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Kosovo as Serbia's Sacred Space: Governmentality, Pastoral Power, and Sacralization of Territories

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When Kosovo declared independence in 2008, Serbia rejected this move as a fundamental threat to its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national identity. The Serbian government, however, shifted its foreign policy approach in 2010 when it started to gradually relinquish its claim of territorial control over Kosovo through a series of European Union (EU)-sponsored Belgrade-Pristina negotiations. The only red line Serbia vowed not to cross was the recognition of Kosovo's independence. Throughout this period of profound policy change, the discourse about the centrality of Kosovo to Serbia's state identity remained intact.

What explains Serbia's continuing treatment of Kosovo as its Holy Land while simultaneously giving up its effective sovereign rights in the province? One of the central assumptions within the realist canon of international relations scholarship is that the primary goal of states is to achieve physical security—defined in terms of survival, power, and sovereignty.[1] Realist scholarship would

therefore have a hard time explaining Serbia's seemingly irrational Kosovo policy. Existing discussions of territorial conflicts over sacred spaces can offer three additional explanations.[2] According to the *materialist* approach, the policies of the parties engaged in the conflict over any territory arise from strategic interaction and bargaining process among rational actors.[3] Materialist explanations can illuminate why Serbia gave up physical control over Kosovo (i.e., due to lack of material capabilities to change the status quo). Nevertheless, they fail to answer why Serbia continues to defy formal recognition of Kosovo, thus incurring significant political cost. *Social constructivists*, on the other hand, treat the importance of a certain territory to a political or religious community as a social fact, shaped by long-term discourses and practices that heavily constrain the freedom of political elites to act.[4] Constructivists offer valuable insights about the evolution and institutionalization of norms and beliefs about the importance of certain territories, as well as about collective identities thus constructed. However, they often stop short of explaining the role of elites in changing those practices, and sideline the governmental logic driving them. Finally, *interpretivist* accounts are interested in what a certain sacred territory means to political or religious actors on the ground, and take those beliefs at face value.[5] At best, interpretivist accounts offer a valuable snapshot of the inside-out perspective about the value of a sacred territory (such as Kosovo) for political and religious actors. However, they often fail to go beyond that into the social origins of the policy vis-à-vis the territory and the governmental logic behind it. Another danger of purely interpretivist accounts is in contributing to an already essentialized image of the world often shared by political and religious actors themselves, with possibly pernicious implications.

This chapter does not aim to offer a superior paradigm that can overcome the above-mentioned shortcomings. Instead, we offer a different perspective by attempting to understand political rationality and governmental logic behind Serbia's seemingly irrational and contradictory Kosovo strategies. Taking cues from Foucault's concept of governmentality, we argue that Serbia's Kosovo policy is a form of technology of pastoral power exercised not over a territory but over a population. Its aim is not to keep control over a territory [Kosovo] and defend the state's "physical security," but first and foremost to keep control over its own population and preserve Serbia's "ontological security" through the monopoly over a specific, national, religiously infused master-narrative.

In linking the concepts of sacralization to that of pastoral power, our interest is in the nexus of pastoral power of the Church and political power of the State in contemporary Serbia. Like other Eastern Christian nations whose national memory stretches to Byzantium and which have been forged from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire, Serbia, too, required not only a state of its own but also a church of its own. As a consequence, ever since the beginning of the state-building project in the early nineteenth century, the equation of religious and political identity has been a defining feature of the Serbian nation. Our intention, however, is not to genealogically examine the features of pastoral power exercised within the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) or even Eastern Christianity at large. Our focus is much narrower in scope: we analyze a particular contemporary technology of pastoral power: the sacralization of Kosovo as Serbia's strategy of governance.

Our chapter proceeds as follows. We first briefly revisit Foucault's notion of governmentality and assess its continuing analytical purchase in understanding state action. We then link governmentality to the concept of sacralization of territory to explain what drives states to "sacralize" some parts of their territory. We ask what the technologies and practices used to create and perpetuate the "sacredness" of a given territory are and for what reason they are used We then apply our theoretical insights to the case of Serbia. We do this in two steps. First, we provide a historical background of the sacralization of Kosovo in Serbia's nation-building efforts. We then demonstrate how the dominant discourse about Kosovo as the "Sacred Land" of the Serbian people served not only as a source of legitimacy for Serbia's continuing refusal to recognize Kosovo's statehood, but most importantly as a technology of pastoral power. To fully understand the contemporary sacralization of Kosovo, we also look at the modes of resistance to the Kosovo discourse, and the efforts by both the State and the Church to administer, if not discipline and punish, practices of dissent.

Governmental reason and sacralization of territory

Governmentality denotes an ensemble of practices that allows the exercise of "power that has population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential

technical instrument."[6] The significance of the concept of governmentality is the focus on the "art of government," as a different set of practices from those used in pursuit of power politics alone. Foucault traces the development of the interest in the practice of government from the sixteenth century on, discovering a new, "anti-Machiavellian" interest in the manner of governing and an expansion of the understanding of governance from the early focus on power, force, and strategy.[7] The recasting of governance from the simple pursuit of coercive power to a more subtle understanding of ideological and emotional control then allows for a fuller engagement with ideas, interests, and beliefs of the governed, and the multiple ways of political contestation and renegotiation.

Foucault demonstrates that it is the Christian pastorate that gave rise to an "art of conducting, directing, leading, guiding, taking in hand and manipulating men . . . collectively and individually throughout their life and at each moment of their existence."[8] Like modern liberal governmentality, pastoral power is exercised over a population or "multiplicity in movement," and not over a given territory. Instead of focusing on the territory, therefore, pastoral power focuses on the subjects—the pastor and his flock. The duty of the pastor is also the well being of the flock, primarily salvation, and it necessitates that the pastor cares for each member of the flock individually, as well as for a group.[9] Pastoral power, therefore, rests on the responsibility and knowledge of the pastor and the obedience of the flock.[10]

Aware of the concept's overuse and underspecification,[11] we apply governmentality to a much narrower issue: the "art of government" in the realm of foreign policy as a form of pastoral power, a rudimentary type of governmentality. We think of governmentality as a set of practices that are designed and used to maintain stability and ontological security among the governed population. These practices are meant to persuade the public and reassure it of its own biographical and identity continuity in the age of high anxiety and public stress.[12]

According to Hassner, "sacred spaces are religious centers at which the heavenly and earthly meet, sites that act as bridges between the human and the divine worlds."[13] As such, they are treated by default as indivisible, as clearly delineated areas that are unique and cannot be parceled.[14] In this chapter, we are interested in the process of sacralization whereby a given territory is being invested with diabolical or divine properties. Sacralization cultivates strong normative control, as it constructs a sense of inviolability.[15] The conventional wisdom presupposes that sacralization

inevitably creates a preference to physically control the sacred space. Sacralization of territory indeed obliges the members of a given community to a sacred duty to behave in a specific way and to refrain from deeds that are interpreted by the pastor as desecration. The duty may be construed as a holy obligation to conquer or maintain physical control over a given territory. However, we argue that sacralization may also generate a duty to preserve the territory as the ontological backbone of collective identity, without the need to physically control it. If that is the case, the primary object of governmental reason is the population, not the territory itself.

In the following section, we apply these arguments to explain Serbia's foreign policy behavior in the aftermath of Kosovo's secession in 2008. We set the stage by demonstrating the process of Kosovo's sacralization as part of Serbia's historical nation-building effort. We then demonstrate, first, the way in which the Serbian state practiced pastoral power in its attempts to oppose Kosovo's secession and, second, the way in which it dealt with resistance to this power.

Sacralization of Kosovo and Serbia's nation-building

Much research has been done on the origin of the Kosovo myth in Serbian epic literature and historiography.[16] As is very well documented, much of the Serbian national identity narrative is built on long standing memories of martyrdom, especially the constitutive myth of Serbian martyrdom at the Battle of Kosovo in 1389. We do not wish to reiterate the well-known story about the creation of the Kosovo myth and its influence on Serbia's state building. Our intention instead is to shed a new light on the Kosovo myth as a form of pastoral power and illuminate the contemporary political utilization of this religiously infused master-narrative. In so doing, we intend to demonstrate the analytical utility of the concept of governmentality for the study of sacred spaces more generally.

For our purposes, suffice it to say that a battle between Serbian Christian forces and Ottoman Turks took place on a field named Kosovo (*Blackbirds*) on June 28, 1389. The actual outcome of the battle is unclear, other than the fact that both sides suffered heavy casualties and that both the Serbian prince and the Ottoman Sultan were killed.

More importantly for the purposes of sacralization, the battle came to be remembered as a fateful defeat, a loss of state sovereignty, and the start of 500 years of "Turkish yoke," although in reality only a part of Serbian territory came under Turkish rule.[17]

Central to the Kosovo "sacred" status in Serbian national autobiography is the myth of sacrifice. According to the legend promoted by the Serbian Orthodox Church, on the eve of the battle, a holy prophet offered Serbian prince Lazar a choice: an empire in heaven or an empire on earth. Lazar chose a "heavenly empire"—which would secure Serbian loss in battle, but eternal life in heaven for the Serbian people. By sacrificing himself and his troops, Lazar turned military defeat into a spiritual victory.[18] The Kosovo myth, therefore, entails the moment when "the Serb nation chose righteousness and truth over earthly power."[19] It made Kosovo the *place* of this ultimate spiritual sacrifice and, as such, sacred and untouchable. The Kosovo battle is remembered in Serbia as a moment of national theophany when Serbs were offered collective redemption. Kosovo thus became Serbia's Holy Land, while the Kosovo battle became Serbia's *Imitiatio Christi*.[20]

This narrative construction was, of course, not an organic development. The Serbian Orthodox Church played an especially critical role in creating and perpetuating the Kosovo myth through much of Serbia's modern history.[21] Early on, sacralization of Kosovo by the Serbian Orthodox Church served as a form of pastoral power and was not in service of territorial aspirations. The story about Lazar's choice of the heavenly instead of the earthly kingdom was meant to grant the Ottoman Empire legitimacy over temporal affairs, while preserving the authority of the Serbian Orthodox Church over the Christian population in religious affairs.[22] Following the demise of the medieval Serbian state, the legend about the battle of Kosovo served to mend the dissonance between the memories of the glorious past on the one hand, and the reality of total political powerlessness under Ottoman rule on the other. Throughout this period, the legend bound the Orthodox flock together and preserved religious control over the Christian population without antagonizing the secular political authorities of the Ottoman Empire.

The Kosovo myth, as it is known today, began to form only in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The myth became significant politically in the late nineteenth century, when Serbian nationalism began to include broad segments of the population and the territorial expansion of the state became one of the principal goals of national

policy.[23] However, throughout most of the nineteenth century, the semi-sovereign principality of Serbia deemed Bosnia to be its core territory. The key trigger for the political activation of the Kosovo myth was the Congress of Berlin held in 1878. The Congress accepted Serbia as an internationally recognized sovereign state, but granted the Habsburg Empire the claim on Bosnia. Since the newborn Serbian state could not expand to its northwest anymore, the only direction left for territorial expansion was to its south, into the Ottoman territory known as Old Serbia, where the epic battle had taken place in 1389.

The importance of the Kosovo myth for early Serbian nation-building project was in establishing a historical continuity between the contemporary Serbian people and the "Serbs" of the Middle Ages, suggesting an eternal and ahistorical nation,[24] and making the Kosovo territory a sacred and inviolable part of the nation's collective memory. Kosovo, or rather the *idea* of Kosovo, then directly contributed to the Serbian feeling of ethnic distinctness from their neighbors. Kosovo became the center of ethnic "Serbianness," and each memory of the 1389 loss obligated the Serbian people to return.[25] This dream of return to Kosovo was finally accomplished in 1912, when the Serbian Army marched into Kosovo during the First Balkan War, incorporating Kosovo into Serbian territory for the first time since the Middle Ages. The soldiers were decorated with medals that read "to the avengers of Kosovo 1912–1913." According to witnesses, many Serbian soldiers were overcome by emotion, believing that they are avenging the defeat of 1389, while also hallucinating and seeing ghosts of dead Serbian knights who died in battle more than five centuries ago. As one of the soldiers wrote in his diary, "We feel strong and proud, for we are the generation which will realize the centuries-old dream of the whole nation: that we with the sword will regain the freedom that was lost with the sword."[26]

Although the early political sacralization of Kosovo met with little resistance inside Serbia, it did not remain entirely unchallenged. Dimitrije Tucović, one of the founders of the social-democratic movement in Serbia, outlined one of the fiercest critiques of Serbia's expansionist policies in Kosovo. In his book, *Serbia and Albania: A Contribution to the Critique of the Conqueror Policy of the Serbian Bourgeoisie*, Tucović argued that Serbia's territorial aspirations for conquering Kosovo and the Adriatic shore of North Albania were mere colonialist pursuits of economic interests, meant to avoid Serbia's trade dependency on the Habsburg Empire. The book remained mostly ignored and so it made

minimal impact on either Serbian discourse or actual policy on Kosovo. However, the Serbian Social Democratic Party (SSDP) persisted in its criticisms of Serbia's expansionism in Kosovo in a variety of forums, including two leftist newspapers, *Radničke novine* and *Borba*. The two SSDP members of Parliament raised the issue again and again, to no avail. In fact, they were frequently ridiculed, abused, accused of being traitors, and never taken seriously.[27]

With the collapse of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires at the end of World War I, the South Slav peoples found a common home in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1918. Since Serbia's takeover of the province in 1912, Kosovo was absorbed into Serbian territory, and over the next few decades, its identity trigger for Serbia's nation-building efforts has changed. After all, Serbs had a modern state of their own, which now included Kosovo, and the focus moved to the promotion of Serbian interests across the broader new Yugoslav space. Already during WWI, the Kosovo myth was morphed into a broader, pan-Yugoslav myth of multicultural brotherhood and unity. Serbian ethnologist Tihomir Đorđević wrote in 1916 that the Kosovo catastrophe "is engraved on hearts of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes—of all the Jugoslav nation . . . So Kosovo became not only the grave of Serbia, but also of the Jugoslavs, and there was nothing left but to lie in it, as was indeed the fate of the nation."[28] However, with the collapse of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the World War II and the establishment of the subsequent Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), the Kosovo myth was relegated to the margins of political discourse. Once again, it was confined within the ideological framework of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

During the communist period (especially 1945–1987, before Milošević's takeover of the ruling party), the presence of the Kosovo myth in the public discourse further weakened, as the visibility and clout of the Church waned. For three decades following World War II, the Church was run by pragmatic patriarchs who attempted to compromise with the Communist order.[29] This began to change in the early 1980s when the radical anti-Communist and anti-Western current started to gain strength within the Church. This ideological shift also brought in a different approach to the Kosovo issue. This is best exemplified in the Church's 1982 "Appeal" to Yugoslav authorities, signed by 21 renowned priests and theologians.[30] In the letter, the priests declared, "for Serbs, the Kosovo issue is not only a biological one or about 'region,' 'province' or 'republics' . . . it is about the spiritual, cultural or historic identity of the

Serbian people," and warned that "Kosovo is our memory, our hearth, the focus of our being. And to take away from a nation its memories means to kill it and spiritually destroy it." The Appeal launched the idea that Kosovo is for Serbs what Jerusalem is for the Jewish people who,

> because of necessity of survival among the living and the miracle of their unremitting memory, even despite the logic of history, return, after two thousand years, in suffering, to their Jerusalem. Likewise, the Serbian nation continues to fight its Kosovo battle, thus fighting for such a memory of its identity, for a meaningful life and survival on this land, ever since 1389 until this day.

Although the Appeal was labeled in the regime-controlled media as a "dangerous step" and a "nationalist challenge," Bishop Atanasije Jevtić, one of the signatories, boasted several years later that it was very well received by the Serbian government.[31] The religious master-narrative about the Serbian nation born in Kosovo and tied to it through a trans-historical covenant once again started to spill over from the Church into the state. From 1982 to 1984 Jevtić published his travelogues from Kosovo in *Pravoslavlje*, the main journal of the Church, and later published them as a book.[32] Two central themes of this highly influential collection are the suffering of the Serbian nation and the sacred land of Kosovo, represented as "the cradle and the tomb" of the Serbian people.[33]

As nationalism replaced communism as the principal ordering ideology in the mid-1980s, such discourse about Kosovo as the Sacred Land of Serbia became openly instrumentalized as a systematic elite intellectual project. The project had a clear political objective: to reconfigure the former Yugoslavia in a way that advanced Serbian national interests at the expense of interests of other constituent ethnic groups of the federation.[34]

The Kosovo myth was critical for the success of this project. The political purchase of the myth for the Serbian nationalist endeavor of the 1990s was to eliminate the historical distance between past and present. Moreover, the invocation of the Kosovo story in effect equated contemporary political leaders such as Slobodan Milošević with historical Serbian figures (such as Prince Lazar), and also group contemporary enemies (such as Kosovo Albanians or Bosniacs) with historical enemies (such as the Ottomans). This explains the bizarre images of crowds carrying placards with the picture of Prince Lazar interspersed with pictures of Milošević at the height of nationalist mobilizational rallies of the late

1980s. In fact, this visual confusion was quite intentional, as on many occasions Milošević came up favorably in a comparison with Lazar, as one of the slogans at the rallies read, "Lazar, you did not have the luck of having Slobo at your side."[35]

The Serbian intellectual elite—political as well as cultural—was the integral part of the Kosovo myth's political instrumentalization in the 1980s and 1990s. Serbian Orthodox Church reasserted itself in taking up the cause of Serbian national interests in Kosovo. In 1992, Bishop Irinej of Bačka famously said that Kosovo is "the most expensive Serbian word," and as such, presumably, nonnegotiable.[36] The sacralization of Kosovo was part of the larger Church project to extend its control to the entire Serbian Orthodox population, including thousands of people who no longer lived in Serbia, but in now newly independent post-Yugoslav states.

Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, Serbian elite historians published volumes linking the Kosovo story to Serbia's contemporary historical predicament, and using emotional language such as the following excerpt from the essay "For a Heavenly Kingdom" by historian Radovan Samardžić: "Nations have their metaphysical core, with some this is impulsive and with others it is hidden, sometimes even powerless… The Kosovo orientation is not [only] a national idea, but also a trait of character which makes a Serb a Serb."[37] Another leading historian, Dimitrije Bogdanović, in his highly influential *Book on Kosovo*, even more directly connected the historical battle to contemporary tensions in Kosovo, as he wrote: "Kosovo is not some imaginary legend of the past, but a real historical destiny that continues today."[38] At the same time, any opposition to the notion that Kosovo is central to Serbia's identity and must be under full Serbian control was quickly attacked, declared anti-patriotic or anti-Serbian, and politically delegitimized and destroyed.[39]

The linking of the Kosovo myth with contemporary Serbian nationalist revival was an integral part of Milošević's successful rise to power in the late 1980s. Milošević's supporters organized massive public rallies with hundreds of thousands of people in cities across Serbia, events known as "the happening of the people." The stated demand of the protesters was to pressure Albanian leaders in Kosovo to grant more protection to the Serb minority. The symbolic culmination of this national mobilization was the six-hundredth anniversary of the Kosovo battle, on June 28, 1989, where estimated one million people gathered.[40] Again, the Kosovo

myth was used not only to mobilize and thus control the population, but also to justify historical vindication of the Serbian people against their adversaries. In his famous speech, Milošević said, "The Kosovo heroism does not allow us to forget that, at one time, we were brave and dignified and one of the few who went into battle undefeated . . . Six centuries later, again we are in battles and quarrels. They are not armed battles, though such things should not be excluded yet."[41]

This sacralization of Kosovo is also evident in a prevalent trope in the Serbian Kosovo narrative that equates Serbia with Jerusalem. The Kosovo/Jerusalem analogy excited ecclesiastical circles and was publicly thrust into the Serbian political discourse in 1985, when novelist (and later politician) Vuk Drašković proclaimed, "Serbs are the thirteenth, lost and the most ill-fated tribe of Israel."[42] The Kosovo/Jerusalem equivalence has been ever since a frequent discursive ploy by multiple Serbian political and cultural actors, across the political spectrum and ideological divides. Vuk Jeremić, Serbian foreign minister from 2007 to 2012, claimed that "Kosovo is Serbian Jerusalem" in multiple speeches at the United Nations, interviews, and public events.[43] The Bishop of Raška-Prizren Artemije stated that Kosovo should stay "our spiritual and cultural cradle, our Serb Jerusalem. What Jerusalem is for the Jewish people, Kosovo and Metohija is for the Serbian People."[44]

The use of the term "Metohija" is also important here. The name Metohija derives from the Greek word *metókhia*, or "monastic estates," a reference to many villages and estates in the region that were owned by the Serbian Orthodox Church during the Middle Ages. It is also used to designate the western part of the province, distinguishing it from "Kosovo" in the eastern part. As the Serbian nationalist project grew, when referring to the province, Serbian elites—political as well as religious—began to use the term "Kosovo and Metohija" exclusively, further marking the sacralization of the territory through linguistic discourse since the 1980s onward. Kosovo Albanians, international actors, and Serbian liberals have consistently used only "Kosovo," in part in an effort to desacralize the territory and make the dispute purely a political, not a religious, one. Although Metohija geographically only refers to the western part, its sacred charge symbolically encompasses the entirety of Kosovo. As Atanasije Jevtić, the influential Serbian bishop wrote back in 1983: "Everything in Kosovo is a sort of metoh, of heavenly beauty, everything on this plateau touches and connects the soil and the sky, the heavenly kingdom with the earthly kingdom."[45]

This argument also builds on the continuing position of the Serbian Orthodox Church: that Kosovo's independence is not only politically, but also morally unacceptable. In his inaugural speech, the new Serbian Patriarch Irinej declared Kosovo independence a "sin,"[46] and later said that Kosovo should be "defended with blood."[47] Most recently, as the political negotiations on Serbia's de facto acceptance of Kosovo's independence were underway, the patriarch said, "Kosovo is, will be and will remain Serbian as long as it is in our thoughts." Again, bringing up the Kosovo/Jerusalem trope, the patriarch said, "If some audacious power makes us lose Kosovo and Metohija, we will always have an example of the Jewish people who waited for Jerusalem for 2,000 years and finally got a hold of it."[48] All of these proclamations further institutionalized the notion of Kosovo as a sacred social fact, while simultaneously equating the fate of the Serbian people [in Kosovo and elsewhere] with destiny and the fate of Christ,[49] making it further divine and untouchable.

From within this context, it is not surprising that Serbia was not able to negotiate Kosovo's secession. Once Kosovo became sacralized, invested with divine properties, the members of the Serbian community, and especially its political actors, became obligated to act in the larger spiritual interest, even if it went against all modern political rationality and governing logic. Kosovo had to be preserved—as an *idea*, even if not as a territory—to provide the Serbian nation with its biographical continuity and a sense of ontological security, or security of self. This process then became a form of population control of Serbs *everywhere*, a practice of pastoral power. The pastoral properties of the Kosovo myth came to the fore particularly following Serbia's effective loss of physical control over the Kosovo territory in 1999. It is to this period that we turn next.

Sacralization of Kosovo after territorial loss

Throughout the 1990s, the regime of Slobodan Milošević claimed control of the territory of Kosovo as its paramount goal. His policy relied on maintaining Serbia's legal and historical rights to the province, but was exercised by total population control, often through brute force. However, the principal goal of the Kosovo discourse was not only the control of territory, but above all the control of population. The Kosovo myth was the foundation on which the entire construction of Serbian

national identity stood. In fact, through controlling history and historical memories, the present was being controlled because every form of dissidence or opposition actually threatened the national Kosovo myth.[50]

Milošević's Kosovo policy, however, faced a crushing defeat in 1999 when NATO moved into the province after 78 days of areal bombardment of Serbian military forces and infrastructure. When the regime of Slobodan Milošević was toppled in October 2000 in a public revolt over fraudulent elections, Serbia began its democratic transition and reintegration into the international society.[51] During the first year of the transition, Kosovo attracted very little attention of the new political elites who were preoccupied with economic recovery, Serbia's relationship with Montenegro, and the rebellion in South Serbia.[52] This did not necessarily signify the abandonment of old ideas about Kosovo being "the heart of Serbia," but rather a pragmatic realization that the country was too weak, both domestically and internationally, to be able to change the facts on the ground through diplomatic or any other means.

In 2001, the issue of Kosovo started to slowly rise on the political agenda. In May, the Head of the UN Kosovo Mission Hans Hækkerup signed the Constitutional Framework for Provisional Self-Government in Kosovo, stipulating the transfer of competences from the international community onto Kosovo's institutions.[53] The Serbian Parliament fiercely rejected the document and invited the government of Serbia to "carry out a policy of strengthening relationships between Kosovo and Metohija and other parts of Serbia, with the aim of protecting sovereignty and integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia."[54] From this point onward, Serbia started to slowly return to its principal claim that the territory of Kosovo is an integral part of Serbia. The claim was based on familiar narratives about legal and historical rights, as well as the importance of Kosovo for Serbia's national identity.

To be sure, the means of Serbia's Kosovo policy adopted by the democratically elected decision makers differed markedly from those employed by the Milošević regime in the 1990s. Instead of using military and police force, the new democratic Serbia relied on diplomatic and legal instruments, such as parliamentary resolutions, governmental programs, negotiation platforms, strategies, international legal initiatives, and international lobbying.[55] With time, the policy became institutionalized, first through the establishment of the Coordination Body for Kosovo in 2001, and then through the Ministry for Kosovo and Metohija in 2007. In late 2006, Serbia also adopted a new constitution

declaring in the preamble that Kosovo is "an integral part of the territory of Serbia," effectively designating any advancement toward recognition of Kosovo illegal. Although the policy was conducted by a number of different actors whose importance and involvement varied, the initiative was always in the hands of the president, prime minister, and foreign minister. As Kosovo institutions grew stronger, and its independence seemed more imminent, Serbia's efforts to prevent Kosovo's independence intensified.

The role of the Church in this period is interesting. The relationship between the Church and the Serbian state was reconfigured with the fall of Milošević. Although the Church supported the efforts of the Milošević regime's nationalist program in the early 1990s, it turned against it when it became clear that the project had in fact failed. Moreover, Milošević was increasingly seen as "an ugly remnant of communism."[56] This rejection of Milošević's legacy, however, coincided with the increasing clericalization of Serbian state and society, which encompassed not only a much more pronounced presence and influence of religion in society, but also a much more direct church involvement in state affairs. The new post-Milošević democratic elites restituted the Church's nationalized property and granted it privileged status among Serbian religious communities. The Church became heavily involved in education through religious classes and in the military, the introduction of official chaplains for each army unit,[57] and collective baptism rituals of officers and soldiers.[58] Orthodox priests became omnipresent at many official state public events. Moreover, for the first time, the Church strongly penetrated universities through a number of clero-nationalist student organizations such as Srpski Sabor Dveri and Students' Association of Saint Justin the Philosopher.[59]

This neo-conservative revival and clericalization of public life has been expressed quite clearly by the army leadership, as editorialized in the army magazine, *Vojska*: "The Church has outlived numerous states and remained one and the same, while society changes all the time. There is now awareness that democratic society has to recognize the Church as a constant. It is an organism which is permanent and a guidepost for the state."[60] The Church, therefore, has become a cultural and ideological "flag keeper" of the state.[61] This has only reconfirmed the previously established fusion between the religious master-narrative about the quasi-biblical covenant between the Serbian nation and its God on the one hand, and Serbia's official policy vis-à-vis its breakaway province on the other.

The Church's position on Kosovo has remained unchanged and non-negotiable. For the Church, Kosovo is still the sacred land of the Serbian people: "What Jerusalem is for the Jewish people, Kosovo is for the Serbs. Like Jerusalem, Kosovo is not only about geography or demography. It is about national, spiritual, cultural, Christian and human identity."[62] The Church also demanded from the Serbian state that the new constitution stipulate, "Nobody ever has the right to relinquish Kosovo and Metohija as it is the inseparable territory of the Serbian nation, Serbian state and Serbian Saint Sava's Church."[63] Nonetheless, like in the past, Kosovo remained viewed not only as the land, but above all as the sacred covenant. Thus, Bishop Artemije of the Raška-Prizren eparchy writes, "Kosovo is not about geography, but about ideology, it is an ideal . . . whoever thinks differently is only biologically a Serb, but not in the spirit."[64] He then goes on to ask how can it be that some Serbs see the Kosovo battle as defeat, while others see it as victory. Artemije argues that these differences were inherited from the Battle of Kosovo when "some stood by Vuk Branković, while the others backed the honorable Knez Lazar . . . Centuries later, even today, some within the Serbian people rally around the treacherous flag of Vuk Branković, while others do so around the Christian colors of Boško Jugović and Knez Lazar."[65]

The Church governing council, the Synod, urged Kosovo Serbs on multiple occasions to remain outside of Kosovo political institutions and claim only Serbia as their political home. In some ways, the Church has become the principal political backer of Kosovo Serbs in the ongoing Kosovo-Serbia negotiations.

The Church allied with the conservative political parties, first and foremost the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), which took over the government in 2004. At the same time, the ideological gap with the more liberal segment of the political spectrum deepened.[66] One of the most contentious issues was the approach to the question of Kosovo. Anyone who dared to oppose the dominant Orthodox discourse about the sanctity of the land of Kosovo and argue in favor of a more pragmatist and pro-European policy, was depicted by clero-nationalist circles as "euro-slobbers" at worst or "Euro-Serbs" at best.[67]

During 2006 and 2007, Serbia participated in the United Nations sponsored Vienna negotiations, mediated by Martti Ahtisaari, the special envoy to the UN Secretary General. Throughout this period, Serbia's foreign policy, which focused on the prevention of Kosovo's secession, was being fueled at home with the restored narratives of Kosovo as the

Holy Land of the Serbian people. Just as Milošević did in the late 1980s, Serbia's Prime Minister Koštunica allied with the Serbian Orthodox Church in order to gain wider support for his Kosovo policy. During his visit to the Gračanica Monastery in Kosovo, paid symbolically on Vidovdan [St. Vitus Day] (28 June 2006), Koštunica stated that Kosovo was a "fortress of truth" that for centuries "witnessed and expressed everything that was supposed to be said about us: who are we, what are we, where are we from, where are we going, in what we believe and where we are heading to as a nation."[68] Accompanying the prime minister was Bishop Artemije, who once again reminded his flock, "Serbia is a temple and Kosovo is an altar. Without the altar there can be no temple, and without Kosovo, there is no Serbia! Kosovo is the Serbian Jerusalem."[69]

When negotiations failed to deliver an agreement, Martti Ahtisaari submitted to the UN Security Council the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement in April 2007. The plan stipulated supervised independence for Kosovo and was immediately endorsed by the United States, France, Germany and United Kingdom, while rejected by Serbia and Russia. While addressing the Security Council on that occasion, Prime Minister Koštunica rejected the proposal and stated, "every citizen and the whole country know and feel deep inside that the very foundation of their national and state dignity was threatened."[70] On February 17, 2008, Kosovo unilaterally declared independence and was soon recognized as an independent state by the United States, France, Germany, United Kingdom, and a number of other states. From that moment onward, Serbia's counter-secessionist efforts focused on preventing the international recognition of Kosovo's independence.

Anticipating the hapless outcome of the negotiations, the Church also intensified its discourse on Kosovo as the sacred land of the Serbian people. In 2008, the Church issued its Easter message in which Kosovo is again portrayed as the heart of Serbia that mighty powers wished to take away from the Serbian people and thus spiritually destroy it. The message states:

> Kosovo and Metohija is not only about the Serbian territory. Above all, it is about our spiritual being, because we used to be born with Kosovo and Metohija, we used to grow and live with it as individuals and as a people, we lived and died with the Kosovo covenant…this is why the question of Kosovo and Metohija is so vitally, psychologically, spiritually and mystically important for each and every one of us.[71]

Reiterating their pastoral care for "our brothers and sisters and all those who are suffering," the bishops called "upon all orthodox Serbs to implement the Kosovo covenant." "If we fulfill this covenant," bishops reassured their flock, "no one can take Kosovo and Metohija from us, not in this or in any other century, just like nobody could take away from the Jewish people their holy Jerusalem." The message then goes on to give concrete instructions to scientists, artists, athletes, parents, peasants, workers, and politicians, about what to do and how to behave in order to defend Kosovo as the Serbian land.

Three days after Kosovo declared independence, the Serbian Government organized a huge rally in Belgrade. Prime Minister Koštunica addressed the crowd with the following words: "Kosovo is the true name of Serbia. Kosovo belongs to Serbia. Kosovo belongs to the Serbian people. It was so from time immemorial. And so shall it be forever."[72] Marking the 620th anniversary of the Kosovo battle, Minister of Foreign Affairs Vuk Jeremić reiterated the Kosovo covenant: "We are choosing today, without hesitation, to protect that identity peacefully, with the help of legal and diplomatic instruments. But as we persevered back then, so we do today, and so shall we remain forever."[73] Re-sacralization of Kosovo was in full swing.

The anticipated declaration of Kosovo's independence already created the collective siege mentality in Serbia in the wake of and during the presidential elections.[74] Nationalist homogenization in Serbia peaked following Kosovo's declaration of February 17, creating a lynch mob atmosphere against internal enemies. Every public expression of opposition to the dominant discourse and policies on Kosovo was immediately labeled "treasonous," while attacks on those who dared to disagree were deemed "legitimate" by state authorities.[75]

In addition to rejecting Kosovo's declaration of independence, the government of Serbia quickly moved from words to deeds. Since the use of force was ruled out from the very beginning, the government intended to use all diplomatic instruments at its disposal, starting with the implementation of the so-called "Action Plan," which included reducing diplomatic relations with those countries that recognized Kosovo.[76] There was even a proposal, conceived by the DSS, to sue all countries that recognized Kosovo. However, the proposal was rejected as excessive and counterproductive. Instead, the government asked the UN General Assembly to seek an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ).[77]

These diplomatic maneuvers, however, did not manage to either reverse the existing recognitions or prevent new ones. As the number of recognitions went up, Serbia increasingly isolated itself from European democracies, while allying itself with autocracies such as China, Russia or Libya. Its continuing path toward European Union accession was questioned in domestic and international circles alike. The measures taken to protect the self-image of an old, Christian, and sovereign state proved not only to be inefficient, but also threatening to another fundamental self-image of Serbia as a modern, civilized, liberal democratic, European state.

Since its initial strategy yielded no results, Serbia soon reestablished full diplomatic relationships with countries that had previously recognized Kosovo. Parliamentary elections in 2008 were won by a coalition of parties whose main campaign message was that it was possible to both protect territorial integrity over Kosovo and gain EU membership, a position that ran contrary to all messages coming from Brussels. In September 2010, the ICJ issued an advisory opinion that Kosovo's declaration of independence was in accordance with international law. Under strong pressure from the EU, Serbia grudgingly acknowledged the ICJ advisory opinion and called for EU-backed dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina.

From that point on, Serbia effectively started to gradually relinquish its claim over the territory of Kosovo. In a series of negotiations from spring 2011 to summer 2012, Belgrade and Pristina agreed on a number of technical issues such as freedom of movement, customs, integrated border management, higher education degrees, and regional representation of Kosovo.[78] However, the narrative about Kosovo being the heart of Serbia and its sacred land was not abandoned. Despite the policy change in relation to the physical control of the territory of Kosovo, Serbia's rhetoric both at home and abroad remained unchanged: Serbia will never recognize, implicitly or explicitly, the independence of Kosovo. Serbia therefore managed to preserve the sacred status of Kosovo at home, while abandoning the claim to have effective control over its territory.

In March 2013, Serbian Prime Minister Ivica Dačić publicly presented this contradictory position by arguing, first, that the Serbian people have for years been "lied to that Kosovo is ours,"[79] and then later that same day, in a different outlet, proclaiming that Serbia would never accept Kosovo's independence.[80] This position fit perfectly in line with majority public opinion, where 63 percent of Serbian citizens acknowledged that Kosovo was, de facto, independent, while at the same time, 65 percent

wanted the government to prioritize keeping Kosovo as part of the Serbian state, as opposed to 28 percent who wanted EU accession to be the priority.[81]

Squaring this policy circle required some creative use of the existing rhetorical repertoire. As discussed above, the Kosovo myth already contains the idea that Serbs lost at Kosovo, but they sacrificed themselves for the greater good. As the European Union kept pressing Serbia to give up its territorial claims on Kosovo in exchange for continuing negotiations toward EU accession, Serbian political elites began to activate the "sacrifice" aspect of this narrative.

Dobrica Ćosić, Serbian leading public intellectual and a noted producer of the Kosovo meme in Serbian life declared that Serbia should hand off Kosovo "in a civilized manner" in order to save Serbian cultural and religious cites and Serbian ethnic minority concentrated in the north.[82] Vuk Drašković, the same novelist who was among the first to activate the "Kosovo is Jerusalem" storyline, has since had a change of heart and has joined some of the more progressive political forces in Serbia in arguing for Serbia's de facto recognition of Kosovo's independence. However, the language of this new position is interesting. Drašković said, "Killing of Serbia for the sake of preserving something that only exists as a mirage must stop."[83] Once again, Serbia is being "killed," sacrificed, for a non-earthly illusion.

On 19 April 2013, Serbia and Kosovo finally signed a deal. The compromise reached compels Serbia to accept the authority of Kosovo's government over the entire territory of Kosovo, in exchange for Kosovo granting significant competences to Kosovo Serbs and abstaining from using its military in the Serb-controlled zone. The somewhat tortured agreement also allows Serbia to continue to officially not recognize Kosovo as a state, a deal-breaker for any Serbian negotiator. Both governments received rewards from the EU for the historic deal. Serbia was given a green light to open EU membership talks (the good news, ironically, came again on June 28, 2013, St. Vitus Day), and Kosovo received recommendation for the start of formal talks on a Stabilization and Association Agreement, a preliminary stage in the EU accession process.

This policy change had to be convincingly presented to the restless and skeptical public. Relinquishing territorial control over the sacred land immediately produced charges of treason, mostly from the Church, and a few opposition parties and right-wing groups. Senior Church leaders and a few thousand Kosovo Serbs held a rally in Belgrade, where one

of the bishops performed a ceremonial "burial" of the Serbian government, and another accused Serbian political leaders of outright treason, because "there is no Serbia without heavenly Serbia." The protesters also carried placards with images of major Serbian political leaders dressed in traditional Albanian garb, insinuating their treasonous allegiances.[84]

Serbian politicians responded mostly by minimizing the significance of Serbian concessions. The deputy prime minister even argued that all Serbia signed was the agreement not to block Kosovo from membership in international organizations,[85] which is quite a pedantic twist on a major territorial loss. The government used an arsenal of various rhetorical tools to discursively deny the actual policy change. A month after the Brussels agreement was signed, Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić made a passionate statement, appealing to the public: "We would never cut our wrists and commit suicide by giving up Kosovo."[86] More tellingly, the president again activated the sacrifice idea when he said, "The EU will say if we recognize Kosovo, our children will have a much better future. But we cannot do this. It is not about nationalism or hatred. It is about love—love for our own nation and our country… We have justice on our side."[87] Serbian deputy Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić similarly lamented,

> The agreement is the only way for Serbia to survive, for us to stay united and solve our problems together in the future… This is a difficult agreement, causing many problems for the Serbian people, but it was the only possible solution at the moment… Sometimes we must make difficult decisions, but a state cannot survive without its people, and the people cannot survive without its state.[88]

Once again, Serbian political actors are implying, Serbs are sacrificing their earthly kingdom for spiritual benefits such as national unity, national survival, justice, and love. The sacrifice is the result of another profound historical injustice, this time the European "takeover" of the Serbian territorial and spiritual core. The sacred character of Kosovo, it seems, lives on, but its political implications change.

Conclusion

Our aim in this chapter was to explain the fundamental paradox of Serbia's contemporary foreign policy: its continuing treatment of Kosovo as its Holy Land—indivisible, untouchable, and sacrosanct—while

simultaneously giving up its sovereign rights over the province. Contrary to the conventional wisdom of scholarship that focuses on territorial ambitions and physical security of states, this chapter has demonstrated that the driving force of contemporary Serbia's stance vis-à-vis Kosovo is increasingly the pastoral rationality of government and the pursuit of ontological security. Using Foucault's concept of governmentality, we argued that the governmental rationality of contemporary Serbia's Kosovo policy is less and less about the control of territory and increasingly about the control over the Serbian population. Serbia's Kosovo-related discourses and policies are best understood as a form of pastoral power, which has the population as its object. Its aim is not to keep the control of a territory (Kosovo) and defend the state's "physical security," but first and foremost to keep control over its own population and preserve Serbia's "ontological security" by monopolizing a specific national master-narrative. The Serbian state used a variety of techniques to exercise this power. We focused on the strategy of sacralization, which was a very effective method for the state—and its principal ally in this project, the Orthodox Church—to deem the territory and all relevant policies, discussions, and issues related to Kosovo, sacred and holy, thereby foreclosing any debate and shutting down any opposition and dissent. We demonstrated how the process of sacralization of Kosovo was closely intertwined with the process of nation building, first in the nineteenth and then again in the late twentieth century.

Religion in Serbia was used in many different, direct, and indirect ways. Religion provided the basis for the state narrative blueprint, delineating acceptable and unacceptable ways of political practice. It was religiously infused public discourse that determined what kind of public memory was allowed, and which one was not tolerated. Religion also provided the fuel and the shield for political actors to justify their destructive policies both at home and abroad. The sacralization of Kosovo in the public imagination and state practice removed this issue from the plane of regular policy debate, and instead made it untouchable, sacrosanct, and therefore unsolvable. This process had real political consequences to the populations of both Serbia and Kosovo, which is why we approached it as the central aspect of Serbia's Kosovo policy, and not as just an interesting sideshow. Finally, the sacralization of the Serbian state itself and the increasing clericalization of society are issues that Serbia will continue to have to deal with, especially if it is serious about its European Union ambitions.

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