

## **Kosovo: a 'European' or an 'Albanian' State?**

Frames of Statehood in the Contentious Political Debate Between the Democratic Party of Kosovo and Lëvizja Vetëvendosje on the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue



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## **ABSTRACT**

In this thesis I examine the 'frames of Kosovar statehood' as created, upheld and promoted by the governing party, the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), and the opposition party, Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, in their contentious political debate on the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue. Since its beginning in March 2011, the two parties have not only disputed the effect that the dialogue and its agreements will have on Kosovo's statehood, but also disagreed on the very nature of that statehood: on what kind of state Kosovo *is* and *should be*, as well as *whose* state it is. Drawing on Benford and Snow's framing theory, the diagnostic and prognostic framing processes, as well as the counterframings with which the two parties have attempted to undermine each other, are analyzed, in order to determine the 'frames of statehood' advocated by these collective actors. The core argument of this thesis is that whereas the PDK presents the frame of Kosovar statehood of Kosovo as a multicultural, civic and European state, Vetëvendosje employs the frame of Kosovo as a state *of* and *for* the Kosovo ethnic-Albanians; a nation-state. This research is empirically relevant in that it contributes to the existing literature on Kosovo's contentious politics. Moreover, it sheds theoretical light on what Rogers Brubaker has neglected in his theoretical framework on 'nationalizing' nationalisms of newly independent states, namely, the dynamics, interactions, and contestations in which nationalization is demanded, and opposed.

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*"My older brother's name is Qëndron. He was born in 1988, and his name has the meaning of a nation's right to exist, and to be equal to others. My name is Fiton, I was born in 1990, and my name has the meaning of triumph and victory. Of not giving up on our right to freedom. Gëzon, the third child, was born in 1991. His name means the joy people experience after achieving their goals. Then, Agon was born in 1993. His name stands for the shine we see before the sun rises. It means something will rise again just like the sun. What would rise is described with the name of my only sister. Krejonë was born in 1995. Her name is a combination of the letters 'K', from Kosova, 'R', from Republic, and 'jonë', which means 'ours'. The Republic of Kosova is ours. The last child, Feston, was born in 1997. His name has the meaning of celebration. Our father was in prison for 11 years, and finally died in the battle fighting against Serbia. He received the title of a martyr because he fought for the Kosova Liberation Army and he devoted his life to his nation."*

– Fiton, 13 May 2016, Pristina, Kosovo.

**List of abbreviations**

AAK	Alliance for the Future of Kosovo
AKR	New Kosovo Alliance
CSP	Comprehensive Status Proposal
EEAS	European External Action Service
EU	European Union
OSCE	Organization for the Cooperation and Security in Europe
FRY	Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
KFOR	Kosovo Force
KAN	Kosovo Action Network
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
KPC	Kosovo Protection Corps
KPS	Kosovo Police Service
LDK	Democratic League of Kosovo
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NISMA	The Initiative for the Future of Kosovo
PDK	Democratic Party of Kosovo
SFRY	Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNMIK	United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

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## INTRODUCTION

When Robert Cooper visited Pristina at the end of June in 2012, he did not exactly receive a warm welcome. The European External Action Service Counselor, who was then responsible for the mediation between Serbia and Kosovo<sup>1</sup> in the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, visited Kosovo's capital to discuss the outstanding issues that the negotiating delegations were unable to reach agreements upon. Several hundred activists affiliated with the opposition party Lëvizja Vetëvendosje,<sup>2</sup> which translates into 'Movement for Self-Determination', had gathered in front of the government building in the city-center, waiting to catch a glimpse of Cooper. Their banners read "Stop the Dialogue"; "Serbia finances illegal structures in Kosovo"; "Serbia never apologized for the crimes it committed"; and the slogan that had become Vetëvendosje's trademark: "No Negotiations – Self-Determination". Finally, as the EU counselor arrived by car and moved towards the entrance of the government building, the activists threw rotten tomatoes at him. This action was justified by saying that they "protested against the paternalistic and restrictive approach of the EU representative, Robert Cooper, and against the servile and shameful attitude of Kosovo government officials". Kosovo's Prime Minister's office immediately released a counter statement, declaring that: "Irresponsible persons threw tomatoes at Mr. Cooper. Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi condemns this act, which damages the European image of the Republic of Kosovo" (Aliu 2012a).

In this thesis I will look at the contentious political debate between Kosovo's governing party, the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK),<sup>3</sup> and Vetëvendosje on the EU-brokered Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, which started in March 2011. Over the past five years, Vetëvendosje has continuously critiqued and challenged the PDK for engaging in this dialogue. Through the analytical lens of Benford and Snow's framing theory, I view the members of the PDK and Vetëvendosje as signifying agents, who have together been embroiled in 'the politics of signification',<sup>4</sup> that is, they have been 'fighting a battle' over the hegemonic meaning – the meaning believed and followed by different audiences – of the

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of the readability of this thesis I will employ the international name of 'Kosovo' for the territory that is referred to as 'Kosovo and Metohija' in Serbian and 'Kosova' in Albanian. Likewise, I refer to Kosovo's capital city as 'Pristina', rather than 'Prishtinë' in Albanian or 'Priština' in Serbian.

<sup>2</sup> Although its official name is Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE!, I refer to the political party as 'Vetëvendosje' for the sake of this thesis' readability.

<sup>3</sup> After the elections in 2007, 2010, and again in 2014, the PDK came out as Kosovo's largest party, and has been in government throughout those years. Whereas in 2007 and 2010, the PDK delivered Kosovo's Prime Minister, Hashim Thaçi, after a six-months political stalemate in 2014, the PDK and the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) eventually decided the LDK's party leader, Isa Mustafa, would fulfil that position. Even though Mustafa has been Kosovo's representative to engage in the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue since its resumption in February 2015, in this research I focus on the PDK as representing Kosovo's government because this party has made the decision to join the dialogue in March 2011; has been responsible for the dialogue the longest, and continues to be involved up to this day. See Cocozzelli 2013; Qirezi 2016.

<sup>4</sup> See Hall 1982.



Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue. I argue that at the core of this 'battle' lies a disagreement on what the dialogue means for Kosovo as a state. On the one hand, the PDK has maintained its participation will strengthen Kosovo's statehood through the achievement of further international recognition of its independence, in particular of Serbia. Vetëvendosje has, on the other hand, argued that Kosovo's statehood will be undermined and harmed by this engagement, as Serbia does not recognize Kosovo's independence and continues to claim it is an integral part of its territory and sovereignty. Over the past five years, the two parties have vied to advance their own particular stance, and they have therewith attempted to gain the acceptance as the legitimate representative of Kosovo, all the while upholding to be speaking in the name of the Republic. In their contentious political debate on the effect that this dialogue has on Kosovo's statehood, the PDK and Vetëvendosje have, furthermore, disagreed on the very nature of that statehood: on what kind of state Kosovo *is* and *should be*, as well as *whose* state it is. Therefore, the main objective of this research is to reach an understanding of how, in this debate, these political parties have created, upheld and promoted frames of Kosovar statehood. Drawing on framing theory, I define a frame of statehood as an interpretive schema that punctuates and encodes how a state *is* and *should become*, as well as *who* the rightful 'owners' of that state are. Thus, the main research question is formulated accordingly:

How have the Democratic Party of Kosovo and Lëvizja Vetëvendosje employed frames of Kosovar statehood in their efforts to produce and maintain the hegemonic meaning of the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue in Kosovo between March 2011 and May 2016?

The core argument of this thesis is that the PDK presents the frame of Kosovar statehood of Kosovo as a multicultural, civic and European state, whilst Vetëvendosje employs the frame of Kosovo as a state *of* and *for* the Kosovo ethnic-Albanians. Furthermore, through their contentious political debate over how Kosovo's state apparatus should be established and further developed, these political parties dispute Kosovo's nationhood: how the 'nation' should be defined and understood, and thus who 'belongs to' that 'nation', and who does not.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> It is important to note that in this research a distinction is made between statehood and nationhood. With statehood, I refer to the quality of having a state in legal and institutional terms. Statehood concerns issues of sovereignty, territory, independence, state recognition, and in the case of Kosovo: possible EU membership. The nation, on the other hand, is the state's imagined community; it is "the citizenry, to the extent that it becomes a unit of identity and loyalty – to the extent, that is, that citizens recognize one another as 'belonging together' in a subjective, 'internal' sense rather than as simply belonging to the state in a formal, external sense." (Brubaker 1996: 80-81). State and nationhood should, however, be understood in relation to each other, because the way in which the state apparatus

Empirically, this case study is relevant in that it contributes to the existing literature on Kosovo's contentious politics. Whereas a lot has been written on Kosovo's claim of statehood as challenged by Serbia,<sup>6</sup> or the international community's involvement in Kosovo's statebuilding processes,<sup>7</sup> less has been written about Kosovo's internal dynamics, particularly on how its statehood is contested by different local, collective actors.

Furthermore, when positioning this research within the literature on nationalizing nationalisms of newly independent states, of which Rogers Brubaker is one of the main contributing authors, this case study is significant in that it exposes a neglected notion that allows me to build upon this framework. According to Brubaker, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia during the 1990s meant the reorganization of political space along ostensibly national lines, creating Europe's youngest nation-states. Yet, this reorganization also resulted in many individuals to become residents or citizens of a nation-state that they did not 'belong to' in ethnonational terms. As a result, nationalisms were now bound together in a triad linking national minorities, the newly 'nationalizing' state in which they live, and the external national 'homelands' to which they 'belong' by ethnocultural affinity. Notably, nationalism of the 'nationalizing' kind results from the perception that the nation-state is insufficiently 'national', despite of its newly attained independence. Therefore, state power is used to promote the interests of the 'core nation', which is defined in ethnocultural terms and is understood as the legitimate 'owner' of the state (1996). Brubaker has argued that "almost all of the new states [...] will be nationalizing states to some degree and in *some* form", and even in states with "models of interethnic harmony" one can find 'nationalizing' elements. Brubaker concludes, "the question is therefore not *whether* the new states will be nationalizing, but *how* they will be nationalizing - and *how nationalizing* they will be" (Brubaker 1996: 106). Nonetheless, the author has paid insufficient attention to *how* this process of nationalization is initiated, by whom, and whether it is subject to disagreement or even contentious politics. Another author, David Smith, who has responded to Brubaker's work, has made a step into the right direction by arguing that within the fields of the 'nationalizing state', national minority and external national 'homeland', different actors challenge one another through which they vie to advance their own stances and positions, yet has failed to further develop this claim. The contentious political debate between the PDK and Vetëvendosje on the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue shows that in the case of Kosovo, nationalization does not 'just' happen, as these collective actors make opposing claims on what kind of state Kosovo should be. Therefore, I build on Brubaker's framework through

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is established and developed, is dependent on how the 'nation' is defined and understood (Brubaker, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> See for example ICG 2008; Ker-Lindsay 2009.

<sup>7</sup> See for example Yannis 2004; Koeth 2010; Tierney 2011; Van der Borgh 2012; Bislimi 2012.

shedding theoretical light on how nationalization of a newly independent state – or the alleged lack thereof – can subject to contentious politics.

In this research, I follow a case study method, as I examine the contentious political debate between the PDK and Vetëvendosje in light of its historical context of having been part of and repressed in the multinational Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the history of the Kosovo War, and the previous attempts of the international community to broker a political deal between the representatives of Kosovo and Serbia. Moreover, this case is examined within its contemporary context of Kosovo's political field. In order to analyze the framing efforts of the PDK and Vetëvendosje, I base my analysis on different direct sources of framing data, including the collective actors' speech acts, other discursive material as published in news articles of *Balkan Insight*, and face-to-face as well as email interviews that were conducted during a three-week-long fieldwork trip to Kosovo from 13 May until 4 June 2016. Through analyzing the logics and arguments these collective actors have presented in their debate, I determine their diagnostic and prognostic framing efforts, counterframings, and finally, the frames of Kosovar statehood they have put forward.

With regard to the outline, this thesis is split into three chapters. The first chapter expands on the academic debate on 'nationalizing' states, and presents the analytical framework of framing theory. Furthermore, the second chapter provides the historical and contemporary context of the political debate between the PDK and Vetëvendosje. Subsequently, the third chapter includes the main analysis of frames of Kosovar statehood as presented by these political parties. Finally, the third chapter draws a conclusion and discusses possibilities for further research.

## **CHAPTER I: STUDYING FRAMES OF STATEHOOD**

This chapter contains four sections. First, the academic debate of nationalizing nationalisms of newly independent states is discussed, in which this research is positioned. Secondly, in order to explain how the 'frames of statehood' as created and presented by the PDK and Vetëvendosje are examined, the analytical framework of Benford and Snow's framing theory is expanded upon. Thirdly, the overall research design is outlined, and finally, the limitations to this research are addressed.

### **1.1 'Nationalizing' Nationalisms of Newly Independent States**

When in 1996, Rogers Brubaker published his book *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*, most studies of nationalism as a form of politics had been developmentalist, and focused on polity-seeking nationalist movements.<sup>8</sup> In an effort to shed some theoretical light on what he called 'polity-based, nation-shaping or nation-promoting nationalisms', which aim to nationalize an already existing polity, Brubaker developed a framework for the analysis of ethnocultural 'nationalizing' states. Brubaker drew on the experience of the new nation-states that came into being during the 1990s when the last of Europe's multinational states disappeared. The dissolution of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia meant the reorganization of political space along ostensibly national lines, a process that had started in the aftermath of the First World War but had temporarily halted. Evidently, nationalism, which Brubaker defines as a form of remedial political action that draws on the sentiment "that the identity and interests of a putative nation are not properly expressed or realized in political institutions, practices, or policies" (Brubaker 1996: 79), remained central in these newly created states.

The post-World War I and post-Communist reorganizations of political space, however, resulted in tens of millions of people being assigned to and becoming residents or citizens of a nation-state that they did not 'belong to' in ethnonational terms. In other words, they were "mismatched," that is, "attached to formal citizenship to one state," "yet by ethnonational affinity to another" (Brubaker 1996: 7). As a result, the national question was recast in a new form; nationalisms as produced by this redrawing of political boundaries along national lines, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, were now bound together in "a triad linking national minorities, the newly 'nationalizing' states in which they live, and the external national 'homelands' to which they belong, or can be construed as belonging, by ethnocultural affinity though not by legal citizenship" (Brubaker 1996: 4). In this triad, the national minority is caught between the two nationalisms of the 'nationalizing' state and the

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<sup>8</sup> See for example Gellner 1983; Anderson 1991; Smith 1986; Hobsbawm 1990, as mentioned in Brubaker 1994.

external national 'homeland'. On the one hand, the former results from the 'nationalizing' state being conceived as "the state *of* and *for* a particular ethnocultural 'core nation'" (Brubaker 1996: 103). Nonetheless, the 'core nation' continues to be seen as weak and insufficiently 'national'. To remedy this weakness and to compensate for the discrimination the nation faced before it secured independence, the 'nationalizing' elites implement policies and practices promoting "the language, culture, demographic preponderance, economic flourishing, or political hegemony of the core ethnocultural nation" (Brubaker 1996: 9). On the other hand, the nationalism of the external national 'homeland' results from that state's assertion of having the right or even duty to protect 'its' ethnonational community in the 'nationalizing' state. In turn, the national minority has its own nationalism, which typically involves the demand for state-recognition of its ethnocultural nationality (Brubaker 1996).

The notion of 'nationalizing' states has been critiqued particularly by Taras Kuzio, who argues that, in applying the concept solely to inter-war and post-Communist Eastern Europe; Brubaker has followed Kohn's tradition<sup>9</sup> of judging nationalism of the 'civic West' as good, and nationalism of the 'ethnic East' as bad. This "ignores the fact that nation- and state-building in the West was also of the 'nationalizing' variety - although six or seven generations earlier" (Kuzio 2001: 143). Brubaker himself responded to this critique by maintaining it is unwarranted as his "argument is not that homogenizing policies or processes are distinctive to the post-Soviet or East European context," but that the institutional legacy of the multinational state help explain the nationalizing discourse in the successor states (Brubaker 2011: 1810). Taking the Soviet Union as example, Brubaker argues it was its system of institutionalized multi-nationality, in which nationhood was promoted on a sub-state level, and the simultaneous state-wide economic integration leading "to linguistic and demographic Russification" that fostered the nationalization of the successor states (Brubaker 2011: 1787). Ethnocultural nations were given national territories, legitimizing their sense of 'ownership' over 'their' republic, and people were categorized by 'nationality' that received preferential treatment when in 'their own' territory. This resulted in the common "habit of distinguishing between the core, state-bearing nation [...] and the total population of the republic," all in all creating the breeding ground for nationalism (Brubaker 2011: 1787).

Another critic, David Smith, has argued that Brubaker has paid insufficient attention to the role that international organizations continue to play in shaping the post-Communist political identity of Central and Eastern Europe. Rather than a triad, Smith proposes a quadratic nexus, linking 'nationalizing' states, national minorities and external national 'homelands' to a 'Euro-Atlantic space', which he defines as a field comprising discourses on 'Europeanization' and 'Westernization'. The author argues that the political debates on

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<sup>9</sup> See Kohn 1955.

nationbuilding in Central and Eastern Europe have centered on the two themes of 'national self-assertion' on the one hand, and 'Europeanization' on the other, and during the late 1980s and early 1990s, these two discourses were complementary inasmuch as "membership of western civilization and the 'family of democratic European nations'" were seen as self-evident (Smith 2002: 9).

In examining both the historical and contemporary context of the political debate between the PDK and Vetëvendosje on the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, Brubaker's analytical concepts of the 'nationalizing' state, the external national 'homeland', and the national minority, as well as Smith's contributing concept of an 'Euro-Atlantic space', are useful. Following the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY),<sup>10</sup> Kosovo – having been denied the possibility to claim independence as an autonomous province – remained part of what was now the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) (Bieber 2015). Whereas the 'core nation' of the FRY were the ethnic-Serbs, the ethnic-Albanians that predominantly lived in Kosovo, were the increasingly suppressed national minority. Rising tensions between the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and the FRY eventually culminated in the Kosovo War in March 1998, which was brought to an end with the bombing campaign of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in March-June 1999 (Tierney 2011). NATO's intervention meant the beginning of the international community's involvement in Kosovo's peace and statebuilding processes, as well as an implicated discourse on Kosovo's 'Europeanization', resulting in the presence of a significant 'Euro-Atlantic space' in Kosovo's political field (Bislimi 2012). When Kosovo declared itself independent on 17 February 2008 with the help of the United States and several EU Member States, it became the last successor state of the SFRY to attain independence.<sup>11</sup> As for the Serbs in Kosovo, the province's newly acquired statehood and independence from Serbia, meant a change in their societal position, as they went from being the FRY's 'core nation', to Kosovo's national minority<sup>12</sup> with Serbia as their external national 'homeland'. During and after the Kosovo War, thousands of Serbs fled to Serbia, the Serb-dominated regions in northern Kosovo, and into enclaves in southern Kosovo (Van der Borgh 2012). Today, many Kosovo Serbs are hardly integrated into

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<sup>10</sup> After the dissolution of the SFRY five independent states were established: the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), which included Serbia, and thus Kosovo, and Montenegro, as well as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia and Slovenia (Tierney 2011).

<sup>11</sup> By 2015, some 112 states had recognized Kosovo as an independent, sovereign state. Notably, five EU Member States – Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain – do not recognize Kosovo (Bieber 2015).

<sup>12</sup> According to an estimation of the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States in 2011, Albanians make up 92.9% of the population, and Serbs 1.5%, although the latter number is likely to be higher because it excludes the four northern Serb-majority municipalities and the research was partially boycotted by Serb communities in southern Kosovo. Most interviewees spoke of a 5% Serb minority. Other minorities include the Bosniaks, Turks, Ashkali, Egyptian, Gorani and Roma. *See:* <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2075.html#kv>

Kosovo's central state system, and Serbia's government continues to assert her right and duty to protect and care for 'her' community in Kosovo. Thus, when the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue was organized in March 2011, the Serbian government still had, and funded parallel<sup>13</sup> state structures in northern Kosovo that many Kosovo Serbs relied on for their livelihood. The dispute between the governments of Kosovo and Serbia, therefore, was most acute in northern Kosovo, which both governments claimed as being part of their sovereign territory (ICG 2011; Bieber 2015). Since 2012, it has been these issues – the rivalry between Kosovo and Serbia and the lack of integration of the North into Kosovo – that the EU has attempted to resolve through the organization and facilitation of the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue.

Over the past five years, the PDK and Vetëvendosje have been involved in a contentious political debate on the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, in which they have disputed the effect that it will have on Kosovo's statehood. In this debate, these two collective actors have confronted and challenged one another on their stances, through which they have attempted to gain, strengthen, or keep the acceptance as the legitimate representative of Kosovo. In this research, I view the PDK and Vetëvendosje's dispute over the meaning of the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue as part of the larger constellation of contentious politics<sup>14</sup> in Kosovo, in which different actors dispute how Kosovo's statehood should be established, and who the rightful and most competent defenders of that statehood are. This debate takes place in the continuously contested political space of Kosovo, in which different nationalisms, including the 'nationalizing' kind, as well as a discourse on 'Europeanization', are manifested, interacting and interlocking. Through their disagreement on how Kosovo's state apparatus should be established and further developed, the PDK and Vetëvendosje are also involved in a dispute over how Kosovo's 'nation' should be defined and understood. In other words, these collective actors dispute *whose* state Kosovo is, and *for whom*.

This debate exposes a neglected notion in Brubaker and Smith's analyses. Brubaker's work has focused on the 'nationalizing' policies, discourses, practices and processes as visible in the successor states of particularly the Soviet Union, and how they can be explained when considering the state practices of the former multinational state (1994; 1996; 2004; 2011). Additionally, Smith has emphasized the role that organizations such as the EU play in constructing the post-Communist political identity of Central and Eastern Europe. In his article responding to Brubaker's work, the author argued that in the case of Estonia, on the

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<sup>13</sup> From the point of view of the Kosovo government these structures are parallel. Serbia, however, views the Kosovar state structures as parallel (ICG 2011).

<sup>14</sup> According to Tilly and Tarrow, "contentious politics involves interactions in which actors make claims bearing on other actor's interests, leading to coordinated efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs, in which governments are involved as targets, initiators of claims or third parties. Contentious politics thus brings together three familiar features of social life: contention, collective action, and politics" (2015: 7).

one hand, minority and homeland nationalists were offered the possibility to appeal to the EU in order to pressure the state government to offer them more rights and freedoms. On the other hand, "the vagueness of European norms and the lack of consensus over what constitutes a 'national minority'" made it possible for the 'nationalizing' elites to "reconcile its own domestic 'nationalizing' agenda with the requirements of Europeanization" (Smith 2002: 12). Both Brubaker and Smith have, however, paid insufficient attention to the way in which nationalization is demanded, initiated, and contested by different collective actors in a newly independent state. In an attempt to fill this gap, the PDK and Vetëvendosje's dispute over Kosovo's statehood is examined, as it is manifested in their contentious political debate on the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue. Whereas Brubaker asserted that 'nationalizing' nationalisms within the frame of independent states do not usually involve distinct movements but rather becomes an 'aspect' of politics, Vetëvendosje can be easily identified as such a movement (1996). Furthermore, as will be shown, this case study illustrates how 'nationalization' does not 'just' happen, but is demanded as well as rejected and opposed. I will now consider this research' analytical framework in order to explain how I use the concept of 'frames of statehood' to examine the collective actors' claims regarding Kosovo's statehood.

## **1.2. Theoretical Lens: Framing Theory**

In framing theory, scholars are interested in 'meaning work', which is the struggle over the production of mobilizing and countermobilizing ideas as well as meanings. Focusing on social movements, Robert Benford and David Snow have argued that movement actors<sup>15</sup> should be viewed as signifying agents who seek to affect the interpretations of reality among different audiences. They do this through 'framing', which refers to processes associated with assigning meaning to, or interpreting, "relevant events and conditions in ways intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists" (Snow and Benford 1988: 198). 'Framing' is an "active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction" (Benford and Snow 2000: 614). It is a way of defining, reframing, and interpreting reality that is collectively created and passed on (Benford 1997). The result is a 'frame', which is an interpretive schema "that simplifies and condenses the 'world out there' by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences and sequences of actions within one's present or past

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<sup>15</sup> Admitting the members of the PDK and Vetëvendosje are not necessarily social movement actors – though some argue Vetëvendosje continues to be a social movement despite of the organization's institutionalization as a political party in 2010 – I maintain that they are collective actors involved in framing processes in their contentious political debate on the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue. Snow et al. have also argued that the process of meaning construction "is foundational to all forms of human interaction," and framing therefore does not 'belong' to the study of social movements (Snow et al. 2014: 38).



environment" (Snow and Benford 1992: 137). Through framing, movement actors are involved in the interrelated processes of 'consensus mobilization', and 'action mobilization'. Whereas the former facilitates agreement, the latter fosters action, "moving people from the balcony to the barricades" (Benford and Snow 2000: 615).

According to the authors, successful mobilization of either agreement or action depends on the persuasive articulation and amplification of shared grievances as well as the development of compelling vocabularies of motive or rationales for taking action. This is done through the core framing tasks of 'diagnostic', 'prognostic' and 'motivational framing'. Firstly, diagnostic framing refers to the process in which signifying actors identify problems, render them urgent and in need of change, and make attributions of who or what is to blame. Secondly, prognostic framing involves the articulation of an alternative set of arrangements, solutions to the identified problems, a better reality, and a strategy as to how this reality can be achieved. Finally, motivational framing is the urging of others to affect change, which is done through the employment of "vocabularies of severity, urgency, efficacy, and propriety," providing "adherents compelling accounts for engaging in collective action and for sustaining their participation" (Benford and Snow 2000: 617). Additionally, movement actors may be confronted with, or confront others, with so-called 'counterframings', which are broadly defined as "the opponent's attempts to rebut, undermine, or neutralize the movement's collective action frames" (Benford and Zuo 1995: 139). Drawing on these analytical concepts, I define a frame of statehood as an interpretive schema that punctuates and encodes how a state *is* and *should become*, as well as *who* are the rightful owners of that state. Such a frame, if accepted, allows individuals to understand the world, their place in that world, as well as their 'national', cultural and social identity.

Whether frames resonate is not only depended on how good actors are at framing. It also depends on the frames' 'empirical credibility', that is, whether they are consistent with what the audiences know and believe about the world. Likewise, the extent to which the claims are consistent with the actors' biographies matters, which the authors refer to as 'experiential commensurability' (Benford and Snow 1988).

Drawing on Benford and Snow's framing theory for my analytical lens has implications for the ontological and epistemological stances of this research. Epistemologically, framing theory upholds an interpretive stance as it seeks to understand the meaning of action. More specifically, scholars are concerned with the ways in which actors construct and negotiate meaning, and they are therein confronted with "the 'double hermeneutic': they aim to acquire knowledge by making an (academic) interpretation of how actors understand their social world" (Demmers 2012: 16). Ontologically, framing theory "emphasizes how structures and agents stand in a dialectical relationship to each other: they

are seen as constitutive entities" (Demmers 2012: 137). It supports the idea of individuals as having 'agency', particularly with regard to reality construction, yet at the same time, these individuals are seen as embedded in society, and influenced by the discursive, social and political 'structures' that tell actors 'how to do' social life (Demmers 2012).

In this thesis, I will limit myself to the analysis of the PDK's and Vetëvendosje's 'diagnostic' and 'prognostic framing' efforts, leaving out 'motivational framing'. First of all, I do this because the focus in this research will lie at the dynamics and interactions between the PDK and Vetëvendosje, rather than between the two parties and their audiences, such as the Kosovar electorate, and the EU. Secondly, I intend to examine how the PDK and Vetëvendosje have battled over the hegemonic meaning of the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, and in my analysis I find their framing efforts can predominantly be ascribed to 'prognostic' and 'diagnostic framing'. I therefore pose the following subquestions:

1. What logics and arguments does the PDK employ in order to construct frames that identify a set of problems Kosovo faces, for which the EU-facilitated dialogue with Serbia is articulated and promoted as a legitimate and necessary strategy to remedy them?
2. How does Vetëvendosje employ logics and arguments in order to construct frames that identify a set of problems that it associates with the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue and focuses blame and responsibility on the PDK as governing party?
3. How does Vetëvendosje employ logics and arguments in order to construct a frame that identifies a strategy as how to remedy this set of problems?
4. How have the PDK and Vetëvendosje attempted to rebut, undermine or neutralize the other's framing of the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue with counterframings?

According to Benford and Zuo, these diagnostic and prognostic framing efforts comprise 'micromobilization', which is the process through which the 'objective' reality is framed in a way that inspires the audience to act or agree. The authors have argued that one should, however, also pay attention to 'mesomobilization', that is, the pre-existing social networks and indigenous organizations are used by movements in their development. Therefore, I will consider the becoming of both the PDK and Vetëvendosje and examine which social networks and indigenous organizations these political parties have been able to build upon in the following chapter. Additionally, Benford and Zuo have suggested that 'macromobilization' should also be taken into account, which involves the institutional forces and political opportunity structures that facilitate actors in their framing efforts (1995).

However, rather than focusing on the structures of political opportunity, I view the organization and facilitation of the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue by the EU as a more volatile opening up of a 'window of opportunity'<sup>16</sup> that the PDK and Vetëvendosje could make use of to further their position within Kosovo's political field. Exactly how this dialogue served as a 'window of opportunity', I will likewise discuss in chapter two.

### **1.3. Research Design**

The main and subquestions posed in this thesis bear implications for the design of this study. Therefore, I will outline the research design, explain how the data has been collected, and highlight the limitations to this research.

In this research I follow a case study method, which is "an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin 2014: 16). This case study examines the way in which the PDK and Vetëvendosje have employed frames of Kosovar statehood in their efforts to produce and maintain the hegemonic meaning of the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue. This case cannot be separated from its context of Kosovo having been part of and repressed in the multinational Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the history of the Kosovo War, as well as the contemporary situation of Kosovo's political field comprising interlinking nationalisms and a 'Euro-Atlantic space'.

In order to analyze the framing efforts of the PDK and Vetëvendosje, I have employed three so-called "direct sources of framing data" that are widely used in framing literature, which include: 1) signifying actors' produced speech acts, such as newsletters, speeches, leaflets, articles and websites; 2) newspapers or other media sources that include these actors' discursive material; 3) interviews with the signifying actors (Snow et al. 2014). Over the course of February-May 2016, I have gathered, systemized and analyzed a large amount of speeches, leaflets, articles, and published interviews that were available on different websites of the Kosovo government, and predominantly included discursive material produced by high-ranking PDK members. Similarly, I have analyzed akin sources as generated by high as well as low-ranking Vetëvendosje members, which were widely available on their website. Additionally, I have considered discursive material of PDK and

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<sup>16</sup> Political opportunities can be broadly defined as "*consistent but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national signals to social or political actors which either encourage or discourage them to use their internal resources to form social movements*" (Tarrow 1996: 54, emphasis in original, in Giugni 2009: 361). Mostly European scholars have looked at political opportunity structures, that is, the stable aspects of political opportunities, attempting to explain cross-national differences in the forms, levels and success of social movements. Particularly American scholars have focused on the volatile aspects of political opportunities, or, 'windows of opportunity', in attempting to explain the emergence or development over time of a social movement on the basis of changes in the institutionalized political system or configuration of power (Giugni 2009).

Vetëvendosje members as quoted and published in news articles of Balkan Insight, which is the news website of the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN). Finally, I am basing my analysis on a three-week-long fieldwork trip to Kosovo from 13 May until 4 June 2016. By way of purposive sampling, I have interviewed Albin Kurti, the founder, former leader and current parliamentary member of Vetëvendosje in an in-depth semi-structured interview. Additionally, I have interviewed Petrit Selimi, who is the former Minister and current Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Edita Tahiri, who headed the Kosovar delegation partaking in the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue in the first year, after which she has been involved fulfilling the position of Minister for Dialogue, over e-mail.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, through expert sampling, I found six journalists, think-tank researchers and political commentators with whom I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews, asking them questions on how the PDK and Vetëvendosje have interacted in the political debate since March 2011, what arguments they have brought forward with regard to the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, and how their arguments and tactics have developed over time. Through analyzing the logics and arguments the members of the PDK and Vetëvendosje have presented in their debate, I determine their diagnostic and prognostic framing efforts, counterframings, and finally, the frames of Kosovar statehood they have put forward. Furthermore, in providing context information, I will mainly use information gathered through the interview with the 'experts', news articles, as well as secondary sources, particularly academic articles and books.

#### **1.4. The Limitations to This Research**

Several limitations to this research design should be taken into account. First and foremost, this research is limited to the analysis of the framing efforts of the members of the political party PDK, which has been in the Kosovar government since 2007, and the members of Vetëvendosje, which has been in the opposition since its transformation from a social movement to a political party in 2010. One should bear in mind the many other players that have, in varying degrees, been embroiled in the dispute over the meaning of this dialogue, and have been involved in framing processes therein. Examples are political elites of the US and Germany, the EU, other Kosovar political parties in government or opposition, the international and Kosovar media, and foreign as well as domestic NGO's. By the same token, the other party directly engaged in the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, that is, the leading politicians of the Serbian government, have also been involved in framing processes regarding the meaning of this dialogue, undoubtedly affecting the political debate within

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<sup>17</sup> One could critique interviews as conducted over e-mail as a flawed method of data collection because the chance exists that the interviewees delegate answering the questions to subordinates. I, however, estimate this chance as unlikely, and this research' focus on elite speech – and the fact that political elites are often supported by subordinates – renders this possible limitation unproblematic.

Kosovo. These actors' framing efforts are, however, outside of the scope of this thesis. Besides, within Kosovo's political field, the PDK and Vetëvendosje have essentially dominated this debate. Secondly, as touched upon before, this research is unable to answer the question of how the two parties' framing efforts have affected their position within Kosovo's political field, nor which side's frames are mostly believed and adopted by the different audiences, such as the Kosovar electorate and the international community. Thirdly, because of the relatively short time span in which this research has been conducted, the focus will lie at the general framing efforts of the PDK and Vetëvendosje, rather than their framing as adapted and changed over time.

On a final note, Benford has warned scholars of framing literature to avoid reifying social movements, or in this case political parties, as "speaking", "framing", or "acting", which are activities only human beings are capable of doing (1997). This is a fair critique, however, in sake of the readability of this thesis, I do speak of the PDK and Vetëvendosje as "framing", with which I refer to the *human* members of these parties. Another critique Benford has posed is that scholars are guilty of an 'elite bias', meaning they "focus on the framings of movement elites to the neglect of rank-and-file participants, potential recruits, bystanders, and others" (Benford 1997: 421). However, this research' main focus lies on the framing efforts of the political elites of the PDK and Vetëvendosje, and this 'elite bias' is therefore fully intentional.

## **CHAPTER II: KOSOVO'S DISPUTED STATEHOOD**

In order to come to a better understanding of the political debate between the PDK and Vetëvendosje on the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, one should consider the dispute over Kosovo's statehood both in its historical and contemporary context. This chapter has two main objectives. First, it will consider Kosovo's disputed statehood since the Kosovo War, and thus provide a factual account of the violent conflict and post-conflict situation in Kosovo. Secondly, it will examine how, after Kosovo attained independence, the PDK and Vetëvendosje developed into being the main collective actors to internally contest how Kosovo's statehood should be established. Therefore, the creation and development of the PDK and Vetëvendosje is examined, through considering the social networks and indigenous organizations these political parties have built on, and finally, the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue is analyzed as being a 'window of opportunity' they could make use of.

### **2.1 The Kosovo War and Rambouillet**

The conflict over Kosovo's status knows a lengthy trajectory, with inter-ethnic tensions between ethnic-Albanians and Serbs long preceding Kosovo's fight for independence from Serbia (Guzina and Marijan 2014). Most relevant for this research is the period leading up to the violent conflict, the Kosovo War itself, and the post-conflict situation in the region.

When Kosovo was a province within the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), it enjoyed a great deal of autonomy. Following the dissolution of the SFRY, Kosovo was, however, brought under the direct authority of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) by the Serbian President Slobodan Milošević in March 1989. Particularly when in February and March 1998, FRY security forces attacked a KLA stronghold in the Drenica Valley, targeting not only militants but also civilians, rising tensions between the FRY and the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) resulted in the Kosovo War. When FRY troops began an ethnic cleansing campaign of the ethnic-Albanians in Kosovo, forcing them to flee to Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro, the international community considered the conflict a humanitarian crisis and began to respond (Tierney 2011).

The lead was taken by the Contact Group, which included the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy and representatives from the European Union Presidency and the European Commission. Throughout the spring of 1998, the Contact Group tried to convince the FRY to enter into internationally mediated negotiations with Kosovo's governing party, the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK). The LDK was elected already in 1992 in a 'parallel' government, and its leader, Ibrahim Rugova, had distanced himself from the KLA's militant strategy. The FRY leadership refused and the following six months were marked by a growing cycle of violence and a tense refugee situation (Weller 1999). Finally, in October 1998, when NATO threatened to intervene militarily, Serbia accepted an

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) peace mission to enter Kosovo (Bislimi 2012). When the OSCE reported a massacre of 45 civilian ethnic-Albanians by the FRY forces on 15 January 1999, the Contact Group decided to act. In the two months that followed, the Rambouillet Conference was organized, to which delegations of the FRY and Serbia, as well as Kosovo were invited. Notably, the Kosovo delegation included representatives of Rugova's government, of several united opposition parties, as well as five members of the KLA. Due to the LDK's continuous insistence upon obtaining independence for Kosovo in a peaceful manner, the party had lost support and legitimacy as the Kosovo War turned increasingly violent. As a result, rather than Rugova, Hashim Thaçi of the KLA was appointed leader of the delegation (Weller 1999).

At Rambouillet, the Kosovo representatives argued that with the dissolution of the SFRY, the province should be entitled to opt for independent statehood. The governments and international organizations involved in the negotiations, however, "took a restrictive view of constitutional self-determination and did not accept a right to statehood for Kosovo. Instead, they insisted that its human rights should be respected and that meaningful self-administration should be restored" (Weller 1999: 215). After much negotiation, both in Rambouillet and later in Paris during follow-up talks, the 'Interim Agreement for Peace and Self-Government in Kosovo' was proposed, also referred to as the 'Rambouillet Accords'. Whereas the Kosovo delegation signed the Accords, the FRY/Serbian delegation refused to do so. When the FRY leadership appeared impossible to persuade otherwise, and engaged in further offensive operations, targeting entire ethnic-Albanian villages, the international community acknowledged that the Rambouillet Conference had failed (Weller 1999).

As a response, NATO, without the approval of the UN Security Council, commenced a bombing campaign targeting Serbian military facilities in both Serbia and Kosovo on 24 March 1999 (Fenrick 2001). After the bombing campaign lasted seventy-seven day, the campaign was suspended as the FRY forces had started their withdrawal (Bislimi 2012).

## **2.2 Kosovo's International Administration and the Declaration of Independence**

With the suspension of NATO's bombing campaign, on 10 June 1999, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1244, which announced the Council's decision to replace FRY authorities with the deployment of international civil and security presences in Kosovo, respectively the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the UN-mandated Kosovo Force (KFOR), a NATO US-led military mission. Furthermore, the Resolution gave effect to the Rambouillet Accords in that it called for 'meaningful self-governance' (Yannis 2004). Yet, the international community postponed making a final

decision on Kosovo's status, "which had become the main bone of contention between the Serbian minority in Kosovo and the majority Kosovo Albanians" (Van der Borgh 2012: 31).

During and after the war, the Serb population, which had lived throughout Kosovo, fled to Serbia, the northern municipalities of Leposavic, Zubin Potok and Zvecan and a part of the Mitrovica municipality north of the Ibar River, or into enclaves in Southern Kosovo. Discarding UNMIK, the government of Serbia and the Serb minority established their own parallel structures in northern Kosovo, reorganizing the remnants of the old regime, and directly linking them to Serbia's state structures. The Kosovo Serbs feared Albanian leadership, and therefore overwhelmingly cleaved to Serbia (ICG 2011).

Faced with this difficult political reality, UNMIK delayed transferring power to local institutions, did little to promote local ownership of Kosovo's reconstruction, and avoided to engage in a discussion on Kosovo's status in the first three years following the war (Visoka 2011). This made UNMIK widely unpopular among the Kosovo Albanians, who scornfully referred to the UN mission as 'anmik', which means 'enemy' in Kosovo-Albanian (Koeth 2010). The UN realized it did not have the capacity to remain responsible for Kosovo's administration forever, and a process was initiated in which parts of the authority were devolved to the newly established Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG). Furthermore, the UN adopted a 'Standards before Status' policy in 2002, which outlined benchmarks that Kosovo had to achieve before a decision could be made on Kosovo's status (Koeth 2010). The absence of a clear road map on the future status of Kosovo, however, "posed a virtually insurmountable obstacle in the efforts of the international administration to bring lasting peace and stability" (Yannis 2004: 75).

By the year of 2004, events on the ground, including violent anti-Serb riots in March, forced the international community to put the issue of Kosovo's status back on its agenda (Visoka 2011). Following a report by UN envoy Kai Eide in 2005, which confirmed the unsustainability of the status quo, the UN organized indirect talks between Serbia and Kosovo in Vienna in February 2006. Matti Ahtisaari, the former Finnish president, was responsible for the mediation, and one year later, Ahtisaari presented his draft 'Comprehensive Status Proposal' (CSP) to both sides, in which he recommended conditional independence supervised by the international community for Kosovo (Koeth 2010). Unsurprisingly, the Serbian representatives, who feared being associated with a process that would result in a loosening Serbian grip on Kosovo, rejected the CSP, and the international community had to accept that after Rambouillet, this process too had failed (Koeth 2010; Bieber 2015). However, the US and several EU Member States hoped that the UN Security Council would nonetheless endorse the CSP with a new resolution that would supersede Resolution 1244. Due to the expected negative veto of Russia and China, however, these states finally decided



to bypass the UN Security Council, and helped the Kosovo leadership to declare Kosovo an independent state on 17 February 2008 (Koeth 2010; Visoka 2011).

### **2.3 The Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue**

After Kosovo had declared itself independent, Kosovo and Serbia's status dispute moved into the field of international law and diplomacy. Whilst the Kosovo leadership lobbied for the recognition of its independence from states and international organizations, the Serbian government did everything in her power to obstruct such recognitions (ICG 2010). That same year, the Serbian leadership was successful in convincing the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to request an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on whether Kosovo's declaration of independence violated international law (Bieber 2015). On 22 July 2010, the ICJ delivered its opinion, and taking a very narrow view by focusing solely on the legality of the declaration rather than the legality of Kosovo's statehood, the ICJ found that Kosovo's declaration of independence "did not violate general international law, Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) or the Constitutional Framework imposed by the United Nations Interim Administrative Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK)" (ICG 2010: 1). In a response, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Commission Vice-President, Catherine Ashton, declared the EU's readiness to facilitate a dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade in order to establish good neighborly relations between Kosovo and Serbia and to bring them both closer to the EU (European Commission 2010). Yet, ignoring the EU's call for such a dialogue, Serbia submitted a draft resolution to the UN General Assembly, calling for new talks on Kosovo's status at the end of July (Economides and Key-Lindsay 2015). Under considerable pressure of the EU, however, Serbia, 'co-sponsored' by the EU Member States, submitted a new draft resolution to the UNGA in September, in which Serbia now expressed its readiness to welcome an EU-facilitated dialogue with Kosovo (Tannam 2013). On 9 September 2010, the UNGA adopted the resolution, and welcomed the EU's readiness to facilitate a dialogue that "would help promote cooperation, achieve progress on the path to the European Union and improve the lives of the people" (UNGA 2010).

The Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue came after the international community had already made various attempts to broker a political deal between the representatives of Kosovo and Serbia, most notably at Rambouillet and Vienna. Although these negotiating processes had failed, the EU now hoped that the integration of the dialogue into Kosovo and Serbia's accession processes would make it a success (Bieber 2015). In the end, the dialogue fell into two parts. In a first "technical round," which took place between March 2011 and May 2012, the European External Action Service (EEAS) Counsellor Robert Cooper was responsible for

the mediation between Kosovo's delegation, which was headed by Deputy Prime Minister, Edita Tahiri, and the Serbian delegation, which was lead by the political director of Serbia's foreign ministry, Borko Stefanovic. In a so-called "political round", which started in October 2012 and is currently ongoing, High Representative Ashton mediated between the Prime Ministers of Serbia and Kosovo until March 2014, after which the dialogue temporarily halted. Following a break of a year, the "political round" resumed in February 2015, in which a new High Representative, Federica Mogherini, was responsible for the mediation. Whereas in the first round "technical" issues regarding trade, regional representation and freedom of movement for the citizens of Kosovo and Serbia were discussed, the second round revolved around finding a suitable solution to the lack of integration of the Serb minority, in particular in the North, into Kosovo (Hopkins 2014; Bieber 2015; Weber 2016).

From the very beginning of the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue it was clear the dialogue would be subject to a lot of controversy within Kosovo's political field. Just one day before the start of the dialogue, on 7 March 2011, a heated political debate in Kosovo's Assembly resulted in the postponing of a vote on two resolutions concerning "acceptable content of talks with Serbia", one of which was proposed by the PDK, and the other by Vetëvendosje. This was one of the first events at which the disagreement and contention between these two political parties with regard to the dialogue was so clearly evident. Despite of not having adopted a resolution, the dialogue commenced the next day in Brussels (Collaku 2011a; Hopkins, 2014). One day after the first round of talks, on 10 March, Kosovo's Assembly approved the resolution proposed by the PDK, which Vetëvendosje refused to sign (Collaku 2011b). The resolution stated that the "dialogue's agenda shall include only technical issues of a common interest, without touching at any moment the Kosovo sovereignty, subjectivity, territorial integrity and internal constitutional arrangements of Kosovo" (Republic of Kosovo 2011).

Between March 2011 and May 2012, nine meetings were organized and seven "technical agreements" were reached encompassing a variety of issues. Two agreements are most notable. First, Tahiri and Stefanovic signed an agreement on Custom Stamps, in which both parties agreed to accept each other's stamps, enabling free trade and the movement of products between Serbia and Kosovo. The products stemming from Kosovo would be labelled 'Kosovo Stamps', without state emblems, a flag or the word "republic", which would allow Serbia to interpret them as provincial stamps (Marzouk 2011). Vetëvendosje was quick in denouncing the agreement, and activists started a graffiti campaign, marking the words "Kosova Republikë", which means "Republic of Kosovo", throughout Pristina, arguing that leaving out the word "republic" irreversibly harmed Kosovo's sovereignty and independence (Aliu 2012b). Secondly, the Kosovo and Serbia delegations reached an agreement regarding

Kosovo's participation in regional forums and initiatives, as the Serbian government continued to refuse to attend conferences at which Kosovo was represented with its own state symbols. The delegations agreed that Kosovo would be regionally represented again under the name "Kosovo", with an asterisk referencing to the UN Resolution 1244, and the ICJ's opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence (Hopkins 2014). As soon as information regarding this agreement reached the Vetëvendosje office in Pristina, the opposition party organized a demonstration, which 800 to one thousand people attended, demanding the government's resignation (Aliu 2012c).

After a break that lasted several months, the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue continued with its "political" round. On 19 October 2012, under the auspices of Catherine Ashton, the first gathering of the political dialogue was established as the Prime Ministers of Serbia and Kosovo, Ivica Dačić and Hashim Thaçi, met in Brussels (Bajrami 2013). After ten rounds of talks, on 19 April 2013, Dačić and Thaçi reached "The First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations". In fifteen points, the agreement concerned the governance of the Serb-majority municipalities, and stipulated that they were now to be integrated in the institutional framework of Kosovo through the creation of an Association/Community<sup>18</sup> of the ten Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo (Beha 2015; EEAS, 2013). Like in the previous two years, Vetëvendosje denounced the agreement, and heavily critiqued the Kosovo government for signing it. The opposition party organized a sit-in protest in Pristina's city-centre, which finally turned violent as several activists clashed with the police (Aliu 2012d).

On 1 November 2014, Frederica Mogherini succeeded Catherine Ashton as the European Union's High Representative (EEAS 2014). Having to prioritize the violent conflict in Ukraine and refugee crisis particularly in Greece, it took several months before Mogherini initiated a resumption of the high level dialogue with the Prime Ministers of Serbia and Kosovo; positions that were now fulfilled by the newly elected Aleksandar Vučić and Isa Mustafa. Finally, after a 10 months pause, the first meeting of was organized on 9 and 10 February 2015 in Brussels (Hopkins 2015). Six months later, on 25 August 2015, Vučić and Mustafa reached an agreement on the implementation of the Association/Community of Serb majority municipalities in Kosovo, commonly referred to as the "August Agreement". The agreement stipulated that the body would be given considerable autonomy and the ability to self-govern the Serb-majority municipalities (EEAS 2015).

What followed were months of political turmoil in Kosovo. Activists of Vetëvendosje organized numerous protests against the Kosovo government, which often resulted in violent

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<sup>18</sup> The double naming of the Community/Association served to allow Kosovo and Serbia to interpret the entity in differing ways: Serbia continues to insist upon the entity to be a community, and Kosovo continues to maintain it is merely an inter-municipal association or NGO. *See* ICG 2013.

confrontations with the police. In several actions, MPs from Vetëvendosje obstructed parliamentary sessions by throwing eggs at Prime Minister Mustafa when he was defending the agreement. Also, Vetëvendosje, now supported by the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) and The Initiative for the Future of Kosovo (NISMA), blocked the speaker's pulpit in parliament, demanding the annulment of the agreements. Finally, in the months of October, November and December the MPs of Vetëvendosje set off tear gas canisters in parliament on several occasions (Mustafa and Popova 2015; Collaku 2015; BBC, 2015). Because of the continued disruption of Kosovo's Parliament, President Jahjaga brought the August agreement to Kosovo's Constitutional Court at the end of October, which ruled in late-December, declaring that some parts of the August agreement's principles did "not entirely meet the constitutional standards" (Weber 2016: 5) Finally, throughout the months of March, April and May, the Parliamentary Members of Vetëvendosje,<sup>19</sup> fuelled by this ruling, went on to boycott Parliament in order to increase pressure on the governing parties – the PDK and LDK – to revoke the August agreement (Qafmolla 2016).

The contentious political debate between the PDK, as Kosovo's governing party responsible for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, and Vetëvendosje, as the main opposition party to challenge the PDK on its political decisions and policies – whilst not shying away from confrontation – is exemplary for the mutual antagonism and opposition between these two parties. I will now consider the becoming of the PDK and Vetëvendosje, and will outline how their rivalry knows a long history.

#### **2.4 The Democratic Party of Kosovo: From Liberation Army to Political Party**

The Democratic Party of Kosovo was established when the political leadership of the KLA transformed itself into a political party after the Kosovo War had ended. At Rambouillet, the KLA was recognized as a political factor to be reckoned with, which happened at the expense of the LDK who, despite of the violent reality on the ground, continued to insist upon a peaceful resolution of the status dispute (Guzina 2003). After the war, the military branch of the KLA was, with the assistance of KFOR, demilitarized, and reintegrated into the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC) and the Kosovo Police Service (KPS) (Özdemir 2003). In the first instance, the political leadership of the KLA attempted to resist the organization of competitive elections, which the international community insisted upon, however, "once it became clear elections would indeed be used to establish provisional

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<sup>19</sup> In the first instance, Vetëvendosje, the AAK and NISMA were united in boycotting Kosovo's parliament, yet a split occurred already in April, resulting in Vetëvendosje being the only party continuing with the boycott. *See* Qafmolla 2016; Popova and Qamili 2016.

governing institutions to replace the KLA-led structures", the political faction of the KLA<sup>20</sup>, headed by Hashim Thaçi, transformed itself in the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) in 2000 (Manning 2004: 64). This political branch of the KLA, in converting into a political party, benefited from having been recognized as legitimate interlockers by the international community, and the party played an important role in the UN's Joint Interim Administrative Structure established in December 1999 by UNMIK (Manning 2004; Taylor 2005). Besides growing out of the indigenous organization of the KLA, the PDK was also able to build on the social network of the Drenica Valley (Pond 2008). Many of the KLA commanders that joined the PDK came from and fought in this region. Therefore, the PDK could count on the support and vote of the people from the valley, and its members could draw on the heroic image of having fought the FRY forces in Drenica, which ensured the wide support from the Kosovar population.<sup>21</sup>

Kosovo's first national elections were held under UNMIK's authority in November 2007, resulting in a coalition government of the PDK and LDK despite of their continuous, mutual antagonism (Cocozzelli 2013). Following a political crisis, early elections were organized on 12 December 2010, which were won by the PDK; the LDK came second, and Vetëvendosje, which had just made the transformation from social movement to political party, followed in third place (Ejupi and Qavdarbasha 2011). Finally, in February 2011, the new Kosovo government was formed with a coalition between the PDK and the New Kosovo Alliance (AKR) (Feta and Zharkalliu 2011). This government would join the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue in March 2011.

## **2.5 Lëvizja Vetëvendosje: From Social Movement to Political Party**

The roots of Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, which translates into 'Movement for Self-Determination', can be traced to the indigenous organization and social network of the Kosovo Action Network (KAN). KAN was founded in 1997 and comprised a group of international activists who, from abroad, aimed to support Kosovo's citizen's resistance against the Milošević' regime (Visoka, 2011). In July 2003, the KAN established a network inside of Kosovo, and its first activity was a protest campaign calling upon UNMIK and the government of Serbia to clarify the fate of 3,000 Kosovars who went missing during the war. One year later, in June 2004, KAN activists organized a campaign called "No Negotiations – Self-Determination" in order to protest against a decentralization plan that was discussed by the international community, which was meant to accommodate Serb minority rights and

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<sup>20</sup> Next to the PDK, Ramush Haradinaj's political party, the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK), also grew out of the KLA. *See* Taylor 2005.

<sup>21</sup> Author's interview with Agron Bajrami, editor in chief of newspaper Koha Ditore, Pristina, 31 May 2016.

interests. This was one of the first occurrences at which the political elites of the PDK were targeted, most notably Hashim Thaçi, in an attempt to paint them as traitors to Kosovo's statehood. KAN then transformed itself into Vetëvendosje, and the social movement continued to focus its activities on resisting the international governance in Kosovo, the political elites that complied with these "foreign occupiers", and the resulting lack of local autonomy (Visoka 2011; Lemay-Hébert 2009). At the core of its resistance was the demand for Kosovo's unification with Albania, which the movement referred to as "external self-determination".<sup>22</sup>

From 2004 onwards, Vetëvendosje organized branch offices in multiple municipalities throughout Kosovo with a main office in Pristina, as well as abroad. Relying on the social network of Kosovar diaspora, the movement also established offices in the United States and several European states (Vardari-Kesler 2012). Furthermore, the movement's activities diversified, and several actions were organized to protest Serbia's state structures in northern Kosovo. After Vetëvendosje had protested against the Ahtisaari talks in 2006 and 2007, which indirectly resulted in Kosovo's declaration of independence, the movement had to reposition itself following 17 February 2008. Vetëvendosje then set out to further delegitimize Kosovo's political elites of the PDK for allowing continuous international interference, such as the reconfigured role of UNMIK and the newly established EU rule of law mission EULEX (Visoka 2011). The following years, the movement's activities mainly involved the "resisting of the on-going privatization of public enterprises in Kosovo; criticizing bad governance and corruption in government; and promoting Albanian national symbols, consequently delegitimizing Kosovo's 'civic' identity as reflected in the new flag, anthem and other symbols that had been introduced" (Visoka 2011: 114). Nonetheless, in December 2010, Vetëvendosje transformed itself from an anti-establishment social movement, to an institutionalized political party. In the parliamentary elections of 12 December, Vetëvendosje became Kosovo's third largest party with 12.69 percent of the vote (Ejupi and Qavdarbashae 2011). Soon, opposing the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue became one of Vetëvendosje's main activities.

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<sup>22</sup> Author's interview with Albin Kurti, Vetëvendosje MP, Pristina, 27 May 2016.

## **2.6 A Window of Opportunity in March 2011**

In deciding whether Kosovo should join the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, the PDK did not have much of a choice as governing party. When the dialogue was organized in March 2011, Kosovo was still very much depending on the international community, as particularly the US and the EU remained heavily involved in Kosovo's statebuilding processes. For the PDK, the dialogue meant a window of opportunity in that if it would succeed in further materializing Kosovo's 'European perspective', it would gain further support of the Kosovar electorate. Kosovo's citizens were particularly eager to gain visa liberalization, as for many it was especially difficult to travel to EU Member States, and to Serbia, or reach other countries through Serbia. Furthermore, many Kosovo Albanians ascribed a more symbolic meaning to EU Membership, viewing it as one of the most important recognitions of Kosovo's statehood and independence. Additionally, if the negotiating delegation would be successful in finding solutions to several issues that Kosovo was dealing with, such as the negative effect Serbia's trade embargo on products stemming from Kosovo had on its economy, the PDK could garner further support.

At the same time, the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue meant an enormous threat for the PDK, as Kosovo was to negotiate directly with its former enemy, and most Kosovo Albanians still distrusted, or even detested, the Serbian authorities. The fact that the Serbian political elites continued to deny the occurrence of certain heinous events that occurred during the Kosovo War, or recognize Kosovo's independence, only added to their distrust and disdain. If the PDK would commit to agreements with the Serbian government that the Kosovar electorate would view as 'giving way to Belgrade', it would undoubtedly damage the PDK's reputation as the defenders of Kosovo's statehood. It was therefore of vital importance for the PDK that it would be successful in convincing the public of the meanings the party itself assigned to the dialogue and its agreements. Nonetheless, this threat was somewhat limited, as the international community, and the US in particular, continued to rely on the political elites of the PDK to cooperate and give effect to its liberal statebuilding agenda. Moreover, the Kosovo Albanians still viewed the US as their saviors and therefore the US' support for the PDK meant, to a certain extent, the electorate's support for the PDK. The governing party could, however, not afford a grave political failure, as the US could not unconditionally support a political party that lacked the electorate's support. In conclusion, for the PDK, the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue meant a difficult predicament.

For Vetëvendosje, this very threat for the PDK meant a 'window of opportunity' to strengthen its own position within Kosovo's political field. Since 2004, Vetëvendosje had based its activities on countering the PDK as Kosovo's governing party, and to have this party negotiate directly with Serbia, meant it could make use of the general public's distrust and

disdain of the Serbian political leadership. The dialogue's character, being top-down, high-level, and 'far away' in Brussels, allowed Vetëvendosje to underscore the PDK as illegitimate representatives of the 'normal' people of Kosovo, whilst emphasizing its own connection and closeness to the electorate. Furthermore, because of the perceived lack of transparency on the part of the PDK and EU regarding the content of the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, a lot of space was created for Vetëvendosje to assign its own meaning to the dialogue. Finally, the opposition party could make use of the statements of Serbian political elites, who, in March 2011, were very vocal in proclaiming Kosovo would forever remain an integral part of Serbia's sovereignty and territory. It is important to note that among many Kosovo Albanians the fear remains that Serbia will, one day, reclaim Kosovo, and strip the state of its independence as it once stripped the province of its autonomy.

## **2.7. Conclusion**

By considering the conflict and post-conflict situation, this chapter has illustrated that over the years many different actors have made the claim of Kosovo's statehood; insisted upon being the principal defenders of that statehood; and disputed what kind of state Kosovo is or should be. Whereas before the war the LDK confronted the FRY leadership with a claim of statehood through the means of establishing a parallel government and rejecting the FRY's sovereignty over Kosovo, not much later the KLA did so militarily, resulting in the Kosovo War. The war had as a result that the international community would become involved in the dispute over Kosovo's statehood, even though in the first years following NATO's intervention, any decision-making on Kosovo's status was postponed. At the expense of the LDK, the PDK – a political party organized by the leadership of the KLA – would develop into being the main collective actor to demand statehood for Kosovo in the beginning of 2000. It was therefore the PDK that would be heavily involved in Kosovo's declaration of independence, which was finally pronounced on 17 February 2008 with the help of the US and several EU Member States. Since 2004, Vetëvendosje has been the main collective actor, first as a social movement and later as an institutionalized political party, to challenge the PDK for its stances on, and as defenders of Kosovo's statehood, which it remains up to this day.



### **CHAPTER III: IT IS ALL ABOUT THE STATE**

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, the framing processes of the PDK and Vetëvendosje with regard to the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue will be examined, while considering their diagnostic and prognostic framings, their counterframings, as well as the 'frames of statehood' with which these political parties have confronted each other over the past five years. Secondly, the PDK and Vetëvendosje's dispute over Kosovo's nationhood, as manifested in this contentious political debate, will be discussed; analyzing how the two collective actors have disagreed on how Kosovo's 'nation' should be defined and understood, and thus who 'belongs to' that 'nation', and who does not.

#### **3.1. Kosovo's Problems in Need of Change**

In defending their decision to participate in the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, the political elites of the PDK, made two notable moves. On the one hand, they hid behind the authority of the US and the EU, and on the other hand, they engaged in framing processes, which emphasized certain issues that Kosovo faced, as increasingly and continuously problematic, for which the dialogue could offer solutions. As described before, since NATO's intervention, which was led by the US government, the electorate of Kosovo trusted the US as the main protectors and guarantors of Kosovo's statehood. Similarly, because several EU Member States were involved in Kosovo's declaration of independence, and have been involved in Kosovo's statebuilding processes, the EU is generally viewed as an ally, or at least an ally-to-be, although with reservations because five EU Member States still refuse to recognize Kosovo's independence. In an attempt to relieve the party from bearing the main responsibility, the PDK stressed it was the US and the EU who wished for the dialogue to take place, and who, therefore, obliged the government to participate in the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue.

In examining the PDK's framing processes, it is important to make a distinction between the periods from March 2011 until May 2012, and October 2012 until May 2016, as one can find several notable differences. In the first period, the dialogue involved finding solutions and making compromises on issues that could be presented as "technical" – and thus the dialogue could be referred to as a "technical dialogue". Therefore, the PDK stressed the urgency of issues practical in nature, rendering them increasingly urgent and in need of change 'now'. Most importantly, the PDK reiterated that the citizens of Kosovo had remained the most isolated people in the region, as cars with license plates issued by Kosovo authorities could not enter Serbia or travel through Serbia to Europe, therefore sabotaging the freedom of movement of Kosovo's citizens. Also, emphasizing the severity of Serbia's trade ban on products stemming from Kosovo due to its custom stamp that included the word 'Republic',

the PDK accentuated how Kosovo's economic development was harmed. Moreover, it was argued that because of all these problems combined, Kosovo was hindered in making progress on its path to EU membership, which added to Kosovo's isolation, but also meant a delay in the consolidation of Kosovo's statehood.

In October 2012, the so-called "political dialogue" commenced, which significantly affected the PDK's framing processes. Now the Prime Ministers of Kosovo and Serbia were to speak to one another directly, and the forthright political topic of northern Kosovo would be discussed, making it of vital importance for the governing party that its framing processes would be successful. During this second period, the PDK's diagnostic framing boiled down to two interlinking issues: the central authority's lack of sovereignty and control over northern Kosovo, and Serbia's continuous obstruction of Kosovo's statehood. The party emphasized how the Serbian government still had and funded a judicial system, law enforcement and municipal governments in the northern Serb-majority municipalities, which resulted in a lack of a functioning, central state apparatus throughout the entire territory of Kosovo. Furthermore, the political elites of the PDK argued this undermining of Kosovo's statehood by Serbia led to the flourishing of organized crime and smuggling practices in the North, where the two border crossings between Kosovo and Serbia served as the gates of these illegal activities. In speaking of chaos, a complete lack of the rule of law in the North, and Serbia's unlawful rule over the northern municipalities, the PDK played on the fears of the Kosovo Albanian electorate: their fear of lawlessness and violence, and their fear of the Serbian government's interference in Kosovo.

Nonetheless, over these five years, the political elites of the PDK hardly attributed blame to 'Belgrade'. This was a direct result of the PDK's predicament: both the problems that threatened Kosovo's statehood had to be rendered as in need of change 'now', but Kosovo's participation in a dialogue with the government that was considered responsible for those threats had to be justified. Therefore, the PDK was limited in what it could do in terms of diagnostic framing, and thus focused mainly on the articulation of problems, and less so on the identification of causality and blame. Interestingly, what is evident throughout the PDK's diagnostic framing efforts is that Kosovo's statehood played a major role. In rendering issues problematic and in need of a solution, the PDK articulated them principally as threats to Kosovo's statehood: Kosovo's independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and its future integration into the European Union. The next subsection will illustrate how Kosovo's statehood remained central also in the PDK's prognostic framing processes.

### **3.2 The Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue for a Better Reality**

In examining the PDK's prognostic framing processes, it is again important to distinguish between the periods of the "technical" and "political" dialogue. In the first period, besides stressing that the dialogue would take place between the *two sovereign states* of Kosovo and Serbia, the members of the PDK emphasized that it was a necessary and legitimate strategy in order to find solutions for the identified issues of practical nature. At the core of the PDK's prognostic framing processes lied the emphasis that the dialogue would serve as a means to improve the quality of the lives of Kosovo's 'normal' citizens. Simply put, the PDK reassured the electorate that this dialogue was in their best interest, as the obstacles of living in Kosovo and of holding Kosovar citizenship would be removed. In particular, the movement of people and goods between both states would be facilitated, bringing an end to Kosovo's isolation, and enabling the stabilization of the market, thus engendering economic development for the state. Furthermore, the PDK affirmed that Kosovo's engagement in a dialogue that would be facilitated by the EU and supported by the US, would ensure Kosovo's Euro-Atlantic integration, bring Kosovo closer to the EU, and thus strengthen Kosovo's statehood. Moreover, the PDK articulated the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue as the best strategy to achieve Kosovo's most desired objective: to achieve Serbia's recognition of Kosovo's statehood. As a result, whenever an agreement was reached, including the agreement on Custom Stamps and on Kosovo's Regional Representation, the members of the PDK, and most importantly Thaçi and Tahiri, argued that Serbia's signing of these agreements signified the Serbian government's de facto recognition of Kosovo as an independent, sovereign state.

With regard to the issue of northern Kosovo, the PDK underlined that Kosovo's territorial integrity would not be up for discussion, yet in terms of prognostic framing the topic was given relatively little attention. This changed considerably with the start of the "political dialogue" in October 2012, in which the issue of Northern Kosovo was directly discussed and two agreements, on 19 April 2013 and 25 August 2015,<sup>23</sup> were reached. Therefore, the PDK significantly increased its prognostic framing efforts, and made three notable changes. Firstly, the topic of northern Kosovo was now proactively addressed. The governing party stressed that the dialogue and the agreements would allow the Kosovo government to bring about the full dissolution of the illegal and parallel state structures of Serbia in the North, and restore Kosovo's full authority in these municipalities in order to protect and ensure Kosovo's state sovereignty and territorial integrity. Secondly, the political

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<sup>23</sup> After Isa Mustafa of the LDK became Prime Minister and lead the dialogue from February 2015 onwards, the PDK made less effort to frame the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, and let the LDK bear the main responsibility. The LDK was however much more passive in framing the dialogue than the PDK had been in the previous years, and sporadically recited the PDK's frames. My analysis therefore mainly focuses on the period between October 2012 and February 2015.

elites of the PDK significantly increased their efforts to articulate the dialogue as a necessary and beneficial way of ensuring Kosovo's EU membership. As Thaçi explained:

*Our trust in the European Union, United States of America and NATO has only brought benefits to Kosovo and its citizens, also in Rambouillet and in the Vienna process. So, in the Rambouillet negotiations, Kosovo won freedom, got liberated. In the Vienna talks, Kosovo got independent. Now we will consolidate our state.<sup>24</sup>*

In other words, Thaçi emphasized how the EU and US should be trusted, as they had played a major role in liberating Kosovo, and ensuring its independence. The Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue was articulated as the final step in the process that started in Rambouillet: establishing Kosovo's statehood. In almost all of their public appearances, the politicians of the PDK emphasized Kosovo's European perspective and integration. The Brussels Agreement in particular was articulated as Kosovo's demonstration of European values, building the peaceful coexistence of a multiethnic society, and protecting the rights of its national minorities, specifically referring to the Kosovo Serbs. Thirdly and finally, the PDK's prognostic framing efforts changed in that the dialogue was now presented as Kosovo's future; as the only way for two states and nations that used to be at war, to move forward. Tahiri explained it in the following way:

*Our philosophy for Kosovo's state is forward-looking for peace and prosperity, while putting behind the history of war but not forgetting it. We will always make sure that genocide against Albanians and Kosovo will never again happen, and this will be possible through developing a strong and prosperous democratic state, integrated in the Euro-Atlantic community with good neighborly relations including with Serbia. This vision has guided us and that is why we accepted to talk again with Serbia though Serbia failed in two previous peace processes.<sup>25</sup>*

Rather than just speaking of the dialogue as a means to normalize the relations between two states, as was done during the "technical dialogue", the PDK now prognostically framed the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue as peace talks; as helping the ethnic-Albanians and ethnic-Serbs of the region to close the chapter of wars and animosities.

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<sup>24</sup> The Republic of Kosovo, 2013.

<sup>25</sup> Author's E-mail interview with Edita Tahiri, Minister for Dialogue, answers received on 10 July 2016.

Notably, whereas the governing party framed itself as the party 'of the future', the PDK upheld the counterframing of Vetëvendosje as '19th century backwards'. As Selimi put it:

*Their political program is calling for a referendum for unification of all Albanians in one land. First Kosovo and Albania, and then rest of Albanian-populated lands. It's an absurd, Westphalian, 19-century, ethno-centric proposition that goes against the civic nature of the Kosovo Constitution that was drafted by President Ahtisaari.*<sup>26</sup>

In an attempt to further undermine the members of Vetëvendosje, and counter their framing processes, they spoke of Vetëvendosje as anti-American, racist towards Serbs, violent, and as pseudo-patriarchs that failed to fight when the time was there, namely, during the Kosovo War. Selimi pointed out:

*The PDK has supported the dialogue and has been a vocal promoter of the results of the dialogue and had a type of moral authority to do so as most of the initial founders of PDK are also the people who started the guerrilla war against Serbia and are still in the Serbian arrest warrants.*<sup>27</sup>

One could, however, question the resonance of this frame, considering the 'experiential commensurability' of the political elites of the PDK, as they had articulated themselves as freedom fighters for the Kosovo Albanians, particularly when the party was founded in the direct aftermath of the war. Now, the PDK simultaneously framed itself as the party of KLA fighters, as well as the protectors of Kosovo's civic statehood, including the minority rights for Kosovo Serbs.

On a final note, what did not change with the commencement of the "political dialogue" was the emphasis on the dialogue as a means to attain Serbia's recognition of Kosovo's independence. As Selimi affirmed:

*The dialogue will ultimately lead to the recognition of Kosovo by Serbia. On this there should be no doubt.*<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Author's E-mail interview with Petrit Selimi, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, answers received on 15 June 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

### 3.3 The Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue as Treason

With regard to the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, the members of Vetëvendosje based their diagnostic framing processes on one overarching 'injustice frame':<sup>29</sup> the deprivation of Kosovo Albanians of their right to self-rule and self-determination. In stark contrast with the PDK's frames, Vetëvendosje heavily focused its diagnostic framing on the identification of causality and blame, and three main actors were targeted: Serbia, the international community, and above all, the political elites of the PDK. Because no visible change occurred in Vetëvendosje's framing processes with the start of the "political dialogue" – besides Vetëvendosje using this changed 'reality' to confirm their frames – this analysis focuses on the total period of March 2011 until May 2016.

Firstly, Vetëvendosje articulated the dialogue as a means for Serbia to humiliate Kosovo's state, and invade its territory in a disguised manner, all the while framing 'Belgrade' as Kosovo's enemy, occupier, and the main threat to Kosovo's statehood. As explained in an article published on their website:

*Instead of apologizing for the war crimes, genocide and the human and material destruction that is still hindering the prospect of any kind of progress in Kosovo, Serbia continues to behave with the arrogance of an occupier.*<sup>30</sup>

As touched upon before, up to this day Kosovo Albanians fear for Kosovo's annexation by Serbia, which would mean the end of Kosovo as an independent, sovereign state. It was this fear that the politicians of Vetëvendosje played on, and in speaking of the dialogue, they repeatedly emphasized how 'Serbia' had not changed since Milošević' regime, arguing that Serbia's political leaders had been part of that government, and were therefore responsible for the persecutions, oppressing and killing of the Kosovo Albanians. As Kurti points out:

*Those in power today in Serbia are descendants of the Nazi-fascist line in Serbia.*<sup>31</sup>

In a similar manner, Vetëvendosje articulated the Serbian political elites as eager to destroy Kosovo's state in order to humiliate Kosovo's 'Albanian nation', stressing the vulnerability of Kosovo's statehood. Furthermore, in emphasizing that Serbia had not apologized or shown regret for the crimes of the past; had failed to return the bodies of 1800 missing Kosovo Albanians to their families; had not paid war damages; and had failed to persecute 'tens of

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<sup>29</sup> An 'injustice frame' is "a mode of interpretation – prefatory to collective noncompliance, protest, and/or rebellion – generated and adopted by those who come to define the actions of an authority as unjust" (Benford and Snow 2000: 615).

<sup>30</sup> Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, 2012a.

<sup>31</sup> Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, 2012b.

thousands' of Serbian war criminals, Vetëvendosje amplified the historical victimization of Kosovo Albanians and clearly attributed blame to the Serbian government. Finally, the members of Vetëvendosje framed the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue as a means for Serbia to not only destroy Kosovo's statehood, but also establish a 'Greater Serbia' by way of creating a 'small Serbia' within Kosovo. When the Brussels Agreement in April 2013 and the August Agreement in 2015 established the Association/Community for Serb-majority municipalities, which Vetëvendosje strategically referred to with the Serbian name "Zajednica", the party articulated this as the official organization of a Serbian sub-state within Kosovo's state. As Kurti put it:

*But basically it is the Bosnification of Kosova. On 26 of April 1991, fourteen municipalities with a Serb-majority in Bosnia, they created their own association. On the 9th of January 1992, they declared their independence. On the 28th of February 1992, they got their constitution. And finally, on the 14th of December 1995, in Dayton Ohio, they got internationally recognized as Republika Srpska, so it started with this peace deal approach, first separating them from us, and later on getting together against us.<sup>32</sup>*

In other words, Vetëvendosje compared the Sprska Lista in Bosnia, to the Association/Community of Kosovo's Serb-majority municipalities, framing it as the establishing of such a 'small Serbia' within the territory of Kosovo. The members of Vetëvendosje then stressed how the dialogue was dangerous and undemocratic, and deprived the Kosovo Albanians of their right to self-rule and self-determination, which could only become worse after 'Belgrade had returned'.

Secondly, Vetëvendosje framed the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue as 'just' another statebuilding mission imposed on Kosovo by the international community, which deprived the Kosovo Albanians from their right to decide what kind of state Kosovo should become. The members of Vetëvendosje emphasized how the EU was not building the state of Kosovo, but an EU Member State, thus ignoring the will of the people, and obstructing the bottom-up statebuilding processes. Furthermore, the opposition party drew a parallel between Serbia's occupation and the international community's involvement in Kosovo's statebuilding, as Vetëvendosje had continuously done since its organization 2004.

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<sup>32</sup> Author's interview with Albin Kurti, Vetëvendosje MP, Pristina, 27 May 2016.

Kurti explained it in the following way:

*During the time of Serbia's occupation, we were prisoners. And now during the international community's protectorate, we are hospital patients. The doctors do not mistreat us, they are not like guards in a prison, but they still do not allow us self-determination.*<sup>33</sup>

Additionally, Vetëvendosje articulated the EU as an unfair mediator for two reasons: because the EU was responsible for the mediation of the dialogue, but simultaneously 'ruled over' Kosovo, specifically through the EU rule of law mission (EULEX),<sup>34</sup> and because the EU was biased on Kosovo's statehood, as five Member States did not recognize its independence.

Thirdly and finally, Vetëvendosje framed the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue as a means for the political elites of the PDK to consolidate their power, whilst discarding and undermining Kosovo's independence and statehood. In arguing that the political elites of the PDK were extremely corrupt, and controlled by the US and the EU, which allegedly held dossiers with proof of that corruption, Vetëvendosje diagnostically framed them as threats to Kosovo's statehood; willing to give up anything in order to remain in power. As Kurti proclaimed in a speech during a session of the Kosovo parliament:

*This dialogue is a threat to the state of Kosovo, but they are not concerned about the state of Kosovo and so they are not frightened by dialogue. But, they are frightened only of losing power: hence they are begging Serbia for dialogue. This Government, without dialogue with Serbia, is like a fish without water in the international arena.*<sup>35</sup>

In other words, Vetëvendosje articulated the members of the PDK, and Thaçi in particular, as traitors to Kosovo's statehood, and as surrendering the Kosovo Republic. In an article on Vetëvendosje's website, it was put simply:

*This Government is not making Kosova sovereign, it is not allowing Kosova to become sovereign, and it is losing our chance to become sovereign.*<sup>36</sup>

Besides framing the elites of the PDK as traitors to the state of Kosovo, the opposition party went even further in that they articulated them as disloyal to the 'Albanian nation'. Through emphasizing how the governing party worked together with Serbia rather

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<sup>33</sup> Nosan 2012.

<sup>34</sup> See Bislimi 2012.

<sup>35</sup> Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, 2012b.

<sup>36</sup> Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, 2011a.



than Albania, and stressing that the topic of Kosovo's Serbian national minority was discussed during the dialogue, but the wellbeing of Serbia's Albanian national minority was disregarded, Vetëvendosje framed the PDK as treacherous to Albanians. As Glauk Konjufca, a high-ranking Vetëvendosje member, explained during a press conference:

*Kosova and Albania as states should work without stinting, for the entire Albanian nation, including those of the Presheva Valley.<sup>37</sup> But this will not happen because Kosova has a government which is surrendering national resources and prospects in order to keep the lid on the dossiers of their corruption and organized crime. Albanian politicians in the Presheva Valley must organize and activate the Albanian people there, inside and outside of the institutions. They must be beside and with the people.<sup>38</sup>*

One can conclude that Vetëvendosje devoted considerable effort to the diagnostic framing of the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, and fiercely attributed blame to the political elites of the PDK. Therefore, the distinction between its diagnostic and counter frames is not clearly evident, as Vetëvendosje's main activity was to undermine the PDK.

### **3.4 An Alternative Course of Action**

When considering Vetëvendosje's prognostic framing processes, comparatively little attention was given to the offering of alternative courses of action, solutions and strategies. On the one hand, Vetëvendosje argued that the Kosovo government had to set conditions for Serbia in order to strengthen Kosovo's statehood. By demanding Serbia's recognition of Kosovo's independence, Serbia's apology for the crimes it committed, the handing over of Serbian war criminals, and the payment of war damages to Kosovo, Vetëvendosje upheld the Republic would become sovereign. On the other hand, Vetëvendosje vouched for a dialogue with the Kosovo Serbs, which Kurti explained in the following way:

*But I think we need a different kind of dialogue, a dialogue from below, a bottom-up dialogue, a dialogue with the Serbs of Kosova, not with Serbia, a dialogue which is social and democratic and open and not closed and diplomatic, and a dialogue for development rather than for reconciliation.<sup>39</sup>*

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<sup>37</sup> The Presheva Valley is a region in Southern Serbia with a majority Albanians.

<sup>38</sup> Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, 2012c.

<sup>39</sup> Author's interview with Albin Kurti, Vetëvendosje MP, Pristina, 27 May 2016.

Notably, in its diagnostic framing efforts, Vetëvendosje spoke mainly in the name of the 'Albanian nation'. Through amplifying the victimization of the Albanians – as 'colonized' by Serbia; as ethnically cleansed during the Kosovo War; as 'hospitalized' by the international community; as oppressed national minority in the Presheva Valley; and as victims of the corrupt political elites of the PDK – Vetëvendosje continuously reinforced the 'imagined community', the 'nation' of Albanians. At the same time, however, Vetëvendosje sporadically upheld "a discourse of abolishing ethnic identity and creating a new common civic identity" (Visoka 2011: 122). As Kurti put it:

*The international community with its 'multi-ethnicity' started from difference. I am pro-multi-ethnic society, but I believe in order for us to achieve a multi-ethnic society, we have to aim for the society, not for multi-ethnicity.*<sup>40</sup>

This discourse was also evident in Vetëvendosje's prognostic framing processes in proposing a dialogue with the Kosovo Serbs rather than with 'Belgrade'. One could, however, question the resonance of this prognostic frame, and this discourse as a whole, considering Vetëvendosje's 'experiential commensurability', as since its organization in 2004, Vetëvendosje steadfastly defended the rights of Kosovo Albanians, whilst speaking in the name of the 'Albanian nation', and waving with the Albanian flag; red with a double-headed eagle.

### **3.5 Opposing Frames of Statehood and Disputed Nationhood**

In their contentious political debate on the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue the PDK and Vetëvendosje created, upheld and promoted frames of Kosovar statehood, which transcended all of their framing processes. Throughout their diagnostic and prognostic framing efforts, and the counterframings with which they attempted to undermine the other party, these collective actors provided answers to the questions of 'what kind of state is Kosovo', 'what kind of state should Kosovo be', and 'for whom is the state of Kosovo'.

On the one hand, the PDK's answered these questions with a frame of Kosovar statehood of Kosovo as a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-confessional state; a civic state that protects its minorities; that is built on 'European values' and whose future lies in the European Union. According to the PDK, Kosovo is and should be a 'Western' oriented state, and a factor of peace and stability in the Western Balkan and in Europe as a whole. Furthermore, in the frame of statehood that the PDK promoted, one is Kosovar by virtue of having Kosovar citizenship. Thus, in responding to the question of 'for whom is the state of Kosovo', the PDK answered with 'for all of its citizens'. In this frame, the 'nation' or 'imagined

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

community' comprises of the Kosovar citizens: the Kosovo Albanians, Serbs, Bosniaks, Turks, Ashkali, Egyptian, Gorani and Roma. Although it often emphasized the PDK was a party of KLA fighters that fought for the Kosovo Albanians, in speaking in the name of the Republic of Kosovo, the PDK upheld that it spoke in the names of all of its citizens, regardless of their ethnocultural affinity. This is noteworthy in that it problematizes Smith's analysis of the 'Euro-Atlantic' space in Estonia, where the political elites tried to reconcile their domestic 'nationalizing' agenda with the requirements of Europeanization, and were thus still predominantly interested in the nationalization of Estonia. Notably, the PDK's frame of statehood shows that the party has seemingly no interest in the nationalization of Kosovo whatsoever. Yet, whether this is due to the presence of a 'Euro-Atlantic space' in Kosovo is outside of the scope of this research.

On the other hand, Vetëvendosje presented its own frame of Kosovar statehood, which directly challenged the frame of the PDK. Although the opposition party somewhat sporadically upheld a discourse on the need for a common civic identity in Kosovo, in its framing processes Vetëvendosje predominantly promoted a frame of Kosovo as a nation-state *of and for* the ethnocultural Albanians. Like the PDK, Vetëvendosje spoke in the name of the Republic of Kosovo, but in the same breath the opposition party spoke in the name of the 'Albanian nation'. In creating its frame of statehood, Vetëvendosje defined the 'core nation' in ethnocultural terms, comprising the Kosovo Albanians. Throughout its framing processes, the members of Vetëvendosje defended and promoted this 'core nation' as the legitimate 'owner' of the Republic of Kosovo. Furthermore, the party clearly articulated the Kosovo's state as insufficiently 'national', and throughout their framing of the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, one can find demands of 'nationalization'. Most notably, the continuous suffering of the Kosovo Albanians resulting from the past oppression of Serbia, the current involvement of the international community, and the continuous treachery of the political elites of the PDK, were injustices held to justify a 'remedial' project. In other words, the historical and contemporary deprivation of Kosovo Albanians' right to self-rule and self-determination was deemed enough of a justification to nationalize Kosovo, in which state power would be used to promote the specific interests of the 'Albanian nation', thus creating the nation-state of Kosovo.

Before Kosovo's declaration of independence on 17 February 2008, the social movement had always demanded the unification of Kosovo with Albania. After Kosovo obtained its statehood, Vetëvendosje repositioned itself, made the transformation to a political party, and set out to defend the Republic (Visoka 2011). As evident in its framing efforts of the past five years, however, Vetëvendosje defended the Republic of *Kosovo Albanians*, and when speaking of the 'Albanian nation', the party did not only refer to the Albanians in

Kosovo, but also to the Albanian minority in Serbia, and Albania itself. Although it did no longer explicitly ask for unification with Albania, Vetëvendosje now urged for what it called 'external self-determination', in which the uniting of the 'nation' is implied. As Kurti put it:

*Well, we would like to have the right to join Albania. I am not saying that we would wage another war, third Balkan war, no that's not going to happen. But we would like to have the right to a referendum.*<sup>41</sup>

In conclusion, in its contentious political debate with the PDK, the Vetëvendosje made demands and accusations characteristic of a 'nationalizing nationalism'. Whereas the PDK's frame of statehood was 'civic' in nature and 'European' in focus, Vetëvendosje manifested a nationalism that was nation-promoting, aiming to nationalize the existing polity, whilst defining Kosovo's 'nation' in ethnocultural terms. This is an interesting phenomenon because Brubaker argued that "'nationalizing' nationalisms within the frame of independent states do not usually involve distinct movements with clear and specific goals," but rather embrace "formal policies and informal practices" (Brubaker 1996: 84). In Kosovo, the formal policies and informal practices do, however, not involve such nationalization, and the nationalism that Vetëvendosje manifests, demonstrates such a distinct movement can exist, and can operate in a state which itself is hard to define as 'nationalizing'. Furthermore, this case study illustrates how in Kosovo the process of nationalization is initiated by an opposition party rather than Kosovo's polity as a whole, and is subject to contentious politics, which is clearly manifested in the debate on the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue. Simply put, over the past five years, the dialogue served as a platform for these two collective actors to 'fight the battle' over how Kosovo's statehood should develop, whether the Republic of Kosovo should be 'nationalizing' or not, and who are the legitimate and most competent defenders of Kosovo's statehood.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This thesis has examined how the PDK and Vetëvendosje have together been embroiled in a 'battle' over the hegemonic meaning – the meaning widely believed – of how the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue would affect Kosovo's statehood. Using this dialogue as a 'platform', these collective actors have vied to advance their own particular stance, and therewith attempted to gain the acceptance as the legitimate representative of Kosovo, all the while upholding to be speaking in the name of the Republic. Yet, on closer examination, this research has shown that in speaking in the name of the state of Kosovo, the PDK and Vetëvendosje assigned different meanings to Kosovo's statehood. In other words, through disputing the effect that the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue had, and would have, on Kosovo's statehood, the PDK and Vetëvendosje disagreed on the very nature of that statehood: on what kind of state Kosovo *is* and *should be*, as well as *whose* state it is.

The PDK and Vetëvendosje were, however, not the first collective actors to do so. Throughout the years, many different actors have claimed Kosovo's statehood; insisted upon being the principal defenders of that statehood; and disputed what kind of state Kosovo was and had to be. As outlined previously, before the war, the LDK confronted the FRY leadership with a peaceful yet disobedient claim of statehood, and not much later the KLA did so militarily. After the Kosovo War a new collective actor entered Kosovo's political field when the PDK was formed. At the expense of the LDK, the PDK developed into being the main collective actor to demand statehood for Kosovo, and was heavily involved in Kosovo's declaration of independence. Finally, the social movement, and later political party, Vetëvendosje was established, and would directly challenge the political elites of the PDK as the representatives of Kosovo's statehood. One year later, in March 2011, the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue was organized.

For the PDK, as Kosovo's governing party, the dialogue meant both a 'window of opportunity' and a threat. On the one hand, if the party would succeed in further materializing Kosovo's 'European perspective', it would gain further support of the Kosovar electorate. On the other hand, the political elites were to negotiate directly with its former enemy, and most Kosovo Albanians still distrusted the Serbian government. This very threat for the PDK meant a 'window of opportunity' for Vetëvendosje to undermine the governing party, and strengthen its own position within Kosovo's political field. Thus, as soon as the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue commenced, the collective actors engaged in framing processes, both eager to produce the hegemonic meaning of the dialogue. During the so-called "technical dialogue", the PDK stressed the urgency of issues practical in nature, rendering them increasingly urgent and in need of change 'now', such as Kosovo's isolation, and weak economy because of

Serbia's trade ban. The dialogue was then prognostically framed as a means to improve the quality of the lives of Kosovo's 'normal' citizens. When the "political dialogue" commenced in October 2012, the PDK's frames changed considerably as the topic of northern Kosovo would be discussed. Through emphasizing the central authority's lack of sovereignty and control over northern Kosovo, and Serbia's continuous obstruction of Kosovo's statehood, the PDK hoped to convince the public of the necessity of the dialogue. Prognostically, the dialogue was then articulated as peace talks. Notably, although most issues were perceived as being caused by the Serbian government, the political elites of the PDK hardly attributed blame to 'Belgrade'. This was a direct result of the PDK's predicament: both the problems that threatened Kosovo's statehood had to be rendered as in need of change 'now', but Kosovo's participation in a dialogue with the government that was considered responsible for those threats had to be justified.

In stark contrast to the PDK's frames, Vetëvendosje heavily focused its diagnostic framing on the identification of causality and blame, and three main actors were targeted: Serbia, the international community, and above all, the political elites of the PDK. The opposition party's diagnostic framing processes were based on one overarching 'injustice frame': the deprivation of Kosovo Albanians of their right to self-rule and self-determination. Firstly, Vetëvendosje articulated the dialogue as a means for Serbia to humiliate Kosovo's state, and invade its territory in a disguised manner, all the while framing 'Belgrade' as the main threat to Kosovo's statehood. Secondly, the opposition party framed the dialogue as 'just' another statebuilding mission imposed on Kosovo by the international community, again depriving the Kosovo Albanians of their right to self-determination. Thirdly and finally, Vetëvendosje affirmed the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue as a means for the political elites of the PDK to consolidate their power, whilst discarding and undermining Kosovo's independence and statehood, as a result of their corruption, and betrayal of Kosovo.

In their contentious political debate on the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, the PDK and Vetëvendosje created, upheld and promoted frames of Kosovar statehood, which transcended all of their framing processes. On the one hand, the PDK presented a frame of Kosovar statehood of Kosovo as a multi-ethnic, civic state built on 'European values', in which one is Kosovar by virtue of having Kosovar citizenship. Vetëvendosje, on the other hand, promoted a frame of Kosovo as a nation-state for the ethnocultural Albanians. In other words, in speaking in the name of the Republic of Kosovo, the PDK spoke in the 'nation' of the Kosovar citizens, and Vetëvendosje spoke in the name of the 'Albanian nation'. Thus, in answering the question of whose state Kosovo is, the PDK upheld the frame of Kosovo as a state *of* and *for* all its citizens, and Vetëvendosje promoted the frame of Kosovo as a state *of* and *for* the Kosovo Albanians. Notably, Vetëvendosje's frame of statehood is characteristic of a

'nationalizing' nationalism, as it demands the nationalization of the existing polity in the interest of Kosovo's 'core nation', as defined in ethnocultural terms. This case study thus contradicts Brubaker's assertion that 'nationalizing' nationalisms in an independent state usually does not involve distinct movements, as Vetëvendosje clearly comprises such a movement, and was created in direct opposition to Kosovo's perceived lack of nationalization.

When considering the PDK's frame of Kosovar statehood, one could question why it did not involve such a demand of nationalization, and was, on the contrary, in direct opposition to the idea of Kosovo as a nation-state. Smith argued that because of the 'Euro-Atlantic' space, the political elites in Estonia were influenced in such a way that they had to jump through hoops to reconcile their domestic 'nationalizing' agenda with the requirements of Europeanization. However, judging from the PDK's frame of statehood the party was seemingly not interested in the nationalization of Kosovo whatsoever, and framed it as going backwards rather than heading towards Kosovo's 'European future'. Whether this is due to the significant 'Euro-Atlantic space' present in Kosovo's political field, is outside of the scope of this research. Therefore, future research would be necessary to investigate a causal relationship, and explain why the PDK upholds and promotes the frame of Kosovar statehood that it does.

To conclude, Brubaker argued that "almost all of the new states [...] will be nationalizing states to some degree and in *some* form", and even in states with "models of interethnic harmony" one can find 'nationalizing' elements. Brubaker concluded, "the question is therefore not *whether* the new states will be nationalizing, but *how* they will be nationalizing - and *how nationalizing* they will be" (Brubaker 1996: 106). Nonetheless, the author failed to further develop this claim and support it with empirical evidence. This thesis has attempted to add to our knowledge of how nationalization is demanded, by whom and whether it is subject to disagreement or even contentious politics. What this research has shown is that in Kosovo, nationalization is demanded by one movement rather than it being an 'aspect' of Kosovo's politics, and by an opposition party rather than the political elites in power. Moreover, this demand is countered with an opposing frame of Kosovar statehood that promotes Kosovo as a civic state, and as having a 'European image', which should not be damaged with the throwing of tomatoes at Robert Cooper. In Kosovo, nationalization is thus subject to contentious politics, which has been 'fought out' in the contentious political debate on the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue. Simply put, nationalization does not 'just' happen, as Brubaker assumes, yet future research should shed light on why it does not.

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