

LUND UNIVERSITY

# Russia and the Kosovar declaration of independence

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A study of Russian newspaper articles  
concerning Kosovo

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# Abstract

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This essay investigates the Russian position towards Kosovo's declaration of independence. Russia chose not to recognize Kosovo and I try to examine why by reading articles in three Russian newspapers. I examine the articles by using three different theoretical approaches, inspired by previous research and scientific literature in this field. These approaches consist of the ideas that the Russian hesitation is due to close historical bonds to Serbia, or a Russian fear of separatism, or geopolitical conflicts between Russia and the West.

Using these approaches, I read through my selection of articles and discovered that the Russian hesitation towards Kosovo's independence can be explained by all of these approaches and that the three different newspapers, albeit for different reasons, all maintain a negative stance towards the Kosovar independence. I also discovered that the method used in the newspaper articles to increase support for Serbia and against Kosovo, is to bestow upon the Albanians the role of the scapegoat and present Serbs as victims.

Keywords: Russia, Kosovo, Serbia, Russian media, content analysis

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# 1. Introduction

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## 1.1. Aim and research question

The topic I have chosen to focus my research on is to try to understand Russia's position towards the Kosovar declaration of independence. There were various reactions in Europe to the announcement of Kosovo's independence. Russia expressed a rather cautious position regarding this development. Explaining such position of the Russian Federation is a very broad and interesting topic that can be explored in many different ways.

The question of why Russia refuses to acknowledge Kosovo as an independent country poses many difficulties. There are several different theories explaining these reasons and I from the beginning doubted that there would be one simple answer to this problem. The official statement from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs portrays the Russian refusal as an attempt to cope with current international law and argues that from a legal perspective, it is not possible for Kosovo to declare their independence, without consulting with Serbia first.

One theory explaining the Russian hesitation is that Russia fears that this will increase separatist tendencies in their own country, for example in Chechnya and Dagestan. The situations in Kosovo and Chechnya are superficially similar – a republic on the edge of the country, that already has some independence, populated by an ethnic group that is different than that of the main country (and in both cases belonging to a different religion – Islam). The question of Kosovo is a very current issue since it affects larger parts of the world than just the countries immediately involved. The problems of separatism in general are something that most countries of the world struggle with, on a larger or smaller scale. After Kosovo decided to proclaim their independence, there was a worry in several parts of the world that other separatists would follow suit. However, we are also faced with another interesting dilemma, the fact that Russia supported South Ossetia and Abkhazia, when they tried to break free from Georgia. Therefore the question arises, what the difference is between these two situations and how true is this explanation of the Russian hesitation on Kosovo issue?

Besides the earlier mentioned issues, there is also the East-West perspective in this problem. A Russian hesitation in supporting Kosovo's independence could be perceived as a refusal to support the American and Western approach to solving the question and be understood rather as a product of the existing Russia-West animosities. This is a much more geopolitical approach where one sees the Kosovo issue as a more general issue of the spheres of influence

in Europe. Is this a way for Russia to show that they are again geopolitically important and influential, at least in Europe, and how far would they go to prove this? Could it even lead to a war, with Russia against the West just like in the times of the Cold War? It is also interesting how this affects Serbia's future. Serbia has started to approach the West and the EU more and more and there are people in Serbia who are very interested in Serbia joining the EU in the future. However, the Kosovo issue is extremely sensitive for most Serbian people and it could be something that completely stops the transit and turns Serbia back towards the East, towards Russia.

All this obviously constitutes a huge research field and I will narrow my analysis by focusing on the study of how this situation is portrayed in the Russian media. Looking at how the media portrays an event is an easier way to get a feel for the public opinion in a country, since the media to some extent both reflects and influences the public opinion. For me it seems much more relevant to study the media than reading official statements and hearing what politicians have to say about it. This approach is informed strongly by the constructivist analysis of international relations stating that the analysis of discourse can show us where the official policy preferences (as expressed by the state leaders) come from.

My aim is not to explain the Russian official position on Kosovo but rather to get a feel for the prevailing discourse and the general attitude in Russia towards Kosovo, something that I have tried to do by analyzing newspaper articles.

My research question is "what reasons for Russia's position towards the independence of Kosovo can be found in the pages of the Russian newspapers *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, *Novaya Gazeta* and *Izvestiya* and which conclusions can be drawn from this material?". I will analyze the material based on three aspects, taking into consideration the reasons that are most commonly believed to influence the Russian decision. The three aspects consist of the Russian historical closeness to Serbia, a fear of separatism and the relationship between Russia and the west.

## **1.2. Empirical data and evaluation of sources**

The most important empirical material for my thesis is composed of the selected newspaper articles regarding the Kosovo independence. However, I will also use several other sources. For example, I will present a summary of the various possible reasons for the Russian

hesitation, such as separatism and historical bonds with Serbia. This summary will be based on books and scientific articles that cover these questions.

I have chosen the newspapers *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, *Novaya Gazeta* and *Izvestiya* because they present different views on the Russian political landscape and contrasting their views will result in more nuanced and in-depth analysis of opinion on the topic. *Komsomolskaya Pravda* was founded in 1925 and started as the official organ of the Communist Union of Youth. *Novaya Gazeta*, however, is famous for being oppositional and somewhat of an outsider in the Russian media landscape. *Izvestiya*, although close to the Kremlin, is somewhere in between the two other newspapers and I hope it will offer a third point of view. I will present them further in the methodological part of the essay. I have used articles published on the newspapers' websites for my research.

I do realize that using Russian sources can complicate the process for the public to get a deeper understanding of the problem, since they are written in Russian. However, I think reading Russian articles is a better way of acquiring information about current events in Russia than reading English ones. The Russian articles are aimed at the Russian public and therefore prove a more interesting research material than the ones written in English, which are clearly aimed only at international readers. Seeing how the English articles are phrased and written can also be an interesting study but might not give me a correct answer to my research question and therefore I decided to use only Russian articles. While translating, I have prioritized translating the right meaning instead of making a verbatim translation.

However, it has still been important to first study the background information to try to get a better grasp of possible reasons why the Russian public opinion has been shaped the way it has. To do this I explored three theoretical explanations with the help of a number of books and scientific articles.

### **1.3. Delimitations**

I have of course been forced to limit my selection of articles. I have tried my best to get a good distribution of information, as mentioned before by taking examples from newspapers with different agendas and political motives. It is important to take into account that the Russian freedom of speech is more limited than that of Western Europe, especially on politically sensitive issues. I started out by limiting the newspapers to only 3, and I decided which of them to choose, based on the earlier mentioned criteria. I then limited the search

further by choosing only articles starting from 17<sup>th</sup> February 2008, the day Kosovo declared their independence, until the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2009. My aim was to get a feel for the reaction after the declaration and see how it progressed during 2008 and 2009.

In the beginning of my search, I still had a very large amount of articles but after reading through the articles briefly, I selected only about 40 articles for further qualitative analysis. When reading the articles I used the theoretical explanations I found during my background research and with these as a base, searched through the articles to see if the theoretical explanations were actually present in the articles as well. As many of the articles were repetitive or at least similar, I narrowed the selection down even further while reading through them again. Since this is only a bachelor thesis and the time frame and word count were limited, I chose to use a limited selection of the original amount of articles. The chosen articles show the recurrent themes and discussions and show how I came to draw my conclusions, even though I obviously read through more articles than the ones I was able to cite in this essay.

I used both more personal forms of articles, like editorials, as well as general informative articles, because I think both kinds can be used to detect trends of opinions. Recurrent wordings, for example using only negatively charged words, can say just as much, if not more, than explicitly expressed views.

#### **1.4. Disposition**

I start out by introducing the main aim and framework of my thesis. In the next chapter I try to explore and identify possible historical reasons that can help answer my research question. The aim of this chapter is to give the reader a deeper understanding of the situation in the Balkans and Russia's relation to the Balkans and Serbia, historically. I also summarize Russia's problems with separatism as well as post-Cold War clashes between Russia and the west. This knowledge is required in order to understand the current situation with Russia and Kosovo. In the chapter following, I present the newspapers I chose and the methodology I will use in my research. I then continue by presenting the results from my research, organized into categories based on the theories. I finish my paper by summarizing and drawing conclusions from my theories and my result.



## 2. Background and theoretical explanations

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### 2.1. Theoretical approach

My theoretical approach was generated by reading through previous research in the field and using the conclusions previously drawn by scholars, to form three possible explanations for Russia's position on Kosovo. The following sub-chapters explain and elaborate these three theoretical explanations and put the question of Kosovo in a historical perspective. This also helps explain some of the historical references made in the newspaper articles.

The first explanation is that Russia does not recognize Kosovo because of its close historical bond to Serbia. The refusal would be a way to, yet again, “come to the rescue of their Slavic brothers” and to help them maintain power in the region and through that still have a Russian interest represented in the region of Western Balkans. A second explanation is that it is actually a question of fear of separatism, that Russia's position is very much influenced by internal problems, such as the situation in Chechnya. The third approach regards the problematic relationship between Russia, the EU and the United States. This suggests that Russia chose to act in the way it did, because it was trying to prove its own importance in geopolitical matters towards the other international actors.

In the following part of the chapter I will briefly present the three explanations visible in the literature.

### 2.2. The Yugoslavian wars and Russia

The dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1991 led to several conflicts on the Balkan Peninsula. In January 1990 Slovenia and Croatia held their first free elections and the communist party was defeated. Slobodan Milošević, who became president of Serbia in 1987, tried to centralize the rule of Serbia in Yugoslavia which was met by protests from the other regions. Above all Albanian protests against the constitutional changes that had led to a reduction of Kosovo's earlier autonomy were brutally repressed. In June 1991 Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence. Serbia answered by sending the federal Yugoslavian army to these regions. The battles came to an end in January 1992 when

Croatia and Slovenia were recognized by the EU and several other countries. The UN decided to establish a peacekeeping force in Croatia, UNPROFOR.<sup>1</sup>

Bosnia and Herzegovina declared its independence in April 1992 and hostilities erupted in other former republics. The war was often confusing, with unclear enemies and allies and often showed elements of ethnic cleansing.<sup>2</sup> The war was temporarily ended in April 1994, after a peace negotiation led by the Americans. However, in July 1995 Bosnian Serb forces attacked the northernmost of three enclaves that had remained in government hands in the Drina valley and the war was resumed.

In November 1995 peace talks were started yet again, trying to solve all the different problems in former Yugoslavia. The so-called Dayton peace treaty was signed on the 14<sup>th</sup> of December 1995 in Paris and lay out how the territory should be divided and ruled in the future. It also introduced an international force, IFOR, to monitor demobilization in the region. The treaty stopped the war but did not put an end to the ethnic infighting in former Yugoslavia.<sup>3</sup> The Russian diplomacy suffered a serious set-back during these negotiations. The American representatives completely led the negotiations and were sure that Russia would not be able to protest in any way, mostly due to the Russian economic crisis and therefore dependence on Western financial assistance.

In 1998, during a debate with US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, Russian foreign minister Primakov said: “Russia has been present on the Balkans for more than 200 years. It is a mystery to us that America now wants to dictate their recommendations to this region and to solve problems on their own initiative there without even consulting with us.”<sup>4</sup> This early statement show that Russia was an important player in the Yugoslav conundrum and that this region was important in Russian foreign policy.

### **2.3. The Kosovo war**

Already in September of 1990, the Kosovo Albanians tried to declare their region’s independence. It was however never internationally recognized and this only increased Milošević’s limitations of Kosovo’s autonomy. After the Dayton treaty a future Kosovar independence seemed impossible. This led to radicalization of Albanian independence

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<sup>1</sup> “Jugoslaviska krigen”, accessed April 16, 2013, <http://www.ne.se/lang/jugoslaviska-krigen>

<sup>2</sup> “Jugoslaviska krigen”

<sup>3</sup> “Jugoslaviska krigen”

<sup>4</sup> Benedikt C. Harzl, “Conflicting Perceptions: Russia, the West and Kosovo”, Review of Central and East European Law 33 (2008): 495

movements, including attacks on Serbian security forces and killing of civilians, which in turn led to excessive use of force by Serbian forces in Kosovo Albanian villages, among other things a massacre of about 40 Albanians in Drenice in March 1998.<sup>5</sup>

Attempts to come to an agreement regarding Kosovar independence started in February 1999. The aim was to give the Albanians back the autonomy they had had before but the Serbs refused to sign the agreement. After this, NATO began bombings against former Yugoslavia. This, however, led to Serbia expelling hundreds of thousands of Albanians from Kosovo. Almost 50% of the Albanians inhabitants fled or were expelled from Kosovo during the war. After 79 days of NATO bombings, Serbia surrendered. After the end of the war, the expulsion has instead hit the Serbs in the region and over thousand civilians have been killed in a number of terrorist attacks.<sup>6</sup>

The international community again met for peace talks and Russia was from the beginning negative towards the idea of a NATO-led military intervention without a UN approval. Russian diplomats were very active in all peace talks and negotiations concerning Yugoslavia and it was obvious that this was a very important issue for Russia. Harzl writes, “one of the diplomats involved in the peace negotiations, Wolfgang Petritsch, remembers: ‘... to keep Kosovo in Yugoslavia and NATO out of Kosovo was the Kremlin’s basso continuo in those dramatic times’.”<sup>7</sup> He continues, “there was concern that an eventual NATO engagement in Kosovo in political terms would constitute a testing ground for the employment of human rights as a convenient excuse for breaking up ‘problematic’ states in the future.”<sup>8</sup> On March 23<sup>rd</sup> 1999 Yevgenii Primakov, the Russian Prime Minister at this time, was on his way to the United States. When his advisors informed him that the NATO bombings were imminent, he told the pilot to immediately return to Moscow<sup>9</sup>. In diplomatic language this was a sign of the utmost protest against American activities.

The fact that Russia had not been able to stop NATO intervention was seen as a huge political failure. The domestic dissatisfaction had reached a boiling point and there was a need of a symbolic gesture to show to the Russian people that Russia did not accept NATO ruling the world. Already during this time “Russia viewed the separatist aims of the Kosovar Albanians as a sinister analogy to those of the Russian Muslims in Chechnya. It also felt that since

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<sup>5</sup> “Kosovokriget”, accessed April 16, 2013, <http://www.ne.se/jugoslaviska-krigen/kosovokriget>

<sup>6</sup> “Kosovokriget”

<sup>7</sup> Harzl, “Conflicting Perceptions: Russia, the West and Kosovo”, 502

<sup>8</sup> Harzl, “Conflicting Perceptions: Russia, the West and Kosovo”, 503

<sup>9</sup> Harzl, “Conflicting Perceptions: Russia, the West and Kosovo”, 504

NATO was concerned over Kosovo, it might later become involved in what was happening in Chechnya. Indeed, the Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, once said to the US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright: ‘Madeleine, don’t you understand, we have many Kosovos in Russia?’<sup>10</sup> Brudenell writes, “it has been stated that Milosevic capitulated when he did because he believed the Russians were going to invade Kosovo and take control of the northern half of the province”<sup>11</sup>. This idea was supported by the Serbs living in Kosovo but there is still no evidence that there was ever a Russian intent to go through with such a plan.

After several years of continued problematic relations with Serbia, Kosovo declared its independence on the 17<sup>th</sup> of February 2008 with significant political assistance from the USA and the EU. This decision was met with joy and celebration in Kosovo but with protests and riots in Serbia. The president of Serbia, Boris Tadić, said that Serbia will never recognize the independence and Russia immediately condemned the declaration and called for an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council. Since stabilization in the region, with a possible separation of Kosovo from Serbia had been the aim of the West for many years, the fact that several European countries as well as the United States recognized Kosovo during the first week comes as no surprise. It caused outrage in Serbia and it decided to withdraw ambassadors from all countries that had recognized Kosovo.<sup>12</sup>

#### **2.4. The Russian official point of view on Kosovo**

The official Russian point of view on the situation is that Kosovo’s declaration of independence is against international laws. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation issued the following statement on February 17<sup>th</sup> 2008, following the declaration of independence:

“On February 17, Kosovo’s Provisional Institutions of Self-Government declared a unilateral proclamation of independence of the province, thus violating the sovereignty of the Republic of Serbia, the Charter of the United Nations, UNSCR 1244, the principles of the Helsinki Final Act, Kosovo’s Constitutional Framework and the high-level Contact Group accords.

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<sup>10</sup> Anna Maria Brudenell, “Russia’s Role in the Kosovo Conflict of 1999”, *The RUSI Journal*, 153:1, (2008): 30, accessed February 27 2013, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03071840801984615>

<sup>11</sup> Anna Maria Brudenell, “Russia’s Role in the Kosovo Conflict of 1999”, 31

<sup>12</sup> “Kosovo”, accessed March 13, 2013, <http://www.ne.se/kosovo/2008-02-20>

Russia fully supports the reaction of the Serbian leadership to the events in Kosovo and its just demands to restore the territorial integrity of the country.”<sup>13</sup>

They also take this opportunity to make a comment concerning separatism in general:

“It is impossible not to be aware that the decisions by the Kosovo leadership create the risk of an escalation of tension and inter-ethnic violence in the province and of new conflict in the Balkans. The international community should respond responsibly to this challenge. Those who are considering supporting separatism should understand what dangerous consequences their actions threaten to have for world order, international stability and the authority of the UN Security Council's decisions that took decades to build.”<sup>14</sup>

Already on June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2007, more than six months before the declaration of independence, Russian President Vladimir Putin commented on the problematic situation in Kosovo,

“We advocate dialogue and the implementation of international law, which implies respect for the territorial integrity of states. If we decide to give preference to the principle of ethnic self-determination over territorial integrity, that should be done everywhere in the world, particularly in Southern Ossetia, in Abkhazia and Transdnistria. In the West, such a solution would unleash separatisms in Europe. Look at Scotland, Catalonia, the Basque country ... I do not think that a European nation like Serbia should be humiliated in an effort to bring it to its knees. We need to be patient, opportunities for reaching compromise have not been exhausted yet.”<sup>15</sup>

At first glance Russia's main priority seems to be complying with international laws but the fact that the theme of separatism comes up in both the above mentioned statements shows that the concern is not only about violation of international laws.

Apart from the firm and clear position of the Russian government, public opinion in Russia also expressed a quite clear view on the issue of Kosovo. A survey was conveyed in late February 2008, just after Kosovo's declaration of independence. 44% of the respondents said that they disapprove of the idea of an independent Kosovo. 27% were indifferent but only 10% actually approved of this idea. However, when asked whether or not Russia should recognize Kosovo, the answers differed somewhat. 36% said that Russia should not recognize

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<sup>13</sup> “Statement by Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Kosovo”, accessed February 8, 2013, [http://www.mid.ru/brp\\_4.nsf/sps/041C5AF46913D38AC32573F30027B380](http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/sps/041C5AF46913D38AC32573F30027B380)

<sup>14</sup> “Statement by Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Kosovo”

<sup>15</sup> Predrag Simić, “Kosovo, Serbia and Russia”, Russian Analytical Digest (RAD) No 39 (2008): 7

Kosovo but 21% said that Russia *should* recognize Kosovo. The majority, however, found it difficult to answer the question and chose to say neither yes nor no.<sup>16</sup>

In 2010, Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a press release on the meeting of the UN Security Council on Kosovo. They again mention their opposition to the Kosovar declaration of independence and repeat that "Russia supports the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Serbia"<sup>17</sup>. The UN resolution 1244 should still be complied with and "to not understand and accept this means not respecting international legitimacy"<sup>18</sup>. It is also stated that Russia supports the UN Mission in Kosovo and points out that nobody else has the right to interfere, a statement most likely directed to the United States and NATO. The statement continues, "the situation in Kosovo remains a matter of serious concern for us" and that there is a fear of increasing problems in this already very complicated region. The NATO-initiated transfer of valuable historical Serbian objects by the Kosovar police is of particular concern. The statement ends, "the complicated situation in Kosovo demonstrates the need for the UN Security Council to maintain a leading role in Kosovo. The Security Council should remain the guarantor of respect for international law, the UN Charter and the decisions of the Council itself. Russia confirms its willingness to continue the political efforts to promote a legally correct and fair solution to the Kosovo issue in accordance with resolution 1244"<sup>19</sup>.

## **2.5. Russia and Serbia historically**

Russia and Serbia have historically had very close yet also very unstable relations. The 19<sup>th</sup> century was a very turbulent time in South Eastern Europe, with many uprisings against the Ottoman Empire rule. The wish for independence by the Balkan countries, for many years ruled by two of the Great Powers of Europe – the Ottoman Empire and the Austria-Hungarian Empire, grew and they turned to Russia for help. During the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the idea of pan-slavism grew in Europa. Pan-slavism was an idea that tried to unite the Slavic people by emphasizing their cultural and sometimes also political affinity. It contrasted the Slavic societies' collectivism, spirituality and, in some cases, Orthodox faith with Western European individualism and materialism. The idea was, at times, to unite the Slavic people under Moscow rule. The idea was strengthened during the several wars that took place in

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<sup>16</sup> "Косово: провозглашение независимости", accessed March 12, 2013, <http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/dominant/dom0809/d080922>

<sup>17</sup> "СООБЩЕНИЕ ДЛЯ СМИ, Об итогах заседания СБ ООН по Косово", accessed April 19, 2013, [http://www.mid.ru/BDOMP/Brp\\_4.nsf/arh/BB6A8618C941E0AEC325772900478363?OpenDocument](http://www.mid.ru/BDOMP/Brp_4.nsf/arh/BB6A8618C941E0AEC325772900478363?OpenDocument)

<sup>18</sup> "СООБЩЕНИЕ ДЛЯ СМИ, Об итогах заседания СБ ООН по Косово"

<sup>19</sup> "СООБЩЕНИЕ ДЛЯ СМИ, Об итогах заседания СБ ООН по Косово"

Europe during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly the Russian-Turkish war in 1877-78. This was seen from the Russian side as a crusade to liberate their Serbian brothers from the Ottoman oppression.

The Russian help for Serbia was not unconditional and more often based on Russian Great Power ambitions than any loyalty to the Serbs. This was especially exemplified by the Bosnian Crisis of 1908, when Russia and Austria-Hungary decided to share territory in the Balkans among themselves. Both empires were interested in dominating the Balkans but Austria-Hungary suddenly decided to act unilaterally and annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina without first discussing it with Russia. This was a diplomatic defeat for Russia and it also caused Serbia to turn away from Russia and search for new allies. However, this defeat combined with the Russian defeat in the Russo-Japanese war of 1905 led Russia to decide to launch a more active Balkan policy and this was started by encouraging the formation of an anti-Austrian union in the Balkans.<sup>20</sup>

After a conflict between Serbia and Bulgaria regarding territories in Macedonia that were wanted by both countries, Russia had to decide whom to support. If Russia were to lose Bulgaria, also an ally of the Russian Empire at the time, Serbia soon would be Russia's only ally in the Balkans. Serbia was "remote from Russia's traditional goals in the Straits and Constantinople. Serbia had little value in furthering those goals. The only advantage Serbia imparted to Russia was a means of antagonizing Austria-Hungary."<sup>21</sup> War between Serbia and Bulgaria commenced before Russia was able to have a say in it, further proving Russia's increasing weakness and insignificance in geopolitical matters.

The relationship between Russia and Serbia deteriorated during the events leading up to the First World War when Serbia felt left alone and betrayed by Russia. After the revolution in Russia and the establishment of Yugoslavia the relations deteriorated further, much due to the Yugoslavian leader Tito. He refused to make Yugoslavia another Soviet satellite state, causing Yugoslavia to be excluded from Comintern. Stalin's priority was to subordinate the "communist" states under the Soviet Union whereas Tito's priority was creating a socialist Balkan federation<sup>22</sup> and remaining somewhat neutral among the Great Powers of the world<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> Hall, 2000, p. 11

<sup>21</sup> Hall, 2000, p. 104

<sup>22</sup> "Socialistiska förbundsrepubliken Jugoslavien 1943-91", accessed April 19, 2013, <http://www.ne.se/jugoslavien/socialistiska-f%C3%B6rbundsrepubliken-jugoslavien-1943-91>

<sup>23</sup> "Tito", accessed April 19, 2013, <http://www.ne.se/lang/tito>



Tito then created his own version of communism, the so-called titoism and Stalin started using the Comintern as a propaganda weapon in his struggles against titoism.

After the fall of the Soviet Union the idea of pan-slavism has again increased in popularity, in many respects due to the Yugoslavian War.<sup>24</sup> In Russia support of the Serbian cause grew, for example due to the NATO bombings. Also, Serbia was now seen as an enemy by the West and they therefore turned towards Russia.

The idea of Slavic brotherhood is something that still very much exists in the minds of the Russian people. Harzl tells, “on 13 September 1995, a forty-year-old vice director of a car shop fired several bullets out of a submachine gun on the US Embassy in Moscow. In interrogations with the police, the man said he had done this as a sign of protest against the American aggression against Serbs”<sup>25</sup>.

When introducing new ambassadors to Russia from 19 different countries on January 24<sup>th</sup> 2013, President Vladimir Putin said about Serbia: “As always, our relationship with Serbia, a country that is spiritually close to us, has a special place in Russian politics. We have established trustful political dialogues and are successfully implementing large-scale economic and investment projects. We will build on these joint efforts.”<sup>26</sup>

## **2.6. Russia’s fear of separatism**

In order to explain Russia’s complex position towards the situation in Kosovo, one must also examine the internal politics in Russia. The problem of rising separatist movements is currently one of the most serious threats to Russian national security and territorial integrity, and it is something that could potentially “result in the Russian Federation being transformed into a loose confederation or even the disintegration of the Russian state”.<sup>27</sup>

Russia has a history of involvement in problems with separatist republics. The process of dissolving started at the end of the Soviet Union, including Western republics but also raising the question of independence among various regions of Russia. Inside Russia itself there are the infamous problems of, among others, the Caucasus republics such as Chechnya and Dagestan. The relations between Russia and the Chechen Republic have been problematic for

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<sup>24</sup> “Panslavism”, accessed March 11, 2013, <http://www.ne.se/panslavism>,

<sup>25</sup> Harzl, “Conflicting Perceptions: Russia, the West and Kosovo”, 497

<sup>26</sup> “Presentation by foreign ambassadors of their letters of credence”, accessed February 15, 2013, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/transcripts/4890>

<sup>27</sup> Gennady Chufirin, “Russia: separatism and conflicts in the North Caucasus”, SIPRI Yearbook 2000, (2000): 1, accessed February 20, 2013, <http://www.sipri.org/yearbook/2000/03>



hundreds of years. There were several unsuccessful attempts to introduce Orthodox Christianity in the area but instead the exact opposite was achieved. Earlier, Chechens were Muslims but mostly superficially so. Dunlop writes, “it would take perceived massive aggression on the part of ‘infidel’ Russians to transform them into observant Muslims”.<sup>28</sup>

The Chechens became famous for their “particularly stubborn resistance to Russian imperial expansion”<sup>29</sup>. During Stalin time the Chechen-Ingush inhabitants were accused of collaborating with the Nazis and rounded up and deported to Kazakhstan. According to Lapidus, “the collective trauma of exile was a key formative experience for many members of the present Chechen elite”<sup>30</sup>. She continues, “both historical experiences and the impact of Soviet policy had served to consolidate and reinforce group identity and solidarity among Chechens, a solidarity in which identification with Islam played an important role.”<sup>31</sup>

The real problems, however, began after the fall of the Soviet Union. It was not clear if Chechnya should immediately be considered a part of Russia or if “its membership in the federation required its formal and explicit consent”<sup>32</sup>. In the beginning the conflict mainly concerned elite actors in Moscow and Grozny but it soon turned into an ethno-political conflict and two bloody wars, for Russia the most serious conflict since World War II, with Grozny being virtually destroyed<sup>33</sup>.

The Second Chechen War officially ended in 2009<sup>34</sup> but the problem is still far from settled. As Menon and Fuller wrote in 2000: “[Moscow] can still destroy all of Chechnya’s cities and towns and kill a large portion of the Chechen people. But it can never create a stable pro-Moscow government in Grozny. Most Chechens would regard a pro-Moscow regime as a collection of quislings; it would need the open-ended protection of Russian troops.”<sup>35</sup>

The problems in Chechnya are far from over and this is an important factor when trying to explain and understand the Russian attitude to separatist republics in general. Russia is a very large country with several ethnicities and there are many areas where separatism is a threat to

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<sup>28</sup> John B. Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya: Roots of a separatist conflict* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 10

<sup>29</sup> Gail W. Lapidus, “Contested Sovereignty: The Tragedy of Chechnya”, *International Security* Vol. 23, No.1 (1998): 8

<sup>30</sup> Lapidus, “Contested Sovereignty: The Tragedy of Chechnya”, 9

<sup>31</sup> Lapidus, “Contested Sovereignty: The Tragedy of Chechnya”, 9

<sup>32</sup> Lapidus, “Contested Sovereignty: The Tragedy of Chechnya”, 7

<sup>33</sup> Lapidus, “Contested Sovereignty: The Tragedy of Chechnya”, 6

<sup>34</sup> “Tjetjenienkrigen”, accessed March 11, 2013, <http://www.ne.se/tjetjenienkrigen>

<sup>35</sup> Rajan Menon and Graham E. Fuller, “Russia’s Ruinous Chechen War”, *Foreign Affairs* Volume 79, Number 2 (2000): 42

the stability of the country. Chechnya is the most known and dramatic example but there are other regions that would like to declare their independence as well, including the much less known example Tatarstan. The risk of a chain reaction to a precedent like Kosovo is something that frightens Moscow and it is something that could lead to a very problematic situation in the future.

## **2.7. Russia and South Ossetia and Abkhazia**

As much as Russia was combating the internal separatist movements within the Russian Federation, it still showed support to other cases abroad. A good example is its politics toward the situation in South Ossetia and Abkhazia which bears much resemblance to the situation in Kosovo. Problems occurred, similarly to the case of Chechnya, after the fall of the Soviet Union when South Ossetia and Abkhazia suddenly found themselves inside a new country - Georgia, a country that they, in their mind, have nothing in common with. Disagreement between Georgia and South Ossetia on independence had occurred before, for example during Ossetian rebellions that took place between 1918 and 1920, where the goal was independence for the Ossetians<sup>36</sup>. These conflicts were settled once both territories were incorporated into the Soviet Union. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Russian passports were handed out to citizens of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and these were therefore considered by Russia to deserve special protection.

The unrest between South Ossetia and Georgia eventually led to an open conflict 8-12 August 2008. Georgian forces entered South Ossetia, which was and still is legally Georgian territory, and killed fifty or so Russian peacekeepers. "Russia had based peacekeepers in South Ossetia since 1994 as part of the ceasefire agreement following the first Georgian–South Ossetian war in the early 1990s."<sup>37</sup> Russia was not late to react; it "moved in and succeeded in avenging the deaths of their peacekeepers and in fixing control over South Ossetia"<sup>38</sup>. "When Russian military units entered Georgia, a Russian embassy spokesperson in London stated that 'there is no Russian attack. There is peace enforcement in South Ossetia.'<sup>39</sup> Having just come back from the situation in Kosovo earlier in 2008, as well as in 1999, the lesson learnt was clear – a strong military power can use force as it sees fit to defend citizens of separatist republics.

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<sup>36</sup> ICG Europe Report N°159, "Georgia: Avoiding war in South Ossetia" (2004): 3, accessed April 19 2013, <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/UNTC/UNPAN019224.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> Oksana Antonenko, "A War with No Winners", *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 50:5 (2008): 24

<sup>38</sup> Timothy L. Thomas, "The Bear Went Through the Mountain: Russia Appraises its Five-Day War in South Ossetia", *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* (2009): 22: 32

<sup>39</sup> Thomas, "The Bear Went Through the Mountain: Russia Appraises its Five-Day War in South Ossetia", 34

After the war, Russia quickly and unilaterally recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states. The official documents were approved by both houses of parliament on the 25<sup>th</sup> August 2008 and signed by president Medvedev on the 26<sup>th</sup> of August. However, there was no support from the West to be expected, the Russian response to the Georgian provocations was by most seen as exaggerated, a scary reminder of how strong Russia had once again become and most of all as a future threat to world stability. From the Russian point of view it now seemed that the United States and the EU only supported separatist movements when the people struggling for freedom are “friends”, and not when they are Russians, as in the case of South Ossetia. Many leading politicians in the West have claimed that the case of Kosovo is a unique one and that it cannot be compared to any other separatist movements. This idea is not supported by Russia, which argues that the same rules should apply for everyone and everywhere, if Kosovo has the right to declare its independence without Serbian approval; South Ossetia has the right to do the same, without Georgian approval. Dmitry Medvedev writes, in an article in the Financial Times, about the reasons for Russia recognizing South Ossetia and Abkhazia, that they took into consideration: “the histories of the Abkhaz and Ossetian peoples, their freely expressed desire for independence, the tragic events of the past weeks and international precedents for such a move.”<sup>40</sup>

In other words, the war led to further instability in Russian-Western relations. In Russia, politicians were proud to say that “finally Russia has emerged as a force to be reckoned with”<sup>41</sup> and also introduced conspiracy theories about the war actually being started by Americans. It also revealed how powerless the United States and the EU actually are when it comes to exerting pressure on Moscow. The war with Georgia led to political isolation and massive capital flight from Russia of foreign investors. However, Russia did not seem to mind the isolation and managed to keep an economic crisis at bay. The European dependency on Russian gas further limits the possibility to introduce any meaningful sanctions.

## **2.8. Russia and the West**

After the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia was weakened and “was forced to stand by and swallow the bitter pill of being excluded from geopolitical decision making”<sup>42</sup>. Among other, these decisions included problems in the Balkan during the 1990s. There was a general

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<sup>40</sup> “Why I had to recognise Georgia's breakaway regions”, accessed February 14, 2013, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/9c7ad792-7395-11dd-8a66-0000779fd18c.html>

<sup>41</sup> Antonenko, “A War with No Winners”, 28

<sup>42</sup> Harzl, “Conflicting Perceptions: Russia, the West and Kosovo”, 492

dissatisfaction in Russia and a feeling that the United States had suddenly decided that the world was now, more or less, run from Washington and that NATO decisions were more important than those of the UN. The Balkans is a region of great importance for Russia and that has been so historically as well. Therefore their reaction in 1999 and 2008 comes as no surprise.

Harzl describes, “Russia was told repeatedly, in a humiliating ex cathedra way, that it cannot be an internationally respected actor with a shrinking economy that was, in the mid-1990s, roughly the size of Denmark’s”<sup>43</sup>. He suggests that Russians today are upset with not being invited to the “club of developed European states” in the 1990s and that it has learnt the lessons from this time and therefore decided to try to cooperate in the economic sphere but not when it comes to political, liberal values.

After the “ruble crisis” of 1998, that affected the slowly growing Russian middle class worst of all, the faith in Western style modernization and market reforms dramatically decreased and Russia turned even further away from its Western partners.

Russia felt that their failure to have a say in the situation in Kosovo was due to a lack of respect from NATO and especially the United States which in turn was due to a lack of military power. “Russians concluded—as an important lesson from the Kosovo crisis—that they must focus in the long-term perspective on restoring their former power status and, despite economic troubles, on enhancing Russia’s military capacity.”<sup>44</sup>

Russia then tried to convince the rest of the world of the UN’s importance, to undermine NATO’s power. Harzl writes that they claim that “launching a military attack without UN sanction would—according to them—undermine the basic foundation of the world order”<sup>45</sup>.

When Putin came into power in 2000, the situation in Russia changed. The economy developed very quickly and enabled Russia to pay off its foreign debts. This also coincided with a lot of disastrous Western “projects”, like the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. As Harzl puts it, “Russia may not be able to seriously rival the US, but, over the course of recent years, it has definitely returned to the table of great powers”<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> Harzl, “Conflicting Perceptions: Russia, the West and Kosovo”, 495

<sup>44</sup> Harzl, “Conflicting Perceptions: Russia, the West and Kosovo”, 506

<sup>45</sup> Harzl, “Conflicting Perceptions: Russia, the West and Kosovo”, 503

<sup>46</sup> Harzl, “Conflicting Perceptions: Russia, the West and Kosovo”, 507

## 3. Methodology

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While examining my material I have primarily used content analysis. As Weber writes, “content analysis is a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text”<sup>47</sup>. Content analysis can be used for many different reasons and the main aim is to study the sender, the message or the receiver of the message. In my essay I have mainly studied the senders and what message they are sending out. One of the advantages with content analysis is that it operates directly on the text and a content analytic study can combine qualitative and quantitative operations, helping to improve the result.

When doing a content analysis, the first step is to choose units of analysis<sup>48</sup>, in my case the three newspapers. Within the content analysis it is also then possibly to classify words into content categories. I describe further how I used this method in my essay in chapter 3.3. A problem with this kind of method can be one of reliability. There is a risk of the words grouped into categories being subjectively grouped by the writer, due to the ambiguity of word meanings or definitions.

I have used three different themes for my content analysis, keeping in mind the possibility of further themes appearing while reading the articles. In this way I hoped to limit the risk of problems with reliability. The themes have been described in detail in chapter 2.

### 3.1. Russian media

For my research I have chosen to look at how the Russian media portrays the situation in Kosovo. I have chosen three different Russian newspapers to get different points of view. The newspapers I have chosen are *Novaya Gazeta*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* and *Izvestiya*.

#### 3.1.1. *Novaya Gazeta* (Новая Газета)

*Novaya Gazeta* is probably one of the most internationally famous Russian newspapers. It is known for its criticism of the Russian government and its investigative research for example concerning the Russian-Chechen war. Founded in 1993, it is now published 3 times per week (Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays)<sup>49</sup>. The main office is in Moscow but it also has regional offices. The St Petersburg branch of *Novaya Gazeta* has the slogan “Мы говорим то, о чем

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<sup>47</sup> Rober Weber, "Basic Content Analysis", SAGE Publications, Inc. (1990): 10

<sup>48</sup> U.H. Graneheim and B. Lundman, "Qualitative content analysis in nursing research: concepts, procedures and measures to achieve trustworthiness" (Department of Nursing, Umeå University, 2003)

<sup>49</sup> “Новая Газета”, accessed February 8, 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/novgaz/info>

другие молчат!” meaning “we speak that, of which others keep silent”.<sup>50</sup> The political profile is liberal oppositional.<sup>51</sup> 39% of the shares are owned by the businessman and former State Duma Deputy Alexander Lebedev and 10% are owned by the former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev.<sup>52</sup> The current circulation is 284 500 copies.<sup>53</sup>

### **3.1.2. *Komsomolskaya Pravda (Комсомольская Правда)***

*Komsomolskaya Pravda* (KP) is published 6 days a week, was founded in May 1925 and “was the official voice of the Central Council of the Komsomol, or communist youth league, for young people aged 14 to 28”<sup>54</sup>. In 1990 it was the newspaper with the largest circulation in the world (22 270 000 copies)<sup>55</sup>. After the fall of the Soviet Union its popularity drastically decreased but it still remains an influential part of the Russian media landscape.<sup>56</sup> The current circulation of the daily issue of *Komsomolskaya Pravda* is 655 000 copies.<sup>57</sup> *Komsomolskaya Pravda* is owned by Media Partner, in turn owned by ECN Group, an energy company led by Grigory Berezkin, who has close links to Gazprom.<sup>58</sup>

### **3.1.3. *Izvestiya (Известия)***

*Izvestiya* is a historically important, daily newspaper, currently published in Moscow. It was the official national publication of the Soviet government until 1991. Founded in 1917 in Saint Petersburg, the main office was moved to Moscow following the October Revolution. In 1932 its circulation was 1,500,000. During Stalin time popularity decreased but during Khrushchev time “*Izvestiya* was transformed into a lively, readable daily with the introduction of more photographs, bigger headlines, shorter and more interesting articles, and a generally high standard of design”<sup>59</sup>. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, *Izvestiya* became an

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<sup>50</sup> “Новая Газета в Санкт-Петербурге”, accessed February 8, 2013, <http://www.novayagazeta.spb.ru>

<sup>51</sup> “Novaya Gazeta”, accessed August 1, 2013, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novaya\\_gazeta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novaya_gazeta)

<sup>52</sup> “Новая газета”, accessed August 1, 2013,

[http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%9D%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B0%D1%8F\\_%D0%B3%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%B0](http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%9D%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B0%D1%8F_%D0%B3%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%B0)

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> “Komsomolskaya Pravda”, accessed March 12, 2013,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/321654/Komsomolskaya-Pravda>

<sup>55</sup> “Комсомольская правда”, accessed August 1, 2013,

[http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%9A%D0%BE%D0%BC%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%BE%D0%BB%D1%8C%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%8F\\_%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%B4%D0%B0](http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%9A%D0%BE%D0%BC%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%BE%D0%BB%D1%8C%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%8F_%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%B4%D0%B0)

<sup>56</sup> “Комсомольская правда (Москва). Информация о газете”, accessed February 8, 2013,

<http://psplkp.agency-siam.ru/about/>

<sup>57</sup> ““Комсомольская правда (Москва)” - размещение рекламы”, accessed August 1, 2013,

<http://psplkp.agency-siam.ru/>

<sup>58</sup> “Komsomolskaya Pravda”, accessed August 1, 2013, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Komsomolskaya\\_Pravda](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Komsomolskaya_Pravda)

<sup>59</sup> “Izvestiya”, accessed March 12, 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/298543/Izvestiya>

independent publication. The current circulation is 234 500 copies.<sup>60</sup> *Izvestiya* was previously owned by Gazprom Media but was in 2008 sold and is now owned by National Media Group.

### **3.2. Articles**

I started my article search by typing the word “Kosovo” (“Косово”) into the search engine of each newspaper. I then limited the search by only searching for articles from the day of the Kosovo declaration of independence (17<sup>th</sup> of February 2008) until the end of 2009 (December 31<sup>st</sup>). I chose to do a very general search, using only the word Kosovo, to not put any subjective assessment on the results and to be sure to not lose potentially interesting material by making a too limited search. This however led to a huge amount of articles that were not related to the situation I chose to examine and I had to narrow down my search results. I did this by briefly reading through the articles provided by the search engine to see if they were related to my topic. Having chosen the appropriate articles I then re-read them more carefully and examined if the articles proved my earlier theories concerning the Russian hesitation towards Kosovo’s independence. I also carefully searched for any other potential answers to my question, to see if the newspapers suggested other reasons for the Russian hesitation than the ones I had discovered. Once this task was completed, I continued by summarizing my findings, how the articles proved or refuted the theories and finally tried to show what conclusions can be drawn from this material.

### **3.3. Theoretical themes**

When reading the articles and looking for evidence proving my theoretical approaches, I looked for specific themes, relating to each one. When using the first approach, concerning the close historical bonds between Russia and Serbia, I looked for references to wars and historical events that affected both countries, Orthodox Christianity and cooperation between the countries. The second approach concerns the fear of separatism. In the articles I looked for references to Chechnya and other troubled regions in Russia, stories about South Ossetia and Abkhazia and comments on separatist republics and movements in the European countries. The third approach explores the problematic relationship between Russia and the West. When searching the articles I looked for content that reflected badly on the EU and the United States, insinuations that they try to abuse their power and/or run the world and also ideas that Russia knows best and should be more involved and important in geopolitical questions and decision.

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<sup>60</sup> “Газета ‘Известия’”, accessed August 1, 2013, <http://www.media-atlas.ru/editions/?a=view&id=2477>



## 4. Analysis of empirical materials

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### 4.1. Russian historical bonds to Serbia

The first theoretical explanation I focused on was that Russia is hesitant to recognize Kosovo's independence because of their close historical ties to Serbia. While reading the articles, it became quite clear that these bonds are something that is very apparent in the Russian discourse on Kosovo.

Starting out with the past, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* writes, "for the first time since the liberation from the Ottoman oppression, they have lost one of their ancient regions – Kosovo"<sup>61</sup>. Since Russia played an integral part in the liberation of Serbia from the Ottoman Empire this is a meaningful reference. Serbia is described as "a historical friend and ally of Russia"<sup>62</sup>.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of February 2008 (the day after the Kosovar declaration of independence) *Komsomolskaya Pravda* lists countries that are for and against the declaration of independence. The first country on the list of countries that are against is Russia with the comment "out of solidarity with Serbia and to maintain borders acknowledged by the UN"<sup>63</sup>. Also worth mentioning is that in July 2008, Russia prepared for abolishing visas from Serbian citizens coming to Russia. It cannot be seen as a coincidence that this decision was made so shortly after the Kosovar declaration of independence.

The idea of Russia as a great protector and defender of Serbia is very present in many articles. Building on the idea that it's supposed to be Russia's duty to protect their Slavic brothers, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* writes, "Russia under Yeltsin did not protect the Serbs when they were bombed"<sup>64</sup>, something that is a shame for many Russians today.

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<sup>61</sup> Михаил Харитонов, Лариса Кафтан, Никита Красников, Инга Сафронова, "Косово провозгласило независимость: что дальше?" *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, February 18, 2008, accessed February 15, 2013, <http://www.kp.ru/daily/24050.5/103315/>

<sup>62</sup> Дарья Асламова, "Сербы потеряли Косово, но нашли Россию", *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, February 19, 2008, accessed March 1, 2013, <http://www.kp.ru/daily/24051/103643/>

<sup>63</sup> Харитонов, Кафтан, Красников, Сафронова, "Косово провозгласило независимость: что дальше?"

<sup>64</sup> Харитонов, Кафтан, Красников, Сафронова, "Косово провозгласило независимость: что дальше?"



*Izvestiya* writes “it is already clear that the Kosovo problem will not go away quickly and will be “inherited” by the new Russian president. And if Medvedev wins the election, then supporting Serbia will be one of his major foreign policy tasks – at least in the beginning”<sup>65</sup>.

Dmitry Medvedev later visited Serbia to close a deal between Russia and Serbia, concerning the gas line “South Stream”. According to *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, “but above all, Medvedev flew to Belgrade to express Russia’s support concerning the situation in Kosovo.”<sup>66</sup> *Izvestiya* writes, “Russia will not abandon Serbia, and we have something to show as a proof of the seriousness of our intentions. The two countries are now linked not only by Slavic roots and centuries-old friendship but also quite earthly multibillion projects.”<sup>67</sup> It then continues, “Russia has clearly stated to the world that it will not abandon its Slavic brothers.”<sup>68</sup>

*Komsomolskaya Pravda* interviews Serbian people in Belgrade. The article has the interesting title “The Serbs lost Kosovo, but found Russia”. “Serbs have always strongly identified themselves with Russia, like Russians have with Serbs. For example, white emigrants, who arrived to Serbia after the Bolshevik revolution, already called themselves Serbs after a few years”<sup>69</sup> says the political scientist and, according to the newspaper, one of the most influential Serbian businessmen, Milan Božić. He continues, “and let the European newspaper shout: ‘Czar Putin has bought Serbia!’ . We like that. Come to us, buy us! Russian investors are our best advocates in the Kremlin and defenders of Serbian interests in Russia. And if Russia will be powerful, this means that Serbia will not be lost.”<sup>70</sup> Further, “for Russia we are a partner and for the European Union only a market and a potential territory. We only have one defender in this world – Russia.”<sup>71</sup>

Another important factor when describing the bonds between Russia and Serbia is the shared Orthodox Christianity. *Izvestiya* reports that “patriarch Kirill expressed his support for the Serbian people”<sup>72</sup>. *Novaya Gazeta* describes a demonstration in Moscow on March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2008 where women in headscarves and bearded men gathered to show their discontent with the

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<sup>65</sup> Елена Шишкунова, “Братья познаются в беде”, *Izvestiya*, February 25, 2008, accessed February 8, 2013, <http://izvestia.ru/news/333648>

<sup>66</sup> Елена Кривякина, “Медведев осудил независимость Косово”, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, February 26, 2008, accessed February 15, 2013, <http://www.kp.ru/daily/24054/300143/>

<sup>67</sup> Шишкунова, “Братья познаются в беде”

<sup>68</sup> Шишкунова, “Братья познаются в беде”

<sup>69</sup> Асламова, “Сербы потеряли Косово, но нашли Россию”

<sup>70</sup> Асламова, “Сербы потеряли Косово, но нашли Россию”

<sup>71</sup> Асламова, “Сербы потеряли Косово, но нашли Россию”

<sup>72</sup> “Патриарх Кирилл выразил поддержку сербскому народу”, *Izvestiya*, March 24, 2009, accessed March 13, 2013, <http://izvestia.ru/news/447348>

current situation in Kosovo, “‘The Orthodox community must fight back the Kosovo infection!’ - is heard from the podium.”<sup>73</sup> 10 days earlier a prayer service for Kosovo was held, also in Moscow. In total about 90 people participated, including activists from other orthodox-patriotic organizations. *Novaya Gazeta* reports that “participants state that the separation of Kosovo from Serbia is a blow to Russia and ‘the entire Orthodox world’”<sup>74</sup>.

In an article with the title “Radovan Karadžić – hero, criminal or victim”, *Izvestiya* explores the story of this man and what the Russian public thinks of him. They start out by saying that one should not try to see the complicated Balkan world in black and white and even their “Serbian brothers” have made some mistakes, but quickly turns back to the Serbian side. “Now, the other side of the coin. Let’s look at the situation in the eyes of the Bosnian Serbs. What remained for Karadžić to do in 1992, when the Bosnian government announced that they would leave Yugoslavia? That means that the Serbs living in the republic would suddenly turn from being the title state-nation into being an ethnic minority. And they would have to obey a Muslim president. And did anybody ask for their opinion on this?”<sup>75</sup>

They also have a poll, with the question “how do you see Radovan Karadžić?” 3696 people voted and the result shows that 36% consider him to be a Serbian patriot and that he defended his people. Only 10% see him as a war criminal, with blood on his hands. The remaining 54% see him as a victim, either of the collapse of Yugoslavia or of the betrayal of the new authorities in Serbia. This is of course surprising since the general idea in the West is that Radovan Karadžić is a war criminal, responsible for the Srebrenica massacre.

## 4.2. Separatism

The second theoretical explanation is that Russia does not want to recognize Kosovo, because it is afraid that the idea of independence will spread to its own republics. Separatism is a problem for Russia and in the discussions in the media about Kosovo and separatism there are often attempts to point out the European problems with separatisms and therefore show that the situation in Kosovo is something that many countries should be worried about.

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<sup>73</sup> Павел Каныгин, “Православные хоругвеносцы митингуют против независимости Косово”, *Novaya Gazeta*, March 22, 2008, accessed March 14, 2013, <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/news/28916.html>

<sup>74</sup> “Молебен о Косово проходит на Триумфальной площади”, *Novaya Gazeta*, March 10, 2008, accessed March 2, 2013, <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/news/28152.html>

<sup>75</sup> Максим Юсин, “Радован Караджич: герой, преступник или жертва?”, *Izvestiya*, July 22, 2008, accessed March 10, 2013, <http://izvestia.ru/news/338910>

*Komsomolskaya Pravda*, for example, writes “several ethnical groups will probably use the Kosovo precedent. It’s no accident that five members of the EU where such a situation is possible (Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Slovakia and Spain) spoke against recognition of Kosovo’s independence.”<sup>76</sup> They also state dramatically, “Kosovo is not the end of the disruption. This is only the beginning!”<sup>77</sup>

Even representatives of the government do not hold back, *Novaya Gazeta* reports, “the president’s special envoy for international cooperation in the fight against international terrorism, Anatoly Safonov, compared the current situation with the Munich Agreement of 1938. ‘In the case of Kosovo the trigger is cocked and nobody knows when and what kind of shot will be heard’. In addition, the special envoy said that because of the situation in Kosovo, separatist tendencies in Europe will inevitably rise.”<sup>78</sup>

However, the majority of the articles focus instead on the problem of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. As mentioned before, Russia is a strong supporter of these republics getting the independence they strive for and try to show that if it’s possible for the Kosovo Albanians, then the Ossetians and Abkhazians should have the same possibility. Moscow does not support the idea that Kosovo is a special case and that it cannot be seen as a precedent for other regions. *Izvestiya* writes that already in 2006 the South Ossetians voted on independence with 99% voting for<sup>79</sup>.

*Novaya Gazeta* reports, “today the US embassy in Georgia issued a statement which emphasized that ‘the situation in Kosovo is a unique case and this case cannot become a precedent for other regions including South Ossetia and Abkhazia’”<sup>80</sup> and continues, “one of the leaders from the U.S. State Department for European and Eurasian Affairs, Matthew Bryza, in an interview with the Azeri ANS television, said: ‘If Russia recognizes the independence of the breakaway republics on the territory of Georgia, its opponents can answer with recognition of the separatist regions of Russia itself’”<sup>81</sup>. From the Russian side

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<sup>76</sup> Харитонов, Кафтан, Красников, Сафронова, “Косово провозгласило независимость: что дальше?”

<sup>77</sup> Асламова, “Сербы потеряли Косово, но нашли Россию”

<sup>78</sup> “Вашингтон критикует Москву за ее позицию по косовской независимости”, *Novaya Gazeta*, February 23, 2008, accessed March 2, 2013, <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/news/27307.html>

<sup>79</sup> “Госдеп США призвал Южную Осетию забыть о какой-либо независимости”, *Izvestiya*, March 6, 2008, accessed March 17, 2013, <http://izvestia.ru/news/420063>

<sup>80</sup> Анна Лебедева, “США заявляют, что Косово не станет прецедентом для Южной Осетии и Абхазии”, *Novaya Gazeta*, February 19, 2008, accessed February 25, 2013, <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/news/26924.html>

<sup>81</sup> Лебедева, “США заявляют, что Косово не станет прецедентом для Южной Осетии и Абхазии”

this is obviously interpreted as a threat and an attempt to try to force Russia to surrender the idea of independent South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Perhaps in response to this, *Izvestiya* reports about the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, “according to Lavrov, the question of recognizing the breakaway republics is of ‘special interest’ in the light of the situation in Kosovo, which develops in contradiction to international law and threatens to destabilize the region.”<sup>82</sup>

*Komsomolskaya Pravda* continues on the same topic, “if the Kosovars want to participate in the Olympics, run and jump, let them go to the Serbian team. Just like the Abkhazians can’t participate under their own flag.”<sup>83</sup> According to them, “we have to decide something concerning unrecognized republics. We said that Kosovo is a precedent, we said that Abkhazia and South Ossetia have more right to independence than Kosovo.”<sup>84</sup>

*Izvestiya* later acknowledges the fact that recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia but not Kosovo gave “the West” a reason to accuse Moscow of double standards. Nevertheless, the answer to this argument comes quickly – “However, it’s completely reasonable to object to these criticisms: gentleman, we just follow your example. We were not the ones who opened ‘Pandora’s box’. We were not the first to resort to double standards. So it is better that you try to explain why Kosovo deserves independence but Abkhazia does not.”<sup>85</sup>

### **4.3. Russia and the West**

The third and last theoretical explanation is that the Russian hesitation is due to the fact that they are trying to prove their own importance in international, geopolitical matters to the United States and the European Union. As mentioned before, Russia has had troubles coming to terms with the changes in the world after the end of the Cold War and the decrease in importance that they experienced. This theory suggests that not recognizing Kosovo is a way to try to get back into the game and to yet again be a country whose opinions matter and that can actually balance out the power of the United States.

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<sup>82</sup> Ксения Фокина, “Глава МИД России Сергей Лавров: “Мы не допустим, чтобы Косово стало членом ООН”, *Izvestiya*, April 3, 2008, accessed February 17, 2013, <http://izvestia.ru/news/335064>

<sup>83</sup> Харитонов, Кафтан, Красников, Сафронова, “Косово провозгласило независимость: что дальше?”

<sup>84</sup> Харитонов, Кафтан, Красников, Сафронова, “Косово провозгласило независимость: что дальше?”

<sup>85</sup> “Сухум и Цхинвал - это вам не Приштина”, *Izvestiya*, October 6, 2008, accessed February 27, 2013, <http://izvestia.ru/news/341459>

The opinions expressed in the articles reflect that Russia tries to put the blame on the West for future problems that can occur because of the situation in Kosovo. As *Komsomolskaya Pravda* puts it, "by recognizing Kosovo, the West changed the rules of the game"<sup>86</sup>.

The results from this theoretical explanation can be divided into three separate parts. The first one is about the idea that the United States and the EU are abusing their power and trying to suppress the smaller countries. *Izvestiya* suggests that the EU is trying to pressure Serbia to accept defeat when it comes to Kosovo, by saying that they will not be able to join the Union before this. *Izvestiya* also writes "the White House tore out the 'heart' of Serbia"<sup>87</sup> and describes the situation as, "the west decides what to do with Kosovo"<sup>88</sup>.

They also like to mention how this "illegal" act is very supported by the United States. A headline in *Izvestiya* reads "because of Kosovo the United States have gone against the UN Security Council yet again"<sup>89</sup> and continues, "the White House believes it has the right to supply arms to Kosovo"<sup>90</sup>.

The support for Serbia is very visible in this "category" as well. *Komsomolskaya Pravda* reports sarcastically that "protests in Serbia and the lack of endorsement of Kosovo's independence by the UN Security Council - this is such a trifle compared to the triumph of democracy."<sup>91</sup>

The second part is basically about an on-going "competition" between, in particular, the United States and Russia, which is trying to prove its own importance.

Sergey Markov, Director of the Institute of Political Studies, tells *Izvestiya* about Medvedev's visit to Serbia, "Dmitry Medvedev wanted tell and show his voters that he would continue the policies of Vladimir Putin, including the policy of sovereignty of countries and the policy of deterrence of the United States."<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Харитонов, Кафтан, Красников, Сафронова, "Косово провозгласило независимость: что дальше?"

<sup>87</sup> "Белый дом вырвал 'сердце' у Сербии", *Izvestiya*, February 18, 2008, accessed March 17, 2013, <http://izvestia.ru/news/418839>

<sup>88</sup> Ксения Фокина, "Запад решает, что делать с Косово", *Izvestiya*, February 18, 2008, accessed February 22, 2013, <http://izvestia.ru/news/333440>

<sup>89</sup> "Ради Косово США еще раз переступили через Совбез ООН", *Izvestiya*, March 21, 2008, accessed March 5, 2013, <http://izvestia.ru/news/421079>

<sup>90</sup> "Ради Косово США еще раз переступили через Совбез ООН"

<sup>91</sup> Харитонов, Кафтан, Красников, Сафронова, "Косово провозгласило независимость: что дальше?"

<sup>92</sup> Шишкунова, "Братья познаются в беде"

As the before-mentioned influential Serbian businessmen Milan Božić stated when interviewed by *Komsomolskaya Pravda* about the situation in Serbia, “our elections more resemble a football match - who is for the EU, who is for Russia, and the votes are practically split in half. But for Russia we are a partner, for the EU - only a market and a potential territory. We have only one protector in this world – Russia.”<sup>93</sup> Since Russia has manifested the intention of projecting its power in the Balkans for centuries, this clearly speaks both to the Russian public and the people in power. Trumping the United States and having Serbia turn away from the EU and the West and towards Russia would of course be a good start for Russia’s increasingly important position in geopolitical questions.

*Novaya Gazeta* tells the story of riots in Serbia after the declaration of independence. “Hooligans set fire to the U.S. embassy, threw stones at the embassies of Croatia, Turkey and Belgium, which have recognized Kosovo's independence.”<sup>94</sup> “Former U.S. Permanent Representative to the UN, and now chief foreign-policy advisor of Hillary Clinton, Richard Holbrooke, said that Russians are behind this.”<sup>95</sup> Stories like these probably aim to increase anti-Western tendencies in Russia.

The third part is the idea that Russia is, or at least should become, a super power yet again and that it should be part of important decision-making and also to some extent guide their misled Western partners. *Izvestiya* has an article with the title “Moscow offers the world to ‘cancel’ Kosovo’s independence”<sup>96</sup>, suggesting that Russia is prepared to forgive its less careful partners and show them the right way, by “cancelling” Kosovo’s independence.

*Komsomolskaya Pravda* reflects upon how to proceed, “what should Russia do? First of all, prevent Kosovo from getting real independence.”<sup>97</sup> This is a clear statement, presuming that Russia actually is very powerful and that Russia not wanting to recognize Kosovo will stop them from gaining their independence.

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<sup>93</sup> Асламова, “Сербы потеряли Косово, но нашли Россию”

<sup>94</sup> “Российский МИД называет неуместными высказывания американского политика Ричарда Холбрука о причастности Москвы к беспорядкам в Белграде”, *Novaya Gazeta*, February 22, 2008, accessed March 15, 2013, <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/news/27251.html>

<sup>95</sup> “Российский МИД называет неуместными высказывания американского политика Ричарда Холбрука о причастности Москвы к беспорядкам в Белграде”

<sup>96</sup> “Москва предложила миру ‘отменить’ независимость Косово”, *Izvestiya*, April 10, 2008, accessed March 7, 2013, <http://izvestia.ru/news/422655>

<sup>97</sup> Харитонов, Кафтан, Красников, Сафронова, “Косово провозгласило независимость: что дальше?”

The head of the Russian Foreign Ministry, Sergey Lavrov stated, “we will not allow Kosovo to become a member of the UN”<sup>98</sup>. The *Izvestiya* article continues, “the Minister made it clear that if the U.S. and NATO will continue to escalate the situation in the former Soviet republics, Russia will have to change their approach to Abkhazia and South Ossetia”<sup>99</sup>.

To sum it up, an article in *Izvestiya* combines the three different parts and also points out the illegitimacy of the new state: “On Sunday, Kosovo's parliament adopted the declaration of independence, and now this Serbian province, this time as a ‘democratic state’, intends to seek membership in international organizations - including the UN. Russia and China won’t let the ‘applicant’ in. The fact that the Kosovars are not very committed to democracy even those who pressed for an exclusion from Serbia do not doubt.”<sup>100</sup> The last sentence leads us to the fourth part.

#### 4.4. The Other

When reading the articles and analyzing them based on the three before mentioned theories, I discovered that something that recurs throughout all the articles and something that could be interpreted as a way of strengthening the opinions that they try to point out, is the idea of Albanians as criminals and Serbs as victims. In other words, they are trying to ascribe the Albanians the role of “the other”, to some extent to justify the support for Serbia and the rejection of Kosovo. They are trying to find someone who is “guilty” of the unfavorable turn of events. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of February 2008, two days after the Kosovar declaration of independence, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* writes, “in Serbia, a Waterloo atmosphere reigns. The country is used to sinking ships, but the present infamy is the most severe blow to the small but obstinate nation.”<sup>101</sup>

Kosovo is referred to as “the emerging criminal state”<sup>102</sup> and a *Komsomolskaya Pravda* reporter writes, “everyone knows that the Kosovar government is associated with the drug mafia, that there was ethnic cleansing, that hundreds of Serbs were killed, that killing is a habit there. I think soon their leader Hashim Thaçi will turn into a European bin Laden.”<sup>103</sup> They continue, “during the last nine years, under the ‘supervision’ of peacekeepers, Albanians

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<sup>98</sup> “МИД РФ противопоставил конституция Косово резолюции Совбеза ООН”, *Izvestiya*, June 16, 2008, accessed February 23, 2013, <http://izvestia.ru/news/427742>

<sup>99</sup> “МИД РФ противопоставил конституция Косово резолюции Совбеза ООН”

<sup>100</sup> Ксения Фокина, “Независимость Косово. Кто следующий?”, *Izvestiya*, February 18, 2008, accessed February 10, 2013, <http://izvestia.ru/news/333408>

<sup>101</sup> Асламова, “Сербы потеряли Косово, но нашли Россию”

<sup>102</sup> Харитонов, Кафтан, Красников, Сафронова, “Косово провозгласило независимость: что дальше?”

<sup>103</sup> Харитонов, Кафтан, Красников, Сафронова, “Косово провозгласило независимость: что дальше?”

have quietly driven out Serbs and all other ‘foreigners’. What's to prevent them from continuing to act in the same spirit?”<sup>104</sup>

The position of the Serbs as victims and of Albanians as criminals applies to the Yugoslav time as well, according to *Komsomolskaya Pravda*. They write, “the Albanian ‘Kosovo Liberation Army’ staged a real terror against the Serbian population, and in 1998 the Serbian army went into the region. But NATO intervened in the conflict, accusing President Milošević of ethnic cleansing.”<sup>105</sup> Whether or not Milošević really did perform ethnic cleansing is not even reflected upon in the article, it goes on to state that after a year NATO bombed Serbian cities and, as always, mentions the UN article 1244, stating that this article recognized Kosovo as a part of Serbia.

*Komsomolskaya Pravda* also brings up the story of Carla del Ponte, a person that appears in several of the articles about Kosovo. The article reads, “the subject of crimes committed by Albanians separatists in Kosovo against peaceful Serbs, including selling human organs of the Serbs who were imprisoned was first raised in the book of the former chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia - Carla del Ponte.”<sup>106</sup> Here not only the choice of story is important but also the words they chose to use. Serbs are described as “peaceful” whereas the Albanians are separatists, bringing other separatists, for example the ones in Chechnya, to the mind of the reader. In another article about this book they tell that Del Ponte got her information from “reliable sources among European and American journalists”<sup>107</sup>, showing that they had this information but chose not to share it with the world earlier, further increasing the role of the Serbs as the victims, left alone by everybody except for Russia.

*Komsomolskaya Pravda* reports on the idea of partitioning Kosovo, with the northern part remaining Serbian. They then quote the minister of the Kosovar government, Skënder Hyseni, who “hastened to announce to Western newspaper” that “that would become a dangerous precedent”<sup>108</sup>. They continue sarcastically, “journalists in all seriousness quoted the statement, unaware of the comical of the situation: the minister of a new illegal state, the appearance of

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<sup>104</sup> Харитонов, Кафтан, Красников, Сафронова, “Косово провозгласило независимость: что дальше?”.

<sup>105</sup> Харитонов, Кафтан, Красников, Сафронова, “Косово провозгласило независимость: что дальше?”

<sup>106</sup> “Эксперт Института Славяноведения рассказал о торговле органами в Косово”, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, August 4, 2008, accessed March 12, 2013 <http://www.kp.ru/online/news/522987/>

<sup>107</sup> Владимир Зибров, “Вожди Косово торговали органами сотен сербов”, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, April 2, 2008, accessed February 18, 2013, <http://www.kp.ru/daily/24074/310974/>

<sup>108</sup> Дарья Асламова, “ООН спряталась от гнева сербов за русским флагом”, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, February 27, 2008, accessed March 4, 2013, <http://www.kp.ru/daily/24055/300436/>



which has created a scandalous precedent in the history of international law, accuses his fellow citizens of separatism and the creation of a precedent.”<sup>109</sup>

According to *Izvestiya*, Medvedev said that “the actions of the Kosovars have ‘destroyed the entire international security system, which mankind has formed in the last hundred years’”<sup>110</sup>, quite strong words, especially coming from someone in such an important position as Medvedev.

Trying to prove that this idea is not only the Russian point of view, *Izvestiya* writes that British journalists have found out that “the current leaders of Kosovo have blood on their hands”<sup>111</sup>, mentioning that the Kosovo Liberation Army had a network of concentration camps where Serbs were tortured and killed.

Last but not least, *Izvestiya* reports that recognition of Kosovo was bought for two million dollars: “The independence of Kosovo has recently become one of the major political issues in the Maldives. According to the local press, government officials received two million dollars for the recognition of the self-proclaimed state from the, in Russia, notorious businessman in Behgjet Pacolli.”<sup>112</sup> Reporting such news is of course a very efficient way to make the readers question the legitimacy of Kosovo and its leadership even further.

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<sup>109</sup> Асламова, “ООН спряталась от гнева сербов за русским флагом”

<sup>110</sup> Шишкунова, “Братья познаются в беде”

<sup>111</sup> Ксения Фокина, “Западные СМИ признали: албанские боевики вели охоту на сербов”, *Izvestiya*, April 14, 2009, accessed March 13, 2013, <http://izvestia.ru/news/347481>

<sup>112</sup> Артем Румянцев, “Признание Косово купили за два миллиона долларов?”, *Izvestiya*, March 18, 2009, accessed March 16, 2013, <http://izvestia.ru/news/346541>

## 5. Conclusion

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In the beginning of my research, I asked a research question, “what reasons for Russia’s position towards the independence of Kosovo can be found while reading the Russian newspapers *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, *Novaya Gazeta* and *Izvestiya* and which conclusions can be drawn from this material?”. I found three theoretical explanations in the previous research in this field and using these I tried to answer my question. While exploring the newspaper articles with the help of the theoretical explanations, I tried to see if one was more prominent than the others.

The official Russian statements talk a lot about Kosovo’s declaration of independence being illegal and contrary to international laws. However, this is difficult to take seriously, taking into account that Russia later decided to recognize South Ossetia’s and Abkhazia’s declarations of independence. I also noticed that this was not as visible in the articles as in the official statements.

Russia’s closeness to Serbia and the “Slavic brotherhood” is something that is very important in the Russian discourse on Kosovo that I have studied. Protecting Serbia from the Western strategic interests is a priority for Russia and this is something that is enhanced by historical references, for example from the Kosovo conflict in 1999 when Russia failed to stop NATO from bombing Yugoslavia. By investing a lot of money in Serbia, Russia tries to further its dominance in the Balkans. The question has been raised if Kosovo could be the key for Putin to manage what Stalin failed to do, namely getting a powerful influence over Serbia. The shared religion, Orthodox Christianity, also matters in this question and is used as a tool to unite the two nations.

The theme of separatism appears many times in the articles. The Russian point of view that can be seen in the articles I have examined is that Kosovo will definitely become a precedent and influence separatists in other countries as well. However, I expected Chechnya and Russian problems with separatism to be more visible in the articles. There were a few mentions of separatists in Tatarstan (for example that Tatar separatist leaders sent their congratulations to Kosovo<sup>113</sup>) and an article accusing Chechens of having displayed a

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<sup>113</sup> Борис Бронштейн, “Лидеры татарских национальных движений послали поздравление в Косово”, *Novaya Gazeta*, February 19, 2008, accessed March 6, 2013, <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/news/26981.html>

Kosovar flag during a soccer game<sup>114</sup> but otherwise a more evident part of the theme was the discussion of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. A majority of the articles shows the opinion that if Kosovo deserves independence, so does South Ossetia and Abkhazia. However, my research unfortunately did not provide any answers as to why Russia considers it suitable to recognize South Ossetia and Abkhazia's independence but not Kosovo's. This would be an interesting topic to develop further in future research.

The difficult relationship between Russia and the West is another important part of the Kosovo question. Russia sees the situation as the West trying to “rule the world” and suppress the smaller countries. Balancing out the power of the United States and NATO and empowering the UN Security Council is a priority for Russia. In the articles it becomes clear that the writers think that Russia has a better insight into the world's problems and should have a bigger say in geopolitical matters.

In articles in both *Komsomolskaya Pravda* and *Izvestiya*, Albanians are portrayed as criminals and Serbs as suffering victims. The Kosovar leader is described as a future European bin Laden and Kosovo is called the “emerging criminal state”. The aim seems to be to turn the public opinion in favor of the Serbs and the Serbian cause to re-unite Kosovo with Serbia by pointing out the vulnerability of the Serbs in Kosovo and by creating the image of Albanians as the “other”.

Looking at the newspapers separately, I discovered that *Komsomolskaya Pravda* mentions Russian historical bonds to Serbia and Albanians as the “other” considerably much more than the others. These themes were brought up in all of the cited articles. This is hardly surprising since most articles have a nationalistic feel, naturally emphasizing traditional values, including religion, and reinforcing the support for Serbia by finding common values as well as a common enemy.

*Izvestiya* writes more about the problematic relationship between the Russia and the West than the others. This newspaper also shows some nationalistic tendencies but these are focused more against the United States and the EU than in support of Serbia.

*Novaya Gazeta* in general writes less about Kosovo than the others but when it does write about it, it is often connected to separatism. Seeing as how *Novaya Gazeta* is famous in the

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<sup>114</sup> “Власти Чечни опровергают слухи о косовском флаге, вывешенном во время футбольного матча в Грозном”, *Novaya Gazeta*, July 21, 2008, accessed May 6, 2013, <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/news/36010.html>

West for writing a lot about the Russian-Chechen conflict this is also not very surprising. It was, however, surprising that articles about the Orthodox demonstrations for Kosovo were found only in *Novaya Gazeta*. *Novaya Gazeta* did not write anything portraying Albanians as criminals and this can probably be explained by the fact that since *Novaya Gazeta* is very critical of the current leaders in Russia, they are less prone to nationalism.

From the newspaper articles it is not clear if one theoretical explanation is more prominent than the others. The conclusion that can be drawn from the material I have used, is that the three newspapers I analyzed present Russia's attitude to Kosovo in several ways and there is not one simple answer to the question of why they chose not to recognize their independence. It is also clear that in all three newspapers there is a generally negative stance towards Kosovo's independence, albeit for different reasons.

It would be interesting to continue the research further, for instance using additional newspapers and widening the search parameters, for example using a wider time span. The question why Russia does not want to recognize Kosovo cannot be answered easily but this essay can be seen as an introduction to this problem and as an attempt to analyze the Russian media's discourse on Kosovo during the years 2008 and 2009.

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