalism, and the dangerous organic forms of Eastern nationalism became ‘well-entrenched in post-World War II literature’, reproduced by writers such as Conner, Plamenatz and Hobsbawm, and saw a revival in the 1990’s with the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.<sup>89</sup>

The specific importance of this East-West distinction is that it rests upon a distinction between what has often been labelled as ‘civic’ and ‘ethnic’ nationalism. There is no need to introduce these terms since they are basically synonymous with Western nationalism (civic, voluntaristic) and Eastern nationalism (ethnic, organic). Intrinsically there’s nothing wrong with the civic-ethnic classification. If properly used, this distinction makes for a valid tool for analysing nationalism: no one can argue that German nationalism as practiced by the Nazis, with its ideology of racial purity, was not significantly different from the form of nationalism which was practiced in France during the interbellum. Even if French nationalism, despite its ‘civic’ credentials, was unsympathetic to its Jewish population, there certainly is a difference between the ideology behind the discriminatory and assimilative policies of interbellum France towards its Jewish citizens and the ideological means of Nazi-Germany by which it pursued the full scale physical extermination of the ‘international’ Jewry.<sup>90</sup>

The distinction should however not be seen as absolute: in truth most forms of nationalism contain both civic and ethnic elements, the prominence of either part shifting over time.<sup>91</sup> The largest problem seems to be the way in which the civic-ethnic distinction has become a form of Western moral judgement, linked to a geographic divide. Civic is good,

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<sup>88</sup> Smith, *Nationalism*, 43.

<sup>89</sup> Dungaciu, ‘East and West and the “mirror of nature”’, 5.

<sup>90</sup> The Dreyfus affair, which revolved around scapegoating a French-Jewish army officer, is a good example of the fragile position of the French Jewry in the ‘civic’ nation of France.

<sup>91</sup> Smith, *Nationalism*, 44, and Roudometof, *Nationalism, globalization and orthodoxy*, 10.

ethnic is bad: consequently, Western nationalism is good, its Eastern 'mutation' bad. It will come as no surprise that such reasoning evades important questions relating to nationalism rather than confronting them.

Of course, Kohn's popular dichotomy, which gradually got to lead a life of its own,<sup>92</sup> could be deconstructed by pointing out ethnic elements in 'Western nationalism', as well as acknowledging those very real civic elements found in those areas which he deems 'Eastern'. However, this has been done many times before and serves no direct purpose here.<sup>93</sup> The importance of the dichotomy is the way in which it shaped a general framework for thinking about the meaning of nationalism and its vices and virtues, especially in relation to the perceived resurgence of nationalism in the 1990s.

A widely held idea about the nationalist struggle in Yugoslavia was that its fatal character rose from the fact that nationalism had taken the 'dangerous' ethnic form. Ignatieff concentrated, especially in his book *Blood and belonging* on the inherent vices of ethnic nationalism and the inherent virtues of civic nationalism. He claims civic to be 'necessarily democratic since its vests sovereignty in all of the people.'<sup>94</sup> But as political philosopher Will Kimlicka points out, one has only to take a quick look at the process of nation building in Latin America to see the giant leap of faith Ignatieff takes.<sup>95</sup> Although most nation-states in Latin

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<sup>92</sup> Dungaciu points out that Robert Bideleux's and Jan Jeffries's *A History of Eastern Europe* (1998) uses Kohn's East-West distinction, but without referring to Kohn's works. 'The distinction has surpassed his author and has become autonomous. It is now an ordinary and standard perspective, an uncritical framework and an axiomatic starting point. Who could contest such a "classical" distinction?' See: Dungaciu, 'East and West and the "mirror of nature"', 11.

<sup>93</sup> Smith. *Nationalism*, 43.

<sup>94</sup> Ignatieff, *Blood & belonging*, 6.

<sup>95</sup> Will Kimlicka, 'Misunderstanding nationalism', in: Ronald Beiner ed., *Theorizing nationalism* (Albany 1999)131-140, 135. Anderson, coining the term 'creole nationalism' for the early forms of nationalist consciousness in Europe's overseas colonies, points out that nationalism in Latin America was specifically used to withhold political power from the lower classes. See: Anderson, *Imagined communities*, 48, and Yael Tamir, 'The Enigma of nationalism' *World politics* 47 (3) 1995, 418-440, 436.

America are based upon civic conceptions of the nation, there has been nothing 'necessarily' democratic about the regimes that have ruled this continent. In addition to Kimlicka's argument regarding Latin America, examples of the undemocratic potential of civic nation-states are scattered all over Europe's colonial past. French civic nationalism did not stop the French state from waging bloody wars to vest its sovereignty *over*, rather than *in* its colonial subjects.

Another propagated virtue of civic nationalism is its inclusive character and ability to cope with minority rights. If ethnic nationalism is identified by Ignatieff as the cause of nationalist conflict it is so because of its 'exclusive' nature. However, nationalist conflicts may very well have its origin in the inclusive policies of civic nation-states<sup>96</sup> Liberal civic nation-states are known to deny rights to ethnic or national minority groups because they reason that ethnicity should not matter at all, comfortably ignoring the fact that the values of civic nationalism are usually aligned with the largest ethnic group. Nationalist policies such as the promotion of one official language, restrictions to schooling and the assimilation of minorities in the 'civic nation' may very well lead to conflict and authoritarian tendencies. Some basic examples would be the treatment of native minorities (Native American, Hawaiian) at the hands of the USA government or the earlier discussed position of Jews in pre-World War France.<sup>97</sup>

If civic nationalism has been idealized as a rational democratic inclusive ideology, its ethnic variant has largely been demonised because of its irrational and exclusive character. It draws power from the mystical bonds of blood, by which it sentences people to a prescribed nationality at birth. As such, ethnic nationalism is seen as something which is built upon misplaced emotions of attachment through a presumed shared (cultural) ancestry. So far, no real harm done: it has been proven many times that

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<sup>96</sup> Smith, *Nationalism*, 44 ,and Kimlicka, 'Misunderstanding nationalism', 134-135.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

the nation as a community *objectively* bounded by blood does not exist: but as stated before, the nation is not something which can be tested *objectively* by certain qualifiers outside of nationalist thought.

The main problem seems to be that the most extreme forms of ethnic nationalism have become nationalism *per se*: this extreme part dominating the meaning of the term in common usage. Nationalism in the post-war world is primarily associated with blood and soil rhetoric, nationhood based on exclusion and the 'emotional' feelings of primordial ties: ethnic nationalism taken to the extreme.<sup>98</sup> As such, thinking about nationalism in dichotomies has not only caused an East-West and civic-ethnic distinction, but also a parallel nationalist – non-nationalist distinction. Tamir rightly observes that the East- West, civic-ethnic dichotomy is used to 'disqualify the more structured and temperate forms of nationalism as worthy of that title ['nationalism']'.<sup>99</sup> When the term 'nationalism' is evoked, it usually refers to the stereotype of ethnic nationalism: bonds of blood, emotional overtones, irrational actions. As Billig points out, even Ignatieff, who uses the civic-ethnic distinction, means 'ethnic nationalism' when he simply refers to nationalism without a qualification.<sup>100</sup>

Again, we return to Billig's theory on banal nationalism. Since the West considers itself not nationalistic, nationalism usually covers not the aspects of nationalist thought which are endemic in our political and cultural life, but those aspects we wish to see in others, 'the appeal to blood loyalty', 'the language of blood [...] which can lead to ethnic-cleansing'.<sup>101</sup> While there is no problem recognizing (ethnic) nationalism in the East, or anywhere outside the Western world, the nationalism of the

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<sup>98</sup> Tamir, 'Theoretical difficulties in the study of nationalism', 70.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Billig, *Banal nationalism*, 48.

<sup>101</sup> This quote is part of the text on the book jacket of Ignatieff's, *Blood & belonging*. See: Billig, *Banal nationalism*, 48.

Western nation-states is routinely forgotten,<sup>102</sup> any sign of the 'real' (in other words, 'ethnic') nationalism, such as neo-fascist movements, swept under the rug as 'an accident, an exception, a temporal and unfortunate deviation.'<sup>103</sup>

In this way, these three dichotomies, civic-ethnic, East-West, nationalist-non-nationalist, are all related to each other, variations on one basic theme: us and them. Us, the civic, non-nationalist West, and them, the ethnic nationalist East. These dichotomies have been hailed as explanations for the 'resurgence' of nationalist conflict in the 1990's and paradoxically influenced the meaning of 'nationalism' without a specific qualification.

In conclusion, popular thinking about nationalism has largely been influenced by these dichotomies, and it specifically formed the evaluation of 'Eastern-nationalisms' in the West. As such, they are of great importance in analyzing the news coverage of a Western country such as the Netherlands in relation to nationalist conflict in an area deemed situated in the sphere of 'Eastern nationalism'.

This chapter has laid out a framework for thinking about nationalism: it presented a definition of nationalism and the nation, its inherent universal aspects, and gave some general outlines on how nationalism has been theorized in relation to East-West, civic-ethnic and nationalist-non-nationalist dichotomies. Having created this framework, we can now turn our gaze on the histories of Kosovo and Macedonia in relation to the project of nation and state-building.

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>103</sup> Dungaciu, 'East and West and the "mirror of nature"', 10.

## 2 A historical introduction to Kosovo and Macedonia

Understanding the contested nature of both Kosovo and Macedonia requires an introduction on the history of nation-building in these regions. The primary goal of this chapter will be to provide the historical perspective necessary to interpret and understand the research results which will be presented in chapter 4. After a short introduction to the pre-national Ottoman history of the Balkans, the fate of Kosovo and Macedonia following the territorial disintegration of the Ottoman Empire will be treated, focusing on the conflicts arising from the different national claims attached to these two regions.

### 2.1 The Ottoman Balkans before the emergence of the nation-state

The war [in Yugoslavia] of which we are witnesses didn't start this summer: the war has essentially been going on for centuries. The post-war peace – a peace enforced by Tito – was an intermezzo, the exception, not the norm.

Peter Michielsen, *NRC* 26 September 1991.<sup>104</sup>

As already has been argued in chapter 1, there are no objective features that make a certain community a nation. The nation as a category in human thought did not exist before the advent of nationalism, and there has been nothing 'predestined' or inevitable about the creation of any particular nation. Still, it might be useful to take a closer look at the pre-national pasts of the Southern Balkans. The Yugoslav conflicts have made 'ethnicity' look like the driving force that has propelled Balkan history

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<sup>104</sup> Peter Michielsen, 'Joegoslavië vecht tot boedel is verdeeld', *NRC* 26-09-1991.

since the dawn of time. However, this idea is itself an invention of the different Balkan nationalisms, which have all tried to overwrite the more complicated and nuanced past of prior interreligious and intercommunal relations with the blueprint of primordial and enduring ethnic differences.<sup>105</sup>

This nationalist propaganda found fertile ground in the 'non-nationalist' West during the wars in Yugoslavia. The idea that the West was dealing with 'centuries' old ethnic hatreds in war torn Yugoslavia was widespread (though not uncontested) and was used as an argument in the discussion on intervention in Bosnia.<sup>106</sup> As such, demystifying the idea of the Balkans as being ever divided along strict ethnic (and later, national) lines must precede the discussion of Kosovo and Macedonia in relation to the project of nation- and state-building.

Two false presuppositions accompany the idea of the Balkans as torn by centuries old ethnic hatred. First of all, there is the presupposition that different religious and ethnic communities lived in continuous animosity. In fact, the Ottoman Balkans had known relatively long periods of peace, the border areas, ever dangerous, excluded. Whenever large-scale violence did erupt, combat lines were rarely formed according to ethnicity. Even though the 20<sup>th</sup> century of the Balkans was marked by dozens of destructive armed conflicts, Mazower rightly states that 'for centuries, life in the Balkans was no more violent than elsewhere'.<sup>107</sup> However, more important is the incorrect presupposition that the national or ethnic labels mobilised in the Yugoslav wars mirrored those of a far

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<sup>105</sup> Roudometof, *Nationalism, globalization and orthodox*, 14. This chapter will primarily deal with Greek and Slavic examples; for information on the fluid nature of ethnicity in relation to the Greeks and Albanians, see: Laurie Kain Hart, 'Culture, civilization, and demarcation at the northwest borders of Greece', *American ethnologist* 26 (1999) 196-220.

<sup>106</sup> B. Naarden, 'Western Perceptions and Balkan Realities' in: *Srebrenica, een 'veilig' gebied. Reconstructie, achtergronden, gevolgen en analyses vande val van een Safe Area*. NIOD (Amsterdam 2002) 4.

<sup>107</sup> Mazower, *The Balkans*, 143.

away past and had existed in relative stability over the ages.

If national identity is a modern phenomenon, and thus no 'nations' existed before the advent of modernity, how do we explain the premodern past of the Balkans? As sociologist Victor Roudometof states, the absence of nations in the premodern Balkans does not mean that the region was devoid of ethnic difference.<sup>108</sup> There certainly were Greeks before the age of nationalism, just as there were Bulgarians, Serbs and Albanians. But these ethnic denominations did not cover the current national meaning that they have gained over the past two centuries of nation-building. They are the 'ethnies' which were shortly addressed in chapter 1, 'predominantly premodern social formations.'<sup>109</sup> More importantly, the meaning of these labels was quite diverse. As late as the 19th century, these 'ethnic' labels could refer either to class, religion or certain ethno-linguistic traits.<sup>110</sup>

Instead of the (ideal) modern horizontal affiliation of nationhood, membership of these Balkan ethnies showed an overlap with class distinction. Most of the Slavic-speaking population of the Ottoman Empire consisted of peasants, and as such, the denominations of 'Bulgar' and 'Serb' came to refer to the Christian peasantry of the Balkans. Slavs that became part of the more affluent urban middle class 'shifted their identity to Greek':<sup>111</sup> to be 'Greek' or 'Bulgarian' was to be part of a class which filled a specific niche in the division of labour.<sup>112</sup> In the same manner, the term 'Vlach' could in early modern times both refer to ethnic Romanians and to those associated with the profession of shepherding who spoke a Slavic tongue.<sup>113</sup>

To this class differentiation was in turn added a religious

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<sup>108</sup> Roudometof, *Nationalism, globalization and orthodox* 48.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Holm Sundhaussen, 'Südosteuropa' in: Klaus J., Bade, e.a., ed., *Enzyklopädie: Migration in Europa vom 17. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart* (Paderborn 2007) 288-313, 292.

<sup>111</sup> Roudometof, *Nationalism, globalization and orthodoxy*, 48.

<sup>112</sup> Danforth, *The Macedonian conflict*, 59.

<sup>113</sup> Sundhaussen, 'Südosteuropa', 292.

differentiation, according to different *millets* (Christian, Jewish and Muslim). However, the religious differentiation as a *national* differentiation naturally followed the coming of nationalism rather than preceding it.<sup>114</sup> National Balkan histories created an image in which the church served as a container for preserving ‘national’ culture under Ottoman rule. In such reasoning, nations simply ‘entered’ the Ottoman Empire, only to emerge from it intact 500 years later, their national character protected generation after generation by the servants of the church.

This myth of ‘orthodoxy as the champion of nationalism’ tried to construct national continuity where it had not existed.<sup>115</sup> To be part of the *rum millet* used to mean that one was an Orthodox Christian, regardless of language and affiliated ethnies. Only after nationalists gained a significant amount of influence over the church were they able to strengthen religious distinctions and turn them into national ones; *rum* became synonymous with ‘Greek’, while rivalling nationalistic religious labels, such as ‘exarchist’ (synonymous with ‘Bulgarian’), appeared to challenge this Greek claim to hegemony.<sup>116</sup> The very notion of ‘Orthodoxy as the champion of nationalism’ was a byproduct of the nation-state rather than a mystical force that had created the Balkan nation-states in the first place.<sup>117</sup>

Thus, the persistence of certain labels, should not be mistaken for unbroken national continuity, and most certainly not for age old ‘ethnic hatreds’, a theme that was popularized during the Yugoslav wars.<sup>118</sup> When

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<sup>114</sup> Paschalis M. Kitromilides, “‘Imagined communities’ and the origins of the national question in the Balkans” in: Martin Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremis eds., *Modern Greece: nationalism & nationality* (1990) 23-66, 52.

<sup>115</sup> Dungaciu, ‘East and West and the “mirror of nature”’, 16.

<sup>116</sup> A.N., Karakasidou, *Fields of wheat, hills of blood: Passages to nationhood in Greek Macedonia, 1870-1990* (London 1997) 84.

<sup>117</sup> Dungaciu, ‘East and West and the “mirror of nature”’, 23.

<sup>118</sup> The quotation of *NRC* editor Peter Michielsen used on page 31 is an interesting example of this view, first of all because Michielsen was considered an expert on the area of

analyzing the news coverage of Kosovo and Macedonia, we should be very critical of the usage of ethnic denominations and the way they are provided with a distinct history. For instance, the persistence of names such as ‘Turks’ or ‘Bulgarians’ can be very misleading. Both ‘Turks’ and ‘Bulgarians’ have existed for centuries, but the meaning of these labels has shifted dramatically. They could have a multiple meanings at any given time and, for that matter, they still can.<sup>119</sup>

Equally, the absence of a Macedonian ethnîe in the Ottoman Empire did not stop a Macedonian nationalist movement from manifesting itself at the deathbed of ‘the sick man of Europe’, nor did the great reach of the *rum millet* prevent Greek nationalists from turning this religious community into a more narrowly defined sign of national allegiance. Nevertheless, even if the conflicts in Yugoslavia were not the manifestation of ancient hatreds, it is important to remember that there were people, both in- and outside of Yugoslavia, who thought it most certainly was.

## 2.2 The Macedonian Question

I have heard a witty French consul declare that with a fund of a million francs he would undertake to make all Macedonia French. He would preach that the Macedonians are the descendants of the French crusaders who conquered Salonica in the twelfth century, and the francs would do the rest.<sup>120</sup>

Henry Noël Brailsford, *Macedonia; Its Races and Their Future*  
(London 1906)

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Eastern-Europe, and secondly because Michielsen revised his view later in the conflict, claiming the existence of a Bosnian tradition of tolerance, originating from the times of Ottoman rule. By September 1993, Michielsen spoke of a ‘a centuries old [...] culture: a culture of tolerance’ in Bosnia, a complete turn away from its initial articles that stressed centuries of ethnic hatred. See: Peter Michielsen, ‘In Bosnie wordt een mentaliteit vermoord’, *NRC* 3-9-1993.

<sup>119</sup> Özkirimli and Sofos, *Tormented by history*, 9.

<sup>120</sup> H. Brailsford, *Macedonia: Its Races and Their Future* (London 1906) 102-103, retrieved on <http://www.kroraina.com/knigi/en/hb/index.html>, 16-6-2011.

The independence of Macedonia in 1991 was based on the idea that there existed a distinct Slavic people called 'Macedonians' with a natural right to freely determine the course of its political future. The composition of this newly found Macedonian Republic was not unproblematic, harbouring a large Albanian minority (22,9 percent according to official data of the Macedonian government from 1994).<sup>121</sup> At the same time, Macedonian state officials claimed that suppressed co-nationals living in the neighbouring countries of Greece and Bulgaria were in dire need of cultural autonomy and international recognition. Both Bulgaria and Greece denied the existence of a distinct Slavic Macedonian nation and its associated expatriate minorities, thus continuing the uneasy relationship that had long since existed in the intricate triangle of Greek, Bulgarian and Macedonian nationalism.

Even though Macedonia was spared the violence that raged over the rest of Yugoslavia, the republic's independence was not without its diplomatic difficulties. The so called 'Macedonia name dispute' severely delayed the recognition of the new republic and poisoned its relationship with neighbouring Greece. It was this issue that dominated the news coverage of Macedonia in 1991-1995, and exploring the roots and causes of the naming question will give a sufficient introduction to both Macedonian nationalism and to the problems that arose from the creation of a Macedonian nation-state.

The bottom line of the naming issue was that Greece forbade the new republic to use the name 'Macedonia' in any way. Greeks feared territorial claims on the Greek province called Macedonia, not entirely without reason as we shall see in this chapter, but the whole issue was not just about the name as means to violating the territorial integrity of Greece. The name 'Macedonia' was seen by Greeks as an inalienable part of Greek cultural and ethnic heritage. Since the ancient Macedonians were supposed to have been Greeks by descentance and by culture, Macedonia

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<sup>121</sup> Viktor Meier, *Yugoslavia: a history of its demise* (London 1995) 175.

could only relate to Greek land, Greek people, and Greek history. Greek nationalism relies heavily on this concept of ethnic continuity and as such the naming of Slavs after a Greek people was seen as a serious violation of the cultural integrity of the Greek nation.<sup>122</sup>

However, this newly named Macedonian Republic with its 'Macedonian people' was not created out of thin air. The concept of Macedonia and 'the Macedonian people' had already been contested since the late 19th century. While the Ottoman Empire was rapidly entering its final phase of territorial disintegration, the Balkan states of Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece were all making plans in order to make the most out of the empire's demise.

At that time, Macedonia was a vaguely defined geographic region that was part of the remaining Ottoman territories in Europe, roughly consisting of the area that is now covered by the Bulgarian Blagoevgrad province (Pirin Macedonia), the Greek province of Macedonia (Aegean Macedonia), the Republic of Macedonia (Vardar Macedonia) and a small part of Eastern Albania.<sup>123</sup> Its population was diverse, including Albanian and Turkish speaking Muslims, Greek and Slavic speaking Christians, Jews, Vlachs and Gypsies, and unfamiliar with the concept of nationality as it was propagated from the neighbouring nation-states.<sup>124</sup>

However, despite the fact that the region defied the very foundations of nationalist ideology, Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia all saw Macedonia as an outlet to satisfy their expansionist ambitions.<sup>125</sup> Serbia claimed part of Macedonia bordering its southern flank on the basis that it had been part of the medieval kingdom of Serbia, calling it 'South Serbia' and its inhabitants 'South Serbs'. Bulgaria claimed virtually all of

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<sup>122</sup> Loring M. Danforth, 'Claims to the Macedonian identity: The Macedonian question and the breakup of Yugoslavia' in *Anthropology today* 4 (1993) 3-10, 8.

<sup>123</sup> Since the Albanian part constituted only a very small part of the 'geographic' Macedonia, its history will not be discussed here. For a concise overview of the fate of 'Albanian Macedonia', see: Hugh Poulton, *Who are the Macedonians* (London 2000).

<sup>124</sup> Danforth, 'Claims to the Macedonian identity', 3.

<sup>125</sup> Mazower, *The Balkans: from the end of Byzantium to the present day*, 104.

Macedonia, declaring that the language used by its Slavic inhabitants was in fact a Bulgarian dialect and that the term 'Macedonian' related to a group of Slavs that was part of the Bulgarian nation. Greece in turn claimed that the entire southern flank of Macedonia belonged to the Greek nation-state. Since the area was seen as part of the ancient Greek world in the form of the ancient kingdom of Macedonia, it was argued that its only rightful place was within the Greek nation-state. Aware of its linguistic handicap in the region (apart from the coastal areas and urban areas, the dominant language in Macedonia was Slavic, not Greek), the Greek government called the Slavic speaking population 'Bulgarophone Greeks' and stressed religious markers to turn religion into nationality, proclaiming all Macedonian members of the *rum millet* to be Greek.<sup>126</sup>

At the same time, some Slavic intellectuals started to argue that the Macedonian people were a distinct Slavic nation which was worthy of acquiring its own state. Lacking the means of established nation-states and dealing with a largely illiterate 'target audience' (Slavic speaking peasants), these Macedonian nationalists remained on the fringes of political life.<sup>127</sup> Still, their ideas would prove to be fruitful in the long run.

These different and overlapping claims were bound to end in a violent way. Clergy, teachers and groups of armed men crossed the borders into the contested territory and preached the gospel of nationalism by the means of conversion, language education and brute force.<sup>128</sup> By 1890 all three neighbouring nation-states were fielding guerrilla forces that fought each other, the Turkish authorities and the

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<sup>126</sup> Karakasidou, *Fields of wheat, hills of blood*, 106.

<sup>127</sup> Danforth, 'Claims to the Macedonian identity', 7.

<sup>128</sup> The distinction between the clergy, teachers and guerrilla fighters was by no means very clear. British diplomats reported about a Bulgarian schoolteacher being caught with Mannlicher ammunition in his possession, while there were instances in which priests served as leaders of the infamous irregular warbands.. See: Angelos A. Chotzidis, e.a., ed., *The events of 1903 in Macedonia as presented in European diplomatic correspondence* (Thessalonica 1993) 59, and Karakasidou, *Fields of wheat, hills of blood*, 120.

local population.<sup>129</sup>

After years of recurring partisan violence, the struggle for Macedonia reached its climax with the outbreak of the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913. In an uneasy alliance, Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia now officially declared war on the Ottoman Empire and quickly conquered most of that what remained of 'European Turkey'. This swift victory was only to be followed by a war between the victors over the spoils of war, pitching a Greco-Serbian alliance against Bulgaria. After a crushing defeat at the hands of Greece and Serbia, Bulgaria lost most of its earlier conquests and was left with a small part of Eastern Macedonia (Pirin Macedonia). Serbia acquired all of Vardar Macedonia (roughly the area that now constitutes the Republic of Macedonia) and Greece was granted the valuable coastal region of Aegean Macedonia (the part of Macedonia which is now known as the Greek province of Macedonia). Both World Wars saw the Bulgarian state trying to alter this outcome, but to no avail: to this day, the borders of 1913 remain largely intact.<sup>130</sup>

While the struggle over Macedonia has been presented as a way to 'liberate' Greeks, Serbs and Bulgarians, these labels as markers of nationality were creations of the conflicts rather than the cause of it.<sup>131</sup> With armed groups roaming the countryside, having the 'right' nationality could save one's life (or at least spare oneself from getting a vicious beating). European travel accounts of Macedonia show the substantial apathy of the local population towards the ideology of nationalism. A French traveller visiting Macedonia in the late 19th century recorded a Slavic peasant, who also spoke Greek, as saying that he could not be

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<sup>129</sup> Danforth, 'Claims to the Macedonian identity', 3.

<sup>130</sup> Bulgaria managed to capture parts of Greek Macedonia in World War Two. Its policy of annexation was extremely harsh and led to Greeks fleeing to German and Italian zones of occupation. See: Xanthippi Kotzageorgi-Zymari and Tassos Hadjianastassiou, 'Memories of the Bulgarian occupation of Eastern Macedonia: three generations' in Mark Mazower, ed., *After the war was over: reconstructing the family, nation and state in Greece, 1943-1960* (Princeton 2000) 273-292, 278.

<sup>131</sup> Karakasidou, *Fields of wheat, hills of blood*, 120.

bothered with wasting his time thinking about Serbia or Bulgaria. 'Our fathers were Greeks and none mentioned the Bulgarians. We became Bulgarians, we won. If we have to be Serbs, no problem. But for now it is better for us to be Bulgarians.'<sup>132</sup> Nationality was not about political identification with a state, or even a nation, but rather seen as a way to protect oneself from the imported nationalist onslaught.

And so, following this uneasy conquest of Macedonia, all three states embarked upon extensive homogenisation campaigns in order to properly 'nationalise' their new territories and deal with its 'problematic' diversity. As a consequence, the interwar period was characterised by forced assimilation and the institutionalised exchange of populations. The movement of peoples was especially influential in the restructuring of Greek Macedonia. Apart from exchanging populations with Bulgaria, Greece made a deal in 1923 with the newly found Republic of Turkey (1923), a state which had emerged from the remains of the defeated Ottoman Empire, which saw all the Muslims of Greek Macedonia forced to emigrate in order to accommodate the Orthodox Christian refugees that had fled Asia Minor alongside the retreating Greek army.

But the oppressive policies of the interwar period did not bring an end to the Macedonian question. Few Slavs agreed with their place within the newly found kingdom of Yugoslavia as 'South Serbs'. Most supported the irredentist policies of Bulgaria, while some turned towards the concept of Macedonian nationalism.<sup>133</sup> Communism was especially attractive for those who desired the recognition of a separate Macedonian

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<sup>132</sup> Dimitris Livanios, "Conquering the souls': nationalism and Greek guerrilla warfare in Ottoman Macedonia, 1904-1908" in *Byzantine and modern Greek studies* 23 (1999) 195-221, 198. The British Henry Brailsford who travelled Macedonia in the early 20th century gives a similar example of a Macedonian man who had send his three sons to three different schools: one to a Greek, one to a Bulgarian and one to a Serbian school. See: Brailsford, *Macedonia*, 160. Mazower too is extremely keen on stressing the problematic nature of the concept of nationality in the Balkans (giving an example specific to Macedonia). See: Mazower, *The Balkans*, 50-52.

<sup>133</sup> Poulton, *Who are the Macedonians*, 97.

nation. While the opinion of the Comintern on the Macedonian question was not fully supportive of definite independence for the 'Macedonians' (partly because the idea of a Macedonian nation clashed with the interest of both Bulgarian and Greek communists)<sup>134</sup>, it at least more or less recognised the existence of a Macedonian nation, one that could be a respected part of a future communist Balkan federation.<sup>135</sup>

It was the defeat of the Axis powers in the Second World War that finally created prospects for the founding of such a communist Balkan federation. Bulgaria had aligned itself with Nazi-Germany and occupied parts of Greek and Yugoslav Macedonia, looking to finally bring into practice its irredentist dreams. While the Slavs of Vardar Macedonia, the Serbian repression still fresh in their minds, had initially welcomed the Bulgarian forces as liberators, they were soon to be alienated by a state that had a clear policy of centralization and trusted the bureaucracy (religious as well as secular) only to Bulgarian officials.<sup>136</sup>

Tito in turn exploited the growing resentment of the Slavic population towards the Bulgarian authorities. Already in 1937, the Yugoslav communists had decided that a Macedonian republic was to be founded in the new Yugoslav federation. Seeing how resistance against the Axis forces was growing more successful, Tito decided to raise the odds in 1944 by proclaiming the entire 'geographic' region of Macedonia the homeland of the Macedonian nation, thus including Bulgarian and Greek acquisitions of the previous Balkan Wars into the future Yugoslavia.<sup>137</sup>

This move succeeded in raising support from Macedonia's Slavic population, but the gamble on territorial claims was ultimately lost. Defeat of the communists in the Greek civil war prevented expansion to the south

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<sup>134</sup> For the uneasy relationship between Greek communism and Macedonian nationalism, see: Andrew Rossos, 'Incompatible allies: Greek communism and Macedonian nationalism in the civil war in Greece, 1943-1949', *The journal of modern history* 69 (1997) 42-76

<sup>135</sup> Poulton, *Who are the Macedonians*, 97-98, and Rossos, 'Incompatible allies', 45.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

while the Tito-Stalin split of 1948 made any deal with Bulgaria on Pirin Macedonia impossible. Still, the concept of a Macedonian nation served Tito well in curbing Serbian influence in Yugoslavia and countering Bulgarian claims on Yugoslav territory.<sup>138</sup>

With 'Macedonia' now being an official republic in Tito's Yugoslavia of 'Brotherhood and Unity', Macedonian nationalism finally had the backing of a state. Even though the concept of Yugoslavia did not allow for the creation of an independent Macedonia, official state support for the propagation of a Macedonian identity was more than most Macedonian nationalists could have hoped for. A standardised Macedonian language was created and used to write a revisionist history of the Macedonian people. Not unimportantly, a Macedonian Orthodox Church was created in order to further strengthen the hold of a Macedonian identity on Macedonia's Slavic population.<sup>139</sup> State sponsored Macedonian nationalism proved to be successful and soon defined the character of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia (short: SR Macedonia). Not surprisingly, the communist party enjoyed great popularity within Macedonian circles. Ethnic Macedonians were disproportionately represented within the state apparatus at the cost of the significant minorities which were still present in Yugoslav Macedonia, primarily Albanians, Turks and Vlachs.<sup>140</sup>

However, the impending end of Yugoslavia in the late 80s made Macedonians fear for renewed Serbian and Bulgarian interference and Albanian separatism. According to historian Hugh Poulton, one reaction to this fear 'was to assert Macedonian nationalism more aggressively to hide potential weakness.'<sup>141</sup> The years 1989 and 1990 saw 'renewed nationalist expression' and growing concern with expatriate minorities who were deemed ethnic Macedonians.

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<sup>138</sup> Danforth, 'Claims to the Macedonian identity', 8.

<sup>139</sup> Danforth, *The Macedonian conflict*, 41

<sup>140</sup> Poulton *Who are the Macedonians*, 122

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

Two different views on the future of Macedonia were proposed within the republic. Kiro Gligorov, a Macedonian member of the old communist elite, tried cautiously to keep Yugoslavia intact in the form of a confederation, fearing that a complete breakdown of Yugoslavia would endanger the very existence of a Macedonian Republic.<sup>142</sup>

However, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE, usually shortened to VMRO), a more hardline nationalist party founded following the introduction of a multi-party system in Yugoslavia in 1990, wanted to see complete independence as quickly as possible. When the war in Bosnia showed that no hope was left for any form of confederation, Gligorov accomplished with remarkable diplomatic skill the only peaceful withdrawal of the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) from a Yugoslav republic.<sup>143</sup>

By 1991 Gligorov, who was elected president in the SR Macedonia in 1990, had automatically become the first president of an independent Macedonia following a plebiscite in which an overwhelming majority voted for secession from Yugoslavia. Yet, in a reversal with the declaration of independence in Bosnia, removal of the JNA proved to be easier than acquiring recognition from the international community.

Finally, we have arrived back at our starting point: the problematic situation of the Republic of Macedonia after its independence. Bulgaria quickly recognised the state of Macedonia in 1991, but refused to acknowledge the existence of a Macedonian nation, sticking to the view that the Macedonians were actually Bulgarians plagued by a rather long lived identity crisis. Fuelling Macedonian fears of rump Yugoslav aggression, some Serbian nationalists proposed to once again claim Macedonia as the long lost 'South Serbia'.

However, it was Greece that took immediate action in response to

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 175-176.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

the Macedonian declaration of independence. The Greek government refused to recognize the republic if it used the term Macedonia in its name, claiming that the naming itself showed that the republic held on to Tito's view of a unified 'Macedonian homeland', while at the same time unjustly appropriating Greek history.<sup>144</sup>

The Greek government succeeded in postponing the UN recognition of Macedonia for a whole year until the new republic was finally accepted in the UN in 1993 under its provisional name 'Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia' (FYROM). This temporal resolution, which both the Greeks and Macedonians saw as unsatisfactory, was only to be followed by a Greek blockade of Macedonia between 1994 and 1995, officially instated as a response to the usage of an ancient Macedonian symbol, the so called Star of Vergina, in the republic's new national flag. To this official blockade was in turn added an unofficial boycott of products originating from countries which were 'too supportive' of the new republic. The Netherlands especially were singled out as being 'anti-Greek', leading to supermarkets removing Dutch products from their shelves.<sup>145</sup>

Adding to these external threats to the stability of the new Republic was the spectre of internal conflict. The Albanian minority was dissatisfied with the amount of power ethnic Macedonians had acquired in the Yugoslav period and demanded the rights associated with the status of a constituting nation. More extremist organisations even entertained plans for violent secession. In this volatile situation, Gligorov tried to represent himself as a moderate and Europe-orientated mediator who could bring the different parties closer together (his ruling coalition included Albanian parties) while staying true to the core tenets of Macedonian nationalism. He remained in office until the failed attempt at his life at the end of 1995.

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<sup>144</sup> Danforth, 'Claims to the Macedonian identity', 4.

<sup>145</sup> Poulton, *Who are the Macedonians*, 218

The opposition to Gligorov's cabinet came mainly from the VMRO. This party took a less compromising stance against internal and external critics of their outspoken Macedonian nationalism. Even though it was the largest party in parliament, ruling power initially escaped VMRO's grasp because it refused to form a coalition with Albanian parties.<sup>146</sup> As such it was usually designated as 'the nationalist opposition' in the period relevant to this study (1991-1995).<sup>147</sup>

As can be concluded, the historical background of the Macedonian question is a complex one. Suffice it to say that the success of different forms of national identity in the carved up Macedonia had never been predestined and always required the large scale movement of peoples and the forceful hand of the state. But while the troubled past of Macedonia might have been complex, history did most certainly not repeat itself in the 'revived' Macedonian question of the 1990s. The widely expressed fear that Macedonia would once again become the centre of a Balkan war may even seem very close to uniformed fear mongering in retrospect. Still, the historical background of the Macedonian question was most certainly important in understanding the arguments made by the different parties in the 1990s, Albanian, Macedonian, Greek, Serbian and Bulgarian, whether their respective fears for renewed conflict turned out to be justified or not.

### **2.3 The case of Kosovo**

An introduction to the region of Kosovo can be significantly shorter than its Macedonian counterpart since there have only been two significant nationalist movements involved with Kosovo: Serbian and Albanian.

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<sup>146</sup> This refusal to work together with Albanian parties was rather short lived. In 1998, VMRO decided to take its chances and forged a coalition with Albanian parties in order to become the ruling party, showing, according to Poulton, 'greater political maturity than many anticipated.' Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> See the research results in chapter 4.2.

Additionally, Kosovo as a region was never carved the way Macedonia was;<sup>148</sup> if we speak about Kosovo today, it has a singular meaning, in contrast to the disputed name of Macedonia.

Again as with Macedonia, nationalist conflicts over Kosovo started in the context of a disintegrating Ottoman Empire bordered by expansionist nation-states. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Serbian nationalists popularized the idea that Kosovo had been the (tragic) cradle of the Serbian nation, invoking the 1389 battle at Kosovo Polje to justify their claim to the region.<sup>149</sup>

In this battle, a Christian alliance led by the Serbian Tsar Lazar was 'gloriously' defeated by the Ottoman army, signalling the beginning of the steady incorporation of the Serbian kingdom into the Ottoman domain. In the subsequent centuries of Ottoman rule over Kosovo, Slavic Christians had largely been replaced by Albanian speaking Muslims, problematizing Serbian claims to the region.

Further complicating the question of Kosovo was the rise of Albanian nationalism. In fact, the Kosovar city of Prizren had already hosted the League for the Defense of the Rights of the Albanian Nation (commonly known as the League of Prizren) in 1878.<sup>150</sup> Claiming to be descendants of the Illyrian population that was supposed to have inhabited the area in ancient times, the Albanian nationalists argued that they were more 'autochthonous' to the land than the Slavic 'invaders'.<sup>151</sup> Apart from this clash with Serbian nationalism, Albanian nationalism was also regarded with suspicion by the Ottoman authorities, who rightly saw this movement as a threat to the territorial integrity of their empire.

The Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 proved critical for both Albanian

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<sup>148</sup> In addition, Kosovo had existed as an administrative unit, a *vilayet*, in the Ottoman Empire, while Macedonia had not. In fact, part of the area claimed by some to be 'Macedonia' had long been part of the Kosovo *vilayet*.

<sup>149</sup> Raymond Detrez, *Kosovo: de uitgestelde oorlog* (Antwerpen 1999) 34.

<sup>150</sup> Roudometof, *Nationalism, globalization and orthodoxy*, 188.

<sup>151</sup> Tim Judah, *Kosovo: what everyone needs to know* (New York 2008) 18.

nationalism and the question of Kosovo. The conquest of most of the remaining Ottoman territory in the Balkans by Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro saw the incorporation of Kosovo into Serbia and the creation of an independent Albanian state. The Serbian conquest of Kosovo was accompanied by the large scale murder of Albanian civilians, which in turn led many more to flee the area.<sup>152</sup>

World War One only served to prolong the suffering of Kosovo's population, but did not lead to a shifting of borders: Kosovo remained part of Serbia. While Serbia in turn was to become part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1918, state policies towards Kosovo did not change. In order for the province to become the Serbian cradle it was imagined to be, Belgrade encouraged the influx of Serbian peasants while at the same time repressing the Albanian population in the hope that these unwanted subjects would find a more tolerant place to call home.<sup>153</sup>

The advent of World War Two was to bring a short reversal between oppressor and oppressed. Dismemberment of Yugoslavia by the Axis powers saw the annexation of Kosovo by the Italian satellite state of Albania, as was in accordance with Greater-Albanian nationalism.<sup>154</sup> In order to reverse the pre-war policies of Belgrade, those Serbs who settled in Kosovo during the interwar period were driven out of the area. Still, the existence of a Greater-Albania proved short lived once its fascist patrons, first Italy, then Germany, suffered definite defeat at the hands of the Allied forces. After the Tito-Stalin split of 1948 blocked any possibility for a larger Communist Balkan federation, Kosovo was to remain part of Serbia in a new Yugoslavia.<sup>155</sup>

However, losing the war did not have the same consequences as

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<sup>152</sup> Mazower, *The Balkans*, 118.

<sup>153</sup> Emigration was sometimes sped up by the means of deportation. '...the post-1929 Serb administration deported more than 100,000 Albanians, Turks and Muslims from Kosovo and Macedonia into Turkey.' See: Roudometof, *Nationalism, globalization and orthodoxy*, 189.

<sup>154</sup> Judah, *Kosovo*, 47.

<sup>155</sup> Detrez, *Kosovo*, 49.

had been the case 30 years earlier. The Albanian majority presence steadily rose in postwar Kosovo, partly owing to the ban on return of Serbian colonist refugees originating from the province. But while communist rule was lenient towards the Albanians of Kosovo in comparison to the interwar years of royal oppression, Albanian dissent remained strong due to Serbian-Montenegrin dominance.<sup>156</sup> Large scale Albanian protests erupted in 1968, and even though these were violently put down by security forces, significant amends were made to Kosovo's Albanian population.

The most important change was the enhancement of the status of Kosovo within Yugoslavia. Already an autonomous province since 1963, the 1974 constitution made Kosovo 'almost a full federal entity'.<sup>157</sup> Nevertheless, the province remained part of Serbia and was not granted the status of republic that so many Albanians desired.<sup>158</sup>

Further emancipation of Yugoslavia's Albanians coincided with a loss of privileges of the Serbian population of Kosovo; emigration of Serbians and Montenegrins stabilized the absolute number of Slavs in Kosovo while their proportion as a percentage of the population declined as a result of the, as Judah puts it, 'Albanian population explosion.'<sup>159</sup>

This demographic shift led to growing tensions in the 1980s. Serbian nationalists accused Albanians of separatism and of deliberately seeking the expulsion of Kosovar Serbians, while Albanians still regarded their rights within Yugoslavia as insufficient and blamed Belgrade for this

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<sup>156</sup> Serbs and Montenegrins were disproportionately represented in Kosovo's state institutions, especially the security forces. See: Judah, *Kosovo*, 51.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>158</sup> This distinction was based upon the Yugoslav classifications of 'nation' and 'nationality'. Nations were those peoples who were considered to have their homelands within the borders of Yugoslavia (Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians, and later (Bosnian) Muslims), nationalities were those ethnic groups living within Yugoslavia that were deemed to have their homelands outside of it (e.g. Albanians, Turks and Hungarians). Only 'nations' were granted a republic. Carole Rogel, 'Kosovo: Where It All Began', *International journal of politics, culture and society* 17 (2003) 167-182, 171.

<sup>159</sup> Judah, *Kosovo*, 59.

perceived injustice. These growing tensions were used by the Serbian communist party leader Slobodan Milosevic to bolster his popularity within Serbia. Shortly before his infamous speech at the 1989 remembrance of the battle of Kosovo Polje, Milosevic had already started the 'restoration' of Serbian influence within Yugoslavia by stripping Kosovo and Vojvodina of their autonomous status. As a direct result of this move, the fragile balance of power within Yugoslavia was upset. What followed was not the return to a Serbian dominated Yugoslavia, but the end of Yugoslavia altogether.<sup>160</sup>

The Albanian population had reacted to the annexation of the autonomous Kosovo province by proclaiming Kosovo a republic (within Yugoslavia) and by setting up a shadow government.<sup>161</sup> This parallel government was run by the Democratic League of Kosovo (the LDK), founded following the closure of Kosovo's parliament by Milosevic. Drawing heavily from the circle of Kosovar Albanian intellectuals, the LDK was headed by a professor of Albanian literature named Ibrahim Rugova.<sup>162</sup> Rugova became well known for his call for non-violent resistance, some characterising him as 'the Mahatma Gandhi of the Balkans'.<sup>163</sup>

The complete collapse of Yugoslavia naturally changed the rules of the game. By the end of 1991, the LDK not only requested that Kosovo was to become a republic, but also that this republic would be fully independent from Yugoslavia.<sup>164</sup> As a result of the secession of Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia and Bosnia, Yugoslavia had basically become a Serb-Montenegrin rump state. It made no sense for the Albanians of Kosovo to strive for a better place within Yugoslavia when this previously multinational state had basically become synonymous with the idea of a

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>161</sup> Judah, *Kosovo*, 73-74.

<sup>162</sup> Rogel, 'Kosovo', 73.

<sup>163</sup> Carl Stellweg, 'Onhoudbaar schaduwbestaan in Kosovo', *AD* 11-11-1994.

<sup>164</sup> Rogel, 'Kosovo', 173.

Greater Serbia.

It is in this context that the news coverage relevant to this study was created. The period between 1991 and 1995 saw the Albanians striving for an independent Kosovo primarily by peaceful means. Belgrade's policies towards Kosovo were geared towards a 'Serbianization' of the region, hoping to drive the Albanians out and encouraging Serbs and Montenegrins to take their place; Serbian refugees from Bosnia and Croatia were even forced to settle in Kosovo. Repressive measures against the Albanian population manifested themselves in the dismantling of the Albanian education system and the firing of Albanian state employees.<sup>165</sup>

The increasing Serbian dominance of the state apparatus was somewhat countered by the Albanian shadow government and its illegal parallel system of taxation, elections and public services. Led by Rugova, Albanian leadership was quite successful in implementing the doctrine of pacifism. As a result, Kosovo remained a relatively peaceful place during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia.<sup>166</sup> Only after the Dayton agreements of 1995 had shown that the international community would not commit itself to an independent Kosovo, did the Kosovo Liberation Army (the UÇK) start to manifest itself more prominently, leading to violent forms of Albanian resistance.<sup>167</sup>

Following almost a century of conflicting Serbian and Albanian nationalist claims, complicated by several wars, communist rule, geopolitical Cold War containment policies and the intricate workings of Yugoslavia as a multinational state, Kosovo remained contested territory. In hindsight, the years of 1991-1995 can best be characterised as the calm before the storm. However, renewed conflict was not just the repetition of older conflicts. Albanian nationalism had changed significantly, giving rise

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<sup>165</sup> Detrez, *Kosovo*, 114-115.

<sup>166</sup> Glenny, *The Balkans 1804-1999*, 653.

<sup>167</sup> Rogel, 'Kosovo', 175.

to a specific Kosovar Albanian nationalism at the cost of the old Greater Albanian nationalism (partly owing to the fact that political unrest in post-communist Albania made unification seem less appealing for most Kosovar Albanians).<sup>168</sup> This did not mean that the Kosovo movement for separatism was not nationalistic, something which the news coverage seems to suggest if we look at the research results presented in chapter 4.4. Nationalism as an ideology had simply shown remarkable flexibility in changing in accordance with an ever changing world.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> For an attack on the notion that Kosovar Albanians supported a Greater Albania, see: Paulin Kola, *The search for Greater Albania* (London 2003).

<sup>169</sup> Anderson especially stressed the flexibility of nationalism, characterising it as a 'blueprint' or 'model', a universal ideology which can be adjusted to local settings (whether cultural, economical or social). Anderson, *Imagined communities*, 5.

### 3 The demise of Yugoslavia and the Dutch press

The news coverage of the wars in Bosnia saw the introduction of a new journalistic term: *journalism of attachment*. Coined by former BBC correspondent Martin Bell, the term 'proposes that reporters are participants in the conflicts they report and, as a consequence, take part in the public debate about the conflict.'<sup>170</sup> Western media have often been criticised for presenting a stereotype and simplified view of the conflicts in Yugoslavia that suited an agenda of intervention politics.<sup>171</sup> This criticism relates to a larger theme, that of 'Western ignorance' on Yugoslavia and its dissolution. Hence, 'The West' has received a fair amount of criticism regarding the way it had dealt with the demise of Yugoslavia, ranging from accusations of cultivating dangerous stereotyped views about Balkan-history to the more serious allegations that it had fuelled the hostilities and was unable to properly intervene once the Bosnian war was in full swing.<sup>172</sup>

The primary goal of this chapter will be to give the information necessary to interpret and understand the research results which will be

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<sup>170</sup> Ruigrok, *Journalism of attachment*, 2.

<sup>171</sup> For a polemic attack on the U.S media regarding their coverage of the conflicts in Yugoslavia, see: James K. Sadkovich, 'The response of the American media to Balkan neo-nationalism' in: Stjepan Meštrović ed., *Genocide after emotion: the postemotional Balkan war* (London 1996) 113-157.

<sup>172</sup> Shore claims that the foundation of EU membership, which practically requires a political entity to be a nation-state, encouraged the founding of new nationalism in the east. EU eligibility could than 'be read as a tacit endorsement for regional nationalism and separatist movements.' In the same manner, socialist writer Michael Barrat Brown blames the IMF for only supporting 'nations', thus promoting secession for economic gain. See: Shore, 'Ethnicity, xenophobia and the boundaries of Europe', 51-52, and Michael Barratt-Brown's *The Yugoslav tragedy: lessons for socialists* (Nottingham 1996) 72.

presented in chapter 4. To do so, a short sketch regarding several aspects of the Western perception of the conflicts in Yugoslavia will be given in order to create a context for the analysis of the news coverage in the period 1991-1995. Following up is a subchapter specifically dealing with the Dutch situation during the Yugoslav crisis. Using the 2002 NIOD report on Srebrenica as a general guideline, this chapter will explore the role of the Dutch press in relation to the demise of Yugoslavia.

### **3.1 The Western perception of the demise of Yugoslavia**

In a report for the BBC filed in February 1991, I wrote, in somewhat lurid terms, that the leaders of Yugoslavia 'were stirring a cauldron of blood that would soon boil over.' My superiors reprimanded me for the piece on the grounds that it was 'alarmist'. This was the end of the 20th century, not the beginning, they told me, and there would be no war in the Balkans.<sup>173</sup>

Misha Glenny, *The Balkans 1804-1999* (London 1999).

Journalist and Balkan specialist Misha Glenny might have been reprimanded by his superiors for being 'alarmist' in early 1991, but once war did break out in Yugoslavia, it was Glenny who had the final say. In his work on the history of the Balkans, which was directly spawned by the Yugoslav conflicts, Glenny's superiors are positioned as members of an ignorant Western elite. Blinded by the end of the Cold War and distracted by conflicts in the Middle- East, the rising tensions in Yugoslavia escaped the attention of the power centres in Western-Europe and America.<sup>174</sup>

However, once actual war in Yugoslavia forced the West to turn its gaze towards the Balkans, to this one misconception was only added that of the unavoidability of the demise of Yugoslavia. As Roudometof remarks, 'while generations of scholars have surrendered to the notion of Yugoslavia as an inevitable reality, opinions suddenly moved the other

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<sup>173</sup> Glenny, *The Balkans 1804-1999*, 634.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 634-635

way around, emphasizing “age old hatred” as the root of its collapse.<sup>175</sup> War became something which had been unavoidable, created by the mysterious workings of history, part of a violent ‘Balkan nature’, or caused by the gullible nature of the Yugoslav people, who were often portrayed as blindly following the propaganda of ‘nationalist demagogues’ en masse.

There were of course many views on what had caused the fall of Yugoslavia and there most certainly did not exist ‘one’ Western perception of the conflicts in the 90s. In order not to get unnecessarily caught up in such a large and complicated subject, this chapter will specifically focus on the Western perception of the Yugoslav wars in relation to Yugoslavia’s place within ‘the Balkans’. As we shall see, Yugoslavia’s troubles were often portrayed as characteristic for the Balkans as a whole and fitted larger themes related to the East-West dichotomy and the concept of nationalism.

Quite tellingly, the conflicts that accompanied Yugoslavia have often been called ‘the Balkan wars’. But even though we should not trivialize the very real damage done in the Yugoslav wars, one must remember, as Maria Todorova has argued, that the actual conflict was never a large scale ‘Balkan war’ as is sometimes suggested by the term.<sup>176</sup>

For instance, Glenny wrote a book about the demise of Yugoslavia called *The fall of Yugoslavia: the third Balkan war* (1992), a somewhat premature name for a book to be released so early in the chain of conflicts and a misplaced one in retrospect. But this was no isolated incident.<sup>177</sup> Even the Carnegie Peace Endowment felt comfortable reprinting their 1913 report on the Balkan Wars as a reaction to the conflicts within Yugoslavia, adding, as Maria Todorova puts it, “the gracious caption, “The

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<sup>175</sup> Roudometof, *Nationalism, globalization, and orthodoxy*, 200 n15.

<sup>176</sup> Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford 1997) 186.

<sup>177</sup> After reading Maria Todorova’s *Imagining the Balkans*, Glenny is said to have told Todorova that he had ‘been guilty of Balkanism’. We can only guess whether Glenny saw the title of his 1992 book as part of his Balkanism. See: Review of Todorova’s *Bones of Contention* on: [http://www.clas.ufl.edu/events/news/articles/199911\\_todorova.html](http://www.clas.ufl.edu/events/news/articles/199911_todorova.html), retrieved on 7-6-2011.

Other Balkan Wars”<sup>178</sup> Apparently, there existed the vague but persistent idea that the happenings in Yugoslavia were somehow characteristic for the Balkans as a whole.

Several conclusions were often derived from the ‘Balkan nature’ of the Yugoslav conflicts. Stereotypes of the Balkans manifested themselves in Western views on the role of history, ethnicity and violence in the Yugoslav wars. According to Todorova, these stereotypes originated from the early 20th century and have ever since existed in a relative stable form, even though the demarcation of the Balkans themselves has remained somewhat fluid.<sup>179</sup> To illustrate these stereotypes with a basic example, most studies invoke, if only shortly, the work of the still very successful journalist Robert Kaplan.<sup>180</sup> Kaplan’s bestseller *Balkan Ghosts* (1993) presented a picture of the Balkans as a place under the constant strain of ethnic strife which radiated so strongly from the area that it was supposed to have inspired even the concept of Nazism.<sup>181</sup> Moulded by centuries of tribal conflict and Turkish despotism, the peoples of the Balkan are claimed to have developed a remarkable level of intolerance and ethnic hatred, which manifested itself occasionally in violent outbursts. This decisive influence of ‘history’ is used to explain why these people are obsessed with the past and, in a self fulfilling prophecy, this in turn explains why they hate on the basis of ethnicity: their ancestors also did so.

Of course, Kaplan’s work represents Western stereotypes of the

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<sup>178</sup> Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 4. This usage of the term Balkan War is less often used in Western-Europe than in the United States according to Todorova, but the 2011 Dutch news coverage of the arrest of Mladic could make one doubt whether this difference remained, at least for the Dutch case, for the war was often named as ‘the war in the Balkans’.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>180</sup> For some studies critical of Kaplan, see the NIOD report on Srebrenica (2002), Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, Roudometof, *Nationalism, globalization, and orthodoxy*, and Dungaciu, ‘East and West and the “mirror of nature”’.

<sup>181</sup> Kaplan, *Balkan ghosts: a journey through history* (London 1993) xxiii

Balkans taken to the extreme, but the general assumptions underlying his rhetoric are characteristic of larger themes. One must not forget that Kaplan's book was very popular, much to the dismay of many specialists on the region.<sup>182</sup>

Nevertheless, the West had quite a positive image of communist Yugoslavia up until the 1980's. Tito's break with Stalin was praised in the West by left- and right-wing political movements alike. In left-wing and progressive circles especially, Yugoslavia was applauded for its 'experimental' social policies, such as the famous workers' self management.<sup>183</sup> In addition, the country became well visited by Western tourists, adding to its popularity. Thus, prior to the 1980's, it appeared as if the Balkans 'as a powder keg' was to be a relic of the past. In the words of Naarden: '[i]t seemed that the old clichés about a barbaric, violent, exotic and semi-Asian Yugoslavia were wearing rather thin.'<sup>184</sup>

However, the demise of Yugoslavia made sure that the country was once again treated as part of the stereotype Balkans in regards to the workings and influence of history. The Balkans have traditionally been imagined as a primitive place where time stood still, in sharp contrast to the ever progressing modern West. The outbreak of armed conflict in Yugoslavia seemed to underline this view of Yugoslavia's return to 'Balkan primitivism'. The very fact that the West saw nationalism as a relic of the past can only have strengthened this idea. Chapter one already showed how a renowned historian such as Hobsbawm has constructed nationalism as a backwards and irrational ideology, something which is opposed to the rationality of the modern (Western) world, closely following the older social scientific idea that nationalism should ideally be a transitory stage on the road towards a rational society.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Keith S. Brown, 'Review of Neighbors at war: anthropological perspectives on Yugoslav ethnicity, culture and history', *American ethnologist* 28 (2001) 740-741.

<sup>183</sup> Naarden, 'Western Perceptions and Balkan Realities', 27.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 'Methodological nationalism and beyond', 303.

As such, it will come as no surprise that the conflicts in Yugoslavia, since they were instigated by 'nationalists', were seen as a return to a barbarous past. But in the case of Yugoslavia and its place within the Balkans, this rhetoric was sometimes pushed even further. According to some, the violence as witnessed by the rest of the world was not just caused by the ideals of a backwards political ideology, but by a much older 'tribalism'. American diplomat and historian George Kennan wrote in the introduction to the earlier mentioned reprint of the 1913 Carnegie Peace Endowment report concerning the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 that 'nationalism, as it manifested itself on the field of battle, drew on deeper traits of character inherited, presumably from a distant tribal past...And so it remains today.'<sup>186</sup> Usage of the term 'tribalism' (according to sociologist Stjepan Meštrović conceived in relation to Europe's negative view on 'primitive' Africa) to describe social structures in Yugoslavia was in line with the older view of the Balkans as the primitive counterpart of modern Europe.<sup>187</sup>

If civilization is associated with rationality, primitivism, by extension, represents the irrational. Indeed, we will see that the concept of irrationality was to play an important part in the Western perception of the Yugoslav conflicts. This was true both for those who claimed that the violence witnessed had deep historic roots and those who thought it to be an invention of postcommunist demagogues. The view that the different peoples of Yugoslavia were guided by age-old ethnic conflicts portrayed the actors in the Yugoslav wars as slaves to subconscious urges and hatred. In this aspect, the view of ahistoric manipulative demagogues as source of the conflict was far from different; it simply promoted a small

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<sup>186</sup> *The other Balkan Wars. A 1913 Carnegie Endowment inquiry in retrospect with a new introduction and reflections on the present conflict by George F. Kennan* (Washington 1993) 11.

<sup>187</sup> Stjepan Meštrović, 'Introduction' in: in Stjepan Meštrović ed., *Genocide after emotion: the postemotional Balkan war* (London 1996) 1-30, 15.

elite to rational actors who controlled the irrational masses. As such, the peoples of Yugoslavia became either slaves to 'truthful' or to 'falsified' histories, both cases stressing the 'ethnic' character of the conflict and suggesting 'a Hobbesian war of all against all and neighbour against neighbour'.<sup>188</sup>

This view on an ingrained irrationality in the Balkan peoples has become quite popular and even survives in academic writings published after the Yugoslav wars. For instance, historian Raymond Detrez firmly places the ensuing Kosovo conflict within a framework in which the Balkan peoples by their very nature are hopelessly caught up in their own obsession with history. Detrez's work on Kosovo, called *Kosovo: de uitgestelde oorlog* ('Kosovo: the postponed war') (1999) simply starts with the assertion that in the Balkans, one is 'born a historian'.<sup>189</sup> Detrez writes that in this remarkable peninsula, national history is the preferred topic for a conversation with the outsider, much to the surprise of 'the inexperienced Balkan traveller'.<sup>190</sup>

However, once the outsider asks for solid proof which supports a specific Balkan national history, the *Balkanees* (inhabitant of the Balkans) often retreats into a shell of emotional arguments in order to ignore the 'mythological' character of his national epic.<sup>191</sup> As such, a clear distinction is made between the ahistorical Western traveller, indifferent to his own national epos, and the irrational Balkan peoples, who are obsessed with their respective mythical histories.

Quite similar in this aspect is an article by political theorist William Hagan called 'The Balkan's lethal nationalisms'. Hagan argues that

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<sup>188</sup> Political scientist John Mueller argues that this view on ethnic conflict as war of all against all is incorrect. According to him, the intrinsic motivations for violence were rarely ethnic and mostly involved only a small core of antisocial and violent thugs who are to be found in every society. John Mueller, 'The banality of ethnic war: Yugoslavia and Rwanda', *International Security* 25 (2000) 42-70.

<sup>189</sup> Detrez, *De uitgestelde oorlog*, 11.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

all nationalisms in Yugoslavia, and for that matter, all of the Balkan-nationalisms,<sup>192</sup> were equally bad.<sup>193</sup> This view is underlined by reasoning that implicates an inherent irrationality in the psyche of the Balkan peoples. As late as 1999, Hagan asks whether Greece and Bulgaria would move against Macedonia 'as they did in 1913'. Apparently, their fickle and irrational Balkan nature would make the Greeks and Bulgarians susceptible to simply repeat history. Hagan does not give any reason as to *why* the Greek and Bulgarian state would wage war over the Republic of Macedonia, and above all, why their populations would support this move. Seemingly, the context of the Balkans is enough to make irrational decisions seem 'logical'. But as Todorova rightly states, actions in the Balkans should be 'explained in terms of set aims rather than irrational (or subconscious) urges.'<sup>194</sup>

This argument will not be unnecessarily prolonged by explaining *why* the West constructed an image of a disintegrating Yugoslavia as a specific Balkan state, and for that matter, following historian Bruno Naarden, to what extent 'Western perceptions' related to a 'Balkan reality'.<sup>195</sup> In relation to the subject of this study, we can already arrive at a relevant conclusion. The negative traits of the Balkans as perceived by the Western world in the crumbling Yugoslav state mirrored in many aspects the negative stereotypes attributed to 'nationalism'. Both the Balkans and the ideology of nationalism are seen as 'irrational' entities

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<sup>192</sup> In this case, the title of the article, 'The Balkan's lethal nationalisms', leaves little to the imagination

<sup>193</sup> Hagan is certainly not alone in this view. Take for instance Michael Barratt-Brown's *The Yugoslav Tragedy: lessons for socialists* (1996), which central theme is, according to Barratt-Brown, 'to condemn all forms of nationalism'. Slavoj Žižek has severely criticised this kind of reasoning. Žižek rightly states that, following obvious support for Tito's legacy in Bosnia, the equal condemnation of all parties in the Bosnian war, 'is not a neutral gesture, but a gesture that adopts in advance the standpoint of one of the sides in the conflict [Serbia]'. See: Barratt-Brown's *The Yugoslav tragedy*, 17 and Slavoj Žižek, *Did somebody say totalitarianism?: five interventions in the (mis)use of a notion* (London 2001) 232.

<sup>194</sup> Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 138.

<sup>195</sup> Naarden, 'Western Perceptions and Balkan Realities'

which are caught up in a mystified past. They also share the burden of being branded as primitive or anachronistic, ideally belonging to the past rather than the present or the future. And finally, both nationalism and the Balkans are imagined to be non-Western. The Balkans, as the book jacket of Todorova's *magnum opus* puts it, 'have often served as a repository of negative characteristics upon which a positive and self-congratulatory image of the 'European' has been built'.<sup>196</sup> In the same manner, Europe often claims to have lost its 'nationalistic' traits in the 'cleansing' flames of two purgatorial world wars, effectively distancing 'the West' from the concept of nationalism. This pattern fits the earlier discussed parallels of the ethnic-civic, East-West and nationalist - non-nationalist distinctions.

Thus, while it is certainly important to remember that the stereotype view on Yugoslavia as part of the primitive and violent prone Balkans was not uncontested in the West, the value of this specific stereotype and its geographical context can be found in the fact that it is in many aspects aligned with the dominant stereotype of nationalism and the dichotomies that were presented in chapter 1.4.

### **3.2 The role of journalists and newspapers**

'Something went wrong with Dutch Journalism.'<sup>197</sup> At least, that is the conclusion that media researcher Nel Ruigrok presented in her dissertation on Dutch newspapers during the Bosnian war. Journalists had been guided by moral rather than objective journalistic imperatives, focusing on influencing the public opinion and intervention debate instead of serving as impartial mediators 'between the events and the audience.'<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> This quote can be found on the book jacket of Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans*.

<sup>197</sup> Ruigrok, *Journalism of attachment*, 147.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

The NIOD report on Srebrenica also reprimanded the Dutch press, stating that they had, together with politicians, created a stereotype and simplified view of the conflicts in Bosnia.<sup>199</sup> The creation of this massive report, counting over 6000 pages of text, was requested by the Dutch government in response to the Srebrenica massacre of 1995, in which Dutch troops under the UN banner failed to stop Serbian forces from ethnically cleansing the 'safe' area of Srebrenica.<sup>200</sup> Most of the newspapers had, in one way or another, reflected on the critical report, trying to learn from past mistakes.<sup>201</sup>

Politicians however, were not let off the hook so easily. They were said to be responsible for having ordered 'an ill-conceived and virtually impossible peace mission'.<sup>202</sup> The results of the report caused the Dutch government to take partial responsibility for the massacre in Srebrenica, leading to the resignation of the second cabinet of Wim Kok in 2002. However, Dutch politics remain beyond the scope of this study. Returning to the criticism expressed by the NIOD report and Ruigrok on the press, this section will try to answer two questions. First, to which cause did Dutch journalists attach themselves? And second, how did their attachment influence the news coverage of the conflicts in Yugoslavia?

First of all, the media studies on the Dutch press conducted by Ruigrok and the NIOD focus primarily on the Bosnian war and to a lesser

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<sup>199</sup> J. Wieten, 'Srebrenica en de journalistiek. Achtergronden en invloed van de berichtgeving over het conflict in voormalig Joegoslavië' in: *Srebrenica, een 'veilig' gebied. Reconstructie, achtergronden, gevolgen en analyses van de val van een Safe Area*. NIOD (Amsterdam 2002) 99.

<sup>200</sup> For a digital version of the report, see: <http://www.srebrenica.nl/>, retrieved on 20-7-2011.

<sup>201</sup> A. de Graaf, 'Een nieuwe dag, een nieuwe krant. Een kwalitatief onderzoek naar zelfreflectie bij vijf Nederlandse dagbladen naar aanleiding van het Niod-rapport over Srebrenica', in: *Medialogica: over het krachtenveld tussen burgers, media en politiek* (Den Haag 2003) 291-309, 307.

<sup>202</sup> Press release on the NIOD Srebrenica report, <http://www.srebrenica.nl/Pages/OOR/23/377.bGFuZz10TA.html>, retrieved on 20-7-2011.

extent on the war in Croatia. As such, the information given should not be seen as directly related to the cases of Kosovo and Macedonia but rather seen as means to place the news coverage treated in this study into a larger context. In the years 1991-1995, the happenings in Bosnia and Serbia were covered more extensively than those in Kosovo and Macedonia. At the same time, the violence witnessed in other parts of Yugoslavia provided journalists, activists and politicians with an example of what would await Macedonia and Kosovo in the case of Serbian aggression.

In the Yugoslav conflicts as a whole, the cause to which many journalists attached themselves was that of humanitarian intervention. According to Ruigrok, the news coverage itself thus became a tool to achieve this goal by influencing the political and public debate about possible intervention. Since media and politics espoused the same opinion regarding the intervention debate, Ruigrok argues that journalists had failed in their traditional role as a watchdog of governmental policies.<sup>203</sup>

In this quest to support intervention policies, the Dutch press created a black and white picture of 'good guys, bad guys'. Serbian actors were dominantly portrayed as 'bad guys' while, in the case of Bosnia, Muslims served the role of victims, 'good guys'. Even though the sympathy for Yugoslavia's Muslims did not mean that they were exempt of any criticism, it did create 'a general groundswell of public opinion in favour of humanitarian intervention and peacekeeping in Bosnia, to prevent any further ethnic cleansing or exacerbation of human suffering.'<sup>204</sup>

While there might have been some doubts about the democratic credentials of Croatia, Dutch perceptions of the demise of Yugoslavia primarily followed the general Western trend in branding Serbia as the

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<sup>203</sup> Ruigrok, *Journalism of attachment*, 150.

<sup>204</sup> Naarden, 'Western Perceptions and Balkan Realities', 48.

instigator of armed conflict in Yugoslavia.<sup>205</sup> According to the NIOD report, this view on 'good guys, bad guys' was not influenced by any prior relation between the Netherlands, or any other Western country for that matter, and the different constituting nations of Yugoslavia.<sup>206</sup>

However, not all journalists and newspapers were evaluated negatively. *NRC* editor Raymond van de Boogaard and *Trouw* journalist Nicole Lucas were praised for their more distanced and neutral coverage of the events in Yugoslavia. Van den Boogaard was even severely criticised by his colleagues when he wrote about the lack of evidence for large scale rapes in the Serbian prison camps.<sup>207</sup> The prevailing view of the 'good guys, bad guys' distinction had made such journalistic doubts seem as amoral. In the same manner, some newspapers were seen as more attached than others. *De Volkskrant* and *NRC Handelsblad*, both part of the quality press, were reprimanded in particular for taking the moral high ground, while the more popular newspapers such as *het Algemeen Dagblad* and *de Telegraaf* were said to be less influenced by journalism of attachment.<sup>208</sup>

All in all, the shortcomings of the Dutch press were summarized as follows: 'too much moral judgement, not enough facts, too many opinions, not enough analyses, too much emotion.'<sup>209</sup> Thus, when looking at the news coverage of Kosovo and Macedonia in the period between 1991-1995, we should be aware of the morally and emotionally charged 'good guys, bad guys' distinction as it was made in the press coverage of the conflicts in Bosnia and Croatia, which can be taken to be of significant influence in the case of Serbian rule in Kosovo.

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> 'Pers over Srebrenica: tussen actie en afstand', *NRC* 13-4-2002, [http://vorige.nrc.nl/dossiers/srebrenica/niodrapport/article1563463.ece/Pers\\_over\\_Srebrenica\\_tussen\\_actie\\_en\\_afstand](http://vorige.nrc.nl/dossiers/srebrenica/niodrapport/article1563463.ece/Pers_over_Srebrenica_tussen_actie_en_afstand), retrieved on 6-6-2011.

<sup>208</sup> De Graaf, 'Een nieuwe dag, een nieuwe krant', 302-304, and Ruigrok, *Journalism of attachment*, 147.

<sup>209</sup> Wieten, 'Srebrenica en de journalistiek', 100.

### **3.3 A Balkan context?**

Even though the Yugoslav wars were just that, a series of armed conflicts within the old borders of Yugoslavia, their place within the Balkans led to the invocation of larger themes related both to nationalism and the character of the Balkan peoples. These two themes showed significant overlap, and even though a thorough discussion of this subject would require a study of its own, these similarities can only have complemented and reinforced one another.

However, while the Western view on the Yugoslav wars was characterised by the cultivation of certain negative stereotypes concerning the Balkans and its inhabitants, this by no means prevented anyone in the West from choosing sides in the conflicts. Even an institution as the press, which was traditionally expected to be neutral, decided to cover the Yugoslav conflicts in a way which clearly presented the reader with a distinction between 'good' and 'bad' guys.

Nonetheless, this 'side picking' was not a simple matter of the East versus the West. In the case of Bosnia, Muslims, generally considered more 'Eastern' than Christians (for instance, Serbs), enjoyed most of the Western support. As we shall see in chapter 4, the same goes for the Kosovar Albanians, primarily Muslims by religion. The East-West distinction concerning nationalism thus is more nuanced and complicated than some of the academic literature suggests, a topic which will be addressed in chapter 4.

Not unimportantly for this study, the judging of the warring parties turned out negatively for Serbia; the war in Bosnia was considered both an act of Serbian aggression and an example of what awaited Macedonia and Kosovo if the West didn't stop the Serbian war machine. The following chapter will shed more light on these issues in regards to the cases of Kosovo and Macedonia. Combining the subjects of all preceding chapters, the next chapter of this study will specifically look at the evaluation and naming of different nationalisms in Kosovo and Macedonia during the break up of Yugoslavia in the Dutch press.

## 4 News coverage of Kosovo and Macedonia during the Yugoslav crisis

Following the theoretical and historical introductions on nationalism and Macedonia, Kosovo and the breakup of Yugoslavia respectively, this chapter deals with the actual news coverage of Kosovo and Macedonia. First of all, this chapter will shortly introduce the newspapers chosen for this research, clarify the criteria for specifically choosing these newspapers, and deal with the means by which these sources have been studied. The second part will revolve around the usage of the terms 'nationalism', 'nationalistic' and 'nationalist(s)' in the news. How are these words used? Are they negatively, neutrally or positively charged? Which parties are associated with these terms? The last part will revolve around those aspects within the news coverage deemed nationalistic in the light of banal and methodological nationalism. Which aspects of the events in Kosovo and Macedonia are being 'unmade' as nationalistic? What is omitted from the interpretation of nationalism as presented in the first chapter? Thus, returning to the main question asked in this study: is the news coverage itself somehow unwittingly framed within a nationalistic discourse?

### 4.1 Methodology

Three Dutch newspapers, *NRC Handelsblad*, *Trouw* and *Algemeen Dagblad*, have been selected for this study. Since the goal of the research was not to directly study the press (as an institute) itself, but rather the possibility of nationalist framing in relation to the breakup of Yugoslavia, this decision has mainly been guided by practical concerns rather than by a specific view on the Dutch press as a subject of study in its own right.

First of all, the reason for specifically choosing these three newspapers is the fact that they are all major national newspapers and

therefore published a significant and representative amount of news and background articles on Yugoslavia. Each of them also published letters to the editor regarding the breakup of Yugoslavia, thus providing certain information on the contested aspects of the news coverage.

A second important factor in choosing these newspapers has been their availability in the online newspaper database LexisNexis academic.<sup>210</sup> With the exception of a few months concerning *Trouw* and *Algemeen Dagblad*, (which were available in the form of microfiches at the Koninklijke Bibliotheek) all articles were available online and thus allowed for a relatively quick but thorough research.

The implications of these choices are twofold. First of all, the articles chosen are written by a large variety of persons. Journalists and editors take the lion's share, but those writing the letters to the editor range from students to embassy personnel, from politicians to professors and from historians to peace activists.

Additionally, one should keep in mind that the choice to publish a letter to the editor is always made by the editorial staff of a newspaper. Thus, while this study might also be based on the opinions and arguments made by those not involved in the newspaper business, editorial boards did make the conscious decision whether a received letter should be published (the so called 'gatekeeping').<sup>211</sup> As such the results of this study might not be limited to the attitudes of journalists and editors towards nationalism, but even so, one should remember that these groups do have a substantial say in the representation of 'external' content.

Let us quickly take a look at the character of the newspapers themselves. The *NRC* is commonly described as a liberal newspaper, ranking the 6th largest Dutch newspaper in 1996 with an average circulation of 272.300 copies. It's usually seen as a *kwaliteitskrant* (a newspaper part of the 'quality press'), which, bluntly put, holds that *NRC* is

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<sup>210</sup> <http://academic.lexisnexis.nl/vu/>, retrieved on 18-4-2011.

<sup>211</sup> Barbie Zelizer, *Taking journalism seriously: news and the academy* (London 2004) 52.

said to favour '(political) information' over 'amusement'.<sup>212</sup> Its audience is more prosperous and has enjoyed a higher education than the average Dutch population.<sup>213</sup>

The exact same goes for *Trouw*, which is also seen as part of the quality press. However, *Trouw's* character has a religious touch because of its orthodox protestant roots. Although the newspaper moved beyond its strictly orthodox protestant character during the sixties, religion remains an important feature of *Trouw*, which has continued to reserve a special section for matters concerning church communities on a national and international level, and spirituality and religion in general. It ranked as the 7<sup>th</sup> largest Dutch newspaper in 1996 with a circulation of 121.600.<sup>214</sup>

The third newspaper, *Algemeen Dagblad (AD)*, differs from *NRC* and *Trouw* in its characterization as a 'popular newspaper'. Its audience consists of a fairly accurate cross section of the population, both in education and social class. It is one of the larger and more popular Dutch newspapers, ranking the second largest Dutch newspaper in 1996 with a circulation of 401.235.<sup>215</sup>

As mentioned before, most of the newspapers have been studied by the means of the digital archive 'LexisNexis academic'. A simple search enquiry has been made as to all articles in the period 08-08-1991 - 31-10-1995 containing the words or tags 'Kosovo' or 'Macedonia'. In the case of Macedonia, this search enquiry gave 522 article hits for the *NRC* (available the entire timeframe), 342 for *Trouw* (available between 01-01-1992 and 31-10-1995), and 336 for the *AD* (available between 01-11-1991 and 31-10-1995). Concerning Kosovo, the hits were 276 for the *NRC*, 194 for *Trouw*, and 120 for the *AD*.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Pieter Bakker and Otto Scholten, *Communicatiekaart van Nederland* (Houten 1997) 14.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>214</sup> Bakker and Scholten, *Communicatiekaart van Nederland*, 15.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15.

<sup>216</sup> These numbers are not totally representative since I did not look for the words 'Kosovo' and 'Macedonia' in the entire *Trouw* and *AD* newspapers which were only

All these articles have been read and a portion has been chosen to create a selection of the news coverage of which to base this study. The selection itself has been based upon the coverage of ‘nationalistic’ themes. This includes –but is not limited to- articles which told the reader something about Macedonia as a state, the Macedonians as a people, Kosovo as an autonomous province, the Albanians as a people, the concept of self-determination, nationalistic and ethnic conflict.

As a result, a lot of articles which named either Macedonia or Kosovo have been ignored, simply because they gave no relevant information. For instance, an article about the war in Bosnia might often shortly refer to Kosovo and Macedonia as the next possible battlefields for ethnic conflict, thus counting as an article naming both Kosovo and Macedonia, but practically giving zero information about these entities. Some articles might be completely about the ancient kingdom of Macedonia, and not mention the Republic of Macedonia even once.

After discarding those articles which gave a minimum of information, or none at all, the results were as follows (articles which were used both for the analyses of Kosovo and Macedonia have been counted separately in both sections):

**Figure 1: Number of articles selected**

	<b>Macedonia</b>	<b>Kosovo</b>
NRC	130	55
Trouw	67	45
AD	72	21
Total	269	121

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available in the archives (for instance, I ignored the sports section, which came up several times in the digital search results). However, they do grant a general indication of the ‘popularity’ of both Kosovo and Macedonia, which was, taken into account the missing months from *Trouw* and the *AD*, still significantly higher in the NRC.

With nine 'doubles', this brings the direct sources for this study to a total of 381 articles. A list of these articles has been added as a supplement. Statistics and data in the following part of this chapter will always refer to this specific selection of articles. In analysing these articles, the decision has been made to split the news coverage of Macedonia and Kosovo in two different sections, followed with a paragraph about larger themes which have been identified on both subjects. As such, first the news coverage of Macedonia will be treated, thereafter the news coverage of Kosovo, and finally, relevant overarching topics will be handled.

However, before starting with the analysis itself, some terms that will be used in analysing the news coverage should be clarified: 'framing', 'rhetoric', and 'stereotyping'. The term 'framing' (or as a given set of 'frames', a 'framework') has already been used in the introduction. Essentially, in making sense of what's going on in the world, everyone falls back on certain assumptions on how the world works, which is what the term 'framing' indicates. In the context of this study, the term (nationalistic) 'framing' will mean that certain assumptions which are found in the news coverage are derived from nationalistic principles.

The person framing his or her article in a nationalistic frame of reference (or framework) is someone who, consciously or unconsciously, assumes that the world works or should work according to certain principles related to nationalism (such as self-determination, the existence of the nation as an important, historical and enduring entity, etc.). This nationalist framing can be understood as the earlier mentioned 'methodological nationalism'.

The meaning of 'rhetoric' in this context is specifically derived from this explanation of framing. If framing represents the assumptions which are held about the workings of the world we live in, rhetoric is a way of using (or abusing) these assumptions to persuade people about certain viewpoints. For instance, arguments that try to speak to a nationalistic frame of reference of the reader, rest upon the assumed presence of such a nationalistic 'framework'. Some very clear examples of

this form of rhetoric will follow in the next part of this chapter.

Lastly, the term stereotyping simply refers to using the stereotype of nationalism as presented in chapter 1: the view of nationalism as something extreme, irrational and primarily reserved for the non-Western world.

#### **4.2 Usage of the terms 'nationalism', 'nationalistic', and 'nationalist(s)' in the news coverage of Macedonia**

When examining the newspaper articles in relation to the usage of the given terms associated with actual nationalism ('nationalism', 'nationalistic', and 'nationalist(s)'), three features have been taken into account. First of all, did the article make use of the terminology, yes or no? If so, was it used in a positive, negative, or neutral way, or an ambiguous combination of these three labels? For instance, when specifically associated with a group considered an aggressor in the article, this would count as negative. The same would go for the association made between 'extreme', 'extremist', or 'ultra-' and 'nationalism'.

The third question asked was which specific form of nationalism was associated with the terms (Macedonian, Greek, undefined). The instances in which these terms were mentioned in a quote have been ignored for the following statistics, since they do not necessarily represent the author's usage of the terms. In the supplement, these instances have been marked with an asterisk, signalling the article used the terms, but only in quotations.

Let us start with some quantitative data from the case of Macedonia. The groups chosen for the statistics were those mentioned most often. The labels refer to the specific form of nationalism associated with the term (Macedonian or Greek). The label 'in general' refers to the use of nationalism as an ideology in general, not associated with a specific group. A special subgroup has been created for the Macedonian opposition since instances of Macedonian nationalism or Macedonian

nationalists often referred specifically to the political opposition, as opposed to Greek nationalism, which was more evenly distributed over a whole range of different groups.

**Figure 2: Associated actors/ethnic groups**

Nationalism:	NRC	Trouw	AD	Tpta;
In general/undefined	5	2	6	13
Macedonian	4	4	5	13
Macedonian (opposition/VMRO)	16	12	5	33
Greek	17	3	9	29
Other	4	4	1	9
Total	46	25	26	97

**Figure 3: (implicit) judgement carried by the terminology**

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Positive and Negative	Total
NRC	0	8	33	1	42
Trouw	0	5	15	1	21
AD	0	2	24	1	27
Total	0	15	72	3	90

**Figure 4: Actor/ethnic group linked to judgement (when both positive and negative were related to different ethnic groups in the article, they have been split in different sections)**

<b>Nationalism:</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Pos. and Neg.</b>	<b>Total</b>
In general/undefined	0	4	9	1	14
Macedonian	1	3	6	1	11
Macedonian (opposition/VMRO)	0	4	33	0	37
Greek	0	5	23	0	28
Other	0	2	14	0	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>106</b>

A few observations can be made regarding this data. Overall, the terms clearly have a negative connotation. These negative labels are mainly applied to Greek nationalism in general and the Macedonian opposition specifically (often represented with reference to the VMRO party). This implies that in the case of the Macedonian Republic, nationalism is generally not associated with the state or ruling parties. Instead, a dichotomy is created between ‘the opposition’, most often in the form of VMRO, and the state, represented by the ruling parties and headed by Kiro Gligorov.

This association of nationalism with the Macedonian opposition and political periphery is very clearly illustrated by the articles published following the failed attempt at the life of the Macedonian president Kiro Gligorov in October 1995. The *AD* headlined: ‘Nationalists suspected of assault on the president of Macedonia’. The article following this headline mentions the possible perpetrators once, calling them simply ‘Macedonian

nationalists'.<sup>217</sup> However, no further context is given; the fact that these terrorist were 'nationalists' is already enough to explain their violent intentions. The same is done by *Trouw*, which reports that according to local Macedonian media, 'nationalists' were behind the attack. Yet again, no context is given about these 'nationalists' other than that they are supposed to be against

concessions regarding Greece and the Albanian minority in Macedonia.<sup>218</sup>

The *NRC* has a far larger article dealing with the attack, and proposes that either Albanian, Serbian, Greek or Macedonian 'extremists' were behind the attack. However, the article also states that the most probable suspects are to be found in the ranks of the supporters of the VMRO, 'an extreme nationalistic party'.<sup>219</sup> Thus, at the same time that 'nationalists' are blamed for the attack, an explicit link between nationalism and extremism is made. These articles clearly illustrate the ways in which nationalism is taken to be the possession of those potentially violent extremists opposing president Gligorov's rule.

This link between nationalism and extremism is very clearly represented in all the newspapers. The 'Macedonian nationalists' are often taken to be synonymous with the VMRO party, which is generally labelled as 'extreme', 'ultra-', or 'fiery nationalistic'. Even if the label 'extremist' is missing, the context usually indicates that we are dealing with an 'extreme' form of nationalism.

*NRC* editor Peter Michielsen, author of a large share of the articles on Macedonia, uses both terms as synonyms: 'both populations [Albanians and Macedonians] have their own extremists – the nationalists are even the largest opposition party in the Macedonian parliament.'<sup>220</sup> These 'nationalists' obviously refer to the VMRO party (since it was the largest opposition party at the time), which remains unmentioned in the article

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<sup>217</sup> Nationalisten verdacht van aanslag op president Macedonië, *AD* 5-10-95.

<sup>218</sup> President Gligorov buiten levensgevaar, *Trouw* 4-10-1995

<sup>219</sup> Skopje speculeert over daders van aanslag, *NRC* 4-10-1995.

<sup>220</sup> Macedonië; VN voor het eerst preventief, *NRC* 14-12-1992.

itself. In a similar vein, another article written by Michielsen about the Albanian minority in Macedonia uses 'Macedonian nationalists' in one sentence, only to change these nationalists into 'Macedonian extremists' in the next.<sup>221</sup> In fact, all instances of extremism found in the entire selection of newspapers directly or indirectly refer to these so called 'nationalist groups'.

In contrast, in the case of Greek reaction to the independence of Macedonia, nationalism is seen as something of a surplus phenomenon. The Greek backlash, cumulating into the infamous boycott of the Macedonian Republic, is usually described in terms related to nationalism. Peace activist Mient Jan Faber calls the Greek reaction to the Macedonian naming question a 'nationalistic psychosis with typical Greek characteristics'.<sup>222</sup>

Other sources call those who are fervent supporters of the boycott 'ultra-nationalists'. In addition, articles, especially those related to EC matters, mention the 'irrational', 'hysterical' and 'emotional' character of the Greek 'obsessions' with the new Macedonian state, attributes closely associated with the ideology of nationalism itself.<sup>223</sup> Greek nationalism, as *NRC* journalist Frans Hasselt puts it, 'is somewhat foolhardy, it is as if the Greeks want to say, look at what has become of us. To face the wicked and ignorant outside world, we have to take refuge in nationalism, even though we know you can't really do that.'<sup>224</sup> In Hasselt's view, even the 'nationalistic' Greeks know that in the modern world, nationalism is an unacceptable and malignant ideology.

These negative associations with nationalism are further

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<sup>221</sup> De vrede staat sterk op de tocht in Macedonië; Die Albanezen geven niet, ze nemen alleen maar in de coalitie; Voor het zwaaien met de Albanese vlag ga je de gevangenis in, *NRC* 24-11-1992.

<sup>222</sup> Griekse obsessies over Macedonië, *Trouw* 14-6-1994.

<sup>223</sup> See for examples: Grieken piepen pas als EU de geldkraan dichtdraait, *AD* 5-4-1994, Brussel, Athene en Skopje, *NRC* 7-4-1994, Irrationeel Athene brengt de vrede in gevaar, *NRC* 27-8-1994.

<sup>224</sup> Grieks nationalisme heeft iets baldadigs, *NRC* 17-12-1992.

strengthened by the vocabulary used by those siding with the Greek cause. When outspoken pro-Greek writers use terms associated with nationalism, these always refer to Macedonian nationalism. As a staunch defender of the Greek position on Macedonia, historian W. van Loon got four LTE's published, two in *Trouw*, one in the *NRC*, and one in the *AD*. The *AD* article is a reply to writer Els de Groen, whom he accuses of dancing to the tunes of 'Slavo-Macedonian' nationalism.<sup>225</sup>

A Dutch student with Greek roots, L. Topaltzikis, managed to get published three times in the *AD* and blames the Macedonian naming dispute on the 'dominant [and] nationalistic VMRO', which forced the 'moderate' Gligorov, 'whom we can barely call a nationalist', to follow a policy informed by the idea of a 'Greater Macedonia'.<sup>226</sup>

Thus, in bolstering their arguments in defence of the exclusive Greek rights to 'Macedonia', these 'philhellenes' denounce the Macedonians and their supporters for either being 'nationalists', or falling for nationalistic propaganda. This means that in regard to the meaning of nationalism, both pro-Greek and pro-Macedonian articles take it to be something negative, and use it as a stigma to demonise the opposing party.

Following this observation, it should come as no surprise that peace activist Mient Jan Faber, when he tries to take a neutral stance towards the naming dispute in a LTE posted in *Trouw*, blames both the Macedonians and Greeks of falling for the vices of nationalism. After mentioning that maps showing a Greater Macedonia were published by 'a nationalistic party, and not by the [Macedonian] government', Faber simply adds that: 'All states in the Balkans have their nationalistic elements – Greece included'<sup>227</sup>

However, this negative stereotyping of nationalism is not all-encompassing. There are some instances in which nationalism is used in a

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<sup>225</sup> De Groen doet Grieken in 'Macedonische zaak' tekort, *AD* 18-1-1994.

<sup>226</sup> Macedonië (5), *AD* 16-4-1994.

<sup>227</sup> Griekse obsessies over Macedonië, *Trouw* 8-6-1994.

neutral, or even in a positive context. For instance, some authors use the label 'nationalists' to describe certain political views, without making a direct judgement about these views. In other instances, the mentioning of nationalism is most basic and factual. The way in which *NRC* editor Hans Nijenhuis describes how 'the rise of nationalism in Eastern Europe' has caused the Slavic minority in Greece to stand up for its rights conveys no direct judgement about the concept of nationalism.<sup>228</sup>

The only positive reference to a specified form of nationalism is made in an article by *AD* editor Othon Zimmerman and is related to the Macedonian nationalism propagated by president Gligorov. As such it also is the only instance in which Gligorov himself is associated with the concept of nationalism. The Macedonian president is said to have tried to create a 'moderate nationalistic consciousness' to keep his country from falling prey to internal conflict.

Nevertheless, this rare instance of a positive view on nationalism is accompanied by a confirmation of the dominant stereotype surrounding nationalism. In order for nationalism to be something good, it needs to be 'moderate'. That nationalism without a qualification is still something extreme, radical and dangerous is made clear by the fact that the same article refers to the 'Macedonian nationalists' as the most probable suspects of the attack on Gligorov.

In the same manner, the 'radical' wing of the Albanian politicians in Macedonia is said 'not to shun nationalistic rhetoric'.<sup>229</sup> Still, this single article positions nationalism as something which can both save and destroy Macedonia; without a 'moderate' form of nationalism which incorporates the Albanian population, Macedonia is doomed to a short lived existence, while a nationalism bent on excluding the Albanians will create a backlash of Albanian separatism which might potentially tear the country apart.

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<sup>228</sup> Macedoniërs binnen Griekenland willen ook erkenning *NRC*, 4-3-1993.

<sup>229</sup> Macedonië: een klein kruisvat, *AD* 7-10-1995.

Concluding, the news on Macedonia in regards to the use of terms associated with 'nationalism' clearly shows a common-sense stereotype of the concept of nationalism. Nationalism is something extreme, potentially violent and used as a stigma in arguments regarding the Macedonian naming issue. Few use nationalism as a neutral signifier of political orientation or ideology, and even fewer choose to use it as something which might be potentially positive.

However, as argued before, nationalism entails more than the 'confused' mindset of terrorists, separatists and ethnocentric bigots. Hence, the next part of this chapter will deal with the unnoticed flagging of nationalism. Bluntly put, which elements of nationalism are unmade as being nationalistic simply because they cannot be forced to fit the popular stereotype?

### **4.3 Unmaking nationalism in the news coverage of Macedonia**

The previous paragraph has described what is associated with nationalism in the news coverage of Macedonia; this part will specifically look at what is *not* associated with nationalism. What will the news coverage tell us about nationalist framing when we deconstruct the stereotype of nationalism as a violent and irrational ideology of the other? Can we discern traces of methodological nationalism?

The most obvious aspect of the news coverage of Macedonia that is unmade as being nationalistic is the national character of Macedonia as 'a national state of the Macedonian people'. This means that on the one hand, Macedonia is continuously flagged as the homeland of the Macedonian people, that its existence is acknowledged as being funded in the existence of a Macedonian nation, and that its national character, history and symbols are derived from this specific nation. On the other hand, the characterization of Macedonia as a nation-state is not associated with the negative term 'nationalistic' or seen as related to the concept of nationalism. It seems to be taken for granted that modern states are based

on the concept of the nation-state. As such, it confirms that the stigma of 'nationalism' is thought to be reserved for those on the periphery taking the concept of nationalism to the extreme.

A good example to show this selective interpretation of the concept of nationalism can be derived from the description articles give about the Macedonian president Kiro Gligorov. As the architect of an independent Macedonia, Gligorov is highly involved with the ideology of nationalism. But as someone who was seen as being a beacon of reason in the otherwise 'irrational' Balkans, most authors assumed that this man could not be associated with the concept of nationalism.<sup>230</sup>

To deal with this paradox, *NRC* editor Peter Michielsen praises Gligorov as 'the Father of the Macedonian independence'.<sup>231</sup> Quite similarly, both in the *AD* and *Trouw*, Gligorov is called the *vader des vaderlands* (literally: father of the fatherland).<sup>232</sup> Interviews with Gligorov play along with the portrait of the reasonable anti-nationalist. *AD* editor Othon Zimmerman asks the Macedonian president whether the Greek embargo will trigger 'a revival of nationalism' in Macedonia, to which Gligorov can simply reply that such a scenario is a very real danger, referring to the wars in Yugoslavia.<sup>233</sup> *Trouw* journalist Nicole Lucas states in the afterword of her interview with Gligorov that the president is someone who has kept 'the Macedonian nationalists in check', thus proclaiming him a counterbalance to the malicious forces of nationalism.<sup>234</sup>

By far the most interesting is the fact that despite the unmaking of Gligorov as a nationalist, statements from the Macedonian president

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<sup>230</sup> Macedonië: een klein kruitvat, *AD* 7-10-1995. Even the Dutch-Greek student L. Topaltzikis writes in his pro- Greek LTE that Gligorov is someone, "whom we can barely call a nationalist." See: Macedonië (5), *AD* 16-4-1994.

<sup>231</sup> Hoeveel Albanezen telt Macedonië?, *NRC* 14-10-1994.

<sup>232</sup> Verdeeld Macedonië wankelt naar eerste verkiezingen, *Trouw* 15-10-1994. Gligorov: Grieken moeten kalmeren, *AD* 16-4-1994.

<sup>233</sup> Gligorov: Grieken moeten kalmeren, *AD* 16-4-1994

<sup>234</sup> Gligorov: Kans op Balkanoorlog, *Trouw* 10-11-1992.

himself leave little to the imagination. In the very same interview in which Lucas disassociates Gligorov from nationalism, she quotes him as saying:

Only if this country is called Macedonia, can we call ourselves Macedonians. And only in that way can we differentiate ourselves from the Greeks, the Bulgarians and the Serbs, who all think that we belong to them.<sup>235</sup>

There should be no confusion about the 'we' Gligorov speaks about. The 'we' stands for the ethnic Macedonians, those who, during the Macedonian struggle, were claimed by the Greeks, Serbs and Bulgarians as being part of their respective nations. Gligorov is very clear in what he wishes to convey: the 'we' is a distinct Macedonian nation which must fear assimilation by its overzealous neighbours and the only way to cancel out these fears is to be recognised as being a nation different from those neighbouring peoples.

This argument is repeated in another article in *Trouw*, which quotes part of a speech Gligorov gave in the European parliament regarding the Macedonian naming issue:

All people[s] have the right to choose for themselves the name of the country they live in. We choose Macedonia, because the Serbs used to call us Serbs, and the Bulgarians considered us Bulgarians.<sup>236</sup>

Gligorov's quote is again filled with nationalistic rhetoric. Clearly, he proclaims the universal rights of nations in order to strengthen his argument, but most importantly, he uses the word 'we'. In this context, the 'we' are, again, the ethnic Macedonians, those Slavs considered Serbs in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and called

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Gligorow smeekt om erkenning Macedonië, *Trouw* 28-1-1993.

Bulgarians by the champions of a Greater Bulgaria.

Of course, this 'we' does not cover all of the Macedonian citizens; it excludes for instance the Albanian and Turkish minorities. In this way a clear link between Macedonia as a political entity and the Macedonians as a distinct people is made: Macedonia is the land of the Macedonians. This does not mean that Gligorov is arguing for an 'ethnically cleansed' Macedonia, as the stereotype of nationalism would have us think. However, it does show that a person like Gligorov can use nationalistic rhetoric without being labeled a nationalist.

Despite ignoring these obvious signs of ethnic nationalism as manifested in a moderate person such as Gligorov, most articles on Macedonia show an awareness of the (ethno-) national character of the Macedonian state. The words 'Macedonian' and 'Macedonians' are used to refer to that which is considered 'ethnically' Macedonian. When the Macedonian constitution is said to look after 'Macedonians' outside of the Republic of Macedonia, it is understood that the Macedonian constitution refers to ethnic Macedonians.<sup>237</sup>

When the Albanian minority clashes with the Macedonian state, the news coverage clearly understands the ethnically charged character of this state when it uses the designation 'Macedonian' to describe the servants of the state (such as police officers) vis-à-vis the Albanian population.<sup>238</sup> The Macedonian naming issue, which on the highest level was a diplomatic conflict between states, is also correctly understood to be not only a battle over the rights to call oneself a Macedonian on a purely administrative basis, but also about the rights to call oneself 'Macedonian' on ethnic grounds: if the world is too small for two Macedonia's, it's most certainly too small for two distinct Macedonian

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<sup>237</sup> Gligorov: Grieken moeten kalmeren, *AD* 16-4-1994

<sup>238</sup> See for examples: Spanning loopt op in Kosovo na dood van Albanees, *Trouw* 12-11-1992, Krokodilletranen over Macedonië?, *Trouw* 23-2-1995, Spanning groeit in Macedonië over 'illegale' universiteit, *NRC* 21-12-1994, Albanezen in Macedonië staan op hun rechten, *AD* 27-4-1994.

peoples.

Even those opposed to the Slavic 'usurpation' of the name Macedonia do not dispute the validity of the ethno-national fundamentals of the Republic of Macedonia. After having made his plea for the exclusively Greek rights to Macedonia, historian W. van Loon ends his LTE with the remark that in spite of their cultural theft, 'the Slavo-Macedonians, like all other [peoples], have a right to their own state.'<sup>239</sup>

However, despite these clear links between the (ethnic) nation and the Macedonian state on the one hand, and the dominant negative view on 'nationalism' on the other, virtually none of the authors are opposed to the independence of the former Yugoslav republic. If anything, the independence of Macedonia is hailed as the long awaited rightful liberation of an oppressed people. Even if some articles question whether the Macedonians should be allowed to be called Macedonians, the rights they have to self-determination as a distinct Slavic people seem uncontested.

Additionally, a lot of articles seem to imply to adhere to the concept of self-determination indirectly by denouncing the oppression of 'peoples'. Self-proclaimed anti-nationalist Els de Groen is clearly sympathetic to the Albanians and Macedonians and their rights to self-determination when she denounces the incorporation of these ethnic groups into Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece following the Balkan wars of 1912-1913. The Albanians and Macedonians have been 'sullied' with, she writes, emerging from '500 years of Turkish oppression' only to be overlooked by the European powers in the 1913 London peace settlement.<sup>240</sup>

De Groen's historic detour brings us to the final and very important unnoticed nationalistic feature in the articles studied: the way in which they deal with the subject of history. The independence of the

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<sup>239</sup> Griekenland moet met EG situatie op Balkan stabiliseren, *NRC* 14-7-1992.

<sup>240</sup> Macedoniërs en Albanezen: de stiefkinderen van de Balkan, *AD* 8-1-1994.

Republic of Macedonia is accompanied by several articles describing the historic hardships of the Macedonian people. Taking the reader as far back as the 10th century AD. The past is 'nationalized' in retrospect, meaning that the current existence of the (Macedonian) nation is taken as a starting point to describe and understand the history of the southern Balkans.

When *NRC* editor Peter Michielsen claims that 'the Macedonian history' is a 'chain of disasters', he starts this sorrowful epos with the flourishing of Slavic churches in the medieval Macedonia of the 10th century.

The tone is set: the Macedonian history is that of a distinct and oppressed Slavic people:

Historical losers, the Macedonians: so many wars, and they themselves never got anything out of it except for a new master, always one with a harsh hand. After the formation of Yugoslavia in 1918 they were to be made into Serbs. They could not call themselves Macedonians in a kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes; they had to be called South-Serbs. The liberation came only in 1945, with Tito, when they were out of the sudden allowed to have their own republic of Macedonia, only then were they allowed to name themselves after the land in which they had lived for thirteen centuries.<sup>241</sup>

*Trouw* journalist Nicole Lucas laments the sorrowful history of the Macedonians in a similar fashion:

Macedonia. Almost two million people in an area a little smaller than the Netherlands. Inhabited by Macedonians, Albanians, gypsies, Turks, Serbs, Vlachs, yes even 1700 Egyptians. The ethnic mishmash mirrors the

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<sup>241</sup> Het bevroren hart van de Balkan; In Macedonië volgen de rampen elkaar op, *NRC* 28-11-1992.

turbulent history of the area. From all sides peoples crossed it: Bulgarians, Turks, Serbs and Greeks. The Macedonians themselves were rarely in charge.<sup>242</sup>

Interestingly, both Michielsen and Lucas mention the 10th century Bulgarian warlord Samuel in their articles (although his possession of the Bulgarian crown is not mentioned). Michielsen positions the defeat of tsar Samuel as the start of Byzantine occupation of Macedonia, a tragedy which is only to be followed by the rule of the Turks, 'a night which lasted for centuries'.<sup>243</sup> Lucas even promotes Samuel to the founder of 'the first independent Macedonian state',<sup>244</sup> a theory which is nowadays only supported by Macedonian historians and was heavily promoted in Tito's Yugoslavia to show there had existed a historical precedent for a Slav-Macedonian state.<sup>245</sup>

Thus, not only are both Lucas and Michielsen projecting the Macedonian nation to a far away past in which it most certainly did not exist (see chapter 2), the basis of both their historical views is funded in the concept of self-determination, national independence versus foreign occupation. Both stress the point that 'the Macedonians' had, until recently, no control over their own future. Lucas writes that they were 'rarely in charge themselves', and Michielsen claims that wars waged over Macedonia only served to enslave the Macedonians to a new master, naming the advent of Tito's rule in 1945 the 'liberation' of the Macedonian nation.

As such, these two articles revolve around the right to self-determination of an enduring secular Macedonian identity, while in a historical perspective, to claim the existence of such an enslaved Macedonian nation in the Balkans since medieval times is simply to follow

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<sup>242</sup> Na tien eeuwen: 'Een onafhankelijk Macedonië willen we allemaal', *Trouw* 17-2-1992.

<sup>243</sup> Het bevroren hart van de Balkan; In Macedonië volgen de rampen elkaar op, *NRC* 28-11-1992.

<sup>244</sup> Na tien eeuwen: 'Een onafhankelijk Macedonië willen we allemaal', *Trouw* 17-2-1992.

<sup>245</sup> Meier, *Yugoslavia*, 177.

modern age nationalistic history writing combined with the championing of national self-determination.

Historical national continuity is also part of the arguments made in the case of the Macedonian naming issue. Supporters of the Greek cause stress the direct link between the ancient Greeks and the modern Greek nation. The ancient Macedonians are claimed to be part of the ancient Greek world, and as such they should be considered unalienable heritage of the modern Greek nation. *NRC* journalist Frans van Hasselt argues that 'Macedonia' is rightly claimed by the Greeks as a Greek concept, 'just like Israel is a Jewish concept', referring to the ancient Macedonian kings Philippos and Alexander to prove his point.<sup>246</sup>

Of course, referring to age-old bonds with far away ancestors can also be done for the Macedonian case. Even Michielsen, who thinks of the Greeks as just picking some unrelated 2300 year old facts out of the 'bottomless grab bag of history',<sup>247</sup> repeatedly tries to strengthen his pro-Macedonian arguments by mentioning that 'the Macedonians' have been living in 'Macedonia' for over 1300 years. When Tito granted the Macedonians a republic, Michielsen argues, 'only then were they allowed to name themselves after the land in which they had lived for thirteen centuries.'<sup>248</sup>

To conclude: at the same time that nationalism is associated with conflict, extremist parties and intolerance, the independence of Macedonia and its foundation as a nation-state are being unmade as part of the ideology of nationalism. This is accomplished by naturalizing the Macedonian nation as an enduring social entity, in possession of certain inalienable rights, and by historicizing its claims to independence.

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<sup>246</sup> Macedonië is sinds 1878 al omstreden; Grieken: republiek van Skopje niet gewoon het zoveelste Balkanstaatje, *NRC* 1-1-1992.

<sup>247</sup> Geen euforie in EG over Bosnië en Macedonië, *NRC* 15-12-1992

<sup>248</sup> Het bevroren hart van de Balkan; In Macedonië volgen de rampen elkaar op, *NRC* 28-11-1992.

Following the usage of the term nationalism in the news coverage of Macedonia, it would seem that the Republic of Macedonia reproduces itself without the use of nationalism, that Macedonian nationalism threatens rather than defends the existence of the Macedonian state, and that any politician not 'radical' or 'extremist' is inherently too good for the label 'nationalist'.<sup>249</sup> This suggests that the usage of terms associated with nationalism is more often a form of moral judgment than a neutral observation.

Consequently, since the independence of Macedonia is accepted as something positive in the news coverage, it is rarely associated with the concept of nationalism. The same goes for Kiro Gligorov, seen as a reasonable man bent on preserving peace in Macedonia and consequently regarded as the direct opposite of a nationalist. Only one author discerns the obvious link between this ethnic broker and Macedonian nationalism. Equally important is the conclusion that *methodological* nationalism cannot be dissociated from those creating the news coverage itself; the professed views on self-determination, the character of modern states and the place of nations within history are evidence of a nationalistic frame of reference carried by the authors.

#### **4.4 Usage of the terms 'nationalism', 'nationalistic', and 'nationalist(s)' in the news coverage of Kosovo**

It should come as no surprise that in the case of Kosovo, nationalism is mainly associated with its Serbian variant. The naming of Serbian nationalism comprised more than half of all instances of nationalism (see

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<sup>249</sup> This stereotype of the 'nationalist extremist' is also found in an article regarding the Athenian Archbishop Seraphim. Trouw journalist Ton Crijnen claims that the way in which the Archbishop, 'a moderate and very diplomatic man', uses 'cliché language' in the Macedonia name issue is a sign of the revival of the 'old nationalism' on the Balkans. Thus, the combination of 'nationalism' and a moderate man such as Seraphim is seen as a paradox (for are not all nationalists extremists?). See: Waarom de Grieks-orthodoxe kerk Servie steunt, *Trouw* 30-12-1992.

figure 5). In contrast, the mentioning of Albanian nationalism barely constituted 10 percent, while Macedonian nationalism made up a little more than 10 percent. Although this might seem strange (surely, Kosovo has more to do with Albanian nationalism than with Macedonian nationalism), the almost equally high number of instances of Macedonian and Albanian nationalism in relation to Kosovo is partly explained by the fact that some articles explicitly link the problems in Kosovo to the Albanian minority in Macedonia. The exact numbers are as follows:

**Figure 5: Associated actors/ethnic groups**

	<b>NRC</b>	<b>Trouw</b>	<b>AD</b>	<b>Total</b>
In general/undefined	2	6	1	9
Albanian	3	0	1	4
Macedonian	1	2	2	5
Serbian	17	8	5	30
Other	2	1	1	4
Total	25	17	10	52

**Figure 6: (implicit) judgement carried by the terminology**

	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Positive/Negative</b>	<b>Total</b>
NRC	1	2	17	0	20
Trouw	0	0	12	2	14
AD	0	1	6	0	7
Total	1	3	35	2	41

**Figure 7: Actor/ethnic group linked to judgement** (when both positive and negative were related to different ethnic groups in the article, they have been split in different sections)

	Positiv	Neutral	Negative	Pos/Neg	Total
In general/undefined	0	0	10	1	11
Albanian	1	2	2	0	5
Macedonian	1	0	4	0	5
Serbian	0	2	28	0	30
Other	0	0	3	0	3
Total	2	4	47	1	54

As shown, all forms of nationalism, except for Albanian nationalism, are overwhelmingly considered negative. Let us start with the nationalism mentioned most often: Serbian nationalism. Virtually all references to Serbian nationalism or nationalists are negative. Most of them relate either to the wars in Croatia or Bosnia, or the Serbian policies regarding the Albanian population of Kosovo. Consequently, Serbian nationalism is primarily understood as the nationalism which is displayed by the proponents of a 'Greater Serbia', the infamous president Slobodan Milosevic in particular.

Also associated with Serbian nationalism is the battle of Kosovo myth, routinely cited as taking an important part in Serbian national history and invoked to explain the uncompromising attitude of Belgrade towards Kosovo.<sup>250</sup> It is worth mentioning that one article was found in which the interviewed Serbian opposition politician Vladeta Jankovic explicitly tried to distance himself from this kind of nationalism by calling himself 'moderately nationalistic', in opposition to the 'extreme

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<sup>250</sup> See for examples: Kosovo niet onder de indruk van Servisch machtsvertoon; "Het geweld zal niet van ons afhangen, maar van de Serviërs", *NRC* 24-6-1992, 'Servie wordt niet voor het eerst gekruisigd' *Trouw* 4-7-1992, Nationale trots wint in Servie, *AD* 24-6-1992.

nationalism' of the Serbian government under Milosevic.<sup>251</sup>

Again, as with the news coverage of Macedonia, most instances of extremism are associated with nationalism, but an explicit link between nationalism and extremism is rarely made (in contrast to the Macedonian case, in which it was made numerous times and associated with the Macedonian opposition in particular). A direct explanation for this observation could not be found, but it might have to do with the fact that Serbian nationalism was more or less seen as synonymous with extreme nationalism, especially in the case of Kosovo. However, this statement remains an educated guess.

As for Macedonian nationalism: this variant is not so much related to Kosovo specifically. Some articles mention both Macedonia and Kosovo, but the naming of Macedonian nationalism is then only used to describe the internal situation of Macedonia and not so much the attitude of Macedonian nationalists towards the developments in Kosovo.

However, the most interesting is the presence (or rather, the absence) of references to Albanian nationalism. It is only mentioned four times, of which one positive account, one neutral and two negative. Thus, Albanian nationalism is not only mentioned significantly less than Serbian nationalism, it is also evaluated more positively. The one instance of support for Albanian (Kosovar) nationalism (this makes it the only article which supports the Albanian cause while identifying it as nationalistic!) comes from the Dutch army officer J.C.A.C. de Vogel, who wrote an LTE in October 1991 in which he argued that the world would welcome an independent Kosovo if it was properly 'sold' to the public opinion.<sup>252</sup>

In this article, Albanian separatism in Kosovo is consistently

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<sup>251</sup> 'Milosevic richt Servie ten gronde', *AD* 22-10-1992. Jankovic stated he supported autonomy for Kosovo, but not actual independence. Instead, he was quoted as saying that Kosovo should remain within the Serbian state, just like the 'Serbian' territories within the Croat and Bosnian should remain within their respective states.

<sup>252</sup> De tijd is nu rijp voor een onafhankelijk Kosovo; De wereldopinie zal het streven van Kosovo - mits publicitair goed 'verkocht' - steunen, *NRC* 3-10-1991.

identified as resulting from Albanian nationalism. Still, the goals of this nationalism are evaluated positively. Of equal importance is the fact that the two negative instances of Albanian nationalism do not specifically single out Albanian nationalism (as is the case with most of the instances of Serbian nationalism). One article positions the Albanian nationalists as a extremists minority, bent on inciting a violent Serbian crackdown on the Albanian population in Kosovo,<sup>253</sup> whilst the other consists of a simultaneous denunciation of three forms of nationalism by rejecting 'the nationalist leaders [...] who cherish dreams of either a Greater Serbia, Greater Macedonia or Greater Albania.'<sup>254</sup>

In relation to the meaning of terms associated with nationalism, one article in specific is worthy of note. Written by Els de Groen, this LTE features an almost grotesque demonization of 'the nationalist'. The article itself should not be seen as representative of the articles studied, but is very interesting in the way it tries to use a rhetorical question in order to draw upon the assumed common sense knowledge of the reader on nationalism. De Groen starts her article by describing the repression by the Serbian authorities towards the Albanians in Kosovo, but does so by adapting it to a 'Dutch' scenario. She tells the reader that the EC suddenly has abolished the autonomous status of the Netherlands. Foreigners are placed in all places of power and the Dutch language is demoted to a dialect. You (the Dutch reader) hear rumours about newborn Dutch babies being murdered in hospitals by foreign doctors, but in your 'Dutch sobriety', do not wish to accept these stories as truth. Still, it seems that the Dutch population growth is deliberately kept in check. In addition, Dutch employees are fired across the country and replaced by a foreign workforce. Unemployed, you try to feed your family by growing vegetables in your backyard.

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<sup>253</sup> Grote bezorgdheid over radicalisering in Kosovo, *NRC* 7-4-1993.

<sup>254</sup> Macedoniërs en Albanezen: de stiefkinderen van de Balkan, *AD* 8-1-1994.

But then comes the day on which they enter your house, torture your entire family and force you to sign a document in which you renounce your own country and side with the occupier. Suppose you refuse, does this make you a nationalist?<sup>255</sup>

Of course, the answer to this final question should be a simple 'no'.<sup>256</sup> Rightfully (non- violently) resisting a foreign occupation force does not make one a nationalist if we are to follow De Groen's discourse. This article represents a textbook example in which nationalism is represented as something inherently wrong, impossible to associate with the rightful resistance of a people to a 'foreign occupier'. But this kind of rhetoric seems to be more about simple semantics than about denouncing nationalism as an ideology, for De Groen obviously tries to speak to the nationalistic consciousness of the reader: how would 'he' (since she clearly fixes the story as to represents a man's point of view) feel were the integrity of his nation violated? How would he feel about a scenario in which 'foreigners' are in power instead of members belonging to his own nation? A scenario in which his language was downgraded to a 'dialect'?<sup>257</sup>

Rather than making an argument against 'nationalism', De Groen calls upon all those obvious nationalistic 'truths' which are held within societies forged by the nation-state. The truth that nations are entitled to self-determination, to the usage and preservation of their languages, to cultural and political autonomy. The truth that no one should be forced to renounce one's 'own country'. The simple truth that it is inherently just (and thus automatically not 'nationalistic' in the view of De Groen) to

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<sup>255</sup> De nachtmerrie van Kosovo, *Trouw* 16-7-1992.

<sup>256</sup> All articles from De Groen consistently use the term 'nationalists' to describe the stereotype nationalist: those violent, extremist and intolerant proponents of a Greater Serbia/Albania/Macedonia. As such, it should be safe to say that the answer should be 'no', especially since De Groen claims in the very same article that she hopes that the UN commission for Kosovo will *not* think in terms of nationalisms.

<sup>257</sup> For the importance and creation of the notions of 'language' and 'dialect' in nationalist rhetoric, see the entire second chapter of Billig, *Banal nationalism*.

resist a foreign occupation. Even though De Groen ends her argument with expressing the hope that the UN research committee for Kosovo will talk, 'not in terms of nationalisms, but in terms of human rights', she strikingly counts on her potential readership to think within the framework of nationalist ideology. For if they would not, the arguments made are lost; they require a nationalist frame of reference to be understood, and for that matter, a nationalist mindset to be made in the first place.

Concluding, in the news coverage concerning Kosovo, nationalism is associated mainly with its Serbian variant. Effectively, this means that 'nationalism' is understood to stand for aggression, violence and oppression, and is routinely cited as being the catalyst for the wars in Yugoslavia. In contrast, there are few instances of Albanian nationalism, and in those found it is evaluated more positively than its Serbian counterpart. This should make us wonder where those Albanians crusading for an independent Kosovo found a place in the news coverage. To be sure, they are rarely found under the signifier of 'nationalists', even though many Albanians, both in and outside the Yugoslav province, supported the independence of Kosovo on nationalistic grounds (the simple idea that it was the homeland of Kosovar Albanians). So how did Dutch reporters manage to express their support (the news coverage was certainly in favor of the Kosovar Albanians) for an independent Kosovo when the ideology of nationalism was evaluated so negatively?

#### **4.5 Unmaking nationalism in the news coverage of Kosovo**

Having asked what the meaning of nationalism was in the context of the news coverage of Kosovo, we should now look for those aspects of nationalism which remain 'unnamed' as well as any instances of methodological nationalism. In what manner does the news coverage report on the separatist movements in Kosovo? How is the Kosovo province envisaged, and how are its inhabitants imagined?

As we can deduce from the previous paragraph, the most

important aspect of the 'unmaking' of nationalism is the fact that in the news coverage, the Albanian Kosovar movement for independence was not associated with nationalism. Thus, while Kosovo is continuously flagged as the homeland of an Albanian majority, the attempt to create an independent Kosovar state on the basis of this distinct Albanian population was not considered to be nationalistic.

A good starting point to deconstruct this dominant view would be to take a look at Ibrahim Rugova, who was both party leader of the largest Kosovar Albanian party, the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), and president of the Albanian shadow government in Kosovo. This man makes for an interesting case since his status mirrors that of Gligorov. Just like the Macedonian president, Rugova is generally described as a moderate and peaceful man who tried to steer clear of conflict. All three newspapers published interviews with Rugova, and all painted a portrait of a reasonable man who tried to make the best out of a dangerous and volatile situation.<sup>258</sup> *NRC* editor Raymond van den Boogaard describes him as a friendly man who speaks with 'a soft voice',<sup>259</sup> while *AD* journalist Carl Stellweg writes in his interview that Rugova is generally seen as 'a peace dove, the Mahatma Gandhi of the Balkans.'<sup>260</sup> *Trouw* journalist Nicole Lucas takes a slightly more ambivalent stance, and claims that Rugova was a very moderate man, but has been forced to take a more radical stance under the pressure of Serbian autocracy.<sup>261</sup>

But apart from trying to avert conflict, Rugova also persistently strived to create an independent Kosovo. For him, Milosevic's policies had made impossible the return of Kosovo as an autonomous province into Serbian administration. That the ultimate goal of Rugova was to turn the

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<sup>258</sup> Rugova's call for peaceful resistance was of course picked up by the media as a positive trait of the president. See for example: Politie in Kosovo is zeer bedreven in slaan en erger *Trouw* 19-9-1994,

<sup>259</sup> Oorlog zou hier nog erger zijn dan in Bosnië, *NRC* 11-11-1992.

<sup>260</sup> Onhoudbaar schaduwbestaan in Kosovo, *AD* 11-11-1994.

<sup>261</sup> Kosovo kan begin worden van de echte Balkanoorlog, *Trouw* 12-8-1992.

province into a sovereign state was no secret and is often mentioned in the news coverage.<sup>262</sup> At the same time, published interviews with Rugova clearly show his nationalistic reasoning used in defending this separatist move. For instance, when asked by van den Boogaard whether the Vance and Owen peace plan was right in trying to keep the borders of the Yugoslav republics intact, Rugova replies:

Europe is not just a collection of states and minorities, but also of peoples and regions. It would be good if the European Community would recognize that Kosovo is, by the result of our referendum, a second Albanian state, independent, democratic and neutral. Ethnicity is a reality, and Albanians are simply a majority of ninety percent in Kosovo, just like the Serbs are a homogenous group in some places in Croatia and Bosnia. So, there they are declaring republics, I can imagine that. But in Kosovo they justify their hegemony with historical arguments – that is the Serbian war logic.<sup>263</sup>

Thus, Rugova seems to support the Serbian republics within the Croatian and Bosnian borders. His reasoning is strangely universal, claiming that peoples living as a homogenous group in a clearly defined area should have a right to self-determination, both Albanians and Serbs. It almost looks like Rugova is arguing that the Serbs are ‘cheating’ within the game of nationalism, using ethnic composition in Bosnia and Croatia, while making historical arguments in the case of Kosovo (while Rugova adheres to the ‘true’ ethnic rules).

When arguing specifically for an independent Kosovo, Rugova focuses on the ethnic ‘reality’: Albanians are a large majority and have

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<sup>262</sup> See for examples: Albanen in Kosovo eisen onafhankeljkheid, *Trouw* 17-7-1992, Kosovo – tussen apartheid, onafhankeljkheid en bezetting, *Trouw* 21-11-1992, Voorzichtig optimisme over bestand Bosnië; Voor het eerst akkoord getekend door alle drie de strijdende partijen, *AD* 12-11-1992, Panic: geen afscheiding van Kosovo, *NRC* 16-10-1992.

<sup>263</sup> Oorlog zou hier nog erger zijn dan in Bosnië, *NRC* 11-11-1992.

chosen to form their own republic, and by the grace of their majority, they should be allowed to do so. Not only is the nationalistic basis of the Kosovar republic underlined, but also its specific *ethnic* foundation. At the same time, Rugova stresses that unification with Albania is not the goal of the separatist movement in Kosovo, thus distancing himself from the (stereotyped) nationalists fighting for a 'Greater Albania'. However, Kosovo should still become, as he puts it, 'a second [independent] Albanian state'.<sup>264</sup>

How is this man not a nationalist? Only one article positions him as such indirectly by calling the LDK a 'nationalistic party',<sup>265</sup> but this single instance is as close as it gets. Rugova is never called a nationalist in the news coverage, even though his arguments for an independent Kosovo speak for themselves. Just like Gligorov, Rugova can use nationalistic rhetoric without being stigmatised with the label 'nationalist'.

The Dutch news coverage itself is very much aligned with the rhetoric used by Rugova. All in all, the articles studied showed an understanding of Kosovo as the (national) homeland of an Albanian majority. First of all, the simple fact that the province has an Albanian majority is often seen as needed mentioning. As a result, Kosovo is consistently (and correctly) represented as a province under Serbian rule but with a large Albanian majority. Following Rugova, we could say that ethnicity is seen as 'a reality'. It is something which is present, and above all a very important factor in both determining and understanding the fate of Kosovo.

This 'ethnic reality' is often used by Dutch proponents of an independent Kosovo to strengthen their argument. Thus, instead of focusing on the direct goals of Albanian nationalism, which was to create a state on the basis of an ethnic Albanian population (and for some, to unify it with the Albanian motherland), an emphasis is placed on the crimes of

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<sup>264</sup> Oorlog zou hier nog erger zijn dan in Bosnië, *NRC* 11-11-1992.

<sup>265</sup> Kosovo niet onder de indruk van Servisch machtsvertoon; "Het geweld zal niet van ons afhangen, maar van de Serviërs", *NRC* 24-6-1992.

the Serbian minority rule towards the Albanian majority. As such, the Albanians are likened to the Jews in Nazi-Germany or the Dutch wartime resistance. In accordance with this clear-cut view, Serbian rule is compared to the apartheid regime in South-Africa.<sup>266</sup>

The question is not so much which rights the Albanians should have (the right to their own state, for instance), but which specific rights are being trampled upon by the Serbian government. We could say that in the case of Kosovo, articles speak about nationalistic goals (the propagation of an independent Albanian Kosovar state) in the language of human rights. This statement is related to the argument anthropologist Anastasia Karakasidou has made regarding Macedonia. In this case, Karakasidou points out how human rights activists such as Hugh Poulton essentialize the groups they wish to protect, in this case the Macedonians, by characterising by the means of primordial features.<sup>267</sup>

However, apart from those articles (primarily LTE's) which openly argue for an independent (Albanian) Kosovo, the flagging of Kosovo as Albanian homeland is also accomplished in more subtle ways. A telling example of this flagging would be the news coverage of the settling of Serbian refugees from Bosnia and Croatia in Kosovo. These Serbian refugees are in several articles labelled as 'colonists', sometimes with quotation marks, but more often without.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> Bosnië betaalt hoge prijs voor pacifisme, *Trouw* 8-8-1992, Kosova wordt opgeofferd aan onze rust, *Trouw* 18-10-1994, 'Albanese lont' in Balkan-kruitvat nog niet ontvlamd, *Trouw* 2-6-1993.

<sup>267</sup> Anastasia Karakasidou, 'Essential differences: national homogeneity and cultural representation in four recent works on Greek Macedonia', *Current Anthropology* 41 (2000) 415-425, 421.

<sup>268</sup> When used with quotation marks, it would indicate that Albanians called the settling of refugees a colonisation, but without quotations it was simply taken to be a given fact that the world was dealing with the colonisation of Kosovo. It should be mentioned that the usage of the word 'colonists' was not found in the *AD*. For examples in the *NRC* and *Trouw*, see: Kosovo is door Serviërs vrijwel volledig 'geserviseerd'; 300.000 inwoners van Kosovo naar W-Europa gevlucht, *NRC* 25-11-1993, Uitzondering voor Oost-Slavonie; De meeste blauwhelmen verdwijnen uit Kroatië, *NRC* 11-8-1995, Gevluchte Serviërs uit Kroatië weigeren naar Kosovo te gaan, *NRC* 16-8-1995, Kosovo - tussen apartheid, onafhankelijkheid en bezetting, *Trouw* 23-1-1993, Voorheen Joegoslavië - Week 32, *Trouw* 12-8-1995.

Of course, using the term colonists is not without implications. One cannot colonise something which is already an integral part of one's national homeland. If the refugees were to be settled somewhere around Belgrade, no one would have called them colonists: as long as someone is perceived as moving inside of one's own homeland, it makes no sense to talk about colonisation.<sup>269</sup> To label Serbian refugees who were allocated to settle in Kosovo 'colonists' is to make a statement about the very nature of the Kosovo province. Most importantly, it implies that the province is not Serbian soil. Consequently, this necessarily means that it belongs to an 'autochthonous' population, which, in the case of Kosovo, was of course Albanian. Therefore, by naming the Serbian refugees colonists, several articles take a methodological nationalist stance in reproducing Kosovo as an Albanian homeland, while at the same time alienating it from the Serbian nation-state.<sup>270</sup>

Concluding, while the Albanian opposition to Serbian rule was nationalistic in character, the news coverage did not name it as such. A man such as Rugova, who fervently strived to create an independent Albanian Kosovar state, was not be associated with nationalism since he was considered a moderate political leader and promoted non-violent resistance. For that matter, the whole movement for Kosovar independence was rarely considered nationalistic while its goals certainly were framed within nationalistic thought.

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<sup>269</sup> Lands that are to be colonised may be within the borders of the nation-state (thus politically part of 'the nation'), but not yet considered an integral part of the 'national homeland' since they need a presence of 'real' members of the nation-state. For instance, in the United States and Russia, legal incorporation of territory into the state sometimes preceded the colonisation of territory and by itself was not enough to make it an inclusive part of the homeland. Settlers were urged to 'claim', cultivate and develop the lands in order to turn it into an integral part of the national territory.

<sup>270</sup> Anthropologist Hans Feddema even uses the term 'colonization' in a LTE to describe the long historical process by which Slavic peoples claimed land from 'older' inhabitants such as the Albanians. See: "Albanese lont' in Balkan-kruitvat nog niet ontvlamd", *Trouw* 2-6-1993.

At the same time, the news coverage as a whole was certainly sympathetic to the Albanian cause in Kosovo and, as a consequence, framed within a nationalistic mindset. Kosovo is consistently reproduced as Albanian homeland, and Rugova's nationalistic rhetoric used in propagating the creation of a second Albanian state is received fairly well. Bluntly put: there seems to be no problem identifying with nationalistic causes, even though the term nationalism is evaluated overwhelmingly negative. Again, as with the Macedonian case, we can conclude that terms related to nationalism are not chosen to describe a specific political or ideological outlook, but rather to make implicit moral judgement.

#### **4.6 Within or against nationalism?**

Returning to the main question of this study: was the news coverage of Kosovo and Macedonia framed within or against nationalism? If we take the articles at face value, we could conclude that the usage of the terms 'nationalism', 'nationalistic', and 'nationalist' indicates that the creators of the news coverage mainly position themselves against nationalism. Nationalism is a possession of 'the other', those persons we do not wish to identify with: the extremist on the political periphery, the terrorists, the ethnic cleansers, the advocates of either a Greater Serbia, Greater Macedonia or Greater Albania, the hysteric masses and the demagogues who control them. As a consequence, nationalism is rarely something which relates to one's own cause; it appears to have such a convincing aura of negativity that it is something which civilized people should not be associated with.

Of course, the cases of Kosovo and Macedonia elaborated on in the study show significant differences. In the Macedonian case, nationalism was associated with two variants, Greek nationalism in general and the nationalism as manifested by the Macedonian opposition. In contrast, the Kosovo case shows that nationalism was mainly associated with one variant, its Serbian strain.

This difference should be viewed as an effect of the more clear cut view on 'good guys' and 'bad guys' in Kosovo. To be sure, the Macedonians had some kind of underdog status in their struggle for recognition against Greece, but the Greek cause too had its vocal proponents and a significant number of articles also elaborated on the uneasy relationship between Macedonians and the Macedonian Albanian minority.

In the case of Kosovo, there was little doubt about the malignant intentions of the Serbian authorities and none of the authors chose to defend Serbian policies. Did the wars in Bosnia not show what 'they' were capable of? As a consequence, while the Kosovar case clearly shows a clash between two conflicting nationalisms, Albanian Kosovar nationalism and Serbian nationalism, only one party, the perceived aggressor, is deemed to be 'nationalistic'.

However, of greater importance is the way in which both cases are alike. Since in both the news coverage of Kosovo and Macedonia nationalism is considered to be something negative, those persons and movements which are seen in a positive light cannot be called nationalistic regardless of the very real nationalistic ideas they stand for. The independence of Macedonia was clearly born out the nationalistic idea that there existed a Macedonian nation with the right to freely determine its own political future. Still the creation of a Macedonian nation- state is rarely called just that: nationalistic. The case of Kosovo is treated in the same way. Even though the Kosovar call for independence was hardly ever propagated as being the first step in the creation of a Greater Albania, its goals were surely nationalistic. However, few deemed it necessary to name it as such, rather reserving the term for the Serbian policies towards Kosovo, and in a broader view, towards Bosnia and Croatia. Even if Rugova, like his Macedonian counterpart Gligorov, uses nationalistic rhetoric in very clear cut language, it still seems that this does not make him a nationalist in the eyes of the reporters.

As a result of the negative associations with nationalism, it might look as if the news coverage is framed *against* nationalism. However, this

is the result of not naming 'positive' instances of nationalism as such. Rather, the news coverage is framed *within* nationalism, clearly showing signs of methodological nationalism. As argued, the authors have no problem identifying with nationalistic causes or supporting them, whether it be the Greek or Macedonian stance in the naming issue, the Albanian call for an independent Kosovo, or the creation of an independent Macedonian state. Overall, the right to self-determination is seen as an important and inalienable human right, and reproducing national histories is not so much a problem as long as the relevant nation is not perceived as standing on the 'wrong side' of history itself.

Despite this view that nations have certain inalienable rights, arguments rarely refer to international law. The word *volkenrecht* (international law) is used sparingly and none of the articles elaborate on the term and its possible implications. As such, we can conclude that a strict judicial view on Macedonia and Kosovo was not considered useful or necessary. This can partly be explained by the lack of a substantial intervention debate regarding Kosovo and Macedonia. Both areas were relatively calm in comparison with Bosnia, in which case intervention debate and international law did take an important place.

It is safe to assume that once the war in Bosnia ended and Kosovo started to show up on the intervention agenda of the West, international law did start to play a more important part in the news coverage. Actual armed intervention could not start without referring to international law, especially since it had to be justified that the territorial integrity of a sovereign state, Serbia, was to be violated in order to protect the Kosovar Albanians. However, this only happened after 1995, and as such this topic must remain beyond the scope of this study.

Finally, the described presence of a nationalist frame of reference does not imply that there were no different opinions and views in the news coverage. The articles on Macedonia especially show that many aspects were contested. However, as far as a discussion touches on the

field of (methodological) nationalism, the arguments are made within rather than against nationalism. As such, a person such as Van Loon, who criticises the 'Slav-Macedonian nationalists' for stealing Greek cultural heritage, is quick to add that these Slav-Macedonians, like all other peoples, have a right to their own state.

De Groen, fervently bashing everything she sees as slightly related to nationalism, stands firm for the rights to self-determination for the Albanian Kosovars, and cites a large quantity of nationalistic clichés in trying to sell this standpoint. The same goes for Michielsen, who is quick to laugh away the 'irrational' Greeks and their nationalist claims based on the concept of millenia of unbroken ethnic and cultural purity, but seems to have no problem narrating a glorious epic about the Macedonian people who, after an enslaved existence of over 1000 years, find their ultimate destiny in acquiring an independent state.

Part of this selective usage of terms associated with nationalism can simply be called rhetoric (to strengthen one's argument, the opposing party is denounced for being 'nationalistic'), but it certainly also shows that methodological nationalism provided a legitimate framework for the construction of the news coverage of Macedonia and Kosovo. The authors might have us think that the Balkan nationalist speaks in a mystical language which is incomprehensible to us, the rational outsider, but we understand more than the authors would like to admit, and we are certainly more sympathetic to its causes than the flagging of the word nationalism would have us think.

# Conclusion

Four conclusions can be drawn from this study of the Dutch news coverage of Kosovo and Macedonia in relation to the concept of nationalism. First of all, the most obvious one is that nationalism as a descriptive term in contemporary Balkan conflicts is overwhelmingly used to describe persons, movements or ideologies which are evaluated negatively. Nationalism is generally understood to be a dangerous and extremist ideology that inspires violence and hatred. There is no consistent use of the terms 'ultra' or 'extreme' in relation to the concept of nationalism. Instead, nationalism is usually treated as an inherently extremist ideology. This means that while nationalists are sometimes specifically labelled 'extremely' or 'ultra' nationalistic, this is not done so in a consistent way. As a result, labels such as 'extremist' and 'nationalist' (without any qualifier) are two interchangeable terms. In the same manner, 'nationalism' without any qualifier usually refers to extreme forms of ethnic nationalism.

However, despite the way in which the news coverage presents itself as being distanced from the ideology of nationalism, it's most certainly not without its fair share of nationalistic common sense and rhetoric and essentially methodologically nationalist in character. There seems to be no problem in identifying with the nationalistic causes of the Kosovar Albanians or Macedonians as long as they are perceived as residing in the camp of the 'good guys'. Instances of nationalism which are seen as 'positive', such as the Albanian Kosovar resistance to Serbian rule, must remain 'unnamed', that is to say, they will generally not be labelled as being 'nationalistic'.

As has been argued, this way of using of terms associated with 'nationalism' is a form of implicit moral judgement. Roughly, the 'good guys, bad guys' distinction mirrors that of the difference between 'nationalists' and 'non-nationalists' This creation of a negative stereotype of 'the nationalist' combined with the unconscious and unnamed usage of nationalistic common-sense and rhetoric perfectly fits Billig's theory on

banal nationalism. While the news coverage showed a negative understanding of the terms 'nationalism', 'nationalistic' and 'nationalist(s)', methodological nationalism was at the same time used as a legitimate framework to discuss the different issues at stake. As mentioned before, this does not imply that all articles espoused the same views on the issues regarding Kosovo and Macedonia. Instead, conflicting views were, to use Billig's words, 'likely to assume those general themes of nationalism that take for granted the naturalness of a world of nations.'<sup>1</sup> This is clearly shown in the Macedonia name dispute. Even though the news coverage showed conflicting pro-Greek and pro-Macedonian views, no one challenged the Macedonian's right to their own state, regardless of the name that was considered appropriate for such a political entity and its Slavic majority.

As of the second conclusion, if we quickly return to the East-West, civic-ethnic (and nationalist-non-nationalist) distinction from chapter one, an interesting paradox arises. While the proposed dichotomies seem to work for Macedonia, they most certainly do not for Kosovo. In Macedonia, Gligorov represented the civic ideal of nationalism. That is not to say that Gligorov was not involved with the ethnic part of nationalism, for examples given in chapter four show that he most certainly was. However, a particular form of nationalism, Macedonian in this case, always has its civic and ethnic aspects; Gligorov is clearly seen as being primarily guided by the (Western) civic ideals. Thus, Gligorov is at the same time pro-Western, representing civic-nationalistic ideals, and consequently not labelled a nationalist. Here we have all the distinctions aligned in a proper fashion: Western, civic, non-nationalistic. The opposition to Gligorov, the stereotype nationalists of the VMRO party, is consequently seen as anti-Western, inspired by ethnic nationalism, and as such these people must be labelled as 'nationalists'. Again, the distinction is aligned properly: Eastern, ethnic, nationalistic.

But what about the case of Kosovo? Rugova was clearly representing the ethnic ideals of nationalism (even justifying Serbian

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<sup>271</sup> Billig 'Reflecting on a critical engagement with banal nationalism', 348.

separatism in Croatia and Bosnia on ethnic grounds), claiming that Kosovo had to become 'a second Albanian state'. The whole movement for Kosovar independence revolved around the ethnic composition of Kosovo and the rights that the Albanians derived from their absolute majority. But despite this focus on ethnic nationalism, the Kosovar Albanian movement for independence was not labelled as nationalistic. Here we have the pro-Western Rugova, who represents ethnic Albanian nationalism, but is not considered a nationalist: Western, ethnic, non-nationalistic.

Apparently, the dominance of the ethnic aspect of nationalism is not a decisive factor by which we can predict whether a certain particular form of nationalism will indeed be labelled as 'nationalistic'. This observation supports the conclusion that the usage of terms associated with nationalism is primarily a form of moral judgement based on a negative stereotype of nationalism. It does not seem to matter whether two forms of ethnic nationalism clash, Serbian and Albanian in this case: only the forms of nationalism which are perceived negatively will actually be called nationalistic.

However, we can give a concluding answer to the question in which cases nationalism is actually called nationalism. This third conclusion boils down to the negative stereotype of nationalism. Since nationalism is associated with aggression, violence and irrationality, those particular nationalisms which are perceived as either aggressive, violent or irrational are more likely to actually be labelled as 'nationalism'.

The Kosovar Albanian nationalism as proposed by Rugova and the Macedonian nationalism as propagated by Gligorov were unlikely to be actually called nationalism since both persons were perceived as peaceful and in a defensive position. In contrast, Serbian, Greek and the specific VMRO nationalism were seen as aggressive, violent (in the cases of Serbia and VMRO) and irrational. As a result, these nationalisms were far more likely to actually be called 'nationalism'.

This question of aggression and defence is certainly bound up with the idea of the weak versus the powerful. As Billig states, '[i]t is easy

to sympathise with nationalist movements battling against more powerful majorities.’ And this seems to be true for the Kosovar Albanians and the Macedonians who were facing the far more powerful nation-states of Serbia and Greece. Being an underdog generates a certain amount of sympathy, which in turn, as this study suggests, makes it less likely for a certain group, movement or person to be called nationalistic.

Since the view on aggression-defence and weak-powerful is to a certain extent a matter of perception, the selective naming naturally works both ways. For instance, Serbs and Greeks often saw themselves as the underdogs, claiming that the far more powerful and unsympathetic ‘West’ unjustly supported respectively the Albanians and the Macedonians. In the same way, pro-Greek articles positioned the Greeks as defending their cultural heritage from aggressive Macedonians. Naturally these articles did only name Macedonian nationalism.

As such, the naming of nationalism becomes something of a moral judgement: it conveys an implicit message about sympathy or disdain for a particular form of nationalism. The ironic twist in all of this is that the more opinionated articles often used methodological nationalism in order to support an actual nationalism that they did not name as such versus a nationalism that they did name. In such an article, three nationalisms can be discerned, but it is most likely that only one will be designated accordingly.

Even though this was not a study of the Dutch press in its own right due to the LTE’s, a modest fourth conclusion can be made in relation to earlier research done by the NIOD and Ruigrok that can put the results of this study in a larger context. The primary conclusion drawn from these two studies was that the Dutch press created a morally charged black and white distinction between ‘good guys’ and ‘bad guys’ in the news coverage of Yugoslavia.

The conclusions from this study seem to support this view. If we take the usage of terms associated with nationalism to be a form of moral judgement, one can unmistakably see a ‘good guys’, ‘bad guys’ picture emerge. This is most obviously done in the case of Kosovo, in which the ‘Serbian nationalists’ (‘bad guys’) are positioned against the ‘non-

nationalist Albanians' ('good guys'). In the case of Macedonia, the distinction is made between the 'good guy' Gligorov and the nationalistic 'bad guys' of the VMRO. The same goes for the Macedonian naming dispute, in which Gligorov is again positioned as 'the good guy' who has to deal with a coalition of 'bad guys' consisting of both the nationalist opposition (VMRO) and the nationalistic Greeks. While there are those who support the Greek cause, they too use 'nationalism' to signify the 'bad guys' (Macedonians).

In addition, the research results of this study seem to support the NIOD's conclusion that the *NRC* was more 'biased' than the *AD*. Figure 3 and 5 show a more even distribution of the naming of nationalism over different parties in the *AD* than in the *NRC*, suggesting that the *AD* indeed presented a more objective picture of the events in Kosovo and Macedonia.

However, this suggestion should be approached cautiously. For instance, the NIOD report described *Trouw* journalist Nicole Lucas as one of the few objective Dutch journalists reporting on Yugoslavia. Still, her articles that were used in this study, especially the interview with Gligorov, clearly show references to nationalism in a stereotype fashion to describe 'bad guys'. As such, the conclusions of this study seem to partly contradict the findings of the NIOD report.

Nevertheless, it must be mentioned that the source material, methodology and goals of this study and the NIOD report differ greatly. For instance, the NIOD report does not present a theoretical introduction to the concept of nationalism; instead, it draws upon the presumed knowledge of the reader in regards of the word 'nationalism'. As such, any similarities and differences between this thesis and the report should be used as a starting point to explore further research rather than to draw definitive and mutually exclusive conclusions.

Since this study was inspired by Billig's theory on banal nationalism, the following quote makes for an appropriate ending. As Billig states:

It is easy to sympathise with nationalist movements battling against more powerful majorities – to see Basques, Catalans, Kurds, Scots [...] as progressively rectifying historic injustices and challenging existing bases of power. [...] ‘Our’ nationality is unimportant – after all, ‘we’ are global citizens and ‘we’ feel for the small nations struggling in their birth pains. However, these two theoretical trends have helped create an omission of ideological proportions.<sup>2</sup>

However, if we look at the results of this study, it seems that this sympathy for the small nations is not only related to the forgetting of ‘our’ own nationalism. In ‘our’ (by which Billig means, ‘we, the West’) support for the weaker peoples of the earth, we also seem to forget the nationalism of these smaller nations. Understanding for the struggles of the Albanians and Macedonians, ‘the stepchildren of the Balkans’ as Els de Groen so sympathetically calls them,<sup>3</sup> seems to make us forget the nationalistic character of their causes. The more sympathy we have for their struggles in ‘rectifying historic injustices’, the less nationalistic these causes appear to be. And could we really blame those who sympathise with these ‘stepchildren’ for not wishing to associate the already oppressed peoples of the earth with an ideology which has virtually become a synonym for irrational hate? Then again, if no one dares to do so, the stereotype of the hateful nationalist shall never change and our understanding of one of the most powerful ideologies in the modern world will remain limited to a banal distinction between ‘good guys’ and ‘bad guys’.

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<sup>272</sup> Billig ‘Reflecting on a critical engagement with banal nationalism’. 349-350.

<sup>273</sup> Els de Groen, ‘Macedoniërs en Albanezen: de stiefkinderen van de Balkan’, *AD* 8-1-1994.

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