Women Politicians, Gender, Nation, and Democratisation: A Political Ethnography of Serbia and Kosovo

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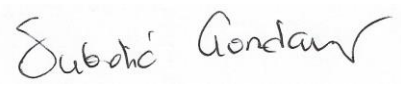
DECLARATION

This is to certify that:

i. The thesis comprises only my original work.

ii. Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used.

iii. The thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies, and appendices.



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Finally, to my Ph.D. peers from the Walter Boas building: hang on, we are almost there!

Abstract

This is an ethnography of women politicians in the 'politically sensitive environments' (Browne and McBride, 2015, p. 34) of Serbia and Kosovo/a. It investigates the ways in which women imagined, constructed, and politicised national and gender identities as they actively engaged with politics in the context of the as yet understudied process of democratisation. This research highlights a profound paradox. In navigating between national and gender identities and everyday work in the nationalist contexts of Serbia and Kosovo/a, women politicians attained a certain degree of agency and emancipation. Despite the ongoing context of democratisation, however, the discourse remained fundamentally patriarchal and, therefore, subordinating for women. Even as they centred themselves in the present democratic political context, women continued to draw on the primordial and ancient elements of their *ethnies*/nations in the form of blood, roots, myths, symbols, and rituals as a means of politicising their own positions. In order to prove their invaluable contributions to their *ethnies*/nations, women politicised traditional gender roles and narratives. I argue that the lack of recognition and the continued undervaluing of women's contributions have influenced the politicisation of gender and national identities in the process of democratisation and steered women towards the hierarchical organisation of *ethnie* over gender identity. Women politicians predominantly politicised their biological roles as reproducers, mothers, sisters, educators, and contributors to the *ethnie* in pursuit of greater gender equality with their men. The ongoing democratisation process in the Western Balkans opened space for greater political participation of women. It did not, however, automatically make this political space safe. Traditional gender and *ethnie* roles as well as patriarchal narratives still dominated political space and affected women's political strategies. For these reasons, women are constantly required to negotiate between different *ethnie* and gender demands in order to survive in politics.

List of Abbreviations

AAK	Alliance for the Future of Kosovo
BFPE	Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence
CHRGE	Commission on Human Rights, Gender Equality, Missing Persons, and Petitions
CoE	Council of Europe
CSO	Civil society organisations
DSS	Democratic Party of Serbia
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
EU	European Union
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
FRY	Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia
KFOR	Kosovo International Security Force (KFOR)
KGSC	Kosovar Gender Studies Centre
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
LCMN	Local Council of Mitrovica North
LDK	Democratic League of Kosovo
LGBTTIQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Transgender, Intersexual, Queer, Questioning people
LVV	Movement Self-Determination
MP	Members of Parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDI	National Democratic Institute

NDS	New Democratic Party
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NS	People's Party
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PDK	Democratic Party of Kosovo
PLS	Plain Language Statement
PM	Prime Minister
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SLS	Serbian Liberal Party
SMS	Party for Modern Serbia
SNS	Serbian Progressive Party
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNSCR 1244	United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244
UNSCR 1325	United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 Women, Peace, Security
US	United States of America
WPN	Women's Parliamentarian Network

Chapter One: Introduction

This political ethnography is concerned with women politicians in Serbia and Kosovo/a.[1] It examines how female members of parliament (MPs) understood and navigated their gender and national identities as active participants in processes of democratisation. Data was collected through ethnographic research (participant observation, multi-sited 'deep hanging out', and interviews) with women politicians in Belgrade, Pristina, Prizren, and North Mitrovica or Kosovska Mitrovica between March 2017 and April 2018.[2] My long history of activist work with women's organisations in the Western Balkans provided the personal motivation for this research. Indeed, I first noticed the obvious tensions between gender (feminism) and the nation (nationalism) as a practitioner and I began to delve into relevant scholarship in pursuit of theoretical and empirical explanations for how these two constructs separated and affected women's lives around the world. The theoretical and practical tensions between gender and the nation and feminist and nationalist women in the Balkans certainly dominated public and political life during the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia (Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) and in the later transition of post-Yugoslav states.

Theoretical conflict between gender and the nation or, more specifically, ethno-nationalism has existed since the earliest attempts to explain the relationship. This tension is multi-dimensional and it permeates political, social, and historical contexts as well as women's own lives. It divides women from the West (Occident) and the East (Orient) around questions of feminism. This is predominantly because women live in very different political contexts and they engage

[1] Language in Serbia and Kosovo/a is an explosive subject. In my thesis, in a similar manner to Julie Mertus (1996, p. 273), I adopt the term 'Kosovo/a' to refer to the state's unresolved political status and to avoid conflict or the appearance that I, as a researcher, might be perceived as taking sides. Where I quote Serb, Albanian, or Bosniak politicians, however, I use the term/s employed directly by each informant. The Serbian term for Kosovo/a is Kosovo and Metohija (Косово и Метохија). The Yugoslav Constitution of 1974 eliminated any reference to Metohija when Kosovo became an Autonomous Province of Yugoslavia. In 1989, however, as Milošević came to power and Kosovo's status changed to the Autonomous Province of Serbia, the term came back into use. Metohija is a part of Kosovo (the Albanian term is *'Dukagjini'*). It derives from the Greek word *'metohion'*, which is a religious term and translates to 'monastery land' in Church language because most Serbian Orthodox monasteries are located in Metohija. The Albanian term for Kosovo/a is *Kosovë*.

[2] The Serbian term for the city is Kosovska Mitrovica, while the Albanian term for the city is Mitrovica or Mitrovicë South and North. Today, the city is ethnically divided; most Serbs live in the North, together with a small population of Bosniak, Egyptian, Ashkali, Gorani, and Roma, while the majority of the Albanian public lives in the South.

with their nations/*ethnies*/states based on their own distinct experiences, cultures, histories, and realities. Jill Vickers (2002, p. 247) asks, 'why is there this hostility between nationalisms and feminisms, especially when we consider that in many countries, women gained rights because they participated in nation building and national liberation movements?' In fact, women have their own roles within their nations/*ethnies*/states and they obtain rights as they engage with them.

Chandra Mohhanty (1991, p. 56) claims there is a lack of analysis around women in the Third World (developing countries).[3] The feminist discourse created by predominantly Western accounts portrays their own women as educated, modern, and in control of their sexuality and decision-making. By contrast, it depicts the 'third-world woman' as uneducated, ignorant, tradition-bound, and domestic. I delve into this argument throughout this thesis by analysing how women politicians understood their 'place' within their nations/*ethnies*/states. Analysing the debates of first wave feminism, Nancy Margaret Forestell and Maureen Anne Moynagh (2012, p. 11) found that the role of feminists in nationalist movements represents a key point of tension between claims to universalist and feminist nationalisms. Others argue that states/*ethnies*/nations are patriarchal, hierarchical, and gendered (Ashe, 2007; Blom, 1995; Cockburn, 1998; Doran and Jose, 2002; Eisenstein, 1984; Enloe, 2000, 2014; Erika, 1986; Franzway et al., 1989; Jayawardena, 1986; Kaufman and Williams, 2007; Luci and Gusia, 2015; McClintock, 1995, 1991; O'Connor, 2008; Pettman, 2005; Savage and Witz, 1992; Sofos, 1996; Zajicek and Calasanti, 1998). Most feminist theorists likely agree with this statement. Disagreement, however, exists on two fronts: firstly, in terms of whether nationalism enables or disables women's empowerment and, secondly, over the types of feminist strategies best suited to assist women to engage with their *ethnies*/nations/states in order to constitute 'woman' as a politically relevant category around which different women might become mobilised (Gal and Kligman, 2000, p. 106). Some feminist theorists refute the idea that nations/*ethnies*/states are beneficial to women, claiming they have little to offer outside of 'symbolic roles' because of their gendered, hierarchical, and patriarchal structures (Enloe, 2014a, p. 45). Conversely, others claim that feminist and women's movements arose in parallel to nationalist/*ethnie*/state struggles against colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, and in times

[3] Third-world women or 'women in developing countries' (usually non-white, Middle-class, Western women) is an analytical and political category that explores the links between the histories and struggles of women against racism, sexism, colonialism, imperialism, and monopoly capitalism (Mohanty et al., 1991, pp. 3-4). In economic, political, and geographic terms, both Serbia and Kosovo/a belong to what Zillah Eisenstein (2014, p. 16) refers to as 'Third World South and East'.

of modernisation. The majority of accounts based on these latter arguments acknowledge that nationalist movements usually betray their female supporters (Nagel, 1998, p. 254) in the aftermath of their revolutions. Women supporters of *ethnie*/state/nationalist projects are rarely awarded the positions they deserve in the post-war environment or during state formation.

My experiences as a practitioner are largely based on my work on the implementation of the *United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 Women, Peace, Security* (S/RES/1325, 2000) in the Western Balkan region, which provided opportunities to observe how women in formal political decision-making roles translated gender and national identity within their work. In my work with the anti-militarist feminist organisation, Women in Black, I was involved in researching post-conflict issues. My role oversaw the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 and reported to the United Nations (UN). During six-years of work, conferences, debates, and trainings, I observed many political disagreements between women from various institutions and civil society organisations (CSOs). The major source of dissent related to gender (feminist) and ethno-national identities, particularly in terms of political position/proximity to one or the other. The inability to successfully align these two identities caused divisions amongst women. Solidarity and collaboration campaigns were often dependent on either aligning or silencing these inextricably entwined identities. For some women, they were easily reconcilable; for others, they remained separate. It was fascinating to observe, for example, how some radical, anti-nationalist feminists could easily collaborate with women nationalists of other ethnicities while simultaneously refusing to engage with nationalists from their 'own' ethnicities. This puzzled me and I used every opportunity to speak with women about how they reconciled the differences between their gender and their national/*ethnie*/state identities, i.e. where they found justification for their work and their beliefs around feminism and nationalism. It became a research passion for me. Over six years, I travelled through the region of the former Yugoslavia and discussed gender and the nation with women from feminist and non-feminist organisations, politicians, officials, war survivors, and their families, mothers of martyrs, and national heroes (combatants).

Empirical data for this thesis was collected in Serbia and Kosovo/a between March 2017 and April 2018. Fieldwork consisted of 'following the people' (Marcus, 1995, p. 106) – in my case, 'following the women politicians' in their places of work and conducting participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and multi-sited deep hanging out (Geertz, 1998; Marcus, 1995). I spent one day each week with one politician at a time, observing and participating in her respective activities for that day (i.e. parliament sessions, meetings with

citizens, party meetings, conferences, and meetings with the Prime Minister). In total, I followed six women politicians, including two women MPs in Serbia and three in Kosovo/a, and one Local Committee Member from the Municipality of North Mitrovica. I also interviewed a total of 20 women politicians from Serbia and Kosovo/a and participated in numerous conferences, coffee meetings, lunches, and field trips.

This project contributes to a better understanding of the previously mentioned theoretical and practical puzzles that exist in any analysis of the nation and nationalism and their effects on gender and feminism in post-conflict countries transitioning to democracy under the guidance of the European Union (EU). In the extensive literature on gender and the nation in the former Yugoslavia, women politicians remain understudied. Academic literature on the relationship between gender and the nation, especially in reference to the Balkans, has produced images of women as either victims of widespread conflict-based sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) or as peacemakers (Lilly and Irvine, 2012, 2002). Most literature focuses on analysing the political actions of women outside of formal political decision-making and power structures, predominantly women from civil society and the mothers movements (Helms, 2014, 2013, 2003; Hughes et al., 1995; Mlađenović et al., 1993). Very little work focuses on women's active physical and political support of nationalist and ethnic state projects or on women as combatants or right-wing politicians (Lilly and Irvine, 2012, 2002). Existing literature on gender, ethnicity, and nationalism in the former Yugoslavia challenges traditional assumptions and offers explanations for different issues, including the ethnicisation of gender roles and representations and the use of sexual violence and women's bodies as weapons in the recreation of nationalised boundaries. Feminist literature also analyses the participation of women in nationalist movements and in private-public dichotomies as they parallel the social constructions of masculinity and femininity. Nevertheless, women politicians remain largely overlooked. For this reason, I chose to observe women politicians as political actors with a certain amount of power – women who sat in parliaments and ministries, women who voted and lobbied for laws, women leaders of political parties, *ethnies,* and societies, and women who were directly engaged in the construction of both gender and nationalism.

This project captures the gender and ethnic-national identities of women politicians in a modern political context, i.e. during the process of democratisation. In this sense, the research encompassed some of the negotiations that took place between pre-modern elements that formed the basis of *ethnies* in the Balkans (Serbian, Albanian, and Bosniak) and traditional gender roles as they appeared during the ongoing process of democratising the state. Anthony

Smith (1987, p. 5) establishes a continuity between the pre-modern *ethnie* and modern nations, which I refer to, especially in explaining some of the pre-modern elements of nations. Smith defines the *ethnie* as a human population with shared ancestry, myths, history, and culture and which has an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity (32). Modern nations, for Smith, are maintained through constant reinterpretation of past ethnic identities and the many elements associated with them. Smith's theory provides a useful basis for interpreting the many translations that women in Serbia and Kosovo/a made around their identities, especially at the juncture of primordial, traditional, and modern elements or, more accurately, in the rendering of the antique elements of their identities into present-day, modern, political, and democratic contexts. According to Smith, Serbs are ethnic communities that emerged in the pre-modern era who base their 'sense of solidarity and continuity upon a real or alleged tie with an ancestral homeland and memories of a glorious past on its soil' (44). The political sense of ethnic unity sprung from local loyalties in the face of common enemies and the myth of shared origin and culture. Religion is also an emblem that differentiates Serbs from other communities of the pre-modern era with whom they share territory (73, 114). Most Serbian women politicians with whom I engaged shared an ancestral relationship with Kosovo and Metohija, both as physical place and as myth, with its Orthodox religious monuments and its symbols. Similarly, Albanian women politicians also regarded themselves as modern extensions of their primordial *ethnie* – i.e. as descendants of Pelasgians and Illyrians who were considered the first people to inhabit the Balkans. Bosniak women politicians, likewise, attempted to authenticate their autochthonous origins and presence in the Balkans through the romanticisation of their primordial *ethnie's* elements within the civic state of Kosovo/a, including their religion, traditions, and customs.

Serbia and Kosovo/a share unresolved territorial and political issues and have signed the ongoing *Agreement on Normalisation of Relations* (also known as the *Brussels Agreement*). Furthermore, both states are in the process of democratic transition and consolidation of democracy, closely monitored by the EU. Mertus (1996, p. 262) explains that lands like Kosovo/a are often neglected in studies on gender and societies in transition because the progression is so incomplete and the gender implications are complicated by other social and political factors. My goal in this thesis is to contribute towards filling this gap by conceptualising how women politicians of different *ethnies* (Serbian, Albanian, and Bosniak) utilised the space created by modern processes of democratisation and liberalisation to politicise issues of gender and nationalism in societies under transition.

Given the absence of general theory on the nation and nationalism, my project is situated within the ongoing debates between three discourses in nationalism studies – primordial, ethno-symbolist, and modernist – and it contributes to each discussion in different ways. My thesis does not attempt to discuss or reconcile conflicting theoretical debates. Instead, it draws from, and adds to, the rich and expanding theories on nations and nationalism by contributing the thoughts and perceptions of women politicians. For instance, primordialists and perrenialists claim that the nation is similar to race in that it is given through nature and its origins and lineaments can be traced back to human biology (Smith, 2009, p. 3). Most of the women politicians in my research shared nationalist views on the origins of their *ethnies/*nations and their present socio-cultural forms. In addition, ethno-symbolists explain the 'inner world' of ethnicity and nationalism through an analysis of its symbolic elements, including myths, rituals, and forms of communication that guarantee the persistence of ethnic identities within nations (Armstrong, 1982; Smith, 2015, 2009, pp. 23-24). Women politicians, in turn, politicised myths, symbols, and rituals in their everyday work, which served as a means of expressing the continuity of their nations from their earliest points in history until the present day and provided proof of their *ethnie's* autochthonous existence. Modernists, moreover, claim that nations are not natural phenomena but are, instead, the products of modern, industrial, capitalist, bureaucratic, and political processes led by elites (Anderson, 1991; Gellner, 2006, 1964). In my research, women politicians offered their views around this and their perspectives may assist modernists to explain the impact of certain political processes on the forming of nations, such as print language and education in one's own vernacular. However, solely modernist perspectives may still have limited applications in explaining, for example, the newborn civic Kosovar identity and the Albanian *ethnie* elements that undergird it. This is mostly because of its character that is, at the same time, pre-modern and modern, civic and ethnic, and so on.

My thesis is also situated amid discussions between the liberal, Third World (developing countries), and standpoint feminist frameworks and it draws on the use of ethnographic methods to expand on the intersections of gender, nationalism, and the state. Sandra Harding (1986, p. 26) explains standpoint theory as a morally and scientifically preferable ground for interpreting and explaining nature and social life. Standpoint theory, however, has been challenged by those committed to Third World feminism because of its tendency to essentialise gender, which has subordinated the differences among and between women based on race, class, and sexual orientation (Visweswaran, 1997, p. 595). I build on the distinctive claims of these theoretical approaches by offering a point of analysis in the ways that women politicians

navigated their contested, intertwined, and highly 'negotiable' (Cockburn, 1998, p. 228) collective identities. In this thesis, therefore, the perspectives and lives of women will be understood through the 'logic of a stand-point' (Harding, 2004, p. 3), while the position and redefinition of ethnic and national identities from different geographic, political, and economic locations will be viewed through Third World theory. These theories allow Serbian, Albanian, and Bosniak women politicians living in Serbia and Kosovo/a to provide different definitions and understandings of the 'myths of their own identity and [to] reject them with a more realistic understanding of self and their community' (Kaufman and Williams, 2007, p. 29) in the present-day political context, which involves a transition towards democracy.

My intention in this research was not to be sympathetic towards the nation (nationalism) or gender (feminism), but to elaborate and understand how this 'pair of opposites' (Sofos, 1996, p. 76) so central to women's identities collide in everyday work. My objective, furthermore, was to investigate strategies that women use to untangle these complicated relationships. Oftentimes, gender representations have the capacity to shape how women are able to participate in nationalist projects. It is, therefore, critical to understand, analyse, and explain women's active involvement in the (re)construction and (re)presentation of nationalist/*ethnie*/state projects. In addition to contributing to the depth of existing theories, my research aims to initiate new debates on gender and national identity in democratising or emerging 'civic' states in the region of the former Yugoslavia.

Women from the former Yugoslavia have always struggled to negotiate between their *ethnie*, national, and gender identities. During the dissolution, gendered constructions of ethnic identities were central to all nationalisms (Bracewell, 2000; Brownmiller, 1975; Collin, 2012; Hansen, 2000; Hassentab et al., 2015; Helms, 2013; Herr, 2003, p. 138; Hughes et al., 1995; Kesić, 2003; Mlađenović et al., 1993; 1996; Nikolić-Ristanović, 2000; Ramet, 2010a; Sofos, 1996). Oftentimes, women's personal security, social, economic, and political status in the newly-formed states depended upon whether they advocated for or against the primary ethno-national group. Women who used gender to advocate for their *ethnie*/nation/state goals or to enhance their nation's perceived sense of victimhood were praised by nationalists. Conversely, women who publicly distanced themselves from the violent acts of their *ethnie*/nation/state and who criticised war and militarism were harassed and labelled as witches, whores, and traitors

of their national/ethnic groups (Kesić, 2010).[4] According to Spiros Sofos (1996, pp. 74-75), nationalist movements in the former Yugoslavia used a specific populist modality of identity formation to simplify the political field and divide it into two opposing camps. In doing so, they created antithetical pairs of opposites, turning 'one' against the 'other' – conquerors against conquered, oppressors versus oppressed, feminine against masculine, male versus female. Inasmuch as the feminist movement in the former Yugoslavia was developed before the war, or is developed today, it has still failed to provide answers or alternatives to this binary logic that categorises actions either in opposition to, or in support of, the nation. By investigating women's politicisation of gender and the nation during democratisation, this thesis aims to offer additional clarification on whether gender still works as entirely opposite to, or in support of, the nation.

Feminist discussions on the entangled relationship between gender and the nation in the former Yugoslavia have always been permeated by exclusivity, meaning that being a nationalist prevented a woman from being a feminist. Dubravka Žarkov (2003, p. 3) claims that the lack of discussion on the co-existence of feminist and national identities caused either crises or silence amongst feminists. Wendy Bracewell (2000, p. 573) explains that female agency played a crucial role in creating an atmosphere of panic over rape and this shaped the relations between the Albanians and the Serbs in Kosovo/a. Gender was central to the emerging discourses on nationalism and patriotic masculinity. Serb women organised massive demonstrations in Kosovo/a in 1987 after one Kosovo Albanian party official publicly compared them to prostitutes. The women represented themselves and others as sisters and mothers and called on the military from Serbia (their men) to come to Kosovo/a to protect them. The first Albanian women's organisations prior to the Albanian nationalist revival in Kosovo/a, moreover, had predominantly gendered and educational objectives (Mertus, 2010, p. 175). Most Kosovo Albanian men, however, were strongly opposed to any emphasis on gender over ethnonational identity and they pressured women to withdraw from literacy projects organised at the expense of national enterprises. Mertus claims that Albanian women had to make a connection between

[4] The Croatian magazine *Globus* published an article in December 1992 entitled, 'Croatia's Feminists Rape Croatia!' as a form of publicly lynching five feminists, including Rada Iveković, Jelena Lovrić, Slavenka Drakulić, Vesna Kesić, and Dubravka Ugrešić. The article accused them of analysing the war rapes in terms of gender instead of the nation and the Serbian aggression towards Croatia (Helms, 2013, p. 62; Mikula, 2006, p. 93; Pavlović, 2010, p. 136). The association Women in Black has often been attacked and their members labeled as witches and whores in response to their demands for transitional justice and their actions in politicising rape, genocide, and other crimes against women committed in the name of the 'nation' (Stange et al., 2011, p. 1393).

their project's literacy outcomes for women and the benefit of the nation in order to publicly politicise gender issues. As the hostilities between the Albanians and the Serbs in Kosovo/a grew, women's public political activism transformed to a whole new level. This thesis offers new perspectives on the representation, imagery, and politicisation of gender and national identities by women politicians under the democratisation process pushed by the EU in Serbia and Kosovo/a.

1.1. Background

Serbia and Kosovo/a both stand to offer unique insights into the role of women in ethnic and national projects because of the earlier ethnic conflict and the current political context. They also provide fruitful ground for academic enquiry on the interrelations of gender and ethnic-nationalism and women's participation in nation-building. Mertus (2010, pp. 171-72) claims that political leaders and women's groups manipulated national identity to shape and challenge gender identity and vice versa. Indeed, performances of gender and ethnic-national identity intertwine and the boundaries of each work to shape the corners of the other. The ethnic-nation and gender, therefore, are works in progress, processes of the *longue durée* that shape one another and offer new avenues for identity formation. My goal in this research is to capture 'the circle of self-exploration and self-discovery' (Mertus, 2010, p. 186) of women politicians from Serbia and Kosovo/a during the process of democratisation. I analyse how women politicians simultaneously 'do' gender and nationalism and how, in their view, their participation contributes to women's overall position and the larger process of democratisation.

The conflict between the Serbs and the Albanians in Kosovo/a was radicalised in 1989 after the removal of the autonomous federal unit status, originally awarded to Kosovo/a under the Constitution of the former Yugoslavia (1974). As a result, Kosovo/a became an autonomous province within Serbia. The Kosovo Albanian majority opposed this by organising parallel institutions (local government, health, education), as well as a series of demonstrations and protests throughout Kosovo/a. Given that the Constitution required any amendments to be ratified by the Kosovo Parliament, Serbia utilised tanks and armoured vehicles to force Kosovo/a to approve the cancellation of its autonomy (Malcolm, 1998, pp. 343-344). In September 1991, Kosovo/a organised an underground referendum on Kosovo's political future in which 99% of mostly Kosovo Albanians voted for independence (Malcolm, 1998; Vickers, 1998; Vidmar, 2012, p. 789; Župančić and Pejić, 2018, pp. 51-52). Serbia quickly suppressed the protests with the use of the army and police forces (Ramet, 2010b). An international

military intervention against the two remaining countries of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (the Republic of Serbia and Montenegro) followed numerous reports of systematic oppression, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing perpetrated by the Serbian state and paramilitary forces against the Albanian population (United Nations, 1999) as well as gross violations of human rights committed during the conflict between the Albanian Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and the Serbian military and police. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) also launched an international 'humanitarian' intervention without the authorisation of the United Nations Security Council (Wippman, 2001), which lasted from March until June of 1999 and put an end to Serbian state rule in Kosovo/a (Krasniqi, 2007a, p. 2).

Serbian forces withdrew from Kosovo/a in June of 1999, leaving the territory under the authority of the international community (EU, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe [OSCE], NATO, and the UN) after signing the *Military Technical Agreement* between the International Security Force (KFOR) and the governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and the Republic of Serbia and the adoption of the *United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244* (1999). Negotiations around the future status of Kosovo/a were mediated by the OSCE and began in 2006. In February 2008, a majority of the Albanian Kosovo parliament adopted the *Kosovo Declaration of Independence*, proclaiming unilateral independence from Serbia. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, however, Kosovo/a is still its southern autonomous province. Thus far, internationally, Kosovo/a is a partially recognised state, but it has yet to attain UN membership. Kosovo/a also remains the only country in the Balkans excluded from the Schengen list, which means its citizens cannot travel throughout the EU without a visa. In April 2013, the first *Agreement on the Normalisation of Relations Between Serbia and Kosovo/a* (Brussels Agreement) was reached in a process mediated by the EU. It provided a basis for local self-governance for the Communities of Serb Municipalities in the majority Serbian-populated North Kosovo and arranged for the integration of Serbian municipalities into the Kosovo/a state system. Since 2013, the Republic of Serbia integrated police forces, judiciary, and customs into the Kosovo/a system. The Kosovo Albanian side, however, has refused to form the Association of Serb Municipalities and provide Serb minorities with autonomy. In the meantime, Kosovo/a has violated the Brussels Agreement and 'neighbourly' relations by introducing a 100 percent tax on goods from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (European Union, 2019). This action has paralysed further implementation of the Brussels Agreement and the political situation in Kosovo/a continues to deteriorate as both sides accuse each other of failures to comply.

1.2. Setting the Context: Balkan's *Padri Padroni*[5]

'[… to the camera] *... We can begin? Okay. Now, what you see here is, at least in summer or in the pole [bridge dividing the Balkans from Central Europe], one of the nicest views of Ljubljana, it looks like Paris, green leaves et cetera. On both sides, nice old houses, nothing special, eh? But you're wrong! This river here is the official geographical limit between Balkan and Mitteleuropa.[6] So, beware! On the other side [Balkan], horror, oriental despotism, women get beaten, get raped, and like it ... On this side, Europe, civilization, women get beaten and raped but don't like it. So: Balkan – Mitteleuropa. Don't forget it!'*

Slavoj Žižek (2014)

'It is paradoxical to read American journalists bemoan the split of their society [which they call 'balkanization'] while their politicians and their allies sealed the virtual, not potential, balkanization of Yugoslavia by embracing unconditionally the principle of self-determination. This is not to deny the legitimate nature of processes of secession and self-determination, but to call on giving phenomena their proper names and on having a clear perspective of their repercussions. It is, of course, a sublime irony to observe leaders of the cleansed societies of Western Europe fifty years after their ugliest performance raise their hands in horror and bombard [in words and in deed, and safely hidden behind American leadership] the former Yugoslavs in preserving "ethnic diversity" for the sake of securing a Volksmuseum of multiculturalism in a corner of Europe, after having given green light to precisely the opposite process.'

Maria Todorova (2009, p. 186)

'If you go to former Yugoslav states, the Balkan states, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Slovenia, the situation is dire. Not to mention Bosnia, which is just run like a colony. The way they used to stand up and sing hymns to President Tito, they now salute the EU flag. It's a very strange transition that we're witnessing in most of Europe, and I don't think it's going to work.'

Tariq Ali (2015)

In his observations of the West's understanding of the East, Edward Said (1979, pp. 11-13) described *orientalism* as a systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage

[5] Padre Padrone (Italian, plural) in English, Fathers, Masters.

[6] Political term for Central Europe.

– and, even, produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period. The Western identity gained strength by setting itself against the Orient. The Orient, in turn, is as much a man-made idea as the West with its own traditions of imagery, thought, and vocabulary that have given it a reality and a presence in and for the West. The following account from my own fieldwork resembled a show based on Said's observations about European interpretations and understandings of the Orient's culture, history, politics, and, above all, its paternalist relationship to it. More specifically, it seemed to reflect thoughts on what has become of the Orient as a result of Western involvement, both theoretically and practically. Rather than a stylised interpretation performed by actors, however, this involved a real event, a real parliament session, and real MPs.

It was a cold winter day in Pristina. Kosovo/a and the Parliament seemed different. Everyone looked and behaved professionally – suits were ironed, ties straightened, faces serious, moves short and restrained as if to attract minimal attention. Even the procedures for entering the Parliament were followed diligently, which certainly surprised me. When I stated I was from the University of Melbourne, I was permitted entry with all the respect reserved for a President of the state. I thought to myself, 'if every day was like this, my fieldwork would be much easier'. It would have brought a degree of certainty only dreamed of by political ethnographers with limited time in the field. For that one day in the Parliament of Kosovo, everything appeared in the manner expected by Europeans. Uncluttered and organised, Kosovo institutions and their employees seemed ready to perform what Europe expected of them – with laws to be adopted and agendas to be set – because Europeans do not open their borders to the wild and savage Europe (De Windt, 1907). To join the EU, Balkan countries needed to cease being, or at least cease behaving as, a 'land of contradictions where everything is the exact opposite of what it might reasonably be expected to be' (Miller, 1898, p. xvi; Todorova, 2009, p. 18).

The occasion was the visit of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, and the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, to Pristina. The visit was part of a plan to ensure the Commission's Strategy for the Western Balkans and its primary mission of 'good neighbourly relations' between countries was being upheld. The ratification of the draft *Law on the Border Demarcation Agreement with Montenegro* was also scheduled for that day, which represented a problematic political issue for the young Republic of Kosovo because, as one politician whose work I followed, Albulena Balaj Halimaj, stated, 'fallen soldiers of Kosovo [Albanians] gave their

blood' for those same borders not that long ago. During their visit, EU officials repeated their position that the ratification of the agreement was a crucial step towards visa liberalisation for Kosovo/a. This was a well-known carrot-and-stick policy that had been implemented by the EU in the Western Balkans since its own respectable historians and travellers began 'classifying and describing' (Todorova, 2009, p. 7) the European periphery in the 18th century. The contextually grounded term for this Orientalist policy was coined by the Mayor of Pristina ironically as 'little carrot, broken stick' (Ahmeti, 2017). Kosovo/a adopted the *Law on the Border Demarcation Agreement with Montenegro* in March 2018, however, the EU has yet to fulfill its promise of opening its borders to Kosovo/a citizens.

I entered the hall where the sessions were held. All the MPs arrived on time, which was strange given that sessions were usually late on ordinary days and MPs could be found smoking and drinking coffee outside until the President of the Parliament frantically rung the bell. The Ambassador of the United States of America (U.S.) was already seated and giving instructions to his translators and deputies as he waited for the session to begin. Unusually, an official stood nearby to ensure the order of seating in the gallery matched the hierarchy of international importance and rank. He approached me, asking which institution I was from and nodded his head in disapproval at the word 'University' before stating, 'if you are not working for the EU or UN, go to the third row. The first and the second rows are for the internationals'.

The MP whose work I was following that day, Emilija Redžepi, whispered *'luftë'* (in Albanian, war) as she passed me, meaning that the session would not be a peaceful one – and she was right. At the beginning, an Albanian woman MP, Ganimete Musliu, from PDK requested a minute of silence for the KLA fighters who had died in a clash with the Serbian police in Likošane and Ćirez near Glogovac in 1998. The day began with a show of Kosovo/a officials resembling children tidying their rooms because their parents (the EU) were visiting. It ended with tear gas thrown by (among others) a young Albanian woman MP from the Self-Determination Party, Fitore Pacolli. The gas caused the dispersal of parents and children, media, international spectators, and academics and destroyed the room's tidiness, which quickly came to echo Western clichés about the Balkans (Becker, 2008, p. 8) as unorderly, wild, aggressive, and undemocratic. The show was short, but it was more than enough for a spectator to understand both the *fabula* (in English, story) and the *sjužet* (in English, plot) (Tomaševskij, 1998), i.e. the logical sequence of the events of the show and the show as a totality. As an observer, the third row proved fortuitous as it provided me with more time to escape the tear gas and to observe the show until it became unbearable for my lungs and eyes.

Politician from North Mitrovica, Adriana Hodžić, contextualised some of Said's (1979, p. 13) conclusions about the Occident's (West) relationship to the Orient (East) in terms of configurations of power, domination, and hegemony. Hodžić reiterated some of the ways in which the West looked at the East as a 'career' or a 'job', perspectives which had dominated the show described above:

> *'Regarding the international community, to be honest, for a good number of people, I have an impression like Kosovo as a mission, because it is relatively safe and the money is good and, in most cases, it is business. They try to solve as few problems as they can. Sometimes, they are the source of the problem because of their wrong advice … [altered] … I have one question for them: Why are they imposing to us democracy they do not want in their own country? And, it is not true when they say they do not interfere in our internal issues. I think they do; they interfere in the issues that suit them! When they already interfere in [our] internal issues, when they have the authority, why don't they interfere in the issues they can really help with?'*

For the reader, this story provides an introduction to the politically sensitive environments of Serbia and Kosovo/a and the context of 'democratisation' that characterised every day of my fieldwork. I tackle democratisation in chapter four of this thesis, although in less than ideal detail because of the limited character of the Ph.D and its associated research questions and word limits. This story is not intended to deny the benefits of the international community's involvement in Serbia and Kosovo/a, nor to generalise or present it as uniformly negative and one-dimensional. It is, rather, intended to open the thesis with a description of a political, social, and cultural context that I was unable to analyse in depth but that is, nevertheless, still worth mentioning in understanding the Balkans.

1.3. Research Questions

My central research question was:

How do women politicians navigate their identities as women and as members of their *ethnies*/nations/states and how does this affect their politicisation of gender and national issues in the process of democratisation?

The key subsidiary questions were:

1. How do women politicians imagine national identity and what does it mean to them?

2. How do women politicians understand gender identity and what does it mean to them?
3. What are the dominant political representations and narratives that women politicians use when they politicise gender and national identity in their work?
4. What are the limitations/constraints/boundaries for political collaboration (political sisterhood) between women politicians of different political parties/*ethnies*/states within democratic institutions (and during the period of democratisation)?
5. How do democratisation processes impact upon the position, security, and autonomy of women politicians and vice versa?

1.4. Thesis Outline

This thesis is separated into chapters, sections, and subsections that correspond with the main research question and the key subsidiary questions. In the second chapter, 'Women Politicians and/in the Nation', I situate women politicians within their *ethnies*/nations and present the ways they 'imagine' (Anderson, 1991, p. 49) and construct their ethnic/national identities. To answer the central research question, I needed to understand the participation of women politicians in the construction of these identities as well as the main elements that constituted them. I explain the principal elements of the nation according to women, including 'common' ethnic/national or personal tragedies, memories, blood, roots, myths, symbols, and rituals. I note that they predominantly imagined their *ethnies*/nations as ancient and primordial, but they situated themselves as political representatives of their *ethnies*/nations in the present political context. Throughout this thesis, I utilise quotes from women politicians where they proudly politicised their *ethnie's* past tragedies and claimed them as their own in a manner that emphasised the connections between their ancestors and themselves, between past and present, and between their own personal and their *ethnie's* destinies.

In the section, '*Ethnie*, Birth, Tragedy, from 'I' to 'We'', I explain the process of personal and *ethnie* tragedies merging to become one and how this shapes the perceptions of women politicians and their political work in the present through the stories of three of my informants from Serbia and Kosovo/a, MPs Edita Tahiri, Saranda Bogujevci, and Sanda Rašković Ivić. Additionally, I demonstrate how women politicians reproduced what Smith (1991, p. 74) refers to as ideology or the 'core doctrine of nationalism'. More specifically, I discuss how they recognised the political and social power of their nations, the ways they expressed their loyalty, how they described their individuality, uniqueness, history, and destiny, and how they actively

worked on their (re)production. Bogujevci's story and discussions around the implications of growing up in the West (United Kingdom) for identity development highlight interesting deviations from dominant nationalist narratives that sought to present the *ethnie* as constant and unchanging.

In the chapter, 'Women Politicians and/in the Nation', I also examine the political explanations for different elements of the *ethnie*. In the section 'Blood', I present the ways women politicians understood and politicised blood and how they used it to transmit different parts of their identity – from their own ethnicities to the emerging Kosovar identity. Blood not only carries genetic potential; it also holds the memories and myths of the *ethnie*. In retelling the story of the *Serbian Heart of Johan* (in Serbian, *Srpsko Srce Jovanovo*), written by Veselin Dželatović (2003), Serbian MP Marija Janjušević depicted the Kosovo myth, claiming that the *ethnie's* memories were transferable through blood and human organs. The story served to politicise the depth of emotional attachment and the unbreakable bond between the Serbs and their 'homeland' of Kosovo and Metohija. Following an exploration of the symbolism of blood, I transition to a second important element of women politicians' identities in roots and rootedness. I draw on the commentary of women politicians on the location of their roots and how they regarded them as an unalienable 'part of life'. I refer to the story of rootedness and uprooting shared by Edita Tahiri, a Kosovo Albanian politician. Specifically, I explain how two processes bring the importance of ethnic primacy into focus through a metaphor taken from the book *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (Friedman, 2000). In doing so, I raise the importance of the constructed character of national identity by drawing on the example of *besa* (in Albanian, a promise or spoken word), describing how the deeply situated cultural elements of the *ethnie* that stem from roots can be modified in the case of a more important or imminent threat to the *ethnie.*

In the final section of the chapter 'Women Politicians and/in the Nation', I unpack the subject of 'Symbols, Myths, and Rituals'. I explore how women politicians used these elements to (re)present themselves, their communities, and ethnic 'others' and the relationship between them. Women politicians often used symbols, myths, and rituals to romanticise and glorify their *ethnies*/nations/states, their 'natural' right to the territory, and the struggles and sacrifices of their heroes and heroines. At the same time, they used them to represent the ethnic 'other' as ominous and threatening. The reproduction of past symbols, myths, and rituals was an important indicator of the political engagement of women politicians because these elements contained political, symbolic, and emotional power. To demonstrate this, I deconstruct the

Battle of Kosovo and its importance for some Serbian women politicians. In addition, I describe the emotional reaction of Kosovo Albanian politician Valdete Idrizi at her first sighting of the Kosovo flag in the U.S. and I draw on the justifications of Bosniak women politicians for their autochthonous existence in the territory of Kosovo/a.

In the third chapter, 'Women Politicians, Gender, and/in the Nation', I focus on gender identity, i.e. how women politicians understood and politicised their gender identities and how they (re)produced gender roles within the formal political structures of their *ethnies*/nations/states. I examine gender and national identity in light of the fact that these two markers are highly variable, intertwined, and negotiable. I specifically focus on the explanations provided by women politicians for the insider/outsider positions that women held within the patriarchal and patrilineal projects of their *ethnies*/nations/states. I argue that the long history of undervaluing women's contributions to the (re)construction and (re)conceptualisation of their *ethnies* has greatly affected the work of women politicians in politicising gender. The minimisation of women's roles and contributions to national projects compelled women politicians to accentuate female participation as a means of shifting their own and other women's positions from outsider to insider. Actively drawing on patriarchal or traditional gender roles to prove the contribution of women became a primary political strategy for achieving this goal. The success of this strategy was limited because it reinforced, rather than deconstructed, the dominant traditional and patriarchal *ethnie* and gender narratives. In this chapter, I discuss some of the successes of this form of politicisation of gender and nation.

The sections of the chapter 'Women Politicians, Gender, and/in the Nation' are structured by the framework developed by Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis (1989, p. 7). I use their five forms of participation in state/nationalist projects to represent the explanations provided by women politicians with regards to the position of women in the nation. I introduce one small change in that I present the second and third forms of participation together to avoid confusion, given that the examples collected during fieldwork for both these forms were marked by a close similarity. Thus, this section has four, rather than five, subsections.

In the final chapter, 'Women Politicians, Democratisation, Gender, and/in the Nation', I address how women navigated gender and national identity in relation to the democratisation process. I explore how women politicians worked within the institutions that were founded (or financed) by international funds as part of democratisation with foundational missions that supported democracy and women's and human rights. This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, I analyse the political space opened to women because of democratisation.

I demonstrate that this space was not tabula rasa, especially in politically sensitive, developing, and patriarchal societies, like those of Serbia and Kosovo/a. Indeed, democratisation opened space for the greater political participation of women, but it did not erase the old, traditional gender and *ethnie* narratives and roles that subordinate women. Women politicians were required to navigate this complex situation by making the occasional bargain with the patriarchy and by developing survival strategies that would minimise risks to their security and ensure their continued presence in politics (Kandiyoti, 1988). The section '"Patriarchal Bargains": Entering the "Oda"', recounts the story of Kosovo Albanian MP Mimoza Kusari Lila to illustrate the specific paradoxical situation that emerged when women entered men's (political) spaces and how this was enhanced by the process of democratisation.[7] In the second section, 'The Collaboration of Women Politicians: "Rings Around Sisterhood"', I describe the impediments to greater political solidarity that existed among women politicians from different political parties/*ethnies*/states in the newly-formed political bodies created under the umbrella of democracy. I refer to these impediments metaphorically as 'rings around sisterhood' because women were required to jump through rings in order to collaborate. The act of jumping through rings was difficult and it carried serious consequences, which were different for men and women. The nationalist state is highly hierarchical, gendered, and characterised by institutionalised masculinity and patriarchal relations (Connell, 1987, 1990, p. 514). The rules and sanctions that applied to women in nationalist states were, therefore, very different to those pertaining to men. I locate party and *ethnie* soldiership as two of the main impediments to, or the 'rings' around, political sisterhood. Material for these subsections was collected during participant observation of individual women MPs at the sessions of the Women's Parliamentarian Network in Belgrade (WPN), the Commission on Human Rights, Gender Equality, Missing Persons, and Petitions (CHRGE) in the Parliament of Kosovo/a as well from MPs testimonies and experiences from the *Follow Us* initiative.[8]

In the subsection, 'Dangers of Double Loyalty: Sisterhood vs. Party Soldiership', I present the first and the strongest ring around sisterhood, party soldiership. The expression 'party soldiers'

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[7] A traditional Albanian room where only men (heads of family) were allowed. Women were permitted to enter the Oda only when bringing food. The purpose and practices of the Oda are further explained in the fourth chapter, 'Women Politicians, Democratisation, Gender, and/in the Nation'.

[8] The *Follow Us* campaign was a dialogue initiative involving prominent women from Belgrade and Pristina initiated by the OSCE Mission to Serbia and the OSCE Mission to Kosovo in 2012. It gathered mostly women MPs from the Parliament of Serbia and the Parliament of Kosovo, with an emphasis on encouraging dialogue between the two societies and regional co-operation (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, 2015).

refers to women who 'are loyal to parties and not women' and was often used by Serbian MP Sanda Rašković Ivić, whose work I observed during fieldwork. The loyalty of women MPs to their political parties instead of other women (and their formal and non-formal political networks) was a primary impediment to achieving political sisterhood and fulfilling the founding goal of the WPN, which was concerned with improving the position of women in Serbia. I explain the paradox evident in the inclination of women politicians to demonstrate allegiance towards party soldiership rather than to the goal of political sisterhood. I utilise several examples provided by women politicians and members of the WPN and their inability to reach a consensus around supporting laws proposed by women that would significantly improve women's rights and fulfil the foundational goal of the WPN.

In the subsection, 'Dangers of Triple Loyalty: Sisterhood vs. *Ethnie* Soldiership', I present a second ring around sisterhood, *ethnie* soldiership. The loyalty that women politicians exhibited towards the political parties that included them on their electoral lists was followed closely by their allegiance to their *ethnies*/nations/states. Frequently, women politicians failed to do their jobs as members of formal and non-formal institutional bodies founded to protect human and women's rights – to stand in solidarity and protect their sisters of other, or even of the same, *ethnies*/nations/states and to uphold the democratic standard. Some of the problems behind this paradox related to the system of punishment that existed for women who disobeyed their *ethnies* and the absence of any groundswell of support from women's networks and institutions. Joane Nagel (1998, pp. 252-253) claims that women in nationalist states occupy distinct symbolic roles that reflect masculinist definitions of femininity and women's proper place in the nation. Faced with these constraints, women often attempted to enact nationalism through the reproduction of the traditional roles assigned to them by nationalists. Women who refused to conform to nationalist practices and principles were severely punished by their own, or by other, *ethnies* and sometimes, as we will see in this research even by both. The system of punishment was highly gendered, and it differed from the forms of discipline enacted upon men. Women were often regarded as less dangerous or less likely to be 'up to something' (Nagel, 1998, p. 253); they were considered less threatening or militant. Because of that, the system of sanctions included sexist media smear campaigns whereby the personal lives of women politicians were publicly exposed, and they were disparagingly labelled as 'starlets', 'whores', or the 'nation's traitors'. Their sexuality, especially in terms of 'fraternising' with the 'enemy' ethnic other, was under the microscope. As a result, women politicians were less inclined to support women's political sisterhood.

In the final section, 'The Collaboration of Women Politicians: Survival Strategies', I deal with certain survival strategies applied by women politicians when attempting to navigate the hybrid democratisation process and its faulty institutions. I demonstrate that women politicians chose to treat women's issues as separate from 'politics' and often settled on 'political ambiguity' as a strategy to grant them political survival, rather than using the space to strengthen political sisterhood among women of different *ethnies*, nations, and states. The fear of being pronounced a 'whore' or a 'traitor' or of having one's political career terminated resulted in women politicians avoiding any topics that might divide them. These topics usually concerned the *ethnie* and the nation. Conferences involving women politicians organised as a result of international funding and based on wishful thinking about a 'common oppression' and a 'common enemy' were not lacking. Ambiguous declarations with no political power were, likewise, abundant. It was authentic political sisterhood with genuine emancipatory and reformative potential that was absent from the collaboration.

1.5. Research Design and Methodology

The principal methodology used in this research was ethnography for its adaptability to both 'politically sensitive research environments' (Browne and McBride, 2015, p. 34), such as Serbia and Kosovo/a, and to my complex set of research questions around gender and national identities. Data was collected through a combination of participant observation and semi-structured interviews with women politicians, mainly MPs in Belgrade and Pristina, but also local women politicians and women who hold, or who have held, a political office or function in Belgrade, Pristina, Prizren, and North Mitrovica. My fieldwork began in March 2017 and lasted until April 2018. I spent the initial six months in Belgrade, specifically from March 2017 to October 2017. Here, I conducted participant observation with two women MPs at their places of work, Tatjana Macura from the Party for Modern Serbia (*Stranka Modern Srbije [SMS]*) and Dr Sanda Rašković Ivić from the People's Party (*Narodna Stranka [NS]*). For the final six months, I moved to Pristina where I remained between October 2017 and April 2018. There, I observed the work of two Bosniak MPs, Emilija Redžepi, president of the New Democratic Party (*Nova Demokratska Stranka [NDS]*) and Duda Balje president of the Social-democratic Union *(Socijaldemokratska Unija [SDU]),* as well as Albanian MP Albulena Balaj Halimaj from NISMA (*Nisma Për Kosovën*). I also sporadically followed the work of Ksenija Božović, a member of the Local Council of Mitrovica North (LCMN), the Serbian part of the former Kosovska Mitrovica (which is the Serbian name for that northern city of Kosovo and Metohija)

and has now been split into Mitrovica North (the Serbian section) and Mitrovica South (the Albanian section). My observation of Božović's work was interrupted because, immediately after she agreed to participate, the leader of her former political party, Freedom, Democracy, Justice (*Sloboda, Demokratija, Pravda [SDP]*), Oliver Ivanović was assassinated on 16 January 2018 in front of their offices. Given that this was one of my 'field sites', I paused my observations in view of the significant political turmoil and the security issues following the assassination. I lost touch with Božović but managed to re-establish contact towards the end of my research and observe her work at two LCMN meetings.

My fieldwork began with a combination of deep hanging out, a method coined by Clifford Geertz (1998), and multi-sited ethnography, an approach framed by George Marcus (1995). This required immersion in the group, cultural, and social experiences of women politicians in multiple sites of observation (Browne and McBride, 2015, p. 4). My main objective was to collect data, knowledge, and insights that would reveal the hierarchy of meaningful structures in which gender and national identities were produced, perceived, interpreted, and negotiated (Geertz, 1994, p. 215) alongside examples of the active participation of women politicians in these processes. I initiated recruitment by reaching out to women politicians in Belgrade, Pristina, and Mitrovica North with requests to allow me to conduct participant observation at least once a week, on a day of their choosing, and for a period of six months in any location in which their work might be conducted.

I also conducted semi-structured interviews and held numerous informal and formal lunch and coffee meetings with women politicians. Additionally, I observed conferences and events organised by non-governmental organisations and international donors (such as EU, OSCE, UN Women). My fieldwork resulted in 105 fieldnotes collected through participant observation and 20 semi-structured interviews with various women politicians in Belgrade, Pristina, Prizren, and North Mitrovica.[9] Consequently, 'the field', as explained by Akhil Gupta and

[9] Interviews in Serbia: Sanda Rašković Ivić (MP, People's Party – NS), Tatjana Macura (MP, Enough is Enough [up until December 2018], MP, Party for Modern Serbia – SMS [present]), Dubravka Filipovski (MP, Serbian Progressive Party – SNS), Gorica Gajić (MP, Democratic Party of Serbia – DSS), Marija Janjušević (MP Serbian Movement Dveri), and Stojanka Lekić (AP, Vojvodina MP, Serbian Progressive Party – SNS).

Interviews in Kosovo/a: Adriana Hodžić (former Minister of Local Government Administration), Edita Tahiri (Democratic League of Kosovo – LDK), Donika Kadaj Bujupi (MP, Alliance for the Future of Kosovo – AAK), Sandra Đokić (MP, Serbian Liberal Party – SLS), Teuta Musa (MP, Democratic League of Kosovo – LDK), Valdete Idrizi (MP, Democratic Party of Kosovo – PDK), Saranda Bogujevci (MP, Movement Self-Determination – LVV), Rada Trajković (MP, European Movement of Serbs from Kosovo and Metohija), Mimoza Kusari Lila (MP, Alternativa), Melisa Azizović (MP, New Democratic Party – NDS), Danijela

James Ferguson (1997, pp. 2-3), was many places chosen by the women politicians themselves – from institutions and parliament halls to cafes, the Prime Minister's and Mayor's offices, restaurants, MPs houses, radio stations, TV stations, and other public places of work.

Ethnographic methods, especially deep hanging out, multi-sited ethnography, and semi-structured interviews, proved highly suitable for my project. According to Nancy Cook (2007, p. 14)**,** ethnography provides a framework for detailing the routine aspects of women's daily lives and brings the ordinariness of everyday life and taken-for-granted practices into sharper focus. Furthermore, it reveals the political significance of these activities by emphasising their implications in the exercise of political power. The focus of this research was the production of knowledge grounded in women's daily lives and political work. As such, ethnographic methods offered possibilities for 'understanding how politics work in everyday life' (Baiocchi and Connor, 2008, p. 139). According to Beverley Skeggs (2007, pp. 7-8, 1994), ethnography embodies opportunities to highlight the experiences, words, voices, and lives of participants and enables a 'view from below' (hooks, 1989). In feminist work, ethnographic methods are useful for accessing the 'standpoints' (Harding, 2004) of different women from different locations. This was especially the case in my research exploring the experiences of various women, how they perceived one another, and how they situated themselves within their different *ethnies*. The power of ethnography to provide a voice for women politicians from different classes, *ethnies,* and geographic locations made it highly suitable for my research.

Recent studies indicate very little application of ethnographic methods in the political sciences, particularly in research with politicians and decision-makers. Javier Auyero and Lauren Joseph's (2007, pp. 1-3) analysis of new perspectives in political ethnography demonstrates that politics and its actors (state officials, politicians, and activists) remain largely understudied by ethnography's mainstream. Auyero and Joseph also claim that both routine (party, union, and NGO) and contentious (social movements and other forms of collective action) politics are generally overlooked in contemporary ethnography. This situation creates a double absence that my research seeks to address in that there is a lack of politics in ethnographic research and a lack of ethnographic methods in the political sciences.

Božović (Member of the Local Council North Mitrovica, Party Freedom, Democracy, Justice [Sloboda, Demokratija, Pravda – SDP] [until September 2019], Serbian List – SL [present]), Emilija Redžepi (MP, New Democratic Party – NDS [until February 2020], Minister of Local Government Administration – NDS [present]), Duda Balje (MP, Coalition VAKAT [until January 2020], MP Social-Democratic Union – SDU [present]), and Albulena Balaj Halimaj (MP, NISMA).

1.5.1. Participant Observation in 'Politically Sensitive Environments'

The road to multi-sited deep hanging out with women politicians was a troubled one. I encountered difficulties in explaining the nature of participant observation, particularly in terms of separating it from the interview and in clarifying the requirement for spending sustained time 'at work' on a regular basis. Women politicians were accustomed to interviews, which tended to be their only experience with researchers. Participant observation was a completely new experience. The full understanding and support of women politicians was crucial when it came to this form of access because deep hanging out required entry to parliament sessions, meetings with citizens, the Prime Minister or Mayor, as well as admittance to conferences or delegation visits. These sites are not particularly accessible to researchers or ordinary citizens, despite the fact that most were held in public institutions. Obtaining access, therefore, required a great deal of time and energy.

My position as a student from an Australian university and my Serbian ethnicity impacted upon my positionality in regards to access to women politicians and political spaces in both Serbia and Kosovo/a. I was regarded as an 'insider' and an 'outsider' at the same time and this was an uneasy position to inhabit. Indeed, some women politicians perceived me as an 'outsider', despite the fact that I am from the region and am regarded as a 'native ethnographer' (Živković, 2000, p. 50). I was born and raised in Belgrade, Serbia, in a working-class family who were part of the first generation to have left the villages for life in a larger city. As a result of the financial stress generated by extreme inflation and war, I took to selling cigarettes in the street at the age of 14. I had, therefore, an intimate knowledge of the political context and a familiarity with the poverty and struggles produced by war, that most of the women politicians I was attempting to follow had confronted in their own lives. I was already acquainted with the groups and the research context through my own origins and background (Flores, 2018; Griffith, 1998; Merton, 1972; Naples, 1996; Parameswaran, 2001; Simić, 2018, pp. xiii, 12, 161; Zinn, 1979). Women from Kosovo/a considered me an 'outsider' because I was not originally from Kosovo/a. In spite of this, the access to Kosovo/a institutions and politicians (Albanian and Bosniak) was, to a greater extent, easier than for those in Serbia. I attributed this to the fact that Australia was one of the first countries to recognise Kosovo/a as an independent state. For the same reason, Kosovo Serb women politicians from the Serbian List in the Kosovo Parliament avoided any contact with me. Surprisingly, in Serbia, my status as a university student from a country that recognises Kosovo/a's independence shifted my position from 'insider' to 'outsider'. The Republic of Serbia does not recognise Kosovo and, according to the Preamble

of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia (2007), 'Kosovo and Metohija is an integral part of Serbia'. As such, some Serbian women politicians from the Serbian Parliament viewed me with suspicion. For the majority of women politicians from Serbia, taking part in the research project of a student from a state that recognises Kosovo/a was against the Constitution.

Some women politicians were bewildered by my proposal to observe them at work. Reactions ranged from confusion over what 'observation' might mean to overtly unpleasant responses. One MP from Serbia, for example, asked me what would happen when she went on vacation. Did I intend to observe her there? Other politicians were affronted by my 'audacity' in 'expecting' they would have the time to deal with me once a week for the period of six months. In the words of one Serbian politician from the Democratic Party who telephoned me to query my research design, 'how dare you think that I have time to deal with you every day and take you with me to work? That is both outrageous and impossible. How dare you?' Others doubted my good intentions. Serbian MP Tatjana Macura was the first to agree to participant observation in Belgrade. The first time I spoke with her over the telephone, she bravely asked, 'OK, what exactly do you want from me?' As a member of the WPN in the Serbian Parliament, she encouraged me to introduce myself to them first so she could take me to their meetings. She was even kind enough to schedule a meeting with the WPN.

Due to protests against the Serbian President, Aleksandar Vučić, access to the Parliament was prohibited to the public from March through to the end of April 2017. This development significantly complicated my fieldwork, especially my access to institutions and observing MPs at work. The MPs of the WPN even moved one meeting from the Home of the Parliament to the Kralja Milana building to accommodate me. I was the first presenter at this meeting. The 'coffee cook' (in Serbian, *kafe kuvarica*) brought us Turkish coffee, as was common at the beginning of institutional meetings in the Western Balkans. I began by introducing myself and my research to the MPs who sat on the opposite side of the table to myself and the EU and OSCE representatives. The meeting concluded with MPs asking questions about my research. More than half the meeting was consumed by an interrogation of the exact 'motivations' behind my research and how I planned to 'represent' the women and their political activities. The most important question concerned why my Plain Language Statement (PLS) referred to 'Kosovo' without Metohija.[10] One MP stated, 'I don't like this, only Kosovo in your text!' Others

[10] PLS is a document that contains clear and detailed information about the Ph.D. project and the nature of participant involvement.

supported her concerns, nodding their heads and looking at each other for signs of approval. The concerned MP added:

> *'I do not want to pressure you and I don't know if there were pressures from the other "side" [presumably the Albanian or the Australian sides] but, in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic Serbia, Kosovo and Metohija is an autonomous province of Serbia.'*

The MPs of WPN were particularly anxious that I present women politicians in a positive manner, given that their political network was still 'fragile'. They were also concerned that I present Kosovo/a as part of Serbia. Interestingly, both points of concern – women's representation (gender identity) and national representation (national identity) – were the focus of my research. Understanding how women perceived their gender and national identities and how they politicised them were key research questions. I struggled to explain that I was yet to discover the answers to their questions and that I had no hidden agenda. It took me a great deal of time to explain that, as a researcher, I could not promise to represent women politicians positively on all occasions and that I could only write honestly about my observations. Moreover, the political status of Kosovo and Metohija was not the subject of my research and my political stance on Kosovo's independence was immaterial. The PLS provided a clear and succinct description of the project and the nature of participation.

Some women MPs from the leading Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) and coalition parties also raised concerns that my initial observations were of women from opposition parties. In this sense, my research became an issue in the power struggle between MPs from the majority party and coalition and those of the opposition parties in the WPN. Women politicians from the ruling party and coalition regarded my actions as 'suspicious'. Macura, who initiated the meeting and whose work I was already observing, attempted to clarify the situation. She advised that there had been no political conspiracy behind my early research activities; but, rather, that politicians from the opposition parties had been the only ones to respond positively towards my research at that point. She also attempted to provoke MPs into participating in my research by stating that I was one of them (i.e. a Serb). For Macura, it was unimaginable that I could receive a better reception in Kosovo/a than in Serbia, my homeland. This point also resulted in my research unintentionally becoming an issue between Serbian and Kosovo MPs. As Macura said:

'It would be such a shame if the WPN from Serbia does not help our researcher. A woman [myself] got a scholarship from a foreign university and spent her life studying in Serbia. She is "ours" [in Serbian, naša] and it would be a shame for us if she goes to Kosovo and gets more help there than here!'

I added that invitations had been sent to all women MPs equally and even multiple times to some potential informants. Yet, no woman politician from the ruling party or the coalition had officially agreed to allow me to engage in participant observation with them. I had heard from several sources that, in order to agree, they required the approval of the President himself. MPs from the Serbian List (SL) in Pristina Parliament required the same approvals. Some women had consented to informal meetings over coffee, but that remained the extent of their participation. Nonetheless, I was grateful for this cooperation, which still proved useful for my research and gave me a chance to listen to their struggles in a more intimate setting that would not endanger their positions within their parties and the WPN. However, despite their suspicious attitudes towards me as a researcher – at least in the beginning – the WPN did allow me to observe MPs during their visit to the Poznan Congress of Women. I observed a series of formal meetings between them and Polish MPs on many state and gender issues during Congress. They were also very generous in letting me accompany them on walks around the city and during lunches.

1.5.2. Negotiating Politically Explosive Debates: Wording the Political Status of Kosovo/a

The unresolved political status and wording of Kosovo/a in my PLS posed a problem in terms of justifications for, and explanations of, my project to women politicians in both Belgrade and Pristina. In Serbia, some MPs believed the absence of Kosovo and Metohija in my PLS was intentional. One Serbian MP considered it a 'deceitful attempt to try to make Serbian politicians participate in a project with Kosovo politicians', which would mean 'participation in crawling recognition of Kosovo as an independent republic'. She said it was 'hypocritical to invite Serbian politicians to give legitimacy to politicians of the quasi-state of Kosovo' by participating in my research. Kosovo Albanian women politicians were also bothered by my use of the term 'Kosovo' and not 'the Republic of Kosovo' in the PLS. To some, this was an indication that I did not recognise Kosovo/a as an independent state, which – in their view – was a typical position for a Serb (myself). One Albanian politician said her participation in my research would depend on my 'political approach to Kosovo and Serbia'.

Providing explanations to satisfy the assumptions of women politicians took significant time and energy. However, gaining positionality and legitimacy among future research participants is an important step in every political ethnography (Browne and McBride, 2015, p. 34). For this reason, I followed the advice of Mertus (1996, p. 273) who recognises that Kosova is an Albanian term and Kosovo (rarely) or Kosovo and Metohija (more often) is a Serbian term. In my research, I adopt the term 'Kosovo/a' to refer to the state due to its unresolved political status and to avoid conflict or the appearance that I, as a researcher, might be perceived as taking sides. Where I quote a Serb, Albanian, or Bosniak politician, however, I use the term/s employed directly by each informant.

An informant's doubts around the intrusive nature of ethnographic research is understandable and expected. This is especially so in 'politically sensitive environments' like Serbia and Kosovo/a, which both have long histories of political turmoil and still unresolved status issues. Ethnography is intrusive and justifications for selecting this approach must be 'good' for it to seem credible and to manage the creation of 'trust' between the researcher and the researched (Iphofen, 2015, pp. 1-2). I was aware that asking women politicians to accompany them to work and to confide in me was intrusive and that I would need a great deal of time simply to establish trust. Some of my colleagues were seriously concerned about me after 'stalking' was introduced into the *Criminal Code* (2018) in Serbia. They often joked that MPs would sue me for 'stalking' because I called them so many times per day or week to ask, 'What are we doing this week? Where are we going? What are the plans?' For some researchers, a research strategy based solely on interviews would have been an easier path, given both the political context and the participants. However, I was not prepared to forego the benefits of participant observation, i.e. the originality of the information obtained through access to the everyday lives of women politicians at work and its value to the field of political ethnography. My intention to understand the behaviour of women politicians as seen through 'their own eyes' (Aronoff and Kubik, 2013, p. xvii) and their own standpoints prevailed. As aforementioned, the possibilities of political ethnography helped overcome some of the limits and constraints surrounding access. I was able to negotiate politically sensitive environments and the refusal of authorities to fully implement the rules and procedures that applied to foreign researchers in terms of access. Aside from simple observation, participant observation enabled follow-up with participants on events that occurred during observation.

1.5.3. Arrest(s), Assassination(s), Tear Gas, Rumours, Limited Freedom of Movement, and other Constraints of 'Politically Sensitive Environments'

Other, primarily contextual, limitations significantly impacted my research. I will mention only some of them: the arrest of Kosovo Albanian MP Donika Kadaj Bujupi, the assassination of Serbian political leader Oliver Ivanović, occasional tear-gassing in Parliament sessions in Pristina, suspicions around my position as a 'native researcher' of Serbian background coming from an Australian university and residing in Pristina, and deep ethnic divisions between the Albanian majority and the Serbian minority in Kosovo/a.

When I first travelled to Kosovo/a in October 2017, Kadaj Bujupi was eager to participate in my research and she immediately agreed to participant observation. Unfortunately, she was arrested the following week because of her refusal to appear in court for setting-off tear gas during Parliament sessions in 2016. She was subsequently imprisoned for three months in solitary confinement. I attempted to reach out to her on numerous occasions during her imprisonment, but without success. When she was eventually released, we only had time for a single interview. This was particularly disappointing given Kadaj Bujupi's experience in Kosovo/a politics, especially in terms of the politicisation of gender and national identities.

Participant observation with the only Serbian woman in Kosovo/a who did agree to be involved in participant observation, Ksenija Božović, was postponed after the assassination of the leader of her party, Ivanović. Božović was a member of the Local Council of Mitrovica North, the Serbian section of the city that Serbs refer to as Kosovska Mitrovica. Prior to the assassination, I met with her at the same offices in front of which Ivanović was later shot with five bullets to the back. We had agreed that I would follow her at the sessions of the Local Council when I learned that Ivanović had been assassinated. I received advice that I should not travel to North Mitrovica until everything 'blows over'. I sat with some of the MPs from the Kosovo/a Parliament and their assistants after the assassination. All of them were grieving, as Ivanović was one of the first Kosovo Serb MPs and one of the 'rare Serbs in Kosovo/a that spoke Albanian fluently'. None of them intended go to the North, however, to attend the funeral. They advised me not to go either because of the 'security situation'. At this point, I lost contact with Božović and only re-established connections a month before the end of my fieldwork. As such, I was only able to observe two of the LCMN sessions with her. When I returned to North Mitrovica following the assassination, I realised that the security and political situation had

changed. In front of the office, I saw a police car guarding the entrance and a marble plate with an image of Ivanović and his famous quote:

I must stay strong, because if I don't, if I fail,
I will show them that they are stronger than everything I've believed in.
Evil cannot last forever.
One day, there will be justice, I guess.
I will never, never, leave Kosovo and Metohija.

Indeed, he did not leave; he was killed in Kosovo and Metohija. Božović's first comment when I entered the office was, 'Did you see what happened? Did you see how they killed our leader? Now, there is no sense to do anything in Kosovska Mitrovica, without him, there is no sense in doing anything'. We travelled together to the LCNM meeting held at the old socialist worker's hall of the Public Communal Company called 'Standard'. As we stood and smoked outside, waiting for the meeting to start, Božović pointed to all the former members of her political party that had left when 'it was the hardest' – namely, when Ivanović was arrested in 2014. The Serbian List, an opposition Serb political party completely controlled by Belgrade (or by Aleksandar Vučić, the President of Serbia), pressured many members of Božović's party to transfer. In Serbia, people who switch political parties are popularly referred to as 'the flyers' (in Serbian, *preletači*). The term is pejorative and understood to signify a betrayal of loyalty rather than a politically legitimate move; it is usually employed to describe people of weak character and political opportunists or, even more accurately, traitors. Some members transferred to the SL immediately, while others needed more persuasion. In fact, their cars were burnt, their apartments burgled, and some – including Dimitrije Janićijević (Ivanović's godfather) – were also assassinated. It was not accidental that the police could not find the perpetrators of these crimes. After the observation of two meetings of the LCNM, I noticed that some members of the SL had suspicious-looking men around them. They appeared more like local mobsters than legitimate political representatives. As a result, I terminated my fieldwork with Božović. It was my personal judgement that the situation in North Mitrovica was not stable enough to carry out good participant observation and I was due to finish my fieldwork in April 2018 at any rate. Later in the 2019, Ksenija Božović did what the majority of the members of her political party did before her and what she, herself, had heavily criticised, she also transferred to the SL.

The two occasions of tear gassing at the Parliament in Kosovo/a substantially impacted my fieldwork. Not only did these incidents prevent me from observing the MPs at the Parliament

sessions for that day, they also affected my safety and made access to the Parliament more difficult. As MP Duda Balje once said, 'I don't know why they call it tear gas, it should be called choking gas, it chokes you and burns your lungs'. As we walked to one of the sessions, she recalled the occasion when Kadaj Bujupi threw tear gas during a session held on the top floor of the Parliament. She laughed over the incident, remembering that one Serbian MP could not jump out of the window onto a small piece of wall outside the building because she was too heavy. She could not remember the Serbian MPs name, but said it was equally dangerous and amusing. Kosovo MPs and employees in the Parliament appeared somewhat used to tear gas. In contrast to the security employees who ran frantically through the hallways, administrative staff seemed completely undisturbed. Some of them dismissively commented, 'ah, these lunatics threw tear gas again' and continued on with their business. I ran out of the session alongside the U.S. Ambassador with red and tear-filled eyes and went to a Parliament restaurant on the top floor popularly known as *'bife'* to wait until the burning in my lungs abated. The situation in the bife appeared normal; people drank coffee and waited for the air to clear so that everyone could continue their work.

Being a researcher of Serbian ethnicity, coming from an Australian university, and residing in Pristina affected my access to certain institutions. Although the Head of School from the University of Melbourne wrote to the Parliaments in Belgrade and Pristina explaining the purpose of my research, the struggle in obtaining access was continuous. The reasons provided were always different. One day in Pristina, for example, security staff assumed that I was an assistant for one of the MPs who I was observing on a regular basis. On that day, I entered the Parliament easily and I felt my problems were seemingly over. My luck, however, did not last. The rules changed the following day and I struggled to gain entry once again. My ongoing problems seemed to have a similar narrative to the Groundhog Day movie; I relived the same day endlessly, only the outcome was always different. It often depended upon the moods of the security staff, rather than the application of any rules and procedures which guaranteed freedom to observe Parliament sessions, especially to researchers and the media. A researcher, therefore, must remain patient and inventive in politically sensitive environments where rules and procedures depended more on 'who you know' or 'who you are' rather than what any laws and procedures stated. Many times, I sought assistance from people I had become acquainted with to enter a building when the MP I was observing could not meet me at the entrance. This would occasionally be an assistant of one of the MPs who I was observing and, in some cases, an employee of the Parliament library.

On occasion, I was physically prevented from observing MPs inside the Parliament hall in Serbia where sessions were held. Parliament staff refused to allow me entry, even though researchers were permitted to sit in the balcony area according to the *Code of Conduct* (Narodna Skupština Republike Srbije, 2012). As aforementioned, the application and approach of institutions to rules and regulations is often rather flexible in politically sensitive environments. One of the main reasons for this was weak institutions and the absence of systems of punishment. Sometimes, I was permitted to observe the sessions via a television located in the Parliamentarian club of the MPs political party. On the one hand, this proved beneficial as it gave me the opportunity to 'hang out' with other MPs from the same Parliamentarian club and listen to their comments on the debate. On the other hand, it prevented me from observing the situation firsthand in the Parliament hall, which limited my ability to hear comments that were not made 'into the microphone' and to observe women politicians' immediate reactions to them. Nevertheless, I still followed up with the MPs after each session to explore their responses to various incidents in the hall and their feelings over these events.

In Kosovo/a, I was permitted to observe the full proceedings of each session in the same hall as the MPs in a section reserved for ambassadors, the media, and NGOs. At any point, the MP I was observing on that day could give me a sign to pay attention to a point of interest. Bosniak MP, Emilija Redžepi, would often indicate with her hand or her head to leave the hall or she would invite me to attend another meeting with her or simply to have coffee over a briefing at the front of the hall. A small bife was conveniently located outside the Kosovo/a Parliament and MPs would often gather there to drink coffee and smoke. Smoking inside the Parliament was prohibited by law, but these legislators did not appear perturbed by this regulation. The space was filled with smoke, MPs chatting about current issues, negotiating, and sometimes even fighting. This was a good opportunity for me to observe how matters work in the Parliament.

My position as a 'native ethnographer' (Živković, 2000, p. 50) was a double-edged sword. As someone who was born and raised in Serbia, my presence in Kosovo/a provoked different reactions among my various informants. The most noticeable response involved questions around my origins. When I asked Kadaj Bujupi how she imagined her national identity, she immediately replied, 'How do you imagine yourself being a Serb?' For her, I was a Serb, even though I had never declared myself as one. My *ethnie* background, my country of birth, were unalterable. Another Albanian MP referred to me as a 'friend' of the Serbian MP simply because we were both Serbians. She questioned my presence at one of the CHRGE meetings,

speaking to me in Albanian, even though I had explained that I did not understand the language. Later, I overheard this same Albanian MP speaking Serbian fluently to the same MP of the Serbian List who she had suggested was a friend of mine. Apparently, she did not want to speak to me in Serbian or into the microphone in front of the CHRGE attendees. Occasionally, security guards at the entrance to the Kosovo/a Parliament were hostile towards me when I presented my Serbian ID as was required of every visitor to the building. Once a female security guard violently removed my ID from my outstretched hand, refusing to explain what her issue with it was. On other occasions, security staff pretended they could not read Serbian Cyrillic and questioned me as to who I was and why I was there. As a native ethnographer, I was familiar with the fact that some Kosovo Albanian MPs, administrative, and security staff working in the Parliament considered me a representative of the Serbian state simply because of my origins and the documents I held. I was also aware of the political context and the fact that some people had lost their loved ones during the war and that I, as a 'perceived' representative of the Serbian collective *ethnie,* reminded them of that. I, therefore, tried not to pay too much attention to these issues so that I could maximise my access and minimise the risks to my security and the people whose feelings I might have hurt by living and researching in Pristina.

Not everyone was negative about the country of my origin or my education, however. Redžepi, an MP of a Bosniak party, found it amusing that MPs on the Serbian List refused to speak with me. She raised this with the Prime Minister (PM), Ramush Haradinaj, during a delegation meeting in his cabinet. She introduced me to Haradinaj as a 'Serbian student from an Australian university' and added that I had 'also talked to the Serbian List and they didn't accept her, but I did, because we are different'. Her acceptance of me, despite my origins and education, was evidence of their (the Kosovo Bosniaks) commitment to multi-culturalism and their openness.

The presumptions I held about the potential obstacles to access, especially in relation to my origins, were quite stereotypical prior to fieldwork. I had assumed that Albanian MPs would refuse to speak with me, while Serbian and Bosniak MPs would demonstrate a great deal more openness. The situation, however, was quite the opposite. In reality, Serbian MPs in Kosovo/a refused to speak with me. They avoided me in hallways and would invent excuses for their lack of responses to my phone calls, messages, and emails. A couple of women from the SL cancelled meetings without any justification. Later, I discovered that I needed to 'pull strings in Belgrade' before speaking with them. One Parliament employee joked that, 'they do not go to the toilet without approval from Belgrade'. Some Bosniak and Albanian MPs, however,

found the fact that the SL did not want to communicate with another Serb entertaining. They often emphasised the scenario to prove their own claims about the dependency of the SL on Belgrade or to demonstrate their own multiculturalism over the 'conservative' and 'closed' Kosovo Serbs.

My presence in Kosovo/a was followed by rumours. One of the most interesting and the most typical for fieldworkers in Eastern Europe was that I was a 'spy'. I was not deported or expelled from the country, like Michael Herzfeld (2000, p. 219). Nonetheless, the rumours certainly still affected my access to, and collaboration with, different people. In the Parliament of Kosovo/a, some speculated that I was a 'Russian spy' while others thought I was an Australian or, even worse, an 'American spy'. They wondered why I visited the Parliament every day. Assistants asked for my whereabouts and for information on the people with whom they had seen me speaking to on any one day in the hallways. Some people may have even experienced trouble simply for speaking with me. As 'native ethnographer', I anticipated this and that is why I asked my Head of School to send documents to the President of the Parliament explaining my research. Even so, some employees still refused to believe the contents of the letter and continued to spread rumours about me, which affected my access to the Parliament on several occasions.

The last, but by no means least, contextual issue affecting my research was transportation. Kosovo/a is a deeply ethnically divided society. Freedom of movement is limited, especially to the Serbian minority, and transportation is similarly ethnically divided. As a Serb, I was not always free to use every means of transport. My generous fieldwork grant from the University of Melbourne allowed me to utilise taxis but, in some cases, I could not do so because Serbian taxi drivers from North Mitrovica would refuse to drive me back to Pristina. Pristina drivers, by contrast, would refuse to drive the entire distance from Mitrovica to collect me. Pristina drivers would rarely even drive into North Mitrovica. Instead, they would simply deposit me at the south end with instructions to walk the remaining distance. For this reason, I often used the Serbian vans that travelled from Gračanica to Mitrovica North and back, but only at certain times, which made it impossible for to me to attend certain events or to stay as long as I might have wanted. The Serbian vans did not even stop at the official bus station. Instead, they picked people up on the highway. A ride cost double the price (3 EUR) of the bus and could be paid in either Serbian dinar (RSD) or in Euro (EUR). The vans were old and almost always full, sometimes they would not even stop to collect me. The radios played Serbian music and a Serbian Orthodox cross and chaplet (in Serbian, *brojanica*) – the symbol of the Serbian

Orthodox church – hung from the rear vision mirror as a reminder of the 'nationality' of the van (or, at least, of its passengers). Albanian vans cost half the price (1.5 EUR) of Serbian vans and were usually parked alongside the highway and the seats were covered in furry blankets. My friend, a Kosovo Serb, would joke that I could always travel with the 'trafficking vans' (her phrase for 'Albanian vans') if I was late to a meeting, but that I should ensure I did 'not speak Serbian' for safety reasons.

Once while running late to meet the scheduled Serbian van, I had to take an official bus from South Mitrovica (the Albanian side). The bus was full, and the ticket controller casually asked me where I was from simply because I was sitting on the first seat next to him. I lied and said I was from Australia. The faces of the other passengers listening in to our conversation made me feel unsafe and discouraged me from admitting the truth. There were also other transport choices. Specifically, I had the option of using a Serbian taxi driver named Bogdan, originally from the Serbian enclave of Gračanica, where Serbs constituted the majority population (Elek, 2013; Fort, 2018; Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, 2008). A journalist friend had recommended Bogdan but, before she did, she noted he was a little 'crazy'. He certainly was. In driving me from point A to point B, he would often begin very serious monologues containing conspiracy theories about the Pope and how Slobodan Milošević had said 'Fuck you' to the Vatican (Catholics) during the 1990s. I found these monologues amusing and tiring at the same time.

At times, people assumed I had connections to the Serbian police because I was from Belgrade and could, therefore, help people from Kosovo/a obtain Serbian passports. Kosovo/a citizens were the only citizens of the Balkans whose passports had not been included on the EU Schengen list. For this reason, some people from Kosovo/a attempted to obtain Serbian passports. The rationale for seeking a Serbian passport was, paradoxically, more pragmatic than it was ideological or political. These people publicly celebrated Kosovo/a as an independent republic at the same time as they secretly attempted to establish 'connections' (in Serbian, *veze*) to obtain Serbian passports, which would allow them to travel to the EU without a visa. The road was complicated for Kosovo Serbs, let alone for Bosniaks or Albanians (Praxis, 2012, pp. 26-40) to obtain Serbian passports. I politely declined any requests to participate in bribing Serbian officials and downplayed the connections people believed I had with the Serbian police.

1.6. Literature Review

This thesis is an interpretive, multi-sited, political ethnography of women politicians, gender, and nationalism in Serbia and Kosovo/a during the process of democratisation. The study reveals a profound paradox. As women politicians began to occupy public space and to use their newfound positions to politicise both gender and national identities, they attained a certain degree of agency and emancipation. At the same time, they engaged with, (re)created, and (re)produced the patriarchally-based gender roles and narratives that contributed to their subordination. This thesis makes a critical theoretical contribution to the field of politics as explored through interpretative, multi-sited ethnographies. It differs from other political ethnographies in similar fields in several key areas. In the first instance, the thesis is based on data obtained through participant observation of individual women politicians, rather than material obtained from engaging with the spaces where politics are made, such as with political parties or inside parliaments (Aronoff, 2015; Aronoff and Kubik, 2013; Crewe, 2015; Shafer, 1986; Smith, 2011). Consequently, I chose to employ a technique known as 'following the people', which is one of seven tracking strategies identified by Marcus (1995, p. 106) as shaping multi-sited ethnographies. My thesis deals with understanding how the gender and national identities of individual women politicians of different *ethnies* have been politicised, rather than exploring the experiences of women from civil society, NGOs, or other groups, including, for example, women refugees or survivors of sexual violence (Đajić Horváth, 2009; Helms, 2014, 2013, 2003; Jambrešić, Kirin and Povrzanović, 1996; Quillinan, 2019, 2018). Finally, my research seeks to capture gender and national identities during a highly politically and culturally contextualised period of democratisation, rather than attempting to explore democracy or democratisation as general political theory and practice (Paley, 2002; Wedeen, 2013) or the nation-building process (Luci, 2014).

This literature review engages with three thematic areas relevant to my research questions. The first section examines the well-developed academic literature on the *ethnie*, nation, and nationalism, highlighting my objective of building on, and contributing to, three contested discourses, i.e. primordialism, ethno-symbolism, and modernism. I use explanations provided by nationalism theorists of all three discourses to explain women politicians' perceptions of their national identities, history, significance, and symbols as well as their emotional attachments to these elements. The second section narrows the theoretical framework to focus more specifically on existing studies around the intersections of gender, nation, and state, explaining the ways women engage with these constructed, male-dominated, patriarchal forms.

Finally, the third section analyses democratisation and liberalisation processes and their effects on the gender and national identity politics of women politicians in Serbia and Kosovo/a.

1.6.1. What, Where, and When is the Nation?

Academic literature on the nation and nationalism is a vastly developed body of research and it informs this thesis in three ways. Firstly, it provides definitions and explanations for the nation and nationalism. Secondly, it helps locate and explain the persistence of ethnic identities within national identities and the durability of nationalism in the political contexts of Serbia and Kosovo/a. Thirdly, it points to a dearth of analyses around women and gender among the foundational theories of nationalism and, in doing so, it emphasises a key lacuna that my research endeavours to help fill. Nira Yuval-Davis (1997a, pp. 621-622, 2004), among others (Ranchod-Nilsson and Tetreault, 2003), argues that hegemonic theorists of the nation and nationalism have largely ignored gender. Certainly, in discussing the (re)production of the 'nation' and nationalism, theorists have tended to omit women and gender, treating both categories as inconsequential. To a greater extent, they have ignored nationalism as highly gendered and hierarchical and focused instead on analysing processes of creating and reproducing nations through state bureaucracy and apparatuses (Amin, 1978; Zubaida, 1989), elites and intellectuals (Gellner, 1983; Smith, 1972), social and cultural factors (Anderson, 1991; Gellner and Breuilly, 2008; Hroch, 1996), and politics and power struggles between competing elites (Brass, 1991; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992). There have been notable exceptions among particular theorists. Claude Lévi-Strauss (1963), for example, recognised that the exchange of women between groups was a practice that created stronger social relations between men of different kinship (Yuval-Davis, 2004, p. 22).[11] More serious theorisation around gender, women, and the nation emerged later in the 1980s and was treated as a new and modernist theoretical approach to the study of nations and nationalism (Ozkirimli, 2010, p. 7).

This thesis aims to contribute to existing theoretical paradigms by providing an explanation of how women politicians in Serbia and Kosovo/a define the nation, nationalism, and the *ethnie*. It seeks to explain how women politicians understand and value the persistence of the *ethnie* and its importance for their national identities. It explores what they consider the main elements of their nations and, most importantly, it positions women politicians as central to theories of

[11] Serbian history contains examples of women/girl exchanges as a means of creating stronger social and political relations among states. Milutin Nemanjić of Serbia, for example, married Byzantine princess Simonida who was only five years old when she was given to Milutin by her father as a peace pledge (Fine, 1994, p. 222).

the nation and nationalism, defining them as agents who (re)produce nations and nationalism through their political actions and participation, as elites who participate in the (re)creation of nations and nationalism, and as leaders in each of these processes. Throughout this thesis, I demonstrate that women politicians primarily located their national identities within the *ethnie* and its constructed 'givens' of social existence (Geertz, 1973, p. 259), including 'common' ethnic/national or personal memories of tragedies, the 'ineffable significance to the tie of blood' (Shils, 1957, p. 142), and roots, myths, symbols, and rituals. I show that women politicians recognised and emphasised the noticeable absence of women from the ethnic tragedies and stories of their nations, but that these omissions did not necessarily compel them to refute the constructed idea of the *ethnie*/nation itself. Rather, the situation served as a motivation to fight for the recognition of women's contributions.

Women politicians noticed that women were universally devalued, both in the theories and in the practices of the *ethnie*/nation/state, despite their sacrifices for the nation. Women politicians observed that this absence was based on their biological sex as well as traditional gender roles associating women with nature and men with culture (Ortner, 1996, pp. 25-30). These factors have kept women and their contributions to the nation fixed within the private sphere and have left the public sphere and the practice of politics almost in the sole command of men. Interestingly, as noted by Yuval-Davis (2004, p. 21), gender has not even been mentioned as a point of reference by primordialist theorists (Berghe, 1987; Geertz, 1973; Shils, 1957) in their analyses of the nation as a natural and universal construct.

Throughout this thesis, I adopt modernist claims that the nation is imagined and constructed. I use primordial, perennial, and ethno-symbolist theories to explain how women politicians constructed and represented their *ethnies* and identified its main elements. I employ modernist theories to explain how women politicians used cultural elements, such as language and communication, to represent their *ethnies*, their sentiments about the Kosovo flag, and their thoughts on the Albanian *ethnie* symbols that underlie the ostensibly 'civic' Kosovar state identity. I frequently refer to the definition of *ethnie,* as proposed by sociologist Anthony Smith (1987, p. 32), as a human population with shared ancestry, myths, histories, and cultures and an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity. I explain how women politicians understood and constructed each element of the *ethnie* and explore the ways they used these elements to advance both their *ethnies* and the category of women. Definitions of the nation as a phenomenon and nationalism as an ideology or a political process vary depending on the theoretical approach used. According to Eric J. Hobsbawm (1992, p. 9),

concepts of the nation, national identity, and nationalism are not part of free-floating philosophical thought; they are socially, historically, and locally grounded and must be explained in terms of these realities. Ontologically, different authors base their explanations and analyses on the nature of the nation and nationalism according to different historical periods and political contexts. In later text, I refer to some of the theories that undergird my explanations of the *ethnie*/nation as perceived by women politicians in Serbia and Kosovo/a.

Atsuko Ichijo and Gordana Uzelac (2005, pp. 2-3) claim that the focus of the literature on nations and nationalism is based on the four basic questions: 'what', 'when', 'why', and 'how'. They differentiate between primordial, ethno-symbolist, and modernist discourses of nationalism. While there is still no general agreement on the origins of the nation in academic literature, a consensus does exist on the three main discourses of nationalism. These discourses are based on points that are highly contested between researchers working on locating nationalism in either modernity or antiquity. Researchers agree that nationalism is a modern phenomenon accompanied by, among other things, processes of capitalism and industrialisation and the establishment of a modern state. Locating nations as human groups irrespective of the state in modernity or antiquity, however, remains an unsettled area between researchers of all three discourses. To locate and explain the elements of national identity as expressed by women politicians, I take into consideration: a) the lack of consensus and common ground in existing analyses on the nation and nationalism; b) the key research question central to this thesis; and c) the political context of Serbia and Kosovo/a. My research builds upon three contested approaches to the nation and nationalism. It focuses on the effects of both primordial elements, including ethnicity, blood, roots, myths, symbols, and rituals, and modernist elements, such as cultural, political, and economic processes and it treats them as constructed and 'imagined' (Anderson, 1991) identities. In my explanations of the main theories, I address how women politicians perceived their *ethnie* identities within different historical, natural, cultural, and modern processes.

Theoretical approaches to defining the nation, or what constitutes a nation, are based on two different principles – the natural (biological) and the social (civic). Certain theorists, including Verena Stolcke (1987), identify a difference between *Kulturnations* (cultural nations) and *Staatnations* (state nations). Smith's (1998, p. 3) primordial and perennial definition represents the nation – in a similar manner to race – as a category given by nature. The nation, as a category and a historical community, is eternal and can be traced back to human biology as a phenomenon that has manifested itself as a specific type of socio-cultural community. Friedrich

Meinecke (2015, p. 9) explains that nations are large, powerful communities that must be based on a natural core of blood relationship. Nations have an indeterminate essence and can also share cultural elements, including common places of residence, ancestry, language, intellectual life, and an accepted state or federation of similar states. According to Meinecke, each of these elements can be an important and essential component of a nation, but every nation does not necessarily need to possess all of these features to be considered one. A different, or more modern, explanation of the nation is provided by Ernest Renan (1990, sec. III) who regards the nation as great solidarity constituted by the feeling of 'sacrifices' that have already been made in addition to those that might still be made in the future. In this sense, the nation – in a similar manner to the individual – is the outcome of a long history of effort, sacrifice, and devotion. The social capital of every national idea, therefore, is tied to the 'heroic past with great men and glory'. Similarly, in his book originally published in 1841, Thomas Carlyle (1993) attempted to allocate credit throughout history to men as 'heroes', rather than to the social forces of industrialisation. In my work, I demonstrate that women politicians shared in the pride of their *ethnie's* long histories of struggle. Indeed, they often employed nationalist representations to emphasise their own sacrifices to the nation as heroines in their own right as well as in service to heroes throughout the creation of their *ethnies* and over the *longue durée* (Smith, 2015, p. 166). My analysis suggests that women politicians largely felt solidarity with their *ethnies,* following their fellow men in their sacrifices and devotions to it.

The main dispute between the primordial and modernist approaches to the nation and nationalism that theories of ethno-symbolism successfully reconsolidate revolves around the nature and beginnings of the nation. Smith (2009, p. 8) describes the nation as a form of extended kinship that is recurrent in nature; a trans-historical and cross-cultural form of community that has emerged and declined throughout history and is subject to change across time. The primordial approach, therefore, has two manifestations: sociobiological and cultural. I employ both in my explanations of women's perceptions of their *ethnies*. The sociobiological approach, advanced by Pierre van den Berghe (1987, pp. xi-19), considers nations and ethnic groups as expressions of extended kinship that originate from genetic and reproductive drives. Thus, ethnocentrism associated with group membership becomes a form of nepotism between members of kinship groups. For Berghe, ethnocentrism is embedded in biology and cannot be erased by modern, secular, industrial states. The cultural manifestations of primordial attachments are, according to Clifford Geertz (1973, pp. 259-260), the outcome of so-called 'natural givens'. Geertz's 'natural givens' derive from the act of being born into a particular

community, which includes groups with specific languages, dialects, religions, social practices, blood, and customs. Primordial attachments are the preferred bases for the autonomy of political units in modernising and democratising societies where the understanding of civil politics is weak and the technical requirements for welfare governments are poorly understood. This scenario was particularly visible in Serbia and Kosovo/a in the representations of the ethnic core of national identities among women politicians. In the case of Serbia and Kosovo/a, ethnic identity and community was a 'major point of reference and a vital building block for theories of the nation and nationalism' (Smith, 1998, p. xiii).

Modernist approaches to the nation and nationalism are based on the premise that nations are created during periods of modernisation and industrialisation. Modernists largely approach nations by treating them as invented (Dieckhoff, 2003; Gellner, 1964, p. 169; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992; Piro, 2002; Wallerstein, 2004), 'imagined' or constructed (Anderson, 1991) through different economic, social, and cultural processes (Gellner, 2006; Gellner and Breuilly, 2008) during the period of industrialisation. Gellner (2006) differentiates between the agrarian period and industrialisation. He explains that Yugoslav Bosniaks, who he defines as 'Serbo-Croat speakers of Slav ancestry and Muslim cultural background' (71), mobilised and identified as Muslim instead of Yugoslavian during the period of industrialisation. For Bosniaks, the identity 'Yugoslavian' was too abstract, generic, and bloodless. Consequently, a Muslim cultural background, rather than a shared language, became the driving force behind Bosniak identification as an ethnic group during the period of Yugoslavia's industrialisation. Modernist Karl Deutche (1969, 1953) also ties nationalism to modernity and to the associated processes of communication, urbanisation, and industrialisation.

Delving deeper than a modernist discourse is necessary to understand the politicisation of collective identities, including national ones. Considering modernist theories alone in the analysis of Serbia and Kosovo/a is problematic because it locates nations and nationalisms, both as ideologies and movements, as recent and novel. It also neglects ethnic identity in the building of the nation-state. Smith's (1998, p. 52) central argument against Gellner's (1983) modernist theory of connections between the spread of industrialisation and the emergence of nationalism is based on the fact that there was no industrial development during the period of nationalism's materialisation in the case of Serbia. Women politicians demonstrated that *ethnie* was at the core of their understandings of their own identities as well as their past, present, and future experiences. Mobilisation around ethnonational identities was crucial during the war between the Albanians and the Serbs in Kosovo/a and in the construction of both nationalisms

from the period of romanticism until the present. The failure of modernist theories to account for the passionate and emotional attachment of people to nations and to their novel, 'imagined' (Anderson, 1991), and 'invented' (Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1992) symbols has limited their applicability to my research.

Kosovo/a Albanian and Serbian national identities were both formed in a relationship of struggle against one another. Women politicians often used nationalist claims to prove the territorial legitimacy of their *ethnies* within Kosovo/a. According to Valur Ingimundarson (2007, p. 98), Kosovo/a Albanian nationalism was predominantly shaped by the struggle against the Serbian other. Similarly, Vjollca Krasniqi (2007, p. 10) argues that the Kosovo/a Albanian identity should be modelled on traditional and modern parameters and in opposition to the 'other', especially Serbs. The boundaries of otherness between Albanian (Illyrian) and Serbian (Slavic) ethnic groups are primarily grounded in different translations of symbols, myths, values, and traditions and on their claims to the same territory. These theories have proven particularly useful in translating certain Albanian women politicians' explanations for what being Albanian means with regards to being non-Slav (i.e. we are this, because we are not the other). Fredrik Barth (1969, pp. 15-16) claims that it is ethnic boundaries that define the group rather than culture. Ethnic groups only persist as significant units if they imply a marked difference in behaviour or cultural distinctions from other groups.

The claims of several modernist theorists can be helpful in understanding reciprocity in the formation of Serb and Albanian identities. Benedict Anderson's (1991, p. 56) claim that print languages affected the formation of national consciousness can explain the reconstruction of Albanian identity in Kosovo/a. Denisa Kostovicova (2005, p. 52) argues that education in the Albanian language framed the Albanian identity as one of 'resistance' in comparison to the dominant Serbian identity. Serbian nationalists regarded the possibility for Kosovo Albanians to study their own history, culture, and tradition in their own language as a source of Albanian nationalism. Consequently, education in the Albanian language was targeted by Serbian nationalists as the 'most symbolic' element in their efforts to transform the struggle over education (Warrander and Knaus, 2010, p. 22). The termination of education in their native language, among other things, pushed Kosovo Albanians to organise on the basis of a nation-state instead of succumbing to the rule of Serbia. In my research, Albanian women politicians often emphasised their contributions to the organisation of a parallel system of education for the Kosovo Albanian nation. The claims of another modernist, Paul Brass (1991, p. 9), also help explain the relationship between a dominant centralising state (Serbia) and the elites from

non-dominant ethnic groups (Kosovo/a Albanian) and the related effects on strengthening the Albanian identity before and after the war. Serbian domination over Kosovo/a was a point of reference for claims of Albanian self-determination.

In this thesis, I use the strengths of primordial and ethno-symbolist approaches to explain the effects of 'premodern ethnic symbolism' (Anžulović, 1999) in the formation of ethnic-national identities. National myths and symbols translated by Serbian nationalists were motors for the mobilisation and rationalisation of wars. I also draw on the strengths of modernist theories to explain the processes and the actors that affected and shaped the ethnic-national identities of today in both Serbia and Kosovo/a, especially during the period of Romanticism. As Smith (1998, p. 130) observes, it is hard to believe that most people would willingly die for the sake of artefacts or would allow themselves to be deceived by ritual and propaganda unless those practices expressed and amplified pre-existing sentiments of the nation as a family and a locality at large. Women politicians were very active in political processes that romanticised the construction of the nation. This was particularly visible in the Parliament of Kosovo/a where women frequently mentioned the fallen KLA soldiers, graves, tombstones, blood, and sacrifices and the importance of memorialisation.

The present political context in Serbia and Kosovo/a provides fruitful ground for employing Smith's ethno-symbolist approach. It contributes to a better understanding of how the forces of antiquity maintain ethnic bonds in democratising states, which is a largely neglected perspective in modernist theories. In researching collective national identities during the transition from ethnic groups to Western-like civic citizenship, my objective is to offer a deeper analysis of the re-negotiations between old and new, antiquity and modernity, thereby contributing towards bridging the gap in literature and offering better understandings of modernist, ethno-symbolist, and primordial approaches to the nation and nationalism in democratisation.

The history of Kosovo/a symbolises the cradle of national identity for both ethnic Albanians and Serbs and it was always contested. Florian Bieber and Zidas Daskalovski (2003, p. 3) explain that Kosovo/a has two mutually exclusive and frequently antagonistic histories, attributable to the different translations of events in nationalist narratives. To reinforce the relevance of Smith's theory, both ethnic groups claim that Kosovo/a is their irredenta (territory that is historically or ethnically related to one political unit but under the political control of another). Women politicians shared and politicised these claims in their day-to-day work. Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger (1992) claim that traditions can be invented by elites or

'from above' (Smith, 1998, p. 122). It is certainly possible that elites can distort and alter existing myths, however, the process of inventing traditions remains relatively unknown (Conversi, 2006, p. 17). In this thesis, I demonstrate how women politicians used existing myths, symbols, and rituals in order to claim the territory of Kosovo/a for their own *ethnies*. Given that symbols require 'cultivation through communication' (Smith, 2015, p. 166), women politicians were those who maintained 'ethnic symbolic communication between the dead and the living' (Armstrong, 1982, p. 8).

Momčilo Pavlović (2012, pp. 49-50) claims that both Albania and Serbia had nationalist territorial pretensions towards Kosovo/a that manifested in their aspirations to create a 'Greater Serbia' and a 'Greater Albania'. To legitimise their territorial claims, the Serbian and Albanian peoples created their own historical nationalist 'fairy tales' and mythologised histories (Bieber and Daskalovski, 2003, pp. 13-31). Serbian nationalist translations of historical events centre on the Kosovo battle between the Turks and the Serbs on the Orthodox Christian sacred holiday of *Vidovdan* (Saint Vitus' Day) in 1389 (Ingimundarson, 2007; Slapšak, 2005, pp. 95-96; Taylor, 2000, p. 108). The Serbian loss in the battle and the region's subsequent fall to Turkish rule are both mythologised as a struggle for national survival and a fight between Christianity and Islam. Albanians base their historical interpretations on the 'Illyrian' theory of Albanian ethnic origin. Women politicians used these theories to explain natural and legal ownership over Kosovo/a. Vladislav Sotirović (2013, p. 7) states that Albanian claims are based on the hypothesis that Albanians are an authentic nation (ethnolinguistic group) in the Balkans and the oldest, aboriginal, and autochthonous group in this part of Europe. Understanding the transformations of the *ethnie* in the present contexts of post-conflict democratising states, including those of Serbia and Kosovo/a, will significantly contribute to ongoing academic debates between primordial and modernist theorists. This thesis aims to capture fragments of how women politicians comprehended and politicised both *ethnie* and nationalist claims and to understand their contributions to the construction of the foundations of those claims.

1.6.2. Intersections of *Ethnie*, Nation, Gender, and the State

Literature on the intersections of the nation, gender, and the state is a developing area of scholarship. The earliest theorists in the field began their research after the 1980s, motivated by the lack of analysis on gender in the study of national and state discourses in the social sciences and humanities. Gender as a point of reference in the *ethnie*/nation/state includes the works of Yuval-Davis (1999, 1997a, 1997b, 1989), Cynthia Enloe (2000, 1983, 2014), Sikata

Banerjee (2005, 2003), Deniz Kandiyoti (1991, 1988), Cynthia Cockburn (1998), and many others. The work of prominent Yugoslav feminist scholars who witnessed firsthand the sharpening of relations between ethnicities and their detrimental impact on women's rights contributed to the analysis of the convoluted relationship between ethnicity, nation, and gender during wartime. The work of scholars such as Žarana Papić (1999), Dubravka Žarkov (2007, 2003, 1995), Svetlana Slapšak (2001, 2005a), Rada Iveković (1993), among others, significantly contributed to the development of theory and to the understanding among the international community of what had happened throughout the former Yugoslavia. Feminist scholarship has primarily focused on demonstrating that the nation is highly gendered and, therefore, cannot be viewed in gender-neutral terms (Mayer, 2004, p. 153). According to Yuval-Davis (1999, 1997b, 1997b, 1989) and Lois West (2014), women's issues in nationalism literature have been either ignored or treated as peripheral matters in the formation of the nation. Some theorists, including Ida Blom (1995, p. 82), claim that studies on the nation and nationalism only address gender as a central factor in nation-building to a limited degree. The first wave of feminism has only sporadically pointed to the importance of nationalism. Documenting the debates of first wave feminists, Nancy Margaret Forestell and Maureen Anne Moynagh (2012, p. 11) found that the role of feminists in nationalist movements was a key point of tension between nationalist feminists and the more transcendent forms of feminism that insisted on the international unity of women. This kind of tension followed through in the theorisation of the second and the third waves of feminism and remains a central debate today.

In unpacking theories of the nation and nationalism, feminist theorists have found that states and nations are inherently hierarchical, gendered, and patriarchal (Ashe, 2007; Blom, 1995; Doran and Jose, 2002; Eisenstein, 1984; Erika, 1986; Franzway et al., 1989; Jayawardena, 1986; Kaufman and Williams, 2007; Luci and Gusia, 2015; McClintock, 1991; O'Connor, 2008; Pettman, 2005; Savage and Witz, 1992; Sofos, 1996; Zajicek and Calasanti, 1998). To maintain a certain social order, nation-states employ different ways of keeping women within gendered, hierarchical, and patriarchal roles that serve their participation in the project of nation-building. Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias offer the most influential analysis of gendered nationalism (1989, pp. 6-7), identifying five ways of representing women's participation in nationalist processes: (1) as biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectives; (2) as reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic/national groups; (3) as participating centrally in the ideological reproduction of the collective and as transmitters of culture; (4) as signifiers of ethnic/national differences in ideological discourses used in the construction,

reproduction, and transformation of ethnic/national categories; and (5) as participants in national, economic, political, and military struggles. Yuval-Davis argues that 'if the Woman does not want to be Mother, Nation is on its way to die' (1997a, p. 1).

Spike Peterson (1994, p. 83) frames the domination of nationalism over feminism as the domination of the masculine over the feminine. In this sense, treating this form of domination as something natural works to obscure its history and undermines our ability to transform hierarchical gender relations. Likewise, for Sikata Banerjee (2003, p. 167), nationalism is gendered because it draws upon socially constructed ideas of masculinity and femininity to shape female and male participation in nation-building as well as the manner in which the nation is embodied in the imagination of self-professed nationalists. Both the social constructions of femininity and masculinity and the private and public dichotomy lie at the heart of gendered explanations of the *ethnie*/state/nation. For this reason, analyses concerned with the ways nationalism is gendered become essential for understanding women's collective and individual politicisation in relation to the state.

Krasniqi (2007, p. 10) demonstrates that discourses of Western political modernisation paradoxically reinforce patriarchal relations of power and traditional gender roles through the subjugation of women. In my analysis, I investigate women politicians' participation in the reinforcement of traditional patriarchal roles and proving women's contributions to the *ethnie*/nation in order to advance the rights of women. Women politicians frequently drew on traditional gender roles and identities as the basis for political action, potentially reinforcing these identities (Ashe, 2007, p. 767). This meant that the national liberation and westernisation of Kosovo/a did not bring about the anticipated changes to women's liberation despite the important role that Kosovo Albanian women played in nationalist struggles. Many feminist theorists (Jayawardena, 1986; Krasniqi, 2007b; Luci, 2014; Luci and Gusia, 2015), alongside the women politicians I followed in my research, agreed that women's participation in nationalist projects brought about some degree of emancipation. For Kosovo Albanian women, the war and women's involvement in the national project of liberation was commonly mentioned as a starting point for women's liberation. Some women politicians referred to in this thesis argued that women constituted most of the civil society sector and they organised home-school education in the Albanian language during the period of oppression. Kosovo Albanian women also attended international conferences for women, speaking about the conflict and the oppression of the Albanian people, thus, internationalising the situation and mobilising an important aspect of the global political support that brought about independence.

All these activities affected the emancipation of Kosovo Albanian women. Nonetheless, there remains a certain tension between feminists in examining the character of this emancipation. I address this in the section 'Women Politicians, Democratisation, Gender, and/in the Nation'.

Gender was an important aspect of the nationalist struggles between Serbia and Kosovo/a. In 1998, women's organisations in Kosovo/a staged a series of protests supporting ethno-nationalist claims and demanding a 'peaceful divorce' from Serbia (Clark, 2000, p. 175). Mertus (2010, pp. 171-72) explains that the first women's organisations in Kosovo/a began before the war with literacy projects. After the situation between ethnic Serbs and Albanians worsened, women's organisations were forced to find connections between the literacy of women and the perceived benefits this would have for the nation. Mertus (1996, p. 262) explains that places like Kosovo/a are often neglected in studies about gender in societies in transition because the progression is so incomplete and the gender implications are complicated by other social and political factors.

Existing tensions in the literature between the nationalist and the more transcendent or transnational forms of feminism are based on different understandings of gendered nationalism and its effects on women's liberation and emancipation. Some scholars claim that women can benefit from emphasising the importance of their participation in nation-building, pointing to overlaps in the interests of women and the nation (Ashe, 2007; Herr, 2016, 2014, 2003; Kim, 2009). Other scholars advocate against understanding women and the nation as overlapping, arguing that nations have always been exploitative and have little to offer women (Grewal and Kaplan, 1994; Kaplan et al., 1999). Georgina Waylen (2012, p. 5) claims that liberal nationalist feminists and social democratic (welfare state) feminists advocate for strategies that understand the state as being of benefit to women, even though they cannot always explain why states do not always play this role. Conversely, socialist and radical feminists perceive the state as fundamentally oppressive and patriarchal, adding to the oppression of women. My research interacts with claims from both schools of thought.

Ranjoo Seodu Herr (2014, p. 9) suggests that, for Third World feminists, it is imperative to engage with their nation-states. In the first instance, this is because states have been the main arenas of democratic contestations since the advent of modernity. In the second instance, states are important loci for the struggles of women activists, whether they are feminist or not. The price of non-involvement with the state for women in the Third World is the abdication of a place in the public arena, consigning it to patriarchal nationalists and continuing the impunity around their subjugation. The price of involvement, however, as illustrated in my thesis, is the

reinforcement of patriarchy through the politicisation of the traditional gender roles that dominate women's political participation in democratisation in Serbia and Kosovo/a.

The body of literature on women in the political arena is scarce, especially in relation to women politicians in developing countries. Few theorists of gender and nationalism in Kosovo/a, such as Krasniqi (2007b) and Nita Luci and Linda Gusia (2014, 2015), explore women's contributions to the Kosovo Albanian national struggle and their involvement with the state in both its conflict and post-conflict moments. Krasniqi (2007b, p. 21) claims that, 'it is all but certain that Kosovar women will continue to occupy the position of subalternity' in the future. Krasniqi locates the sources of subalternity in gendered representations of manhood, womanhood, and the silencing of women by international bureaucrats and the military establishment as well as local patriarchal nationalist leaders.

It is important to note that not all branches of feminism consider gendered representations in nationalist processes as primarily negative to women. Indeed, a stream of so-called nationalist feminists argue that feminism can redefine nationalism (West, 2014, p. xi). Many feminists and women's rights activists drew on gendered nationalist representations of women and the role of 'motherhood as a service of the state' (Pettman, 2005, p. 18) as a central argument in their political advocacy. As Herr (2014, p. 8) explains, women in the Third World must claim that they are as 'authentic' as any other member of their nation and demand the right to participate in nationalist discourses. Hence, nationalist representations of women's gender roles require that women prove their authenticity through their contributions to the nation via motherhood and care work. These representations can also be found in Serbia and Kosovo/a. In the 1990s, for example, the Serbian nationalist women's group *Samo Sloga Srbina Spasava* (historical Serbian slogan, *Only Unity Can Save a Serb*) advocated for Serbian women to fulfil their natural biological roles by giving birth to more Serbian children. In doing so, they connected the survival of the nation to motherhood (Bracewell, 1996, p. 28). Albanian women use gendered forms of nationalism to accentuate their participation in processes of liberation (Farnsworth, 2011, pp. 15-17), advocating for different rights following the proclamation of the independence of Kosovo/a. Indeed, women used gendered nationalism, traditional gender roles, and collective political representation to legitimise their political claims and to advocate for their rights within existing nationalist political contexts. In my thesis, I extend beyond one of the most common traps in feminist theorising on nationalism and the belief that 'women are used' (Ranchod-Nilsson and Tetreault, 2003, p. 7) by nationalist projects. I include examples

of women's active participation and their reinforcement of the patriarchal, hierarchical, and gendered structures of the *ethnie*/nation/state.

My analysis on how women politicians create and re-create feminism and nationalism by simultaneously doing gender and nationalism contributes to existing literature on the subject in the context of developing countries. Feminist theorists of nationalism (Jayawardena, 1986; Kim, 2009; Sunseri, 2000; West, 2014) discovered certain positive developments for women in nationalist struggles. West (2014) and Jayawardena (1986) explore the intersections of feminism and nationalism in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia, the Pacific Islands, and the Americas. According to West (2014, p. xiii), feminism redefines nationalism by incorporating the viewpoints of women and the geographical areas of her everyday residence. Her central argument is that neither nationalism nor feminism are fixed or binary and women work on defining victimisation, but they also struggle against it. Feminism and nationalism are created and re-created in the daily interactions between the genders. In her project on the women's movement in South Korea, Hee-Kang Kim (2009, p. 108) demonstrates how 'doing gender' and 'doing nationalism' were simultaneously possible in the Korean women's movement. For her, nationalism provides a means through which society can improve women's rights and promote gender equality. My stance, however, is that the politicisation of gender and the nation is only beneficial in ethnically homogenous nation-states. Jayawardena's (1986, p. 257) analysis points to the fact that many male nationalist leaders in Asia sought to bring about changes in women's rights similar to those in Western societies. The first change caused by the modernisation of society paved the way for a greater role for women in public and economic life. The second change associated with national identity worked at a deeper level than the changes that came about with liberation. It was about bringing women back to their cultural or religious roots, requiring them to reinhabit the roles of custodians and transmitters of national culture in addition to their roles as participants in the national independence process.

For the most part, feminist literature on gender and nationalism reveals that nationalism can be both enabling and disabling for claims of women's empowerment. Some authors, such as Jayawardena (2003, p. 135; 1986), found enabling features of nationalism in the parallel development of nationalist and feminist movements. Nationalism brought women into the public space at the point at which they joined nationalist struggles against colonisation. Some politicians, whose experiences appear in my thesis, claimed that women significantly contributed to, and learned from, the process of supporting the liberation of Kosovo/a. In a similar manner, Fidelma Ashe (2007, p. 767) considers that by taking public space to politicise

women's voices, women disrupt ethno-nationalist dichotomies. In terms of disabling factors for feminist agency in nationalist environments, discussions predominantly revolve around the limited character of the liberation and emancipation of women under nationalist regimes and the creation of hierarchies based on gender, race, ethnicity, and class. Jayawardena (1986), for example, claims that the secret intention of nationalist leaders who express liberatory sentiments in almost all cases from Third World countries in Asia was to keep women within gendered boundaries. This was particularly visible during the post-war period in Kosovo/a when women were asked to return to the private sphere at the same time as all the public positions were awarded to male KLA fighters. West (2014) recognises that women are still undeniably victimised by individual men, states, nationalist conflicts, and wars and that women's interests continue to be actively marginalised in the development of political economies and states. Similarly, Lina Sunseri (2000, p. 143), who analysed aboriginal liberation struggles in Canada, found limitations in the liberatory aspects of nationalist movements. In most cases, once the post-colonial nation is formed, the position of women does not improve greatly and, in some cases, it even regresses.

Mary Layoun, Lydia Liu, Nalini Natarajan, and Kamala Visweswaran (1994, pp. 22-23) examine the problematic limitations of the symbolic relationship of nationalism to women. They claim that the concept of national identity serves the interest of various patriarchies in multiple locations and that these collaborations occur in different ways and in different places. Similarly, Enloe (1983, pp. 160-172) analyses the nature of limitations for feminist claims in nationalist struggles. She concludes that national and liberation movements are founded on the sexual division of labour. Participating in movements that perpetuate the sexual division of labour is neither liberating nor does it contribute to advancing women's rights after the struggle. In most cases, a military participant's role during the struggle is added to the dual roles of women as wives and mothers or agricultural producers. The fact that women fight alongside men in nationalist struggles does not automatically erase inequalities. Instead, it creates a double or triple burden for women. I write about the double and triple burdens and the party and *ethnie* loyalties that women politicians have been forced to navigate to remain in political positions in Serbia and Kosovo/a. When male elites establish the state, the sexual division of labour is maintained and women are forced to return to the private sphere where they continue to struggle for full recognition of human and citizenship rights. By the same token, Tamar Mayer (2012, p. 155; 2004) and Krasniqi (2007, p. 10) demonstrate that national projects reinforce patriarchal relations of power and traditional gender roles that subjugate women by

assigning them to secondary positions while controlling and repressing their sexuality. In my investigation in Serbia and Kosovo/a, I demonstrate the symbolic limitations of nationalist movements for women's emancipatory claims using the examples provided by women politicians. I draw on the work of these feminist theorists to explain women politicians as active participants in these processes.

According to literature on gender and nationalism in the former Yugoslavia (Bracewell, 2000; Brownmiller, 1975; Collin, 2012; Hansen, 2000; Hassentab et al., 2015; Helms, 2013; Herr, 2003, p. 138; Hughes et al., 1995, 1995; Kesić, 2003; Mlađenović et al., 1993; Nikolić-Ristanović, 2000; 1996; Ramet, 2010a; Simić, 2018, 2016, 2016, 2010, 2009, 2005; Sofos, 1996), the gendered character of nationalism was dangerous. Women in the former Yugoslavia, including in Serbia and Kosovo/a, faced challenges in negotiating between their gender, ethnic, and national identities during the conflict (Kaufman and Williams, 2007, p. 89; Lilly and Irvine, 2002). The gendered dimensions of the growing ethnic nationalisms in the former Yugoslavia was most visible in the interpretations of the widespread use of SGBV. Sociologist Spyros Sofos (1996) claims that social constructions of sexuality and gender identities were important parts of the ethnic conflict and the related nationalist discourses. Ethnic belonging to the nation subordinated and targeted women. Their own nations understood their femininity solely through the role of motherhood and 'enemy' nations excluded and perceived them as sources for physical violation and the annihilation of the male ethnic 'other'. Mothering, as the primary biological contribution of women, was equated with the mothering of the nation, which translated sexual violence against women into violence against the ethnic group and the whole nation (Banerjee, 2003; Enloe, 2000, p. 11; Helms, 2013, p. 63; Kesić, 2003; Kohn, 2010; Simić, 2016; Taylor, 2000; Benderly in West, 2014, p. 71; Žarkov, 2003).

Jelena Batinić (2001, p. 3) argues that the ethnic conflict in the former Yugoslavia revealed 'points of vulnerability' of feminist to masculinist discourses. This was noticeable in the radical split within the women's movement between patriotic and non-patriotic organisations, i.e. patriotic and non-patriotic women. Negotiation between feminist and nationalist women was difficult and complex. According to Žarkov (2003, p. 3), the absence of discussions around the co-existence of feminist and national identities caused both crises and silences among feminists. In analyses of the intersections of gender and ethnic identities in feminist texts, Batinić (2001, p. 2) identifies three co-existing and competing discourses: nationalist, feminist, and Orientalist. The first women's political party (Women's Party – ZEST) gathered prominent Yugoslav feminists and academics and was formed in Belgrade with the aim of representing

women from the whole of Yugoslavia on gender issues (Cockburn, 1991). ZEST was formed in response to the absence of women in political decision-making and it collapsed as a result of conflicts between feminist and nationalist discourses among its members (Batinić, 2001, p. 6; Mlađenović et al., 1993). The orientalist discourse towards women of Eastern Europe, mentioned by Batinić (2001, p. 3) among others (Helms, 2003; Ramet, 2002; Sjoberg and Via, 2010; Todorova, 2009; Živković, 2001), is closely connected to the Western representation of women from the Balkans.

At the time, Western literature and the media depicted women from Eastern Europe as culturally backwards and uneducated – as the primitive 'other'. Certain works by some Western feminists about SGBV, such as Catharine MacKinnon (1994), deepened and intensified the crisis between Yugoslav feminists by 'promoting ethnic hatred and revenge' (Kesić, 1994, p. 268). Describing violence as exclusively a product of inter-ethnic conflict served to overshadow the other complex economic, political, and social factors that influenced the use of sexual violence in war (Buss, 2009, p. 160). In addition to reporting on the conflict itself, some media stories included arbitrary numbers of victims (Gutman, 1993) that were later cited and shared widely among scholars. In relying on newspaper articles and 'insider' information from the region (Batinić, 2001, p. 6; Buss, 2009, p. 160; Kesić, 1994; MacKinnon, 1994; Simić, 2009; Skjelsbæk, 2016, 2016; Žarkov, 1997), Western literature and media outlets created twisted gendered images, portraying one ethnic group as rapists and the other as victims. International criminal law and feminist legal discourse on SGBV, moreover, constructed a problematic victim hierarchy in which ethno-national identity served as the primary factor in determining the legal and symbolic status of the 'victim'. As a result, certain women's experiences during and after the war were excluded and misrecognised (Simić, 2018, pp. 2, 13-40). A number of local patriotic women's organisations contributed to the construction of these images (Batinić, 2001, p. 7) – some were manipulated by political elites from former Yugoslavian republics (Liht and Drakulić, 1996), while others purposefully harnessed support for the national cause through the internationalisation of gender issues (Mertus, 2010, pp. 173-174). This problematic gender imagery exacerbated the split between feminists and nationalists in the former Yugoslavia – a situation that still endures today.

Literature on the intersections of gender, ethnicity, nation, and the state in the former Yugoslavia has focused predominantly on the activities of women from civil society around the politicisation of women's voices for peace and justice. Carol Lilly and Jill Irvine (2002, p. 109) explain that most literature on gender and nationalism in the former Yugoslavia frames

women as victims of the post-communist transition and human rights abuses and assumes women were opposed to nationalist policies and parties. This obscures the diversity of women's political activism and their roles in contributing to nationalist movements. This uneven perspective is primarily a result of the fact that literature on women in the former Yugoslavia overwhelmingly focuses on SGBV during, and in the aftermath of, the Bosnian war (Collin, 2012; Crider, 2012; Hansen, 2000; Hayden, 2000; Ingelaere and Wilén, 2017; Kohn, 2010; Korać, 1998; MacKinnon, 1994; Salzman, 1998; Simić, 2018, 2016; Skjelsbæk, 2001; Stiglmayer, 1994; Subotić and Zaharijević, 2016; Weitsman, 2008; Žarkov, 1997). Women were chiefly considered either the main victims of the post-communist transition or peacemakers. Other authors, such as Andrew Dawson (2008), focus on the post-communist transition, the presence of the international community, and its demand for prostitution.

Academic discussions on gender and the nation in the former Yugoslavia have failed to bring women politicians into focus. Throughout this thesis, I present a two-pronged hypothesis for the absence of theoretical analyses of women politicians' involvement in nationalist movements. The first reason relates to the lack of women in politics during and after the war. The second reason refers to the absence of women in the official peace processes and the overwhelming presence of women in civil society organisations and peace movements. This adds to the existing paradoxical assumption that feminism and nationalism are opposing ideologies. Most contemporary Third World feminists have proven that nationalism is detrimental to feminism (Grewal and Kaplan, 1994; Herr, 2003, p. 135). However, further theoretically and empirically grounded work explaining the strong relationship between feminism and nationalism during processes of democratisation is yet to eventuate. In this thesis, I contribute to existing theoretical explanations of women's passionate support of nationalist projects by providing space for women politicians to explain the ambiguous relationship between gender and the *ethnie*/nation/state in their own terms and as political insiders rather than outsiders.

All *ethnies* mentioned in this research (Serbian, Bosniak, and Albanian) are patrilineal and patrilocal in nature and they function by patriarchally-oriented common law (Denich, 1974; Halpern et al., 1996, p. 427; Sofos, 1996; Todorova, 1993). When women politicians advocated for the cultural elements of their nations – like roots and traditions – they reproduced and reinforced the highly patriarchal systems of their *ethnies*/nations. This system not only divided and ascribed social positions to women on the basis of their gender, it also awarded men the principal roles within society (Halpern et al., 1996, p. 427). Patrilineality is one of the

foundations of Balkan patriarchy and the Balkan family system and it has worked to keep the women of the Balkans in private and subordinate positions. Patrilineality was also used to justify the mass SGBV against women in the former Yugoslavia, encouraging the perception of women as mere vessels for the progeny of the 'other' (Sofos, 1996, p. 86).

Due to the earlier ethnic conflict and the present political context, Serbia and Kosovo/a offer unique insights on both the role of women in ethnic and national projects and the causal explanations for the interrelations of gender and ethnic nationalism. Furthermore, they offer unique points of observation on women's participation in nation-building and democratisation processes. Blom (1995, p. 84) considers the growth of democracy as a great opportunity for identity change. In my thesis, I explain the character of this change by tracking women's contributions to the construction of the *ethnie* and gender. Yuval-Davis (2005, p. 3) notes that feminists need to tackle citizenship, not only by considering the matter in contrast to that of men, but also in relation to women's affiliations to dominant or subordinate groups, their ethnicity, origins, and urban or rural residences. By focusing on both identities, my research extends beyond gender binaries and explores ethnicity as a point of inclusion and exclusion from the politicisation of gender and citizenship, as emphasised by Yuval-Davis. Vicky Randall and Georgina Waylen (2012, p. 1) assert that a great deal of literature perceives women as objects of state policy and the state is regarded as external to women's lives. My research explores how women navigated gender and nationalist identities and redefined their roles in line with the political contexts of their new states and the associated democratisation processes.

1.6.3. Gender, *Ethnie,* Nation, and Democratisation

Serbia and Kosovo/a are in the process of democratic consolidation and transition stimulated by EU enlargement and integration. According to Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (1996, pp. 4-5), consolidation is complete when democracy becomes the 'only game in town' behaviourally, attitudinally, and constitutionally. Behaviour markers are reached when there are no significant political groups that can wrest power violently from a democratically elected government or secede from the state. Attitude markers are reached when people believe in the democratic principles of government election, even during periods of crisis. Constitutional markers are reached when actors in the polity are accustomed to resolving disputes according to rules and procedures and the violation of these standards are costly and ineffective. In short, the consolidation of democracy is complete when it becomes routine and deeply internalised in social, institutional, and psychological life within certain countries and their polities.

Democratisation is a process that requires open contestation over the right to win control of the government and it demands competitive and free elections. Free elections, however, are not the sole condition for a country to be considered a democracy.

Linz and Stepan (1996, pp. 7-8) define democracy as a form of governance of the state. This positions the state as a first condition for democracy to exist. Five other mutually dependent conditions also exist that must be fulfilled for the consolidation of democracy, including the existence of free civil society, political society, rule of law, state bureaucracy, and an economic society. Serbia and Kosovo/a are countries that struggle with almost every one of these conditions. This significantly affects the space available for women politicians. It also affects the quality of that space in terms of the ability of democratic institutions to protect both women's rights and democratic principles. As illustrated in this thesis, the first, and arguably most important, problem is that of 'stateness', which Linz and Stepan (1996, p. 16) have defined as a situation of profound disagreement over the territorial boundaries of a political community's state and the fundamental differences over who has the right to citizenship. Secondly, they identify the problem of competing and perplexed nationalisms in these political processes. Therefore, we must consider how 'stateness' and competing nationalisms work in relation to the realities of women politicians from different communities living in Serbia and Kosovo/a.

In their attempt to answer how to successfully consolidate democracy in multinational settings, Linz and Stepan (1996, p. 33) provide a strong hypothesis on what not to do when installing democracy in multinational states. One of the main reasons for the failure of democratisation processes is the denial of rights (citizenship) to people born in a country who do not consider themselves foreign citizens. The deprivation of opportunity through the denial of rights reduces the space for the successful consolidation of democracy. According to Linz and Stepan, if state policies offer equal and inclusive citizenship and rights to all people regardless of ethnicity, the chances of creating a common umbrella of mandated and enforced individual rights increases. As demonstrated in my analysis, women politicians suffered from, but also practiced the denial of rights in relation to other women. They imposed the citizenship of their state on women of the ethnic 'other' with whom they had minimal communication because they saw them as belonging to the enemy or the *ethnie* other.

Throughout this thesis, I explain how consolidating democracy, pushed by the international community in Serbia and Kosovo/a, provided legal guarantees that ensured the greater participation of women in politics. Democratisation opened space for women to participate in

formal political processes and to serve as MPs, PMs, or presidents. The space for participation, however, did not automatically translate into power. Transformation of space and its implications for public, as well as private, life are considerably different for women (Ma, 2014, p. 198). According to most women politicians, the engendering of politics in Serbia and Kosovo/a was 'artificial' because it did not emerge naturally. Instead, it was pushed by the international community. Some authors investigating EU equality legislation in processes of democratisation have referred to this as 'costless room service feminism' because it was imposed by international actors before the internal audiences recognised a need (Miroiu, 2010, p. 575). Extensive research on gender equality in the EU has also established that expansion is somewhat contradictory because it imposes gender-neutral economic standards that lead to serious exclusion of women from the public sphere in post-communist countries. At the same time, it imposes gender mainstreaming as part of enlargement policies.

The mass participation of women in politics, according to Shirin Rai (1994, pp. 209-213), created new opportunities for women to mobilise in their various interests, but it did not erase some of the most common gender problems, including those of the public/private dichotomy, divisions of class, cultural differentiation, race, ethnicity, and religious issues. On the one hand, women who enter politics face painful and contradictory options. On the other hand, they gain new opportunities to transform gender and *ethnie* policies and relations. In my thesis, I capture the process of negotiation and struggle in which women politicians represented themselves and their own authentic cultures while attempting to build coalitions with women from their own and other cultures.

Blom (1995, p. 84) argues that the interplay of different identities within a nation may be studied during the process of nation-building because it changes with the growth of democracy. Nevertheless, the literature on democratisation processes barely mentions women, despite their enormous contribution to democratic transitions throughout the world (Waylen, 2012, p. 327). One reason for this is that women often participate on the basis of their gendered social roles (as mothers or household providers). Gender identities are, thus, rendered invisible, marginal, and irrelevant in the literature on democratisation. Waylen adds that institutional democratisation does not automatically entail the democratisation of power relations in society at large, especially in terms of power relations between men and women. In addition, playing an important part during one stage of democratic transition does not necessarily guarantee inclusion in later processes of consolidation (328-329). In my thesis, I use gender and democratisation theory to reflect on the present political claims of Kosovo Albanian women

politicians who assert that they were not rewarded with political positions during democratic consolidation, despite playing important roles in the organisation of secession from Serbia. I also capture other changes created by the process of democratisation in Serbia and Kosovo/a, such as the state of freedoms and protections guaranteed to women who dared to take-up the political spaces opened to them.

Gender researchers who have focused on EU-led processes of democratisation established that enlargement brings with it new challenges because it draws together gender regimes with contrasting histories and trajectories (Pascall and Lewis, 2004, pp. 373, 377). Very little attention has been paid to, for example, the social and gendered implications of merging former communist regimes that hold strong legacies of supporting care work with Western-like private market solutions. In some cases, despite a strong EU commitment towards gender equality, the accession and democratisation processes have still brought about a deterioration of the social positions of, and protections for, women. The EU enlargement and the associated expansion of democratisation processes are not safe havens for women, as commonly advertised to Western Balkan audiences. In fact, of the previous 12 countries that have joined the EU since 2004, women have most often been labelled as the 'losers' in these processes (Roth, 2008, pp. 5-6).[12] This is mainly because of the shifting of the socialist legacy of paid care work largely performed by women towards a liberal, unpaid, and informal economy. Unemployment, the decline of revenues, and the dropping of the Gross National Product has affected women more so than men because women form the majority of the shrinking public and care sectors (Domsch et al., 2003; Einhorn, 2006). The capitalist transition of the former socialist states into the EU has eroded the framework for women's economic and social protections that had been established under communism/socialism (Pollert, 2003, p. 331). Democratisation is, therefore, a complex political and institutional process which requires that women politicians are aware of the associated gender and social implications and the traps that come with it.

Democratisation in the Western Balkans is a complicated process for women due to the differences in political contexts and cultural specificities from other countries with, for example, social-democratic traditions, such as Sweden or Denmark. The rise of nationalism in the Western Balkans was accompanied by a return to traditional gender roles where women were encouraged, directly and indirectly, to reinhabit the roles of housewives and caregivers

[12] Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Lithuania, and Slovakia.

(Roth, 2008, p. 6). This makes the politicisation of gender and national identities dangerous when women politicians draw from traditional gender roles in the process of democratisation. Democratisation opens space and carries power for women politicians to 'mobilize for their own defence' (Rai, 1994, p. 217) protected by the powers of newly-formed democratic institutions. Nevertheless, the processes of democratisation, liberalisation, and consolidation are also highly dependent on the political context and cultural specificities under which they take place. Indeed, democratic institutions in Serbia and Kosovo/a that were created for the sole purpose of 'ticking the boxes' associated with the Western-like process of democratisation did not prove functional. These institutions could not fulfil their mission of representing and protecting citizens and upholding democratic standards. The key problem lies in the very way in which these institutions were founded in a 'copy-and-paste' format imposed upon each and every post-socialist state. The process was top-down, rather than bottom-up, and this has affected its foundational strength. All this has created a specific situation for women politicians. Instead of finding strength and protection in the newly-formed democracy and its institutions, women were directed towards the reproduction of traditional gender roles and the creation and adoption of survival strategies.

In entering the space of the 'boys club', women politicians learned to make 'patriarchal bargains' (Kandiyoti, 1988, p. 275) when navigating between their gender and *ethnie*/national identities. Deniz Kandiyoti (1988, p. 274) states that the making of patriarchal bargains means strategising within a set of concrete constraints because different patriarchies around the world present women with different 'rules of the game' that require different strategies to maximise security and optimise life options with varying potential for active or passive resistance in the face of oppression. Women around the world have always strategised as part of their survival in the midst of various patriarchies. The range of survival strategies or systems for escaping patriarchy, sexism, and oppression is wide and encompasses actions such as fighting against abusive relationships (Hall, 2015; Hirschmann, 1996; Koikari and Hippensteele, 2000; Lempert, 1996), escaping patriarchy through writing (Kaplan, 1990; Yaeger, 1988), sexism (Bennett, 2016; Rosewarne, 2018, 2017), sexual exploitation or sex work (Gerassi, 2015), economic development (Bhat, 2003; Budlender, 2002, 2000; Parpart et al., 2000), and war (Brenner, 2016; Cockburn, 2007; Elshtain, 2001, 1995, 1987; Sjoberg and Via, 2010). Nonetheless, strategising has helped women develop their own authentic agency. In some cases, women pushed the boundaries of emancipation further by politicising gender and the

nation in their own, authentic ways. In other cases, their actions made them 'participants with vested interests in the system that oppressed them' (Johnson, 1983, pp. 21, 245).

In the process of democratisation in Serbia and Kosovo/a, women have occasionally been understood as tokens – i.e. as the social group fewer in number in comparison to the majority who often feel like outsiders or strangers intruding upon an alien culture and who may become self-estranged in the process of assimilation (Kanter, 1977a, p. 207). When regarded as tokens, women become symbols of how a certain group might succeed and stand-in for all other members of the social group in question. The negative effects of this tokenism can be observed in the increased visibility of women politicians, which ought to reflect the democratic character of the state in terms of women's political participation. Participation, however, does not necessarily equate to power. Nonetheless, as previously mentioned, the process of incorporating women into politics within patriarchal environments, like those of Serbia and Kosovo/a, was an imposed practice, rather than a development that emerged from any deep understanding of the benefits of women's participation in political decision-making. In the beginning, men included women on the electoral lists of their political parties simply because they were required to. With time, experience, and confidence, however, women began creating their own prints of participation.

Women politicians operating amid processes of democratisation face different problems to those of men. The robust – although not always straightforward – relationship between the strength of democracy, gender equality, and women's security needs further monitoring (Piccone, 2017). As demonstrated in this thesis, women were frequently excluded from professional networks (Garcia-Hernandez et al., 2018; Tamale, 1998; Tripp, 2000) or from budget drafting on the basis of their sex. Furthermore, they were threatened and besmirched in different ways to men. Women politicians could not enter 'boys club' events that were held in the late hours at private houses or bars. Some women politicians in Kosovo/a and Serbia silently accepted their exclusion for the sake of their own survival in politics. Others, however, fought their exclusion by giving voice to it at conferences, particularly with international audiences. The choice over whether to fight exclusion or accept it depended on many factors. As Rai (1994, p. 227) observes, one woman's starting point for participation in politics may be very different from another's, some women entered the public sphere as mothers, rather than feminist revolutionaries in the cause for women's rights. Additionally, the kind of support and power that a woman might garner within her own party, among her family, and within her *ethnie* also affects her ability to strategise. Finally, the protection a woman politician might

expect to receive from democratic institutions and the international community becomes essential in establishing the power a woman has to rebel against the patriarchy in politics. If democratic institutions for the protection of civic and human rights are weak or largely party-owned, women will be discouraged from fighting for their rights because of the absence of support from formal and non-formal networks and independent institutions if they are attacked.

Drude Dahlerup (1988, p. 275) claims that change is possible when women reach a quantitative critical mass in politics (considered to be more than 30%). At this moment, women – or any other minority group – transform from a token to a group with a certain amount of power that can change political decision-making. In 2018, however, Dahlerup (2018) questioned her own theory and asked whether democracy had failed women. Could democracy be defined as such if women were not given power despite their quantitative participation and representation? Ignoring research on women's participation in the process of democratisation has created gaps in the literature and omitted certain important factors that impact upon women's real political power after they enter the 'boys club' of politics. My thesis addresses these issues by revealing the ways in which women politicians use the democratic process to advance women's rights. Moreover, it illustrates the limitations of the space created by democratisation.

Chapter Two: Women Politicians and/in the Nation

The following chapter is the first of three in which I present my own ethnographic research results and it corresponds to the main research question as well as the first key subsidiary question. This chapter explores the ways women politicians understand and construct their national and ethnic identities in the politically sensitive environments (Browne and McBride, 2015, p. 34) of Serbia and Kosovo/a. It also responds to the question about what these identities mean to women politicians? Hence, I situate women politicians from Serbia and Kosovo/a within their *ethnies*/nations and present the ways they 'imagine' (Anderson, 1991, p. 49) and construct their ethnic/national identities. In doing so, I engage with several key elements that constitute these identities, including 'common' ethnic/national or personal tragedies, memories, blood, roots, myths, symbols, and rituals. I refer to primordial, ethno-symbolist, and modern theories of the nation to locate and explain the particular ethnic/national identities encountered during fieldwork. In addition, I explore certain modern civic identities – including the Kosovar identity – although, I claim that even these identities in Serbia and Kosovo/a have primordial and ethno-symbolist elements at their core.

Situating women within the *ethnie*/nation/state is a relatively new field of research. The earliest theorists began their research after the 1980s and were motivated by the lack of analysis on gender in the study of national and state discourses in the social sciences and humanities. Very few scholars have addressed women's active support for nationalist and ethnic state projects nor have they thoroughly explored the issue of women as combatants or right-wing politicians (Lilly and Irvine, 2012, 2002, p. 109). In the abundance of academic literature on the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, women are largely perceived as victims of the post-communist transition and of the ethnic conflicts that accompanied it. Most academic research in this area revolves around women's politics outside of mainstream and formally elected political bodies, including their involvement in civil society organisations and peace movements. Women's agency within formal political structures remains somewhat neglected across existing bodies of research, specifically, their activities in political parties and parliaments, ministries, and local councils. My intention in this chapter and, indeed, throughout the thesis is to contribute towards filling this gap and achieving a greater understanding and visibility of women's political contributions to the projects of their *ethnies* and nation-states.

In my research, I found that women politicians imagined their *ethnies*/nations as ancient and primordial, while they situated themselves in the present political context as its political

representatives. One of my informants, a Kosovo Albanian politician, Teuta Musa, from the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), refers to this situation as the 'new reality':

> *'My identity is Kosovar, now we live in a new reality. Kosovo is an independent and democratic state since 2008. So, with my identity, I am Kosovar; by blood, I am Albanian. This is the reality now, we have our country, and we are proud of our country, and we have respect for other nationalities living here, like Serbs, Bosnians, Turks, Gorani. Their rights are respected based on international conventions.'*

Identification by state and blood in both Serbia and Kosovo/a is not a new phenomenon. Blood is well explained in primordial theories of the nation and nationalism and it belongs to the natural givens of social existence that have 'ineffable, and at times overpowering, coerciveness in and of themselves' (Geertz, 1973, p. 259). Undeniably, women politicians also imagined the nation through other mechanisms explained by modern theories, including language, political elites, education, and the processes of industrialisation, urbanisation, and democratisation. In my research, however, I discovered that the predominant forms of identification with the *ethnie*/nation were reflected through primordial and ethno-symbolist elements, such as collective tragedies, blood, and roots as well as symbols, myths, and rituals. I will deal with each of these elements throughout this chapter.

In my research, women politicians located themselves within their *ethnies*, while membership of their state, as a broader and more civic concept, was positioned as secondary. My informants proudly represented their *ethnies'* pasts as their own pasts and their *ethnies'* tragedies as their own tragedies. As Serbian MP Dubravka Filipovski explained:

> *'I recently showed my national identity during a bilateral visit to Georgia. We were received by the Synod of the Georgian Patriarchy and, at that moment, it was very important for me to say that I am Serbian, to say that I was born in the city of Ras, where Saint Sava was born.* [13] *I am very proud of my identity, my country, culture, tradition ... I am not a radical nationalist, but I am proud of our sportsmen. I am proud in that manner, not the radical one, just a patriotic manner. I learned that in school from a teacher, you cannot choose what you love the most, you couldn't choose the country you were born into, your family, and your closest cousins.'*

[13] Saint Sava was the founder of the Serbian Orthodox Church in 1219, the youngest son of the Nemanja dynasty, and brother of the Serbian king (Anžulović, 1999, p. 23).

Most women politicians with whom I engaged identified with their *ethnies* even though they could not choose their affiliations or impact their development throughout history. In his attempts to define the nation, Renan (1999, pp. 153-155) described it as a 'soul and a spiritual principle'. According to Renan, the nation – like the individual – is the fruit of a long past spent on hard work, sacrifice, and devotion. He argues that ancestor worship is one of the most justifiable forms of worship for anyone who imagines the nation as an ancient entity, like Filipovski, because 'ancestors made us what we are today' (Renan, 1999, p. 153). A nation is defined by its members who share in the great glories of the past and in a common will for the future. Love for the nation, according to Renan, is proportionate to the sacrifices made by great men for glory, i.e. we love the house we built and we pass it to our successors.

Women politicians firmly located their national identities within their *ethnies* – Albanian, Serbian, or Bosniak. The women were proud to be born into, and to collectively identify with, one of these three ethnicities. In this sense, ethnicity defines political participation in the nation-state just as much as it delineates what and who they are, their history, and its biological and cultural elements, including blood, roots, and symbols. As Duda Balje, an MP in Kosovo Parliament, explained:

> *'I am a Bosniak, my children are Bosniak. I come from a Bosniak family, and I do not think about my national identity, and I do not have a problem presenting it. I know how to represent myself as a Bosniak and fight for my place not even thinking about other communities.'*

Following Smith's (1991, p. 14) thoughts on primordialism and perennialism, the nation is given by nature in the same manner as race. Indeed, the nation as a category and a historical community is imagined as eternal and it may be traced to human biology that has manifested itself as a specific type of socio-cultural community. As Balje implies, women politicians identified with these natural socio-cultural communities and represented them in the present political context of Kosovo/a. Consequently, they formed part of their national elites and shared the same collective sense of pride, solidarity, history, and 'tragedies' as their male compatriots. Women politicians mobilised around the primordial elements of their *ethnies*/nations and actively promoted them as their own. The commonly-held tragedies of their *ethnies* frequently provided the motivation for women to engage with politics and to enter political parties, movements, and civic initiatives to assist their own groups to establish their nation-states or improve their own country's democracy. Albanian politician Edita Tahiri explained that, for

Albanian women in Kosovo/a in the 1990s, the issues of the *ethnie* were regarded as far more important than issues of gender:

> *'At that time, we couldn't ask the question of women because it was not time; we were solving the bigger issues of war.'*

For women in Kosovo/a, issues of the *ethnie* and war provided a foundation around which to mobilise in a similar manner to their male compatriots. Women politicised these issues through highly gendered roles. They improved their political positions within their own *ethnies* and in their nation-states through engagement in defence of the *ethnie*. Certain political decisions advocated by female politicians also had positive impacts for women outside of their own *ethnies*, i.e. the introduction of electoral laws guaranteeing at least 30% participation of women in the parliaments. The sense of solidarity, however, remained primarily concentrated around the *ethnie* as the main guiding principle with gender as a secondary issue. This significantly limited, not only political sisterhood, but also the level of women's emancipation within the *ethnie(s).*

In his extensive research on ethno-nationalism, Smith (2009, p. 28) argues that the ethnic core of the population acts as a base for political actors and institutions to forge what is today considered a nation. In many encounters with women politicians from Serbia and Kosovo/a, I was left with a similar impression. Smith's concept of 'ethnic primacy' was the key to understanding where women politicians belonged and who they represented, personally, politically, and culturally. In later discussions, especially based on the accounts provided by politicians Edita Tahiri, Teuta Musa, Saranda Bogujevci, and Sanda Rašković Ivić, I demonstrate that women politicised their own and their *ethnies'* tragedies. Additionally, I present – through the stories of Albulena Balaj Halimaj and Marija Janjušević – that they also frequently politicised claims of ethnogenesis. I assert that the *ethnie* is still a core assumption when women politicians considered where and how they belonged to an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1991, pp. 48-59). Women politicians tended to romanticise their sense of belonging and to politicise their voices and stories as collective ones. The *ethnie* acts as the first and most important sense of belonging, one that requires national mobilisation and unification.

In his book on nations as zones of conflict, John Hutchinson (2005, p. 53) explains that ethnic groups view themselves as linked 'ancestrally' to the land to create homelands. As my own analysis illustrates, women often romanticised the nation's obsession with land, descent, and blood; this was especially evident in the story of Janjušević about the *Serbian Heart of Johan*

(in Serbian, *Srpsko Srce Jovanovo*). Women politicians maintained the 'elements that ensure persistence of ethnicity' (Smith, 2015, p. 166) through the politicisation of tragedies, roots, blood, myths, symbols, and rituals. They communicated *ethnie*/national myths daily through their political work with their own and other ethnic groups and collectives. The participation of women in politics and their presence in parliaments and decision-making bodies was important. Through their work, we see women's active involvement in the constitution of their political collectives and, especially, how their understanding and imagination of the nation translated into politics.

The contributions of women politicians to the constitution of political and ethnic myths have been relatively unacknowledged up until recently, particularly as a result of their low levels of participation and lack of visibility within political institutions. The democratisation process, however, and the subsequent increase in the political participation of women in Serbia and Kosovo/a has brought new light to their involvement in maintaining the *mythomoteurs* (Armstrong, 1982; Smith, 2009, p. 24) of their collectives and revealed the ways they actively passed these stories on to voters, children, and families.[14] According to John Armstrong (1982) and Smith (2009), *mythomoteurs* are sets of myths that are constitutive of an ethnic polity and ensure the long-term persistence of ethnic identities. Smith expanded on the term and developed his own 'myth-symbol complex' in which *mythomoteurs* play a central role in the exploration of ethnic groups and nations over the *longue durée*. Women, undoubtedly, have a role in the maintenance of *ethnie* primacy in Serbia and Kosovo/a and, here, I endeavour to analyse their active roles in these processes. I focus, as well, on how women politicians understood and politicised their personal tragedies as part of the collective tragedies of their own *ethnies*. Finally, I turn to explanations of different primordial and ethno-symbolist elements of the *ethnie*/nation, including blood, roots, symbols, myths, and rituals. I demonstrate the ways in which women politicians used these markers to narrate and politicise their individual and collective identities.

2.1. *Ethnie*, Birth, Tragedy, from 'I' to 'We'

How does the 'I' become 'we' and how is this process, in turn, related to the *ethnie* and nationalism? In my research, I found that women politicians often enforced the 'core doctrine

[14] *Mythomoteur* is a term taken by Armstrong from Catalan scholar Ramon d'Abadal I de Vinyals (Stråth, 2010, p. 21).

of nationalism' (Smith, 1991, p. 74). That is, they recognised the power of, and their loyalty to, the nation; they emphasised its individuality, uniqueness, history, and destiny and they identified with their *ethnie*/nation and actively worked towards its reproduction. In this section, I present the ways women actively utilised their own personal stories and located them at the very centre of collective, *ethnie* ones. Their experiences and memories became part of collective memories and experiences as well as sources for women's personal drives to become involved in politics. I argue that the primary reason for the ease with which women's personal stories became part of collective ones was because they fed into ideas about the 'uniqueness', history, and destiny that the nation requires to remain a congruent entity. The responsiveness of the nation to absorbing women's personal stories and histories was dependent on their adaptability to its nationalist projects. If women's narratives spoke in favour of the nation and if they did not make it appear incongruous with its own aims, they were seen to conform and become part of collective memory. If they did not comply, their narratives were rejected and ridiculed. The exclusion of women's stories was not an uncommon occurrence. I repeatedly encountered stories or parts of women politicians' identities that were poorly received by their *ethnies*/nations/states, mainly because they failed to feed into the dominant 'core doctrine of nationalism' (Smith, 1991, p. 74).

In this section, I focus on the personal stories of women politicians as drivers of the historical persistence of the *ethnie*, the nation, and nationalism. I refer to Smith's (2009, p. 24, 1991, 1987, pp. 73-77) theory on nationalist concept and 'myth-symbol complex' as lenses through which to analyse the ways that women politicians' stories merged with those of their *ethnies* as well as with other primordial and ethno-symbolist elements of the nation. Nations draw from different concepts to galvanise power. Smith (1991, p. 77) claims that the concepts of autonomy, identity, national genius, authenticity, unity, and fraternity are primary notions that fill in the cracks of the nation's abstractness. Nations develop interrelated languages or discourses expressed through ceremonials, symbols, and myths and are celebrated by its members. People largely take these conventions for granted as they form such routine parts of the everyday. To claim that the quotidian nature of these practices diminishes their potency, durability and, in some cases, capacity to devastate would be mistaken.

Most women politicians who participated in my research tended to openly romanticise the notion of 'striving and sacrifice' (Smith, 2010, p. 14) as the lifeblood of a nation. Interestingly, women politicians from both Serbia and Kosovo/a claimed that their individual nation was especially unique in this respect; it was these essential features that marked national destiny

and ensured collective survival. The women tied it firmly to their ethno-national identities and, more compellingly, to the same geographic landscape. For different women informants, Kosovo/a (or Kosovo and Metohija, as Serbs refer to it) has various meanings. Women used diverse concepts, myths, symbols, and rituals to explain its existence, accentuating each one as a critical and unique part of their national identity. This situation enhanced the romanticism of the *ethnie* and deepened the emotional weight of past tragedies among these competitive and mutually exclusive ethnic/national identities.

The following section is based on the contributions of four politicians and how their personal memories became part of the national narrative. As Kosovo Albanian politician Edita Tahiri explained:

> *'My personality was shaped by the history of the hardships of my father fighting for the rights of Albanians and suffering for that; the same as my personality was shaped within my family, where my mother fought for my rights and never allowed any gender differences, that was very important.'*

Tahiri began her political career in 1989 as one of the first women to enter politics in Kosovo/a. Her motivation to join the political fight for an independent Kosovo/a and for the unification of ethnic Albanians from Albania and Kosovo/a was based on her own family's hardships. Memories of her father's imprisonment while fighting for the Albanian *ethnie* and her mother's separation from her family who remained in communist Albania influenced the nature of her work. In particular, her role as a founder of the LDK significantly contributed to the liberation of Kosovo/a from the 'occupiers' who she identifies as Serbs. According to Tahiri, 'when your nation faces difficulties, you unify around the common goal'. She claimed that the high risk of killings and exterminations encouraged the union of women and men of the Albanian *ethnie* in Kosovo/a. A political situation of this nature brings freedom and the cessation of hostilities into sharper focus for both men and women of the group. According to Tahiri, the nationalist orientations of women remain active today because of ongoing security concerns and the endangerment of the *ethnie*. The sense of threat because of being 'Albanian' permeated all other identities women might have.

Kosovo Albanian politician Teuta Musa, from LDK, recounted similar experiences. Her political engagement was driven by the Serbian oppression of the Albanian *ethnie* rather than the oppression of women within the Albanian *ethnie*. She did not claim that women's oppression was non-existent but, rather, that Serbian oppression was stronger and represented

a mobilising force. Musa's father was part of the LDK, which claims to be the first democratic party in the Balkans. Ibrahim Rugova, its leader, was her role model. Musa joined the political fight for an independent Kosovo, turning her personal story into a political one. Mobilising for 'liberty' was an essential component of women's political participation in the public life of Kosovo/a, especially in relation to advocacy for women's political rights and participation. Over coffee one day, I asked Musa whether this mobilisation was intended to enhance the fight for women's rights. She answered, 'No. In the start, it was not about women'. Both Musa and Tahiri emphasised that the plight of the *ethnie* was the most important reference point for ethnic Albanian women engaged in politics and gender was secondary to this. This was a very common response among all women living in liberatory or colonial settings where they were required to join the struggle against ethnic/racist oppression, in the first instance, and then against gender domination (Jayawardena, 1986).

As previously mentioned, ethnicity is central to the national identities of women politicians in Serbia and Kosovo/a. Ethnicity is a relic of the past, a biological determinant of the *longue durée* (Hutchinson, 2005, p. 13). It belongs to the past, but it is practiced in the present. While ethnicity is perceived as biological and is acquired through birth, it is reproduced through cultural and political practices. Women politicians contributed to the reproduction of both *ethnie* and gender through the telling of personal and collective stories and they did so as both active participants in the narration of anecdotes and as actors in the political events on which these anecdotes were based. Some women, including Tahiri and Musa, held that 'common suffering unites more strongly than common rejoicing' (Renan, 1999, p. 153). Blood and suffering were part of the collective past, but they were also group markers that were clearly articulated in the present as expressions of the desire to continue living life in common.

Carol Hanisch (1970, p. 76) argues that the 'personal is political' in terms of problems that can only be solved through joint political action. Women's personal problems are, therefore, political issues and collective action for a collective solution is required to elicit change. In my work, I found women politicians were more likely to seek change through collective political action for their *ethnies.* I explain the possible reasons for this in the section 'Women Politicians, Democratisation, Gender, and/in the Nation'. Here, I focus on how the personal becomes political in relation to the *ethnie* and to women in politics. As Tahiri and Musa demonstrate, women who engage in politics were frequently motivated by defence of their *ethnies* in times of 'vulnerability' and when under attack from 'oppressors'.

This is not to suggest that political organising around women's rights did not exist before and after the war for independence in Kosovo/a. Mertus (2010, p. 175) explains some of the reasons for the seeming absence of gender from the political realm. She found that the ethnically Albanian women's rights group Motrat Qiriazi, for example, was unable to implement their gendered projects because they did not have an ethno-national and liberational character. The group was compelled to dismantle literacy projects because of their primarily gendered approach. Men accused them of neglecting the nation at the expense of gender. During a research period of six years, Mertus observed an entirely new representation of women's participation in which the gap between nation and gender was negotiated and the space between nation and gender decreased. In order to politicise gender and to implement gender projects, then, ethnically Albanian women in Kosovo/a were required to align themselves with ethno-nationalist demands. For this reason, Tahiri and Musa, alongside other women, claimed that the *ethnie* was the first and most important category around which women mobilised.

Even today, after many years of studying gender and the nation, whether women were forced or voluntarily participated in ethno-national projects is a topic still heavily debated. Smith (1991, p. 14), for example, explains that geographic and ethnic fragmentation led women to align themselves with more cohesive identities to inspire collective consciousness and action. This may be part of the reason why many women of Serbia and Kosovo/a chose to mobilise around ethnic issues rather than gendered ones and why they placed their own individual stories at the centre of the *ethnie's* collective narratives, even today.

Kosovo/a politician Saranda Bogujevci, an MP from Vetevendosje, was shot by a Serbian paramilitary group known as the Scorpions in March of 1999. Bogujevci was medically evacuated to Manchester U.K. from Kosovo at the age of 14. She lost her mother and two brothers and many other members of her family. At only 18 years of age, she became the first Albanian witness to testify before the Serbian courts on the atrocities that had befallen her and her family. The family's identification with the Albanian *ethnie* was certainly the primary characteristic that marked Bogujevci and her family as targets on that day. I asked Bogujevci if carrying the burden of these past events bothered her and she answered, 'No, because I learned whatever happens in life, it marks you for the rest of your life and you deal with it and do something with it'. Bogujevci's individual memories, like those of many other Kosovo Albanian politicians, were placed at the centre of the collective, *ethnie* stories. She actively politicised her personal history, not only in her political work, but also in her artwork, especially through installations and exhibitions. Her artwork entitled, 'Bogujevci Visual

History', for example, includes a living room with a couch covered in material made to resemble real fur, embroidered pillows, television, furnace, table, gobelin, and books. In many ways, the installation mimicked a standard family living room in the former Yugoslavia. Its artistic power did not lie solely in the disturbing events that had taken place in the Bogujevci family's living room in 1999. With this exhibition, Bogujevci depicted her family's and her *ethnie's* history and destiny and encouraged her audience to identify with the situation as if it could have happened to any one of them in their own living rooms. In her interview for Oral History Kosovo (Bogujevci, 2018), Bogujevci stated:

> *'What we found interesting about the living room [in the exhibition], it was that you know, either in Kosovo, Albania, Serbia, but also the visitors from other European countries … all of them had the same feeling when they entered the living room. You know, the living room was a sort of, how to explain this … through the living room, everyone understood that in that period of time everyone's ways of living were similar to one another's. You know, we were not so different from one another, you know how propaganda took over, especially in Serbia towards Albanians in Kosovo? And, when they entered the living room, all the time you would hear people say, "We also had this, we also had this book, we also had the same television". Or, "We had the same blanket, my grandmother owned this …"'*

Bogujevci entered politics in Kosovo because she wanted to express disappointment in how Kosovo/a looks today and to work towards change. In my observation of the meetings of both the Parliament of the Republic of Kosovo and the CHRGE, I had multiple opportunities to observe the ways that Bogujevci's story was perceived in the current political context in Kosovo. Her personal tragedy contributed to her individual drive to politicise these events at different levels and with different audiences. It also made her an exemplar of what had happened to the Albanian *ethnie* in Kosovo/a. In a planning meeting for International Women's Day celebrations on 8 March, the subject of missing persons was on the agenda. MP Teuta Haxhiu gave priority to Bogujevci to open the panel because, 'she is the only one that really lost members of her family'. If Bogujevci had declined the invitation, then Haxhiu stated she would speak, 'because she is from a village where 27 people are still missing and they have not been found'.

The interaction highlighted the hierarchy among victims, particularly in terms of what was considered the fitness of a personal story to become a part of the collective *ethnie* one. The people who lost the most for the *ethnie* were considered to have the greatest right to speak. In

her work with silenced victims survivors of SGBV, Olivera Simić (2018) offers explanations on how international criminal law and feminist legal discourse can construct a certain victim hierarchy that misrecognises and excludes some women's experiences. The legal and symbolic status of some women, thus, can be perceived and treated based on their ethno-national identity rather than the act they survived. In my own fieldwork, a similar political hierarchy of victimhood dominated every political event centred around the problematic issues of the past.

Smith (1991, pp. 11-14) problematises the collective and individual questions of identity in Sophocles' play, *Oedipus Tyrannus*. In this Athenian tragedy, Oedipus traverses a series of categories and roles well known to fifth century Greeks. In a similar manner to other heroes whose exploits have been dramatised by Athenian tragedians, Oedipus represents a normal person placed in unusual circumstances and set apart by a unique fate. Of significance, here, is the notion that past events can serve present purposes and/or future goals in stories such as this. The nation stands at the centre of one of the most popular and ubiquitous myths of modern times: nationalism (Smith, 1991, p. 19). Likewise, Bogujevci represented a normal person, placed in unusual circumstances, and marked by her terrible fate, which is a narrative well known to many ethnic Albanians living in Kosovo/a. In Bogujevci's case, her personal tragedy was undeniably connected with her *ethnie's* history of hardship and struggle. It is what made her an 'insider' (Flores, 2018; Griffith, 1998; Merton, 1972; Naples, 1996; Parameswaran, 2001; Simić, 2018, pp. xiii, 12, 161; Zinn, 1979). It marked who she was and guided her own political prospects, but it also served the plight of the *ethnie*. According to Bogujevci's story in Oral History (2018), she was in Canada when Kosovo/a proclaimed independence in 2008. There was a celebration among the Albanian community there and, as a person who had lost her family during the war, she was asked to speak:

> *'I remember, it was an honour for me, they asked me to talk, so to address all the compatriots that were gathered in, in Toronto. I remember I had … I mean with, with the family I had, the friends I had, in Toronto, I drew the eagle, like the one in the pictures on the cheeks of all the kids and the younger generations. It was a huge celebration.'*[15]

[15] The black eagle is a motif of the Albanian *ethnie* and statehood and appears on the national flag. It is also a symbolic gesture commonly demonstrated by many ethnic Albanians through the crossing of the hands over the chest in a manner indicative of an eagle. In 2018, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) fined two Kosovo Albanian football players of the Swiss team because of their use of this gesture during a game against Serbia (Boren, 2018).

In this way, Bogujevci's own personal history became part of the tragedy of the Albanian *ethnie* in Kosovo/a. An interesting paradox, however, reveals problems with the 'abstract and complex nature' (Smith, 2010, p. 14) of the Kosovar Albanian *ethnie*. The part of Bogujevci's identity that most easily conformed to the Albanian *ethnie's* tragedy was prioritised. The other side of her identity, however – the part that related to her life in the West and her acceptance of 'its values' – that made her an 'outsider' - was ridiculed. The other consequences of this same destiny, the aspects that do not promote the *ethnie's* tragedy, were poorly received by other Albanian MPs at CHRGE. Specifically, living and growing up in civic, multi-national societies with liberal values marked Bogujevci as different and allowed her to identify with diverse groups of people that those in Kosovo/a society were not typically accustomed to being associated with. In her interview, Bogujevci emphasised:

> *'I am Albanian in my culture, history, and I think everyone has that kind of patriotism; it's embedded in you since you are a child, but then I ask why there is no space in embracing other cultures and being part of that? I absolutely love when I hear stories of kids from mixed backgrounds; they are so enriched by being so much more than just one nationality. I am always proud to say I am Kosovo Albanian, but I am also proud to say I am British. For me, I am all of these things.'*

Smith (1991, pp. 14, 76) explains that national identity is fundamentally multi-dimensional; it can never be reduced to a single element. Nationalism, however, strives to homogenise nations and to reduce them to a single element, especially in relation to ethnic nations. The other side of Bogujevci's identity – her Western upbringing and values – did not conform to the dominant perception of what the Kosovo/a Albanian nation is. In one of the meetings of CHRGE, MPs joked about her attendance at the first Pristina Gay Pride Parade. They referred to gay people as 'hers'. Living in the UK and Canada meant that she promoted 'Western' values and supported the LGBTTIQ people.[16] Subsequently, Bogujevci not only represented the Albanian collective tragedy but also the liberal pro-LBGTTIQ attitudes and ideals that Kosovo/a's traditional, patriarchal society was not commonly associated with. To summarise, the tragedy of the *ethnie* corresponded with the idea of unity within the Kosovo/a Albanian nation, while the rights of the LGBTTIQ community did not. Bogujevci was shocked that other MPs could sit at the CHRGE without expressing open support of human and LGBTTIQ rights. She

[16] LGBTTIQ is an abbreviation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Transgender, Intersexual, Queer, Questioning people.

challenged her compatriots with regard to this lack of support. She disagreed with them and refused to represent a traditional stance, claiming, 'If you don't want to be associated with it (human rights), you should not be in the Parliament'. I analyse the problems associated with newly-formed democratic institutions that ought to protect human rights and their inability to do so in the final chapter 'Women Politicians, Democratisation, Gender, and/in the Nation'. In the following text, I present another example demonstrating how the personal memories of a second politician, Serbian in this case, became a part of the collective story.

Sanda Rasković Ivić is an MP in the Serbian Parliament and her story also revealed the transition from 'personal' to 'political' and its interconnectedness with *ethnie* and nationalist politics. Rašković Ivić is one of a very few women in politics regularly invited on television and radio to speak about national issues. Her family background, political beliefs, and social status (i.e. education) made her 'eligible' to speak on the topic of 'nationalism', which is predominantly a masculine theme in Serbia. At certain times, she was the only woman in the studio speaking about the nation and national issues. In one television debate about 'questions of concern to St Sava people' (in Serbian, *Svetosavski narod*) and the 'starvation' (in Serbian, *stradanje*) of Serbs in the Serbian Autonomous Region Krajina (in Serbian, *Srpska Autonomna Oblast SAO Krajina, Croatia*) in the former Yugoslavia and in other wars, the speaker introduced Rašković Ivić as the 'daughter of a very honourable Serbian man, Jovan Rašković'.[17] According to the speaker, she was not only a lady but also the daughter of a man who 'fought for Serbs in Krajina'.

Rašković Ivić's father was a prominent member of the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts (SANU). The Academy came to the world's attention following the publication of a Memorandum (SANU, 1986) that stirred Serbian nationalist and victimhood sentiments before the wars in the former Yugoslavia broke out. It accused the Yugoslav republics of 'physical, political, legal and cultural genocide perpetrated against the Serbian population of Kosovo and Metohija' as well as in Croatia and other republics. Rašković was also the leader of a political party representing Serbs in Croatia, the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS).[18] In 1990, on the

[17] In Serbian, *'stradati'* means to die in a tragic way. The word is popularly used to explain the collective deaths of Serbs in wars and pogroms. In Serbian history, Serbs experienced many periods of starvation. Events in which many Serbs lost their lives, from the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 to the concentration camp of Jasenovac in 1941, are all called the *'stradanje'* of Serbs (Bieber, 2002a; Pejin, 1994; Škiljan, 2010).

[18] One of the pamphlets from the SDS from Knin – Belgrade in 1990 states that the SDS is a party of 'Serbdom on barricades … It will defend your (Serb) past from forgetting, your present from alienation, and your future from darkening … it is a party that emerged from the rest of the people that were not slaughtered …'

brink of war in Croatia, the SDS Party formed the independent SAO Krajina within Croatia. Rašković Ivić relocated to Belgrade as a refugee in 1992 after the right-nationalist Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) organised a petition for her father's expulsion from Šibenik. Their family assets were seized and destroyed. The main reasons for his expulsion were their *ethnie* and her father's political engagement. Her father was not the only person in her family persecuted on the basis of *ethnie*. Rašković Ivić's grandfather, Dušan Rašković, was also a refugee from Croatia. He had fled to Italy in 1941 because the Independent State of Croatia, a Nazi puppet state, had denounced him as a 'Chetnik-Communist'. His family assets were also seized and destroyed by Nazi collaborationists (Kesar, 2007).

Rašković Ivić was raised in a political environment because of her father and she mentioned him often in her everyday work. In the post-Milošević era, she felt the need to engage in the political realm because she was dissatisfied with the political, legal, economic, and security situation after the democratic revolution in 2000. She joined the nationalist Serbian Democratic Party (DSS) because it contained both 'democratic and national dimensions' that were important to her. Her background as a Serb refugee from Krajina and the daughter of a Serbian dissident in the former Yugoslavia affected her political activism and orientation in many ways:

> *'Before all, I am a Serb from Croatia and my national identity is very important to me because I love my genus [in Serbian, rod], our history, tradition. We [Serbs from Croatia] were over there [in Croatia] exposed to assimilation in many ways that lasted through centuries. We know that in the time of Maria Theresa people had to change religion and that meant a change of national identity as well.*[19] *National identity there was connected to religion. So, whoever was Catholic was automatically a Croat, whoever is Orthodox was a Serb … My national identity is important for me because it is a part my overall identity. I am a woman biologically and psychologically and I have my national identity and I know who I am. To be able to be cosmopolitan and a citizen of the world, which I consider myself to be, I must know who I am. I am Serbian, so I can be a citizen of the world, I am both Serbian and a citizen of the world.'*

Rašković's political engagement and struggle for the Serbs in Croatia (Rašković, 2004, p. 233, 261) built a 'cult of personality' (Hayball, 2017, p. 159). In Croatia, Serbs referred to him as

[19] In Croatia, under the Hapsburg ruler Maria Theresia, Serbian children were forced to change their religion from Orthodox Christian to Catholic and were unable to attend school until they had done so (Jarčević, 2006). The forced change of religion perpetrated against Serbian people throughout history is widely referred to as *'pokrštavanje'* and is considered the gravest crime against one's national and religious identity.

'Ćaća' (in English, *father*). Hence, not only was he Rašković Ivić's father, he was also a father to the collective *ethnie* in Croatia, to Serbs from Croatia. Some newspapers in Serbia even named him a 'Serbian Gandhi' (Telegraf, 2015) because of his peaceful politics in the name of Serbian political autonomy in Croatia. Nevertheless, according to Rašković Ivić, 'it is one thing to be Ghandi in India and completely another thing to be Gandhi in mountainous (in Serbian, *brdoviti*) Balkans'.[20] Her father died in Belgrade in 1992 after receiving a call from Croatia informing him that the Military Court in Split had indicted him for alleged 'war crimes'. In a video of the rallies in Buković in Croatia in 1991, Serbs could be heard cheering Rašković with the phrases 'Jovo Serb', 'We will kill Tudjman',[21] and 'We will kill Ustasha'.[22] Rašković, in turn, repeated, 'do not ask me to give you weapons, do not ask me to give you weapons! If you need them, there will be someone else who will give them to you'. The video reconfirmed Rašković Ivić's story of her father as a man calling for a peaceful solution and autonomy for Serbs in Croatia. He was prosecuted by both Milošević and Tudjman on the basis of his peaceful politics because they wanted war.

Her father, according to Rašković Ivić, 'disagreed with Milošević's politics on Croatia and fought for a peaceful solution'. He advocated for democratic rights for Serbs in Krajina and not for war. In 1991, he met Milošević and told him that Croats wanted 'sacrifice'; they needed it as they did not have it in WWI and WWII. Croats wanting independence and peaceful resistance was not a great tool for mobilising for war. In theories of nationalism (Denton-Borhaug, 2014; Elshtain, 1991; Guibernau, 2013, 2004; Guibernau and Hutchinson, 2001; Marvin and Ingle, 1996; Pettus, 2004; Smith, 2001; Stern, 2013), sacrifice is one of the most

[20] Rašković Ivić used the word 'mountainous' (in Serbian, *brdoviti*) to point to the geopolitical claims of the Greek historian Herodotus (Grčić, 1997, p. 24; Herodot, 1959) to the effect that people from mountains and unfertile lands are prone to aggressive behaviour and conquest in contrast to people from flat lands who are inherently more peaceful. In this statement, she points to the aggressive behaviour of people from the Balkans in comparison to the peaceful and democratic claims of her father. One of the most famous Serbian poets, Desanka Maksimović (1941), uses the same expression 'mountainous Balkan' in her poem, 'Bloody Fairy-tale' (in Serbian, *Krvava Bajka*). The poem speaks about the assassination of 270 Serbian school children who 'died a martyr's death' by Nazi soldiers in Kragujevac in 1941. Serbia is mentioned as a 'land of peasants in the mountainous Balkans'. Generally, the phrase 'mountainous Balkans' is used to depict the self-Orientalist view of the Balkans and its people as backward and patriarchal.

[21] Franjo Tudjman was the President of Croatia at the time.

[22] Ustasha (in Serbian, *Ustaša*) refers to the Croatian ultranationalist terrorist organisation formed in 1929 who joined Nazi Germany in 1941 (Campion, 2006, pp. 38-39) and were responsible for Jasenovac, one of the deadliest camps for Jews, Serbs, and Roma on the territory of Europe.

powerful tools for mobilising the nation. Milošević dismissed Rašković with the phrase, 'go back to your private practice' (he was a neuropsychiatrist). In Rašković Ivić's words:

> *'Croats were provoking and attacking [Serbs in Croatia] and, therefore, reviving the feeling of Serbs from 1941 and Jasenovac. I remember that one woman told me in Šibenik in 1991, "they will not catch us [Serbs] sleeping as they did in 1941".*[23] *It could have been different, but Milošević's politics brought it to where it ended and how it ended. My father said that it can happen that Serbs disappear from Croatia in one day in a NIN interview in 1992, to be expelled in one day by Croatian forces with international assistance.'*

Rašković was essentially correct. According to a Report of the UN Commission on Human Rights (Nowak, 1996), more than 200,000 Serbs were forcefully expelled from Croatia after the military operations Storm (in Serbian, *Oluja*) and Flash (in Serbian, *Bljesak*) conducted by the Croatian army and backed by the U.S. in 1995. Today, the Republic of Croatia commemorates these two dates as national holidays. For Croatia, *Bljesak* and *Oluja* did not have the character of ethnic cleansing (as they did for the Croatian Serbs); instead, they had a 'liberational' character.

As a Serb from Croatia, Rašković Ivić's mention of Jasenovac was far from strange. Jasenovac has genuine significance in the collective memory of Serbian people as a symbol of 'tragedy and sacrifice' and holds enormous mobilising power for the Serbian nation. The concentration camp was the site at which almost 400,000 people, mainly Serbs, were executed alongside Jews, Roma, and some Croat opponents of the Nazi puppet state of the Independent State of Croatia in 1941-1942 (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2018). The history of persecution was an ideological tool for national mobilisation for many nationalist leaders in the 1990s (Pavasović Trost, 2013, p. 13). Jasenovac fits perfectly into narratives that glorify one's own battles, one's own victimhood, and denies one's own history, such that Serbia and Serbians became the victimised heroes (Moll, 2013, pp. 914-915; Ramet, 2007a, March 1, 2007b). In 2016, MP Sanda Rašković Ivić submitted the draft Resolution on Victims of Genocide of the Independent State of Croatia Against Serbs, Jews, and Roma to the Parliament of Serbia. The Parliament, however, did not even take it into consideration for discussion.

[23] 'Catch us sleeping' is a metaphor that depicts Serbs who were unprepared for war, which is why so many were executed in Jasenovac Concentration Camp in 1941.

In this section, I analysed the ways women politicians utilised their own personal stories in their day-to-day work and how their actions coincided with the 'core doctrine of nationalism' (Smith, 1991, p. 74). I demonstrated how they recognised the power of the nation and their loyalty to it, being proud representatives at home and abroad. Women politicians emphasised their nation's individuality, uniqueness, history, and destiny and they identified with it while actively working on its reproduction. Specifically, women placed their individual-personal stories at the centre of collective, *ethnie* ones. The inclusion of women's stories, however, depended on their congruency with nationalist projects. Women politicians' stories became part of the collective narrative only if they fed into the concept of the 'uniqueness' of the nation – its history, destiny, and sacrifice – that made the nation a coherent entity. In cases where women's stories did not speak in favour of the nationalist narrative or where they made the nation appear fragmented, they failed to find a place in the collective *ethnie* story.

2.2. Blood

In the following section, I explain the ways women politicians understood and politicised blood. In Serbia and Kosovo/a, blood signifies many things, most commonly, it expresses ethno-national ties or acts as a measure of the *ethnie*/nation's unique characteristics that differentiate it from 'others'. Blood defines the *ethnie*, and one might identify as either Albanian, Bosniak, or Serbian by blood. Indeed, Kosovo Albanian politician Teuta Musa claimed, 'By blood I am Albanian'. Furthermore, blood is used to romanticise the fight for liberation. In my work, I discovered two different functions of blood that were frequently used to express ethno-nationalist ties and queries in both Kosovo/a and Serbia. The first application concerned blood that was spilled in the past and that will be spilled in the future for the *ethnie*. The second application involved blood that was transferred through the mother to the child at birth and thus can carry all the memories, myths, symbols, and rituals of the *ethnie*. In both cases, blood was used to symbolise the sacrifices paid by ancestors, family members, and the collective as well as those that are expected to be paid by future generations should circumstances arise. It is also used to depict how different myths, symbols, customs, mentality, and other social and cultural markers of the nation are passed on from generation to generation. In summary, blood belongs to the strongest elements of the *ethnie* that ties the past to the present.

Blood is commonly imagined as a conduit for the transfer of different parts of a woman's identity. According to MP Marija Janjušević, 'the Kosovo myth' was a crucial part of Serbian

identity because ‘we are born with it’, thus, it is in our blood. Janjušević draws on the symbolism of blood to romanticise the Kosovo myth, depicting it as something deep and unchangeable. Consequently, the enduring nature of the Serbian identity depends on these immutable features, which are located deep in the bloodstreams of both the individual and the collective. In addition to its biological features, blood also contained a cultural category for some women politicians and was perceived as transmitting myths and urban identities as well as genetic material. Blood is a symbolic characteristic that binds certain primordial features to contemporary ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson, 2006, 1991).

According to Hutchinson (2005, p. 54), nationalists embark on cultural voyages to record distinctive qualities of their own habitat and its cultures as part of the discovery of their collective-self. To create a homeland, they use spatial and historical elements to extend and deepen the sense of attachment to the ‘land’. They expand the sense of life and activities of the communities who work the land and they explore the layers of the past continuously. He provides the example of Serbian nationalists and the ‘graves of the Orthodox dead as their burial sites’.

During my fieldwork, I had several meetings with Janjušević, an MP of the political party Dveri. Initially, she expressed opposition to my research. Her reticence was fuelled by the terminology used to introduce my research and my reference to Kosovo without mention of Metohija. For Janjušević, my language contributed to a global conspiracy against Serbia to recognise Kosovo as an independent state. In addition, my association with an Australian university further impacted upon her decision to withhold her participation early on, given Australia’s recognition of Kosovo as an independent state. After some time emailing back and forth and discussing the nature of my research, Janjušević finally agreed to join me for coffee and a few additional meetings. Interestingly, each time I met her in the Parliament, she would kindly invite me to her office for a coffee where she would introduce me to other people as a researcher from Australia who was ‘forced’ to refer to Kosovo without mention of Metohija. At times, it seemed that these particular representations were deliberate in that they served her own particular internal political purposes.

In our first meeting in the garden of the legendary Moscow Hotel (in Serbian, *Moskva*), Janjušević shared a story about a book entitled, *Serbian Heart of Johan* (in Serbian, *Srpsko Srce Jovanovo*), written by Veselin Dželatović (2003). Dželatović claimed that the book was based on the true story of a German man named Johan Wagner who the author had met in a graveyard in Kosovo/a. Johan had explained that he carried the transplanted heart of Jovan, a

Serbian man from Kosovo/a who had been kidnapped in 1991 and whose organs had been removed and trafficked from Albania to Germany. Following his transplant operation, Johan began dreaming about Kosovo, a land he had never seen. He dreamt of the landscape, he heard the ringing of the Orthodox Church bells, and he saw a young blue-eyed boy who happened to be Jovan's son. In his dreams, Johan could speak and understand the Serbian language. After some time, Johan's dreams became nightmares and he decided to research the history of his heart. Tracking its origins, Johan travelled first to Albania where he found the infamous 'Yellow House'. The Council of Europe (CoE) published a report by Swiss prosecutor Mr Dick Marty (2010) on human organ theft perpetrated by ethnic Albanians in Kosovo in the notorious 'Yellow House'.

According to the report (Marty, 2010), investigations began after revelations were made by the former Prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) concerning acts of human organ trafficking committed by members of the KLA.[24] Marty's Report, among other things, documented the locations, transportation, and procedures for organ theft and trafficking and implicated the current president of Kosovo/a, Hashim Thaqi, and the Drenica Group he commanded in crimes extending from Kosovo/a to Albania and through to Europe. The Report, moreover, noted that the symbolism behind blood represented one of the main impediments to prosecution. Article 172 of the report stated that, 'the central impediment to achieving true justice for many Kosovars seems to be the ancestral custom, which still prevails in some parts of society, of entrenched clan loyalty' (Marty, 2010, pp. 25-26). The report claimed that conspirators' allegiances to their criminal 'bosses' were as unbreakable as any family bonds, even where perpetrators were not members of the same clans or extended families. This speaks to the depth and strength of blood and ethnic (clan) ties in Kosovo/a Albanian society. Even though the KLA was a predominantly Albanian militia it also targeted, not only Kosovo Serbian nationals, but also peaceful Kosovo Albanians who expressed opposition to their methods. When I began my fieldwork in Pristina, one politician from the LDK and several people from the NGO sector mentioned that the father of an Albanian MP in the Kosovo Parliament, Doruntina Maloku, had been killed by the KLA in 1998 (Saudi Gazette,

[24] The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) was a predominantly ethnically Albanian paramilitary group that carried out attacks against Serbian forces in Kosovo/a (Global Security, 2018). According to the BBC (1998), the U.S. special envoy to the Balkans, Robert Gelbard, characterised the KLA as a terrorist organisation. A report by the Federal Research Division of the U.S. Congress (Berry et al., 2002, p. 80) also described it as a drug-funded terrorist/extremist group. This characterisation changed after 1999 when the KLA received full support from the U.S. for the independence of Kosovo.

2018).[25] These people suggested that I follow Maloku's work, however, she did not respond to my phone calls.

In the story of Johan's heart, human organs were carriers of *ethnie* symbols and memories. Janjušević suggested that blood could also signify the sacrifices made by the *ethnie*:

> *'The symbols of Kosovo are our Christian monuments and 1389, the fact that we died for it, our blood soaked that territory, not the Albanian one.'*

The story of Johan's heart carries the most important markers of the Serbian *ethnie:* Orthodox Church bells, a blue-eyed boy, and a mother. Following the book's release and promotion, *Kurir*, the populist pro-regime newspaper from Belgrade published an article 'Kosovo is in the Soul: Serbian Heart Inside of a German Man Talking' (2013). Cell Memory Theory claims that it is possible to transfer memory from an owner to a recipient through organ transplantation, especially in relation to the heart. A group of researchers from the School of Nursing at the University of Hawaii (Pearsall et al., 2000; Pearsall, 2001) assert that it is feasible for patients who received an organ to experience personal changes that parallel the history of the donor. In their research, correlations between donor and recipient included changes in different social, cultural, and sexual preferences, such as food, music, art, sexual, recreational, and career preferences as well as sensory experiences. One recipient of an organ dreamt of hot flashes of light in his face. The organ donor had been shot in his face with a gun. The theory's main argument is that memories stored in the neurons of the donor can be transferred from donor to recipient. Some researchers, including Andrew Armour (2008), have discovered that the heart has its own brain. A number of studies confirm the claims made by cell memory theory (Bunzel et al., 1992; Jay, 2016; Pearsall et al., 2000). According to current neurological science research, however, there is still no credible evidence that unequivocally demonstrates that biological cells contain this kind of memory (Buttigieg and Duffy, 2017).

Janjušević, like many other women politicians, tried to prove that the idea of ethnic Serbdom (in Serbian, *Srpstvo*) was located within Serbian people's blood.[26] They suggested that it was also transferrable by blood and through the neurons of the heart and that it was so persistent it could even carry ethno-national memory within itself. Thus, it appeared that claims to Serbdom

[25] The identity of this woman has been concealed for her protection.

[26] The ideas of Serbdom encompass different primordial and ethno-symbolist elements of the nation, such as blood, roots, Orthodoxy as religion, sacrifice, tragedy, myths, memories, symbols, and rituals. It also includes political ideas about the unification of Serbs who live in different parts of the former Yugoslavia into one state (Bulatović, 2013, pp. 254-276).

were not exclusively masculine and political; women also exploited these beliefs to promote the authenticity of national struggles and the sacrifices of their own *ethnies* while advancing their own political positions. Some women politicians utilised these claims in their everyday work and political engagements. In the story of the *Serbian Heart of Johan*, the idea of Serbdom, originally crafted by famous Serbian language reformer Vuk Karadžić (Crnobrnja, 1996, p. 37), was transformed into something relatively contemporary: the Serbian-Albanian ethnic conflict in Kosovo (1998-1999). It was translated as a marker of ethnic identity deeply-rooted in the body and transferrable through human organ transplantation. According to Smith (2009, p. 78), the politicisation of blood at the collective level is a grim and solemn reminder of the communal faith, trauma, and survival of the nation in the face of its enemies and of the repeated blood sacrifice of its youth to ensure the regeneration of the nation. Blood, therefore, is a powerful tool in the hands of nationalists.

An MP in Kosovo Parliament, Albulena Balaj Halimaj, also used blood to politicise the sacrifice of fallen Albanian soldiers for the state of Kosovo/a. In one of her speeches, in which she strongly opposed a court ruling in Kosovo/a to return the land on which a Serbian Orthodox Church was built, she stated:

> *'Because of the land, fallen soldiers of Kosovo [Albanians] gave their blood and the Church is a reminder of traumas caused by Milošević.'*

According to some women in politics, blood determines who a territory belongs to, whose blood soaks the land and, most importantly, whose symbols can and cannot exist in Kosovo/a. Problems arise when all communities living in Kosovo/a claim that their blood soaks the land to the greatest extent and only their symbols can exist. In this section, I presented the ways women politicians in Serbia and Kosovo/a understood and politicised primordial elements of the *ethnie*/nation in terms of blood. I found that the most common political use of blood by women politicians was as an expression of ethno-national ties or as a way to voice differences between themselves and the ethnic 'other'. Blood is also commonly used as a symbol to augment the importance of their struggles and suffering and to assert their *ethnie's* inalienable rights to the land of Kosovo/a.

2.3. Roots

In this section, I unpack the ways women politicians understood 'roots' and where they located them in their political work. Roots also belong to the group of significant markers for

reinforcing the ethnic and national affinities of different collectives in Serbia and Kosovo/a. In the following text, I present some of the different explanations and perceptions of roots and their significance to the national formation of the Serbian and Albanian *ethnies*. I unpack the meanings given to the concept of roots through the stories provided by different women politicians. Following this, I deal with the main elements of roots as identified by my informants from different *ethnies* and geographic locations in Serbia and Kosovo/a. My goal here is to illustrate the depth of emotional attachment of women politicians to their roots. Discovering roots, according to Smith (2009, p. 68), means discovering authenticity, a 'true essence' of the nation, the distinctive and unique spirit that is peculiar to 'us' and to 'us' alone.

Simone Weil (2001, p. 43) claims that to be rooted is perhaps the most important, and least recognised, need for the human soul; it is also one of the hardest to define. Understanding the significance of roots and their locations is important in comprehending the borders of national identity for women politicians. Roots and rootedness are essential elements of being and belonging. Ethnography, for example, finds its roots in anthropology (Geertz, 1998, 1994, 1973; Prasad, 1997, p. 104). To do ethnography, we must first turn towards anthropology. In a similar manner, to understand where roots stem from and comprehend their emotional strength, we must explore the places in which they are located. I found that women politicians located their roots in different spheres of their lives, including family, territory, religion, tradition, and customs. Each of these places were sacred to women and carried different emotions that were inseparable from the acts that they, their families, and their ancestors were/are ready to undertake to preserve them. Azar Gat (2016, p. 42) claims it is easy to become carried away in the process and to believe that *everything* is invented myth. The genuine nature of the ethno-national phenomenon makes it the object of mythmaking and manipulation and only something that touches such a very sensitive chord can be so powerfully manipulated. Statements used in this analysis are taken from the feelings expressed by the women politicians with whom I engaged during my fieldwork.

In my analysis, roots and their places are used to form what Glenn Bowman (2003, p. 319) refers to as the 'nationalist imaginary', which is a specific modality of the 'imagined community' (Anderson 1991). Nationalist imaginary is when a group of people comes to conceive of itself as 'we' through the process of mobilisation against forces that its members recognise as threatening to their individual and collective survival. The shared perception of a threat from aggressive outside forces compels them to engage in the project of forming a nation state as a means of protection against the menacing 'other'. Processes of rootedness and

uprootedness are equally important in the framing of 'self' and 'other'. Gorica Gajić, an MP of the Democratic Party of Serbia in the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia, stated:

> *'To be conscious of your national identity, you must take it from the environment in which you grew up, you matured in … Like when you plant a young tree and its roots spread into the ground, deeper … For me, I was always saying that, as a child, I was fed Serbian music, tradition, customs, family's patron saint celebration day [in Serbian, krsna slava], religious holidays … As a child, I grew up beside my grandma and grandpa who always nurtured traditional values in their most original and most beautiful sense … So, when you carry something like that, as valuable within yourself, as yours, as something that belongs to you, you have the need to show it. And, when this becomes endangered or threatened to be erased, or annulled, meaningless, then you rebel and say, "No, I have to preserve this".'*

Aside from the biological and archaeological components, Gajić's statement reveals the cultural elements of roots as well, including music, traditions, customs, the family's patron Saint's Day (in Serbian, *Krsna Slava*), and religious holidays. If any of these elements are perceived as under threat, a person's roots are also experienced as endangered and members of the *ethnie* are then required to mobilise to preserve them. For Gajić, roots come from the family. Roots establish important connections between a person, their family, and the *ethnie*/nation; they not only define the person, they also designate an individual's future and their 'unique' fate (Smith, 1991, p. 13).

In terms of gender, Serbian, Bosniak, and Albanian *ethnies* are patrilineal and patrilocal and they function by patriarchally-oriented common law (Denich, 1974; Halpern et al., 1996, p. 427; Sofos, 1996; Todorova, 1993). In this sense, when women politicians advocated for the maintenance and promotion of certain cultural elements, they simultaneously reproduced the highly patriarchal systems within their nations. The same system that ascribed certain social positions to women on the basis of gender also awarded men the principal roles within society (Halpern et al., 1996, p. 427). Patrilineality is a foundation of Balkan patriarchy and the Balkan family system. Patrilineality and patriarchy ensured that the women of the Balkans remained in the dark for centuries. In the 1990s, patrilineality was identified as one of the principal reasons for the mass rape of women as they were perceived as mere vessels for the reproduction of the 'other' (Sofos, 1996, p. 86).

In addition to the reproduction of the patriarchal system, women politicians also performed another ongoing reproduction of roles, those produced by the *ethnie*. On several occasions, I was identified by Albanian women politicians as belonging to the collective of the Kosovo/a Serbian *ethnie,* despite the fact that I was born in Belgrade and had no ties with Kosovo whatsoever. My Serbian origins implied a relationship with Kosovo Serbs in their national imaginary. When Kosovo Serb politician Oliver Ivanović was assassinated in Mitrovica North, for example, some Albanian women politicians expressed their condolences to me because of my Serbian background. For them, my origins meant I was a part of Ivanović's family or *ethnie*. One Kosovo Albanian politician said she 'understands how I must feel as a Serb'. I already mentioned the story where MP Teuta Haxhiu assumed that I must be a 'friend' of the only Kosovo Serbian MP because of my Serbian background. She asked me in Albanian (sarcastically, knowing that I do not speak the language), 'Where is your friend?' Following this logic, all Serbs are friends and all Serbian MPs or other Kosovo Serbs must be, by extension, my 'friends'. Regardless of my personal identifications with Kosovo Serbs, in the nationalist imaginary of some Albanian and Bosniak MPs, my roots pre-determined the community to which I belonged and who were regarded as my 'friends'.

This manner of thinking is problematic because of what Bowman (2003, pp. 320-321) refers to as the catalytic role of perceptions, antagonisms, and violence in the emergence of nationalism. Nationalism is a historical construct that emerges against certain social conditions of individual and group reformulations of relations to social fields. Perceptions on, and antagonistic attitudes towards, people's solidarities, bonding, and ethnic ties are important in the formation of communal identity. For nationalism to emerge, one must perceive their identity as integrally linked to the wider community that he/she lives in and appreciate the risk that the community is under because of the ethnic other. For these women, I belonged to the Serbian 'other' and my roots already identified my solidarities.

For Kosovo Albanian politician Edita Tahiri, nationalist thinking and roots were a part of life for all *ethnies* in the Balkans and no modern processes were strong enough to eradicate it:

> *'It becomes part of your life! Nationalist processes historically have been different. In our case, Albanians, Serbians, Croats, and others' national identity comes from roots. The Balkans have deep roots to national identity, but not only the Balkans, worldwide the debate over globalisation and roots has suggested that you cannot detach people from roots. "The Lexus and the Olive Tree", if you have read it, comes to the important conclusion that roots you cannot eradicate …'*

Tahiri explained the strength and durability of the rootedness of the Albanian, Serbian, and Croat nations through examples provided in Thomas Friedman's book, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*. In the book, Friedman (2000, pp. 50-51) draws on two metaphors to explain the differences between primordialism and modernism in state building. On the one side, the Japanese are building Lexus cars using robots. On the other side, the Israelis and Palestinians continue to fight over who owns which olive tree. In other words, half of the world is in the process of modernising and privatising to produce commodities while the other half is engaged in fighting over territory. For Friedman, the olive tree is a symbol of individual rootedness within the collective. He claims that individuals fight with such persistence over the olive tree because it provides feelings of self-esteem and belonging, which are essential for human survival. Belonging is, thus, linguistical, geographic, and historical in nature. He argues that when attachment to one's olive tree is taken to excess, it can lead to the extermination of others, as evidenced in the examples of Nazi Germany and the Serbs in Yugoslavia in the mid-1990s. Extreme attachments are about who remains anchored within their local worlds and who disappears from them because, without a sense of home and belonging, life becomes barren and rootless. Friedman (513) concludes his book with an image of 'a healthy global society […] one that can balance the Lexus and the olive tree all the time, and there is no better model for this on earth today than America'.

Some book critiques describe Friedman as 'the most travelled blind man ever' (Hertz and Nader, 2005, p. 122) because his conclusions are based on 'glib-phrase mongering rather than reasonable analysis' of the intersections of complex social phenomena, including globalisation, liberalism, and nationalism. According to other critiques (ibid), the book is not based on in-depth knowledge and immersion within the communities it describes. The simplistic presentation of liberal capitalist ideology and the U.S. as model for peace (Nowicki, 2013; Urbanski, 2000) as well as the 'us' verses 'them' ideology aligns with Tahiri's political perceptions. Her use of the book to explain the rootedness of the *ethnie*/nation was hardly surprising. Friedman's examples reflect a reality that most people born in the Balkans could easily relate to. On many occasions, some of my own friends born in civic democracies had difficulty understanding why the average taxi driver in Belgrade had such a profound knowledge of history and would mention the Battle of Kosovo of 1389. 'It is 2018', they would often state. Similar to the Middle East, the Balkans has a two-dimensional interconnectedness of culture and politics where 'your culture defines your politics' (Friedman, 2000, p. 39). *Ethnie* and national identities in the Balkans are built on constant processes of the rootedness

of self and the uprooting of the other. These processes were especially visible in Kosovo/a, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and other multi-ethnic parts of the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s.

The olive tree is a metaphor symbolising different elements of the *ethnie*: primacy, rootedness, and strength. For George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1981, pp. 3-6), metaphors are pervasive in everyday life. They structure our language, thoughts, and actions and govern our everyday functioning down to even the most mundane of details. We conceptualise reality through metaphors which makes them central to our understandings of the world, how we relate to others, how and what we perceive, and what we do. The olive tree metaphor contains essential elements conceptualised as part of Tahiri's national imaginary. Primacy emerges from the claims of authors like Lucius Junius Moderatus Columella (1968) and Mitchell King (1846, p. 23) who argue that the olive tree is 'the first of all trees' (in Latin, *Olea prima omnium arborum est*). In the same way, ethnic primacy is at the base of the nation (Smith, 2009, p. 28).

Women politicised ethnic primacy and the ethnic core of their nations and they anchored them to their claims over the land of Kosovo/a. Some women politicians, including Kosovo Albanian MP Albulena Balaj Halimaj, used ethnogenesis to explain antiquity and the right to rootedness of their own *ethnie*. According to Balaj Halimaj, the Illyrian people (Albanians) derived from the 'Pelasgians that were the first people in the Balkans'. In a similar manner to the olive tree, which was considered the first and oldest tree, Albanians were regarded as the descendants of the first and oldest people in the Balkans and their language was 'the oldest language in Europe'. This claim to ethnogenesis made Balaj Halimaj 'feel' pride. In the nationalist imaginary, these assertions were used to strengthen claims to the territory (Geukjian, 2016, p. 20). Kosovo Albanian politician Teuta Musa agreed that 'Albanian is the oldest language in Europe' and added that the danger her *ethnie* was under, the danger of being uprooted by the Serbian occupier, strengthened the Albanian sense of identity:

> *'We [Albanians] have our own state, the territory, the language, and the symbols. For this, many generations have sacrificed for freedom, peace, and security, only in the last war in Kosovo over 12,000 victims have been killed by the Serb occupier. For this, the issue of identity is more pronounced in us.'*

Thus, women politicians participated in the (re)production of nationalist imaginary based on claims of ethnic primacy. They actively drew on the antagonisms and the construction of defensive solidarity that linked actual and potential victims through identification (Bowman,

2003, p. 335). Tangible or illusive, the threat of being uprooted drove those under threat into stronger forms of defensive solidarity and more effectively delineated the 'other' from 'us'.

Aside from primacy, the olive tree also symbolises rootedness and strength, which is essential for the process of uprooting the other. Olive trees have broad and strong root networks that can even damage, dislodge, and uplift stones and concrete (Spennemann, 1998, p. 8). They are very hostile, so growers are advised to plant them at a reasonable distance from other plans and facilities. Similarly, the strength and rootedness of the *ethnie* are critical for its survival as is its resilience against the threat of assimilation by neighbouring identities. *Ethnies* and nations with strong roots are harder to displace and divide. Tahiri shared similar claims to those of Musa to the extent that the endangerment of being uprooted by the Serbs impacted upon the process of forming a strong Kosovo Albanian national identity:

> *'Albanian tragic division has been helping to have a stronger national identity. When speaking of divided nations, we suffered for 100 years … However, Serbs were also divided and Croats as well ... We, the Albanians, were the most affected nation and not to forget to mention that oppression against Albanians was notorious in ex-Yugoslavia.'*

Tahiri's quote points to the significance of another element of nationalism, the 'long-suffering masses' (Smith, 2009, p. 78). Uprooting causes collective and individual suffering. The only alternative, therefore, becomes the rootedness of the self/collective alongside the uprootedness of the other. Another reason for the ease of Tahiri's identification with Friedman's book and its explanations of rootedness could potentially be his mention of Serbia alongside Nazi Germany. This description fits the general narrative of the enforced rootedness of the Albanian *ethnie*. Suffering was essential for national mobilisation in the 1990s and the struggle for an independent Kosovo/a. This connection becomes clearer in my later analysis of the eradication of the blood feud. Additionally, Friedman's book re-emphasised the sense of endangerment of the Albanian *ethnie,* while also promoting 'America', the traditional Kosovo Albanian ally, as an example of the perfect balance of modern liberal economy and primordial strength of identity.

As Gajević's and Tahiri's accounts both highlight, if roots, or any other cultural element that belongs to roots (i.e. tradition, culture, religious holidays, monuments), are threatened, the collective must act to defend and preserve them. How fast the *ethnie* mobilises itself is dependent on a range of different modern and primordial factors, including the proximity of, and the sense of danger from, the 'other', rootedness, unity around its elements, and other

political and economic aspects. The cohabitation of primordial elements, such as roots and the present-day political context, must be negotiated within the *ethnie* itself because, according to Kosovo Albanian politician Tahiri:

> *'… Which balance you reach, how much you opt to be close to roots or globalisation, depends on different factors, but in the Balkans, until European future and integration are not completed, I am sure that nationalism is going to continue to be high, first because of security concerns, fear, and geopolitical projects.'*

In the Balkans, the responsibility for the acts of the community and those of the family are usually ascribed to individual members of the family. In imagining the nation in Serbia and Kosovo/a, ethnic primacy has led to the automatic ascription of multiple markers at an individual's birth. These elements largely dictate the individual's destiny and his or her relationships to self and 'others' in the future. These details impact upon how an individual will be perceived and treated by other communities and whose rules they will follow. The Albanian besa, for example, is a cultural practice that demonstrates how one's roots act to transpose the deeds of ones' family onto an individual. Besa is also an important example of how one rooted social practice can be abandoned or modified when more important markers of the *ethnie* are under threat. Some Albanian politicians, including Valdete Idrizi, still regard it as an important marker of Albanian traditions:

> *'I think that it comes from the family, maybe even family tradition … I knew that when I was very young, this "besa" – the word, when you give besa to someone, you are giving him the word, or the promise, that is the proper translation. If I promise you that I will do the following, that means that I will never break this promise. This is something that was instilled when I was … So, if you give a word, you must keep it. This was our Albanian thing; I was saying that, my father was saying that …'*

Besa belongs to the system of Albanian customary laws, canons (in Albanian, *kanun*). According to some scholars (Ahmeti, 2014; Dukagjini et al., 1989; Elsie, 2004; Hasluck, 2015, p. 91), besa was mentioned in the *Canons of Lek Dukagjinit* (in Albanian, *Kodi penal në Kanunin e Lekë Dukagjini*). These laws were collected and formalised by the Albanian Franciscan enlightener father, Shtjefën Gjeçovi, who was killed by the Serbs in 1929. Dukagjinit was a 15th century prince and a brother in arms of the Albanian hero Skanderbeg. He was also the first to codify the Albanian customary laws in the Northern Albanian highlands. Some of the coded laws, according to Robert Elsie (2004, p. 91), appear harsh and

barbaric to the modern observer. Among others, 12 canons contain rules that relate to different aspects of life, including church, marriage, family, property, honour, damages, and besa. In these laws, vengeance was a prime instrument for maintaining justice. This led to a perpetuation of the practice of the blood feud between Albanian *ethnie* in Albania, Kosovo, and Montenegro, which had a devastating impact on northern Albanian tribes at the beginning of the 20th century. In the canons, women had a vastly inferior status compared to men and were deprived of all the rights, privileges, and duties accorded to males. Interestingly, this did not influence Albanian women in politics to self-identify through the markers provided in the canons, such as besa, or to accept it as part of their culture. Some of my politician informants, including Idrizi, considered besa as a pathway to mediation, as a political practice:

> *'... and about that mediation of these movements, I wanted to say that this is, maybe, an Albanian thing. I love believing it is an Albanian thing. I know mediation, everyone in the world can do that, but Anton Çetta and his movement, we link to "besa", to the promise, and he thought that every conflict, everything, can be solved.'*[27]

Significantly, these deeply-rooted cultural practices could be modified if there was an imminent threat to the *ethnie*. In Kosovo/a and Albania, the end of this practice was motivated by the need for unity among the Albanian *ethnie* because of the imminent threat of Serbian plans for the largely ethnically Albanian region of Kosovo/a. Indeed, the national reconciliation of blood feuds was performed after the Parliament of Kosovo/a accepted changes to the Constitution in which the autonomy of the province of Kosovo/a was abolished. Abolition of autonomy triggered massive demonstrations among the Albanian majority in Kosovo/a. Finally, this devastating social practice that had been taking the lives of 'brothers' of the Albanian *ethnie* received the impetus for change through the urgent need for a national imaginary, for unity against the threat that Serbia posed. An activist of the Reconciliation of Blood Feuds Movement, Lumturije Lumka Krasniqi (2018), stated for Oral History Kosovo:[28]

> *'... a woman somewhere in the surrounding of Istog, her father had been killed, and she did not want to forgive it, her family wanted to, but she didn't want. The case was terrible ... She gave the besa to her father that she will not forgive and that she will avenge his death. So, we [activists of the Reconciliation of Blood Feuds Movement] went the next*

[27] Anton Çetta was an Albanian cultural anthropologist and a professor at the University of Pristina. He was one of the leaders of the Blood Feuds Reconciliation Campaign (Sudetić, 1990).

[28] Citation edited for clarity.

day, but she still did not want to forgive it. When I returned home, I asked my father: "For example, God forbid someone killed you, and you asked me to avenge your blood, and I promised you to take out the blood and, now, the people asked me, for the sake of the Movement, to forgive the blood that I promised you to avenge. If I forgave it, what would you say? Was I to forgive it or were I to keep my promise?" He answered, "When it concerns the national cause, never keep a personal promise. Personal promises are broken for the sake of the national cause. Everyone, not just me, but if the whole family was killed, if the nation asked for it, if the national flag asked for it, not only forgive it, but give your life for it. So, this is my answer, for the national cause and the flag." So, more or less, I was touched, I thought why that woman is not forgiving it? So, the following week, she already agreed to forgive it...'

The Blood Feuds Reconciliation Campaign is an example of how deeply-rooted traditional customary laws can be altered in the face of an imminent threat to the more important, more deeply-rooted sense of the ethnic primacy of the nation. In this case, the question was, 'Why would we defend one marker of the *ethnie*, if the *ethnie* itself is in danger?' According to Krasniqi's father, if the nation asks for sacrifice and deviation from one's roots, individuals must accede to demonstrate their loyalty to the collective. The *ethnie* is, therefore, something one gives one's life for. Reconciling blood feuds was an essential part of the greater struggle for Kosovo's independence from Serbia. The movement called for individuals of the Albanian *ethnie* to forgive one another to prepare for unification in the fight against their external enemy (Marku, 2014). As Bowman (2003, p. 320) claims, perceptions of violence afflicting a diverse range of people give rise to the concept of a 'national enemy' that, in turn, produces a sense of solidarity among the members of a victim group. This was critical for the constitution of the Albanian *ethnie* in Kosovo/a.

An activist for the Blood Feuds Reconciliation Movement, Hava Shala (2018), claimed that Milošević used the practice of blood feuds to justify police violence against Albanian protesters in Kosovo/a and to dehumanise the Albanian *ethnie*:

'The spokesperson of Milošević's government appeared on [prime time] news at that time […] and said, "They were not killed by our army and our police," by them, "Primitive Albanians were killed because of blood feuds." […] It was very irritating, it was unacceptable to me, it was very discriminatory, it was very untrue, it was very dehumanising.'

Cultural elements associated with roots were used to dehumanise the *ethnie* other in the former Yugoslavia. The fact that these elements were so deeply-rooted and carried collective emotional appeal contributed to the destructive power of these processes of dehumanisation. According to Nick Haslam (2006, p. 252), among other scholars (Bauman, 2000; Chalk and Jonassohn, 1990; Jahoda, 1999; Kelman, 1973; Moller and Deci, 2010), dehumanisation is a well-known concept in theories of nationalism, ethnicity, and race. Dehumanisation and labelling of the ethnic or racial 'other' as primitive is not a cultural practice that belongs to Serbia and Kosovo/a alone, it is also at the core of Western culture. Gustav Jahoda's (1999, p. 3) view, in the process of dehumanisation, certain cultural elements of the *ethnie* are emphasised and demonised as backwards, primitive, and animal-like. The 'other' is identified as someone who is unable to control animal and sexual drives. At the end of the 1980s and 1990s, deeply-rooted cultural markers, such as besa, were used to dehumanise the ethnic 'other'. This became a political practice of both the Serbian and Albanian *ethnies* for two important reasons. In the first instance, dehumanisation practices alienated the other and produced a clear separation between the Serbian and Albanian *ethnies* based on their different roots and cultural traditions. In the second instance, ethnic mobilisation was fuelled by perceptions of violence. This was necessary for the constitution of nationalist identities in the national imaginary (Bowman, 2003, p. 320). These facts, however, did not necessarily make women politicians less inclined to claim the rootedness of certain cultural elements. Instead, they politicised these various elements as details worthy of pride, as fundamental practices that must be preserved, as markers of 'our' characteristics.

For Balaj Halimaj, besa was a part of the Albanian tradition that represented Albanian people as 'loyal'. Besa belonged to 'our way of thinking'. Apparently, Albanian people shared a 'way of thinking' (often mixed with mentality) as a marker of the *ethnie* alongside the elements of blood, symbols, myths, and rituals. She explained that this way of thinking was unique because Albanian people have greater 'respect' for family, parents, and children than other people or nations which, in turn, formed a basis for respecting others:

> *'You can visit many places, but Albanians and Shqiptare will accept you and respect you and will be friendlier more than in other places.*'[29]

[29] Shqiptare is an exonym for the Albanian *ethnie*. The Albanians call themselves 'Shqiptar', their language 'shqip', and their country 'Shqipëria' (Costanzo et al., 2018).

According to Balaj Halimaj, this was because of their 'way of thinking' and besa, which both implied the uniqueness of the Albanians in terms of respect-giving when compared with other *ethnies* living elsewhere.

In this section, I analysed the understandings and the locations of roots held by some women politicians. Furthermore, I identified the main cultural elements/markers of roots and the meanings, significance, and emotional attachments. In order to explain how roots are conceptualised and the ways in which their cultural markers form part of the nationalist imaginary of the Serbian and Albanian *ethnies*, I provided different examples and metaphors shared by women politicians.

2.4. Symbols, Myths, and Rituals

In this section, I analyse how women politicians in Serbia and Kosovo/a understood and employed different symbols, myths, and rituals to represent themselves, their communities, and their relationships to ethnic 'others'. I found that women politicians politicised these elements in order to promote their communities or states as well as to advance their own political positions within them. The natural right to rootedness and the sense of 'autochthonous' belonging to the territory was very much evident in many of the core symbols, myths, and rituals and their reproduction was an important component of women's engagement in the political sphere. Women politicians demonstrated a strong sense of identification and solidarity with anachronic ethnic symbols from the past. They located their national identity in the myths, symbols, and rituals that belonged to the period before the modern era and they politicised them to reinforce the struggle of/for the *ethnie* in the present political contexts of Serbia and Kosovo/a.

The myths, symbols, and rituals also wielded substantial power over the women themselves, affecting their actions. One of the key reasons for this power is demonstrated in most common nationalist justifications: the vulnerability and struggle of the *ethnie* in the past (Smith, 1991, p. 13). As previously explained, the politicisation of the nation's various primordial and cultural elements form a part of the nationalist imaginary where one group is established in the process of mobilising against the constitutive violence of the menacing 'other' (Bowman, 2003, p. 319). I found that, where symbols, myths, and rituals of the past have been targeted and threatened, women politicians have placed them at the centre of debates in the present political context. In their stories, women indicated that, in the absence of their own people, the menacing 'other' had attacked their *ethnie's* symbols. From this, we can conclude that symbols may

actually represent *ethnies* in their absence. One Serbian politician from Kosovo/a, who had spent a reasonable amount of time in politics before resigning, told me:

> *'I took care of everything. No monastery was attacked when I was in position. As soon as I left, they [Albanians] attacked Dečane [Serbian Orthodox Monastery].'*

That Serbian monuments in Kosovo/a were not attacked during this woman's time in office indicated that her mandate was successful and her contribution to the nation was in the preservation of monuments against the threatening 'other' (Kosovo Albanian). In many other cases throughout Albanian, Bosniak, and Serbian history, we might find that the symbols of the *ethnies* were often attacked after people had fled. Deep emotional attachment to symbols and myths and their significance to the core of the *ethnie*/nation made them a compelling target of the menacing other. These nationalist elements were perceived as embodiments of the people and their destruction was comparable to the destruction of the collective that identified with them.

One Serbian woman from Kosovo/a[30] offered a personal story about the fate of an Orthodox Christian family icon she had left behind in her old house in Pristina when she fled on the day of the Pogrom.[31] On 17 April 2004, the Pogrom began, following the publication of sensationalist and specious media reports suggesting that Serbs were responsible for the drowning of three Albanian children. Several international security organisations collapsed during the ensuing violence, which involved attacks led by an estimated 51,000 Albanians against Kosovo Serbs and other minority groups (Human Rights Watch, 2004, pp. 21-26). Admiral Gregory Johnson, the commander of the NATO forces for Southern Europe, which included the NATO-led KFOR troops in Kosovo/a, described the violence as, 'essentially amount[ing] to ethnic cleansing' (ibid). As a Serbian compelled to flee, the woman could not take her icon. For Orthodox Serbs, icons represent important elements of the Church's liturgical ceremonies; they hold strong symbolic value as sources of strength in moments of need and crisis and they are thought to possess miraculous and healing powers (Lossky and Ouspensky, 1999; Mylonas, 2003, p. 47; Strickland, 2013). Icons are not mere images of the unknowable and indescribable creator and saints, they are also holistic expressions of human-divine communion and visible representations of heaven on earth. After the Pogrom had ended, the

[30] The identity of this woman has been concealed for her protection.

[31] Pogroms are acts of organised, cruel behaviour or killings perpetrated on a large group of people because of their race or religion (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2019a).

Serbian woman returned to her old house to find it demolished. The icon remained the only remnant that had survived. As the woman stated hearteningly, 'They [the Albanians] didn't touch the icon because they know it is bad luck!'

As George Schöpflin (1997, p. 19) explained, certain aspects of the human world cannot be encompassed by conventional reality. Many different processes, values, and mechanisms remain hidden from standard modes of scrutiny and, yet, they have significant implications for the lives and the mentalities of individuals and collectives. Indeed, people can accept information that is not necessarily strictly accurate and still live by it. For this Serbian woman, the Albanians who had destroyed her house understood the mythical powers and the strength of the Orthodox patron saint icon, which may be one reason why the figure survived the Pogrom in an undamaged state. However, other Serbian Orthodox churches in Kosovo/a that had also come under attack on 17 March 2004 did not experience the same fate. Many Serbian churches and monasteries dating back to the 14th century were burned and destroyed (Human Rights Watch, 2004, 1999). In the absence of the Serbian population, many of whom had fled the violence, their symbols were attacked and destroyed because they signified the embodiment of the Orthodox Christian Serbs. According to Mary Douglas (1975, p. 131), myths have implicit meanings. Symbols, myths, and rituals represent the embodiment of the people who believe in them and the culture at whose core they are situated. According to Murray Edelman (1985) and Stuart J. Kaufman (2001), symbols and myths are connected. Kaufman (28) explains that symbols obtain their meanings from emotionally-laden myths. Myths furnish events and actions with specific meanings that are typically expressed in the definition of enemies and heroes and in the interlacing of ideas of right and wrong with people's identities.

In the following three subsections, I explain how women politicians use their ethnie's symbols, myths, and rituals. In the first case, I address expressions and the emotional attachment of Serbian women politicians to the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, the cradle of Serbdom. In the second example, I present the reaction of Kosovo/a Albanian politician Valdete Idrizi to her first sighting of a Kosovo flag (next to the Albanian flag) during an award ceremony in the U.S. Here, I illustrate the birthing of emotional attachment to the newly-formed state identity symbol (Kosovar) and its interlocked relationship with the ethnic Albanian identity. In addition, I also tackle the problems of the underlying Albanian identity to the newly-formed Kosovar civic identity for women who feel Kosovar, but are not ethnically Albanian. My final example in this section concerns the reiterations of the 'autochthonous' existence of Kosovo Bosniaks, expressed by Bosniak MPs Emilija Redžepi and Duda Balje. I describe the plight of

Bosniaks and their struggle to have their symbols recognised by both Serbs and Albanians as visible representations of their long existence on the territory of Kosovo/a.

2.4.1. 'One more for conquest, one more for survival'[32]

An MP in the Serbian Parliament, Sanda Rašković Ivić, invited me to her apartment in Stari Grad to discuss my research before agreeing to participate. When I arrived, she kindly offered me coffee and lemonade. Unlike the living room of Saranda Bogujevci (whose story I discuss in the section '*Ethnie*, Birth, Tragedy, from 'I' to 'We''), Rašković Ivić's living room resembled an old library with Orthodox icons hanging on the walls and the literature of Mikhail Bulgakov and Jasenovac housed on bookshelves alongside English language volumes. The stark differences between the two homes was a result of the two women's associations with different *ethnies* as well as the fact that Rašković Ivić's family belonged to the Yugoslav upper class and she lived in an urban centre of Zagreb, Croatia. Bogujevci, conversely, belonged to the rural area of Podujevo in Kosovo/a. I do not wish to emphasise the two women's differences based solely on their affiliations with separate *ethnies,* but to depict the disparities in aesthetics based on class, social status, and proximity to the urban centres of Belgrade, Zagreb, or Ljubljana in the former Yugoslavia that I cannot fully address within this thesis. All these factors significantly impacted upon each woman's unique destiny, her nationalist imagery and imaginary as well as her current political agenda.

As soon as I sat down, Rašković Ivić explained that she was 'not a civic political option' as if to clear the air. We began discussing my research and she offered her perception of the Kosovo 'problem' and its symbolic significance for herself and the Serbian people:[33]

> *'Mythology is a mirror to the soul of the people. Every serious people [in Serbian, narod, which refers to a nation or ethnic group] respects and nourishes its own myths. We do not have to choose between Heavenly Serbia and death because, in the past, we often did and that is why there is still few of us left here …'*

For Rašković Ivić, the Battle of Kosovo represented a foundational myth of Serbian national identity because it reflected the soul. The list of scholars who critically analyse the strength of

[32] Quote from the Serbian politician Rada Trajković, the former MP in Kosovo/a Parliament and President of the European Movement for Kosovo and Metohija.

[33] Aside from being a cradle of Serbdom, Kosovo and Metohija are often referred to as 'problems' or as the 'Kosovo knot' (Popović et al., 1990) because of the long history of ethnic struggles and unresolved territorial claims.

this particular myth for Serbian nationalism is expansive (Anžulović, 1999; Bakić-Hayden, 2004; Bataković, 2015; Bieber, 2002b; Bieber and Daskalovski, 2003; Ćirković, 2004; Emmert, 1990; Erjavec and Volčič, 2007, p. 83; Guzina, 2003; Judah, 1997; Mertus, 1999; Mylonas, 2003; Vasiljević, 2015; Zirojević and Popov, 2000). Rašković Ivić's references were related to the Serbian epic poem, 'The Downfall of the Serbian Empire' (Đokić, 2009, p. 1; Judah, 1997, pp. 6-7) and to the ultimatum that was given to Prince Lazar, the legitimate ruler of Serbia in 1389. In Serbian cultural and educational patterns, epic songs (in Serbian, *epske pesme*) condense the glorious past and the constitutive aspects of *Homo Serbicus* (Serbian Man) and *Femina Serbica* (Serbian Woman) (Mylonas, 2003, p. 81).

The song describes the events that preceded the Battle of Kosovo on St Vitus Day on 28 June 1389 when the Serbs lost their autonomy and were overruled by the Ottoman Empire. As the story goes, before the Ottomans descended into the Balkans, Prince Lazar received an ultimatum to obey the Turkish Sultan Murad and provide him with control over the Serbian Empire or to go out into the Field of Blackbirds (in Serbian, *Kosovo Polje*) and fight his army. Before the battle, a large, grey hawk from Jerusalem appeared in Lazar's dream, giving him an ultimatum: to choose between the Earthly and the Heavenly Kingdoms. According to Carl Jung (1990, p. 73), the Church has long been known for *Somnia deo Missa* (dreams sent by God). Prince Lazar chose to lose the battle and, in doing so, to receive the Heavenly, rather than the Earthly, Kingdom. John Hutchinson (2005, p. 22) explains that, even where wars result in the overthrow of a state, an ethnic consciousness can still persist. This is especially so in cases where groups define themselves in religious terms, interpreting their defeat as a test of their commitment to their true religion, like the Serbs at the Battle of Kosovo. A religious sense of being chosen explains defeat and reinforces group motivation to defend collective traditions as a means of regaining divine favour. In her politicisation of the Serbian nation's origins, Rašković Ivić located national identity within the Kosovo myth.

Florian Bieber (2002a, pp. 95-97) asserts that the Kosovo myth makes the core of Serbian national identity and it has three key dimensions. The first essential feature is the commemorative dimension, as reflected in the annual commemorations of the Battle of Kosovo, which creates a connection between the historical record and its mythical representation. I discuss this later in the section as part of my analysis of ritual as performed by MP Marija Janjušević on her yearly visits to Gazimestan. The second essential feature is the related Serbian claim to Kosovo. The consistent remembrance of the Battle in conjunction with the significance of Kosovo for the medieval Serbian Kingdom are grounds for claims over the

territory, regardless of current demographics or any subsequent historical developments. This perspective is evident in Janjusević and Kosovo Serb politician Rada Trajković's comments about populations, endangerment, and the perseverance of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija. The third essential element is that the myth establishes a connection between the contemporary Serb nation and the 'Serbs' of the Middle Ages, suggesting the existence of a perennial nation. Later in my analysis, I discuss the temporal and special representations of the Kosovo myth through Janjušević and Rašković Ivić's explanations. The Kosovo myth is, thus, unavoidable, as myths are simultaneously historic and anti-historic (Bieber, 2002b, p. 97).

Many scholars have dealt with the mobilising power of the Battle of Kosovo for nationalist purposes, especially following the wars in the former Yugoslavia. In this section, I explain how women politicians used the symbols, myths, and rituals of the Battle of Kosovo to explain their own *ethnies* and their relationship to ethnic 'others'. In their representations, references to the Battle of Kosovo reconfirmed Serbian national identity and celebrated its heroes. As Raškovic Ivić observed, Prince Lazar's sacrifice and his choice to die and ascend to the Heavenly Kingdom ensured the continued presence of Serbs as Orthodox Christians in these territories. If Lazar had chosen life and the Earthly Kingdom, Serbs would have been overruled and assimilated with no national identity or, at the very least, only a very weak one. By completing his sacramental duty, the hero Lazar sacrificed his own life and those of his soldiers to preserve a strong Serbian nation. His choice was detrimental to the preservation of the Serbian identity and the sacred Orthodox monuments in Kosovo and Metohija. Matija Bećković (2000) explains the meaning of the Battle of Kosovo for Serbian national identity:

> *'Defeat is a victory of memory. If we were not defeated, we would forget everything. Everything can be taken from the one who remembers nothing.'*

In other words, nations are more easily extirpated or made vulnerable to assimilation in the absence of memories or without stories of past sacrifices as part of their histories. In this way, the myth made Kosovo 'the most expensive Serbian word' because of the enormous sacrifices made for it, as claimed by Bećković, but also by women MPs Janjušević and Rašković Ivić. The price of Kosovo and Metohija was paid in the past, and potentially in the future, by the blood of the Serbian people. The sacrifices made in the Battle situate Kosovo and Metohija, and its defence, at the centre of Serbian identity for all past, present, and future generations. Kosovo and Metohija were, according to Janjušević, 'timeless, for which you give everything you have in your life'. In Rašković Ivić's words a 'spiritual vertical' of the Serbian people.

Recent attempts by the Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić to render the Kosovo myth meaningless, therefore, made Janjušević 'angry' because 'every kind of feeling towards Kosovo, whether it is rational or irrational', made her feel more 'tied' to it.[34] Janjušević, like other politicians and public figures, felt that Vučić's (2017c) statements about renouncing mythology and embracing the future, together with his actions in announcing an Internal Dialogue about Kosovo, were his attempt to prepare the Serbian populace for the final recognition of Kosovo's independence and the surrender of Kosovo and Metohija (as territory) forever into Albanian hands. To relinquish the territory, Vučić needed to destroy all ties between Serbs and Kosovo and Metohija as the motherland. According to Janjušević:

> *'I am not bothered when someone says we have irrational emotions for Kosovo and Metohija. Irrationally and rationally, I am emotionally tied to it. There is a dreadful manner when people who gave up on Kosovo say, "Well, you have never been in Kosovo!" I am now asking you, "Have all the Jewish people ever visited Jerusalem?" I could talk forever about how ugly and mean that is!'*

For Janjušević, the Kosovo myth had both symbolic and ritual meaning. It described her emotional attachment to Kosovo and Metohija as the cradle of Serbdom and the Serbian relationship to the Albanian 'other':

> *'I was in Kosovo on St Vitus Day. It was hard for me to watch my Serbs in the ghetto, while Albanian people are leisurely spreading, progressing, and educating … It was hard, but when I was leaving Gazimestan, when I kissed the ground and said, "I will be back …"'*

Personification and kissing the ground (earth) are practices that are shared by many cultures and they carry different claims and meanings connected to emotional attachment and the sacredness of the land. In some cultures, kissing the ground signifies homecoming (in Hebrew, return, *Aliyah*). In other cultures, it represents the source, beginning, and end of life. In his poem, 'Spring Giddiness', Iranian poet Jalal al-Din Rumi (2004) writes, 'There are a thousand ways to kneel and kiss the ground'. Likewise, Jewish philosopher Moses ben Maimon (1983, pp. 5, 10) notes, 'Great sages would kiss the borders of Eretz Yisrael [the Promised Land], kiss

[34] In May 2017, the president of the Republic of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, made a speech on the date of his inauguration in the Parliament of Serbia to the effect that, 'We [Serbs] have to stay open and liberate ourselves from the mythic approach [to Kosovo] and ease of giving away what is rightfully ours. Our internal dialogue about this is maybe more important than the dialogue we have with Albanians' (Vučić, 2017a). In another statement, he said, 'Serbia is ready to make a step from mythology to the future' (Vučić, 2017b).

its stones, and roll in its dust'. As in the ritual performed by Janjušević, each of these stories carries on the symbol of kissing the ground in a unique fashion. Every action may carry different emotions and messages for its audiences, ranging from signifying a return home to demonstrating a strong commitment and devotion to the land. Kissing the ground reveals an emotional attachment to it, to the homeland, and to return and belonging.

The symbolism involved in kissing the ground in Janjušević's claims communicates the political choice and the emotional expression embodied in the Kosovo myth. Schöpflin (1997, pp. 19-20) defines myth as one of the ways that collectives establish and determine the foundations of their being through their own system of morality and values. A myth is a narrative, a set of ideas, and a ritual is acting out, articulating the myth. Symbols are the building blocks of myth, while the acceptance or veneration of symbols is a significant aspect of ritual. Schöpflin claims that myths are encoded in rituals, liturgies, and symbols. Reference to one symbol can be significant for recalling the myth among the members of a community without the need to return to the ritual. In her ritual of kissing of the ground, Janjušević referenced different symbols and building blocks of the Kosovo myth, utilising them as markers to indicate that Kosovo and Metohija are both the spatial and temporal Serbian homeland. The markers were spatial in that the mention of Gazimestan recalled the name of the memorial site commemorating the Serbian heroes who lost their lives at the Battle of Kosovo. Aside from its place as a memorial site carving Serbian sacrifice into collective history and memory, Gazimestan is a place that marks different political events related to Serbian national identity and Serbian national struggles. The markers were temporal in that the mention of St Vitus Day remembers a symbolically important moment for Serbs.

Dejan Đokić (2009, p. 2) suggests it is possible that no other national history is so strongly connected to a single date. On the 600th anniversary of this day in 1989, then-Serbian president Slobodan Milošević presented his famous speech, which remains one of the most important subjects of analysis in nationalism studies for its strong symbolism. Delivered before almost one million Serbs (Grgić, 2016, p. 112), Milošević employed different symbols related to the Kosovo myth, including references to Miloš Obilić (the legendary hero of the Battle of Kosovo), the lack of unity amongst Serbs, parallels with the betrayal of Vuk Branković, the 'evil fate' of the Serbian people throughout history (i.e. its fall under Ottoman rule), Serbian heroism and sacrifice, and old and new battles.

Janjušević's statement contains references to the past, present, and future struggles embodied in the Kosovo myth, which are both romanticist and revivalist in nature. By evoking the

symbolic of the Kosovo myth and St. Vitus, Janjušević also pointed to the continuity of the Serbian people's suffering. At the same time, she connected past suffering under one enemy (the Ottomans) with present suffering under the Albanians who she perceived as a different enemy. Past heroes (including Miloš Obilić and Prince Lazar) were substituted with new heroes, the people who stayed in Kosovo: 'my Serbs in a ghetto'. Those who physically stayed in Kosovo and Metohija represented the new Lazars and the new Obilić's through their decision to remain in a place of suffering to preserve the Serbian national identity.

In his work on the 'ethnic overlay', Hutchinson (2004, pp. 109, 113) explains that nationalists justify innovation because of the 'layered' nature of the ethnic past. They overcome their established ethnic identities by generating novel myths in times of crisis based on romantic acts of sacrifice by heroic elites that legitimise new national projects. In this process, history stimulates revival and evokes a call to action. Janjušević's statement served to romanticise the old glory, to restore links with heroic past sacrifices, and to elicit a call to action, i.e. the return of Serbs to Kosovo and Metohija and the return of Kosovo and Metohija to the Serbs/Republic of Serbia. Dawson (2009, pp. 152-153) argues that the myth of Heavenly Serbia is as much a statement of a nation in being as it is a nation in waiting. Heavenly Serbia furnishes the myth of Serbian territorial claims and presents a means of conceptualising the abstract, the nation, and its national subject in certain historical periods of frustration and defeat. Building on the theory of Maurice Bloch (1992, p. 4, 1986), Dawson concludes that the myth's core and the rituals of Heavenly Serbia and the Battle of Kosovo are universal and unchanging. The core involves a process of rebounding violence and is used to conceptualise and justify significant events in Serbian experience.

Janjušević's political party, Dveri, went as far as organising visits to Kosovo, Metohija, and Gazimestan each St. Vitus day. These trips were forms of politico-pilgrimage with the aim of romanticising, reviving, returning, and keeping the Kosovo myth alive. I refer to such travel as 'politico-pilgrimage' because of its dual political and religious purposes. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Serbian elite historians used emotive language to link Kosovo to the Serbian contemporary historical predicament (Ognjenović and Joželić, 2014). Radovan Samardžić claims that the 'Kosovo orientation is not (only) a national idea, but also a trait of character which makes a Serb a Serb' (Ognjenović and Joželić, 2014; Samardžić, 1991, p. 14). Kosovo and Metohija constitutes an essential part of the 'obstinate otherness' of Serbs and the essence of being Serbian (Bock-Luna, 2007, p. 55; van de Port, 1999).

One of Janjušević's party colleagues, MP Boško Obradović, returned from one of these

politico-pilgrimages with a stone, which he brought into Parliament during a session. He praised it as a 'stone from Kosovo and Metohija' while reciting the poem 'Fatherland' (in Serbian, *Otadžbina*) written by the romanticist poet Đura Jakšić (1875). In this patriotic song, Jakšić praises love for the fatherland as stronger than the deaths and the sacrifices that generations have made to pass the spirit of defiance and pride on to succeeding ones. Ancestors were willing to leave 'pyramids of bones' for the fatherland. For Jakšić, the fatherland was an ideal, indestructible part of the past and the cornerstone of the future. At the end of the poem, he concludes with, 'Fatherland is this of Serbian!' Jakšić's goal was to awaken love towards the fatherland among youth as preparation for an eventual Serbian uprising and a final liberation from the Ottoman Empire. On that day in Parliament, however, Obradović's attempt to awaken love for Kosovo and Metohija as the fatherland failed as he was mocked by other MPs and forced to leave the session and give away the stone. The President of the Parliament asked, 'How do we know if that stone is really from Kosovo and Metohija?' While others suggested he had taken the stone his wife used to press sauerkraut (traditional Serbian pickled food women usually prepare for winter, *kiseli kupus*) and presented it as 'sacred'.

Return to the fatherland and the politico-pilgrimages organised by Janjušević's political party and different Serbian patriotic citizens associations were motivated by strong national symbolism and rhetoric. They became a ritual in themselves because of their 'creation of consistency through communication and action', as claimed by Schöpflin (1997, p. 21). It was a form of community maintenance or a practice of keeping the Kosovo myth alive in the hearts and minds of the Serbian people. In most cases, these journeys to Kosovo and Metohija were symbolically organised on important Orthodox religious dates, such as St. Vitus Day, Christmas, or Eastern Orthodox Holidays. The places visited were the markers of Serbdom, including Gazimestan and the monasteries located at the very heart of Kosovo and Metohija.

David Kertzer (1988, pp. 104-108) claims that rituals are far from simple reinforcements of the status quo; they are important weapons in the political struggles between contestants. People need to express their social dependence through ritual because the political forces with control over community rights are in a position to legitimise their authority. Kertzer claims that people commune through ritual and use it to define their relations with others. Visits to Kosovo and Metohija, therefore, were part of both the religious and political power struggles over the territory. They were used to define the relationship between Serbs and the land and between Serbs and 'others' living on these lands (the Albanians). In her political work, Janjušević drew on national symbols, myths, and rituals with the clear political message, 'I (therefore, Serbs)

will be back'. In one of my conversations with her, she stated:

> *'For me, it is very important that I was a part of this [political struggle for Kosovo and Metohija], that I contributed to this as much as I could in my own time.'*

She added, pessimistically, that she was aware that Kosovo and Metohija would not be returned to Serbia during her own lifetime, but that it would, nonetheless, 'be Serbian again'. The Serbian Orthodox Church also stands as one of the most important markers of Serbdom. Kosovo Serb politician Trajković claimed:

> *'For me, even today, the Church is the most important. For me, the identity is the Serbian Orthodox Church and its irreplaceable role in the preservation of Serbs and education on humanity that we, in the enclaves, managed to safeguard. Maybe we are endangered from a territorial point of view, but we managed to safeguard the strong relationship towards Serbdom, the original form of it, unlike the North [of Kosovo, where Serbs are a majority]. The Church does not have a strong impact in the North. There, it's a mixture of profit, patriotism, and theft …'*

The role of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the preservation of the Kosovo myth in Serbia and Kosovo is inestimable. Most Serbian women politicians located the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Kosovo myth, and St Sava as the heartlands of their national identity. Irrespective of their individual origins, whether from Vojvodina (as in MP Stojanka Lekić) or Belgrade (as in MP Dubravka Filipovski) in Serbia or from Kosovo and Metohija (as in Sandra Đokic and Rada Trajković), the women placed Serbian Orthodox Monasteries at the heart of their Serbian identity. Strong identification with the Serbian Orthodox Church is not unusual, predominantly because of its close connection to the Serbian state, dating from 1219 when the Church was established by St Sava (Anžulović, 1999, p. 23). A descendant of the Nemanjić Dynasty, St Sava united the fragmented Serbian nation, statehood, and nationhood, thus, finishing the process of its Christianisation (Mylonas, 2003, pp. 51-52). Consequently, Saint-Savaism is a primordial and fundamental expression of the love of, and the love for, Orthodoxy in accordance with national tradition. The Nemanjić Kingdom and the Serbian Orthodox Church are the foundations of Serbdom.

According to some politicians, including Kosovo Serb Rada Trajković, the Orthodox Church was a marker of Serbdom that endures, even in cases of the physical absence of Serbs and Serbian politics in Kosovo and Metohija. The main institutions of the Serbian Orthodox Church, located on the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, sacralised Serbian national identity

through dialectical interactions between the religious content of the former and the national substance of the latter (Mylonas, 2003, pp. 59-60). Therefore, it assigned itself the 'role' of national defender. Trajković shared this opinion. She also claimed that she was one of the Serbs who stayed in Kosovo after 1999 when the state or, more accurately, the institutions of the Republic of Serbia left:

> *'I stayed with the Church. My children have left, that was the most painful goodbye when my children left … When you travel to the regions where there are no Serbs [in Kosovo and Metohija], there is a place to visit, a local priest that is with his wife and kids there. Those are the buds of – how would I say? – a new resurrection of Serbs in the space of Kosovo and Metohija. That is the irreplaceable role of the Serbian Orthodox Church, that no one writes about and values in the right manner …'*

In Trajković's words, we recognise the holy trinity of the Serbian religion, state, and nation in the Kosovo myth and in the part of 'The Downfall of the Serbian Empire'(Đokić, 2009, p. 1; Judah, 1997, pp. 6-7). The presence of medieval Serbian Orthodox monasteries, as well as their representatives in Kosovo and Metohija, safeguards the hopes that the fatherland is not yet lost, even though it is currently not under Serbian political control and Serbs are not a majority population. Prince Lazar's decision to choose the Heavenly Kingdom and the establishment of the church in Kosovo are guarantees of Serbia's right to the sacred territory in the hearts and minds of the average Serb.

According to young Serbian politician Sandra Đokić, one of the key symbols of the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija was the Kosovo peony flower (in Serbian, *Kosovski božur*). This rare flower is embroidered in the Serbian identity and dates back to the Battle of Kosovo in 1389. In Serbian folklore, the Kosovo peony is another symbol of the Serbian people's suffering and sacrifice in the aftermath of the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 (Ryassaphore, 1996). Legend has it that the peony growing in Gazimestan was white. Following the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, however, it became red. The sudden change in colour symbolised the blood of the Serbian heroes, Prince Lazar and Miloš Obilić, that had soaked Gazimestan. Unlike the previous myth, which was more spiritual in nature, this one is largely biological. The poem is about the dream of one Serbian woman named Rada and the absence of any peony flowers in Gazimestan, which is both Rada's national habitat as a Kosovo Serb and the national habitat of the peonies.[35]

[35] For Serbians, the Kosovo peony is a symbol of Kosovo and is listed and protected by the state *'Decree on the Protection of Natural Rarities'* (Republic of Serbia, 1993).

Similar to the poem about the downfall, the main protagonist receives a message through her dream:

Rada from Kosovo has dreamt a deep dream,
she lies in the arms of her dearest and tells him:
'Hey darling, darling, let's plant peonies.
I'll water them, you provide the roots, so the young blossoms emerge.'
You see, my dear, there are no peonies in this field,
only stones and angry thorns doze under the clouds.
'Hey darling, darling, let's plant peonies.
I'll water them, you provide the roots, so the young blossoms emerge.'
So, the field around the monastery will blossom,
So, the shepherd on the mountain will play his flute.
'Hey darling, darling, let's plant peonies.
I'll water them, you provide the roots, so the young blossoms emerge.'

At this point, you may notice a significant number of Serbian national symbols and sentiments revealed by the women participants in this research were transmitted through the dreams of the main protagonists. You may also note that the symbols and their references in each story carry strong and emotional messages that are interconnected and repetitive. If we recall the dream in the story of the *Serbian Heart of Johan* (explained in the section 'Blood'), or Prince Lazar's dream about the Earthly and the Heavenly Kingdoms, or Rada's dream about peony flowers (both explained in this section), we notice that each one carries strong symbolic and hidden messages related to *ethnie*/national identity.

According to Sigmund Freud (1948, p. 370; Hall, 1953, p. 170), symbols in dreams are actually representations of latent thoughts. In other words, each symbol has its reference in the latent thoughts of the dreamer, therefore, symbols ought to help people understand what their latent thoughts are. Their references are important for the interpretation of dreams and their meanings. Calvin S. Hall (1953, p. 169) also explains that dreams are symbolic and that symbols have universal significance. The vivid and emotional stories told through the protagonist's dreams may appear in the guise of simple stories about past events. They are, however, far more than only simple stories from past events. Behind each story lies the symbolism of important events of the past that serve to mark one's national identity and connect it to the present. In the poem involving Kosovo peonies, the flowers serve as symbols and the Serbian people stand as references to it. During the Battle of Kosovo, many of the Serbs who fought were killed and,

therefore, ‘only stones and angry thorns’ were left. The reference to stones and thorns symbolises death and the absence of Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija. In Rada’s dream, furthermore, the ‘root’ and the ‘water’ were references to biological procreation for the Serbian people. The imagery of the field around the monastery in bloom suggested that Serbs would inhabit Kosovo in great numbers once again someday. Here, the monastery, again, serves as a symbol of Orthodox Christianity.

In explaining her national identity as Kosovo Serb, Trajković described the relationship between endangerment, survival, and politics. She claimed that the biological act of birth was politics:

> *‘You know, where you have a territory in which Albanians and Serbs are fighting for domination, every birth becomes political. When a Serbian child is born, they say, “One more for survival”. When an Albanian child is born, they say, “One more for the conquest”. Taking into consideration that the territory was always of the Serbian state since you are born, you know your side, you know your politics, and every movement beyond these borders is considered as a betrayal of national projects.’*

In Trajković’s statement, we can recognise Bloch’s (1992, pp. 3-4) elements of quasi-universality in minimal religious structures. Birth, as the representation of life, growth, or beginnings, is transcended by a permanent quasi-universal framework of a hostile society. Hence, life evoked through birth for Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija is nothing more than a struggle for survival. This kind of representation is used, not only to justify Serbian territorial claims to Kosovo and Metohija, but also elsewhere. According to Trajković, identities were fixed from the day of one’s birth. It is clear who is considered the sufferer (the Serbs) and who is considered the oppressor (the Albanians). The roles are accorded at birth and remain unchangeable. Every change to a role would mean immediate conflict with the larger, national project.

When we talk about sacrifice expressed through myths, symbols, and rituals, it is important to note that every sacrifice repeats the initial sacrifice and coincides with it (Eliade, 1971, p. 35). Trajković explained further:

> *‘Those Serbs in the enclaves kept something. Because of the hardship and hostile Albanian environment, everyone thought that we [the Serbs] will leave [Kosovo and Metohija] very promptly. I recall, when KFOR came in for the first time, they had some maps with some small red dots, the North was a compact territory, but the South*

[enclaves] were covered with red dots ... My close friend from KFOR, when I asked what those dots are, he said, "You see, in ten years all this will disappear [Serbs] from those areas". Since then, 20 years have passed, and we are still holding on. They [KFOR, international community] never had cultural understanding of the Kosovo Serb identity. Kosovo Serbs can put up with a lot and hold on to the territory with their teeth, they are loyal to the territory in an incredible manner. This rural Kosovo Serb surprises me. He surprised me a thousand times. Once, U.S. KFOR brought a Serb from Kosovo Pomoravlje, we had to amputate his leg, he had diabetes ... I know there were many attacks on Serbs there ... I ask him, "Who of the family you have?" He says, "I have four sons, four daughters-in-law, each one of them has four children ..." I ask him, "So, you are all there [in Kosovo]? You do not intend to leave?" He replies, "No!" At the time, people [the Serbs] were leaving Kosovo, the killing was horrific ... I asked him, how? Why? [he stays]. He says, "They can kill one of my sons and I will still have three left ... If they kill the second, I will still have two sons left ..." I think he will pay that price to stay [in Kosovo] and, for me, that is fascinating. Then, I understood that people who stay are the leaders. Political leaders are nothing. The rural Serb that is ready to stay ... The fascination with the rural Kosovo Serb is incredible. The gratitude to those who stay and guard ... Those are the ones who preserve [national] identity.'

In her explanations, Trajković mentioned that she, 'cannot claim that being endangered is an identity', but she could state that 'it has been a reality' for the Kosovo Serbs. Endangerment has become a 'way of life', especially because no one (in the international community) wanted to help Kosovo Serbs exit the 'project of endangerment' they were subjected to (by the Kosovo majority Albanian population). The sense of endangerment and perseverance in Kosovo and Metohija became the primary markers of the Kosovo Serb. In connecting this claim to the poem referencing Kosovo peony flowers, the idea of procreation, the presence of people who share the same blood and other cultural features in great numbers, becomes a solution for survival and a marker of endangerment for the nation/individual in Kosovo and Metohija. The ones who remained with their families and who biologically procreated in Kosovo and Metohija were proclaimed as the guardians of Serbdom.

The perseverance of the rural Kosovo Serb in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija became essential for the preservation of the Serbian identity. This human, as well as saintly, virtue (as politicised by many women politicians) – to remain in place and 'hold to the territory with his teeth' – has been reinforced by political elites throughout history. The description of the

average rural Kosovo Serb, as explained by Trajković, sits perfectly within the framework of Heavenly Serbia and its continuous national cyclic struggles of 'treachery, sacrifice, saintliness, heavenliness and national resurrection' (Dawson, 2009, p. 151). As aforementioned, the core of the myth surrounding the Battle of Kosovo remains universal and unchanged (Bloch, 1992, 1986), but it continues to be adapted and re-adapted to the present political context of Serbian perseverance in Kosovo and Metohija. In Trajković's application of Heavenly Serbia, the role of saintliness, heavenliness, and merit for national resurrection belonged to Kosovo Serb(s) because of their decision to remain on the territory of Kosovo and Metohija despite all hardships. They paid the price in the lost lives of their children. The same merit was not credited to 'other' Serbs, including those who chose to leave or those who originated from Belgrade. This is what Janjušević and Rašković Ivić meant when they said that 'Kosovo is the most expensive Serbian word' because of the lost lives, sacrifice, and calvary of Serbs. Thus, Kosovo Serbs are the guardians of the Serbian national identity.

Throughout Serbian history, references to continuity and the universal character of the myth of Heavenly Serbia can be found in the statements of most political leaders. In his 1987 speech in Kosovo Polje (Gazimestan), Slobodan Milošević (1987) said:

> *'You need to stay here because of your forefathers and because of your descendants. You would shame your forefathers and disappoint your descendants.'*

During his visit to Kosovo and Metohija, President of the Republic of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić (KosSev, 2018) said:[36]

> *'For all of us [Serbs], you [Kosovo Serbs] need to be strong and brave enough to stay here … It is the highest national interest of the Republic of Serbia, and every man in it, that you stay here on your hearths, our hearths … You do not have another home than this one. So, please stay! ... Serbs must stay and persevere on their hearths.'*

The dates of these statements – 1987 and 2018 – indicate that the political narrative of Kosovo and Metohija has not changed over time. It demonstrates the historical continuity of the Kosovo myth. We also recognise another universal application of the historical myth of Heavenly Serbia in the political representations of the perseverance of the Kosovo Serbs and in demonstrations of their significance in safeguarding the Serbian national identity today. The old narrative of 'treachery, sacrifice, saintliness, heavenliness and national resurrection'

[36] I was unable to attend the visit of the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, to Kosovo and Metohija due to high security measures, limitation of freedom of movement in Kosovo/a, and staged attendance.

(Dawson, 2009, p. 151) is applied in the present political context where a need arises for yet another historical sacrifice on behalf of the Kosovo Serbs and their offspring for greater national survival and resurrection.

Michael Herzfeld (1988, p. 10) asserts that complete identification occurs when a narrator, imbued with a notion of selfhood defined by patrilineal identity, recites stories encapsulating the death of himself, his father, his grandfather, and all possible ancestors by melding them into one, single identity. The shame and the social pressure of failing to identify through the patrilineal ideology of the *ethnie* and kinship are incentive enough to identify. Most politicians used similar narratives when they spoke to/about Kosovo Serbs. They used, as Herzfeld describes it, 'poetics' or 'poetic projections' to motivate the Serbian populace in Kosovo to sacrifice, stay, and persevere. In these projections, politicians intended to portray all Serbs as an homogenous group where the majority were heroes. In these stories, however, the appearance of the occasional 'traitor' was equally as important for the nationalist imaginary. Those who followed the nationalist rhetoric were presented as brave heroes in the same manner as their ancestors. Those who opposed the nationalist project were proclaimed deviant, weak, and in alliance with the 'other' in the same way as those who, through one genetic circumstance or another, did not possess the divine virtues of a true Kosovo Serb. Trajković's story and the statement about the stubborn, fascinating rural Serb alongside the other statements mentioned above are great examples of this nationalist practice.

That said, it is important to note that not all Serbs are/were virtuous rural Kosovo Serbs. Indeed, some Serbs have different visions for their nation. The political representation of Serbs in Kosovo caused a split in Serbian national identity between those who stay and die for the nation and those who leave and refuse to surrender their lives. It produced binary images resulting in political solutions based on people divided into two opposing camps with an irreconcilable and antagonistic relationship between 'the people' and the 'other' (Sofos, 1996, pp. 74-75, 1994; Sofos and Tsagarousianou, 1992). In this case, the 'other' was ethnically Serbian. The stories of the heroes and the traitors of the nation were sometimes referred to by politicians as the 'First-Serbs' (in Serbian, *prvosrbijanci*) and the 'Other-Serbs' (in Serbian, *drugosrbijanci*). This became a folk theory, of sorts, based on 'two Serbia's' (in Serbian, *dve Srbije*), i.e. nationalist Serbia and civic Serbia (Mikuš, 2011, p. 838).

In one of our conversations, Janjušević used the term, 'Other-Serbs' to describe Serbs who generally opposed or questioned Serbian national myths, who did not respect and practice Christian Orthodoxy and, especially, who accepted gender identity. The idea of First-Serbs and

Other-Serbs derives from the collection of speeches from 1992 of Belgrade-based Serbian intellectuals in the Student Cultural Centre (popularly known as *Studentski Kulturni Centar*) called 'Other Serbs' (Čolović et al., 1992). During the Bosnian war, the speeches signified a protest led by intellectuals against nationalism, war, and the authoritarianism of Slobodan Milošević. Many political requests were derived from Other-Serb's speeches – from calls for democratic values and culture to political pluralism and the rule of law. The main denominator of Other-Serbs associated requests, however, was their open Serbian anti-nationalism (Antonić, 2010). Milan Damjanac (2017) describes Other-Serbs as auto-chauvinistic Serbs or self-hating Serbs who want to escape their own people, their core Serb national identity, so they accept the enemy's identity and its markers. In other words, they represent traitors of the Serbian national body. The former President of Republika Srpska, 'Serb Iron Lady' Biljana Plavšić, for example, demonised Bosniaks as 'inherently dangerous and genetically inferior' (Bartrop and Jacobs, 2014, p. 189). She referred to them as 'genetically deformed material' (South Slav stock) that 'embraced Islam' (Sells, 1998, pp. xiv-xv; Tetreault, 1998). They were considered weak Serbs, Other-Serbs, that failed to persevere and safeguard the core of their Serb identity and its markers. Other-Serbs emerged as a term in the 1990s, but it is simply a continuation of the existence of the idea of historical, eternal traitors within the national idea of Serbdom. According to Damjanac (2017), Other-Serbians are historically Bosniaks, Macedonians, or Montenegrins whose core identity (blood) is Serb. Other-Serbianism is a disease, a virus inside the Serbian national organism that must be 'cured'.

Following Janjušević and Trajković, among others, First-Serbs are Kosovo Serbs. First-Serbs are those who 'stay', live, and safeguard their hearths in Kosovo and Metohija; they are those who do not flee, who stay and risk their lives and those of their offspring to protect Serbdom. First-Serbs feel a profound love for their culture, symbols, myths, and rituals; they never question their core or political use. First-Serbs are those who are not ashamed of their natural 'givens' (Geertz, 1973, p. 260; Shils, 1957). Correspondingly, First-Serbs are those who never accept the 'corrupt' Western values of, for example, LGBTTIQ rights, heterosexuality, and gender ideology (Bieber, 2003; Mikuš, 2011; Mišković-Luković et al., 2015). Women politicians used these images to politicise their *ethnie*, their position within their *ethnie*, and their relationship to the 'other'.

In this subsection, I focused on Serbian women politicians from Serbia and Kosovo and Metohija and the ways they politicised their *ethnie* symbols, myths, and rituals in their everyday work. Focusing on the translations of the myth of the Battle of Kosovo and the key

symbols and rituals of Kosovo and Metohija, I demonstrated the contribution of women politicians to sustenance and the retentiveness of their own national myths. Women politicians help safeguard the universal core of the Kosovo myth and the sacrifice and vulnerability of the Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija. In this manner, they transcended its use from history through to the present-day political context.

2.4.2. 'But you said you are Albanian, how is this [Republic of Kosovo/a flag] yours?'[37]

In this second subsection, I discuss how Albanian women politicians understood and politicised their own *ethnie*/national symbols, myths, and rituals. I focus on the relationship between the Kosovar national identity and its ethnic Albanian core, how women politicians navigated the conflict between them and politicised it in their everyday work. The emotional reaction of Kosovo Albanian politician Valdete Idrizi from PDK when she first glimpsed the flag of the newly-formed Republic of Kosovo during a ceremony in the U.S. State Department formed a guiding image for this section. As she explained:

> *'This was in 2008, when Kosovo declared independence, three weeks after I went to the State Department to receive an award. First, I didn't have any feelings about the flag, the Kosovo flag. I mean, of course, I was so happy for independence, but I was not naïve enough to think that independence will bring peace and all that because I knew that, I read a lot about other countries, but somehow, I didn't feel any kind of emotions … I had emotions for the Albanian flag more, but for Kosovo, I just didn't feel that, but when I went to the State Department and when I saw the Kosovo flag, I was just telling seven other women who were receiving the award, "This is my flag!" … So, this was when I felt that I identify, this is my other nationality, and you just don't identify until you cannot feel it, and I was really shouting to everyone, and they said, "But you said you are Albanian, how is this [Kosovo flag] yours?" and I said, "It's mine too!"'*

Until that moment, Idrizi had not been able to identify with the Kosova flag as easily as she had been able to identify with the Albanian one, both cognitively or emotionally.[38] The ceremony was an emotional tipping point at which Idrizi embraced her new national identity, a Kosovar identity, and placed it beside her ethnic Albanian one, paralleling the positioning of

[37] Quote of the Kosovo Albanian politician Idrizi, Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK).

[38] Albania's flag (black double-headed eagle on red field) was adopted in 1992. The eagle was chosen by Skanderbeg who led the Albanians in the fight against the Ottomans in the 1440s (Elgenius, 2005, p. 139).

the flags at the ceremony. From this moment on, Idrizi claimed the Kosovar flag as hers, explaining to other women that, 'It's mine too!', when they asked with confusion, 'But you said you are Albanian, how is this (Kosovo flag) yours?'

This event points to an interesting paradox underlining the ethnic core of the Kosovar identity that confuses people unfamiliar with the region. The contradiction relates to the ongoing negotiations between the old and new political realities/identities and, more specifically, civic and ethnic nationalisms in the newly-formed Republic of Kosovo/a. The core identity in Idrizi's story was that of the old, Albanian, ethnic identity, which was easy for Idrizi to relate to as an ethnic Albanian. The other one was the new, Kosovar state identity, that was harder to relate to due to its novelty. Negotiations between these two identities turned problematic when the state Kosovar identity, because of its ethnic Albanian core, failed to persuade all citizens of the Republic of Kosovo to politically and emotionally identify as Kosovar as easily as they might with their old ethnic Albanian, Serb, or Bosniak identities.[39] I conclude that, when it comes to the imagery drawn upon by Kosovo Albanian women politicians, Albanian and Kosovar identities (their symbols, myths, and rituals) were congruent with one another to a great extent. For them, it was easier to identify as Kosovars because their symbols (the Albanian flag) were already at the core of the Kosovar state identity. This meant that the nation of the Republic of Kosovo was constituted by 'talking, thinking and acting' (Calhoun, 1997, p. 5) Albanian. Women of different *ethnies* or of mixed *ethnies,* however, struggled to negotiate between their ethnic and Kosovar 'civic' identity. The main reason for this was the primacy of the underlying Albanian ethnic identity that sits at the core of the Kosovar 'civic' identity and the constant failure of Kosovo/a state to include and provide equal rights to all citizens independent of their individual *ethnies*. Prioritisation and the constant 'flagging' (Billig, 1995, p. 93) of the symbols of only one ethnonational group as well as Kosovo's institutionalisation of Albanian ethnic symbols as Kosovo's state symbols restricted the 'civic' appeal of the Kosovar identity because it failed to encompass all its citizenry.

In this subsection, I discuss the different symbols, myths, and rituals that Albanian women politicians identified with and the emotional potency they triggered. This is demonstrated in my explanation of their reactions and the need to renegotiate their old (Albanian identity) within the new reality (Kosovar identity) when explaining it to self and others. I also analyse

[39] The flag of the Republic of Kosovo has six stars representing Kosovo's belonging to its founding communities (Albanian, Serbian, Bosniak, Turkish, Roma [Ahkali and Egyptian], and Gorani) (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018; Republic of Kosovo, 2015).

some of the various institutional rituals and women's reactions to the flagging of Albanian symbols in the Republic of Kosovo/a alongside their consequences. I describe the yearly celebration of the Albanian Flag Day and its effects on the national cohesion of the emerging Kosovar 'civic' nation, therefore, causing the alienation of women who failed to identify as Albanian (or only Albanian) from the Kosovar 'civic' identity.

In his work on *Rilinja* (Albanian renaissance), Albanian writer Fatos Lubonja (2002, pp. 91-92) explains that the myths of Albanian nationalism existed to unite a 'scattered array of clans' and transform Albanians into a nation with a collective identity. Contrary to Serbian nationalism, Albanian nationalism was not founded on a strong desire to liberate from the Ottoman empire. The Albanian ethnic identity was marked by greater religious flexibility and its population did not consider the Ottoman presence in its territories as grievously harmful as did the Serbs. Albanian national liberation began much later during the Russian-Turkish war in 1878 when Serbia achieved independence and began the partitioning of the Ottoman lands with the Greeks. This important historical context elicited the creation of the Albanian myth as a response to the need to preserve the presence of the Albanian people in the territories where they lived and to ensure a differentiation from the Greeks and Slavs. The main myths created by the 'men of the Albanian renaissance' were those that exalted Albanian antiquity and the Albanian language as the oldest in Europe.

Albanian nationalism also claims to have emerged from the 'national imaginary' (Bowman, 2003, p. 309) as a group of people who came to conceive of itself as a 'we' through the process of mobilising against the forces its members recognised as threatening to their individual and collective survival. To differentiate from 'others' and to establish claims of superiority, Albanians imagined themselves as the first and the oldest national group. Following this vein, the Albanian people were considered to have originated from the Pelasgians as they were inhabitants of the Balkans before the Greeks. The story of Pelasgian descent was later altered to Illyrian descent as the latter seemed more plausible and conformed more readily to the nationalist territorial claims of Albanians as 'autochthonous' inhabitants of Kosovo/a (Piro, 2002, p. 42). In this way, the myth of the great Albanian men of antiquity was created with the national hero of the Albanians, Skanderbeg, at its centre (Lubonja, 2002, p. 92).

Women politicians of the Albanian *ethnie* in the Republic of Kosovo/a held these identity markers in high regard. In my section on 'Roots', I discussed the pride of one MP, Albulena Balaj Halimaj, when she spoke of herself as a descendant of the Pelasgians (as the first people in the Balkans) and an Albanian with the oldest language in Europe. Kosovo Albanian

politician Teuta Musa, among other women, shared the belief that Albanians were the first people, their language was the oldest, and they experienced a sense of 'pride' in their unique fate. For Edita Tahiri, Skanderbeg was the 'figure that unifies the Albanian people because he was a leader who organised the people against the Ottoman empire and was very much oriented towards Western values and helped the fight to block Islam's penetration in Europe'. In Tahiri's political work 'in the ex-Yugoslavian disintegration process', she explained 'to the international community why all these elements are relevant (as markers of Albanianism – i.e. Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeu [Skanderbeg] and the Albanian flag) and what they signify'. To connect this with the Albanian myth as a sign of differentiation, Tahiri stated that, 'we (Albanians) are non-Slavs'.

In speaking about her national identity, Musa explained:

> *'I always mention Skanderbeg, also … our language, the oldest language in Europe and Indo-European, also mention that we are from Illyria, before the Ottoman era, we were all Christians and now we are Muslims, but we are liberal and moderate European.'*

Bruce Kapferer (2010, p. 164) argues that nationalists declare that their world is distinctly unique, not only in historical experience, but also in ideas, values, and culture. The purpose of nationalism is to celebrate differences from external 'others' alongside the unique experiences of the internal 'us'. As demonstrated in the previous subsection (First-Serbs and Other-Serbs), the images projected by nationalists aimed to oversimplify reality and promote nationalism as the only alternative that guarantees a nation's survival.

The myth of Skanderbeg's struggle for Albanian identity has created a central reference point for Albanians from Kosovo/a, Macedonia, Albania, Serbia, and Greece. It serves as a counter-argument, implying that Serbs did not fight against the Turks alone. Instead, Albanians fought alongside them. Serbs typically deny any suggestion of Albanian participation in this struggle. Given that Albanians did not have a medieval kingdom or an empire to identify with, they chose to adopt Skanderbeg as a collective historical symbol (Piro, 2002, p. 43). Albanian nationalists translated Skanderbeg's struggle in the national imaginary by selectively choosing details from his life to justify their political claims. He was mythologised as a national hero of all Albanians, even though his actions had never involved all Albanians, nor did they implicate Kosovo or any southern part of the imagined Albanian homeland. His religious background was also modified to suit the political context and the needs of national mobilisation. If there was a need for national cohesion among all Albanians, for example, Skanderbeg was positioned

as a Muslim. Conversely, if a need arose for Albanians to make themselves likable to the West, he was lauded as a Catholic. This was evident in Musa's identification with the Albanian national identity and in Tahiri's statement about Skanderbeg's orientation towards 'Western' values. If we compare this with the nationalist imaginary of Serbian women in the story of the First and Other-Serbia, we see that identifying with Western values is an unpopular stance amongst Serbian nationalists. In the Albanian case, however, Western values are desirable when foreign support is needed for the struggle against the enemies (Slavs). Krasniqi (2007a, p. 17) explains that there is an ongoing process of reconstruction of the Kosovar Albanian identity as modern, Western, and European, which has caused religious complications because most of the Kosovo/a population is Muslim. Such a reconstruction helps to establish the historical continuity of the Albanian identity. Skanderbeg's features are negotiated from Muslim to 'Western'-orientated, and from conservative to liberal, for the political purposes of the nationalist imaginary. Albanian women politicians used the myth of Skanderbeg to politicise their Albanian ethnic identities. Indeed, they referred to his liberal, Western orientation and his defence of Europe from Islam to mobilise political support for Kosovo/a independence from Western Europe and the U.S. allies.

Skanderbeg was mythologised twice; firstly, as a 'Champion of Christianity' by the Catholic Church and, secondly, as a national hero of the Albanians, as the man who fought for his country for 25 years and liberated Albania from the Ottomans in 1443 (Lubonja, 2002, p. 92). Skanderbeg's change in religion, from Catholic Christian at birth to Muslim and then back to Catholicism, followed the shifts in historical context. Vasa Pashko, who Uğur Bahadır Bayraktar (2011, p. 2) calls 'political archaeologist' and a 'man of the Albanian renaissance' was a Catholic, yet he worked for the Ottomans. In one of his songs entitled, 'Oh Albania, poor Albania' (in Albanian, *O moj Shqypni e mjera Shqypni*), Pashko writes of the need to unite all Albanians based on *ethnie,* regardless of their location and religion:

Wake up Albania, wake from your slumber,
And altogether, as brothers, swear a common faith,
And don't think about churches or mosques,
The faith of the Albanian is Albanianism!

These verses were a pillar-stone upon which Albanian identity was constructed (Bayraktar, 2011, p. 2). One of the well-known progressive MPs among Albanian politicians in Kosovo, Mimoza Kusari Lila, stated:

'I always represent myself as Kosovo Albanian, so Queen Teuta was for all Albanians, at that time, there was one [state]. Ganimete Terbeshi was from Kosovo, it was then Yugoslavia, so it was this side … It was an iron closing between Albania [and Kosovo] in WWII under the Enver Hoxha dictatorship. Kosovo had a different development. So, we cannot neglect the division that we had for 50 years, closing off Albania for 50 years and the change how we see things and how they see things. So, I think I identify with all I was raised and born with, with everything that associates, with every other woman in Kosovo. Of course, there are many things that connect us, but there are also things that make us different from women in Albania. For that matter, even from Albanians in Macedonia, Montenegro, or Serbia because of the circumstances, geographical, circumstantial, yes, the feeling and language are the same, the history, pre-WWII history, values, patriots, the national flag that is red and black. We all feel that is ours. Then, I also cherish, and I want to have the Kosovo flag and Kosovo identity being known to the world because it is a new state, a new country, and I am not shying away from it. I am just thinking that with everything that has characterised us, we created, we can have a new personalised version of Kosovo women.'

Here, Kusari Lila reconfirmed some of the claims underpinning Albanian romanticism and the underlying ethnic basis of the Kosovar Albanian *ethnie*. In the first instance, she identified with Illyrian Queen Teuta, reconfirming ethnogenetic claims that Albanians were the descendants of the Illyrians. The theory conforms to the nationalist territorial claims that Albanians are 'autochthonous' inhabitants of Kosovo (Piro, 2002, p. 42). She also identified with the flag (red and black) referring to it as 'ours' (Albanian). As well, she recognised the differences between Albanians from different parts of the Balkans, introducing the emerging Kosovar identity as the 'new' state identity with everything that characterises 'us' as Kosovar women. It remains unclear, however, if she was referring to Albanian or Kosovo/a women when she employed the phrase, 'personalised version of the Kosovo women'. This emphasised a point of confusion: who are the Kosovo/a women? The Kosovar identity is under construction and, as I also demonstrate in this thesis, even some Albanian women whose ethnic symbols are at the core of the Kosovar identity do not fully identify with its elements or the ways it has been imagined, constructed, and politicised.

There are two strong, mythologised ideals behind the non-religious nature of the Albanian *ethnie* identity (Pashko, 2006, p. 120). The first ideal relates to tolerance among different religious groups and the second concerns the insignificance of religion in the development of

the Albanian national identity. In his interpretation of Pashko's political ethnography on Albanians, Bayraktar (2011, p. 6) states that some of the stories Pashko used to define ethnic Albanians suggested that Albanians from Upper and Lower Albania, whether Muslim, Catholic, or Orthodox, easily identify as *Shqypetâr:*[40]

> *'[i]f we stop the first peasant we meet on the road and we ask him, "Who are you?" His answer will curtly be: "I am Shqypetâr".'*

According to Bayraktar, this is how Pashko constructed a myth around territory and attributed an ethnic identity to all Albanians in the region, beginning with Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Greece. They are all different as they lived in/under different circumstances, but they are all *Shqypetâr*, which carries certain core ethnic characteristics. In this way, he created the fundamentals of an ethnohistory that defined the conceptual borders of the nation. In the case of Albania, the definition of conceptual borders was based on the myth of origin and had two key translations: the myth of descent and the myth of ethnogenesis. These myths were important. They assigned different characteristics to Albanian people that encouraged them to identify as 'unique'. Albanian women politicians agreed with these claims and embraced and politicised these myths with a certain feeling of 'pride'. For Balaj Halimaj, the myths of descent and ethnogenesis made Albanian people 'one of a kind'. In the section on 'Roots', I examined some of the characteristics of Albanian people stemming from these two myths, including greater respect towards parents, the elderly, and children, being more hospitable and friendly, and having a unique 'way of thinking'. Another Kosovo Albanian MP, Saranda Bogujevci, considered history important to her identity and the pride she takes in it. For her, national identity was about history:

> *'It's down to history in the sense of culture and language, religion, all sorts of stuff. I always take pride in religion; by religion, I am Muslim, but I also take pride in the religion that my ancestors were.'*

In a similar manner to her colleagues, Bogujevci's comments encapsulated the ideal of the non-religious nature of the Albanian identity. In comparison to Serbs, who considered other ethnic Serbs who altered their religion 'traitors' (Other-Serbs), Albanians more easily reconciled the different religious pasts of their ancestors and took pride in what it made them today. However,

[40] The Albanian word for 'eagle' is *Shqype*. *Shqyperi* or *Shqypeni* means 'the country of the eagle'. *Shqypetar* is equivalent to 'Son of the Eagle' (Pashko, 2006, p. 121).

this was only if their ethnic Albanian core remained intact. Undeniably, most nations around the world consider the recreation of the past and historical continuity as major steps in creating a nation.

According to Piro Misha (2002, p. 40), the resurrection of the past provides evidence for Albanians of a common history and was crucial in forming a coherent ethnic national identity. The sense of a common history, paired with all the disasters that fell upon the Albanian *ethnie,* served to tie the population to the fatherland (Kadare, 1998, p. 12). To conclude, the Albanian ethnic identity was formed through the construction and reconstruction of its myths, symbols, and rituals and the external and internal threats that endangered their existence. I addressed the issue of the struggle and tragedy of the Albanian *ethnie* in the chapter 'Women and/in the Nation'.

Albanian women politicians in Kosovo claimed that the Albanian flag was one of the most important symbols of their identity. For Kosovo Albanian MP Donika Kadaj Bujupi, love for the flag was a feeling obtained through birth and education. In one of his letters to Maurice de Hirsch, Theodor Herzl (Dieckhoff, 2003, p. 37; Herzl, 1895, p. 19), the founder of modern political Zionism, wrote, 'politics could not exist without symbols'. Attempting to explain the significance of the flag as a symbol, he stated:

> *'A flag, what is that? A stick with a rag on it? – No sir, a flag is more than that. With a flag, one can lead men wherever one wants to, even into the promised land. For a flag, a man will live and die; it is indeed the only thing for which they are ready to die in masses if one trains them for it'.*

Many theorists of nationalism explain the significance of flags as one of the main elements involved in public displays of national identity and people's attachments to it (Billig, 1995; Carlyle et al., 2008; Cerulo, 1993; Elgenius, 2005; Eriksen and Jenkins, 2007; Firth, 2011; Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008; Huntington, 2011; Smith, 2015). Physically, the flag is simply a piece of coloured fabric on a stick. The signals and symbolics that flags transmit to different audiences, however, make each one a great deal more than just material on a stick.

For Schöpflin (1997, p. 29), a flag is a symbol of territory and serves to reinforce myths and exclude alternative rationalities. For Raymond Firth (2011, pp. 328-333), a flag is a signal and may be an object of strong sentiment, its symbolism may be deeply felt, and it may be an emblem of unity for a large number of people. Flags have been used for centuries, from Mongols and Indian tribes to newspapermen and milkmen, holding different meanings for each

one. National flags are separate and distinct, given that they carry 'small intrinsic value' (339). Firth refers to the emotional power that compels people to give up their lives for the flag. Thomas Carlyle (2008, p. 265) explained the symbolic meanings of flags:

> *'Fantasy is thy eye, with its color-giving retina, healthy or diseased. Have not I myself known five hundred living soldiers sabred into crows meat for a piece of glazed cotton, which they called their Flag; which, had you sold it at any market cross, would not have brought above three groschen?'*

For politician Edita Tahiri, 'the flag and the colours of the flag [red and black] you grow with, you relate to that, and you feel belonging'. Undeniably, for most women politicians who participated in my research, the flag constituted one of the primary markers of national identity, regardless of their national (ethnic) identity. Albanian women politicians easily identified with the Albanian flag because it was exhibited daily in the Republic of Kosovo/a. Women of mixed or different *ethnie* (i.e. Turkish/Albanian, Bosniak/Albanian, Serbian women, and other), however, negotiated their political and emotional allegiances to both Kosovo and Albanian flags in different ways. These women politicians had different reactions to the celebration of the Day of the Albanian Flag (in Albanian, *Dita e Flamurit*) on 28 November in the Republic of Kosovo/a.

According to some Kosovo Albanian women politicians, the Albanian flag was one of the most important symbols for the Albanian *ethnie* in the Republic of Kosovo/a. The celebration was a combination of three elements: ethnic (and political) rites, ceremony, and sacrifice. In terms of ethnic and political rites, it was one of the most important rituals for maintaining the existence of the Albanian ethnic identity behind the 'Kosovar' civic identity. The Day of the Albanian flag is a public holiday and the only 'flag' day in Kosovo. The date refers to the celebration of Albanian Independence Day on 28 November 1912. On this day, the Republic of Albania received their independence from the Ottoman Empire. Aside from flag day, the Republic of Kosovo Independence Day on 17 February and Constitution Day on 9 April were also public holidays. These latter two dates, however, were not flagged in the same way as the first one.

Michael Billig (1995, pp. 93-94) explains the strength and the symbolism behind 'Flagging the Homeland Daily' when the nation is indicated or 'flagged' in the lives of its citizenry on a daily basis. In the Republic of Kosovo, a red piece of material with a two-headed black eagle hung in stores, post-offices, and from terraces on 28 November each year. Red and black was 'flagged' throughout the main street of Nene Teresa. After spending 28 November in Pristina

(the capital of the Republic of Kosovo/a), one may have the feeling of having been in Tirana, Albania. Schools, regardless of whether their pupils were Bosniak or Albanian, organised a series of special events to mark the day.[41] Children received a special assignment, usually an activity, such as drawing the most beautiful black eagle they could imagine or thinking of/composing a poem about the day for recitation in front of the class. The flag days of other *ethnies* were not set aside as public holidays, i.e. Ashkali or Roma. They were marked and celebrated only by the members of their minority communities and only in their schools. These kinds of celebrations were, unlike the Albanian Flag Day that was institutionalised and funded by the state of Kosovo/a, supported through public funds only if their communities had applied through projects and received funding approval.

Following Billig's theory, I claim that citizenry living in Kosovo/a are reminded that they live in a nation(s) on 28 November. This impression left some women (although, not only women) with feelings of confusion as to which nation(s) they lived in, given that each and every one of them have attachments to their own. By institutionalising the Albanian Flag Day without doing the same for other similar days, the Albanian *ethnie* was kept near 'the surface of contemporary life' (Billig, 1995, p. 93) in Kosovo/a. The flag was, consequently, a reminder of the homeland and of the construction of the newborn Kosovar civic identity with an Albanian ethnic core. In this way, the Albanian people 'bring the flag home' (Billig, 1995, p. 94) to their families, alongside Bosniaks, Roma, and Ashkali people living in Kosovo and attending public schools. For Kosovo politician Musa, the day of the Albanian flag was important because Kosovo Albanians see Albania as their 'mother'. She added, however, that 'now is the new reality of our country (Kosovo)'. For Kosovo Albanian politician Tahiri, there was a difference between the two:

> *'Kosovar is a state identity. Albanian is a national identity. Kosova constitution follows the civic concept, which means all are citizens of Kosova.'*

As mentioned earlier, however, there were two conflicts that stemmed from these universalising claims. The first one was the new reality and the negotiations that took place between Albanian and Kosovar identities. This was, however, not difficult to reconsolidate as most Albanians saw Albania as the 'mother' of the Republic of Kosovo/a. The second one was much harder to reconsolidate in that not all citizens of Kosovo/a consider Albania as the

[41] Serbian schools do not celebrate Albanian Flag Day because they remain under the Serbian system and not the Kosovo/a administration.

'mother', especially women who, by birth, blood, or descent, do not belong to the Albanian identity or who were only partially Albanian. This also includes women in mixed marriages (Bosniak, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, and Serbian). For the latter group of citizens, the constant flagging of the Albanian *ethnie* state symbols underlying the Kosovar civic identity caused alienation. I argue that the main cause of this alienation was the Kosovo state's poor and selective provision of civic and human rights to its citizens.

Marking Albanian Flag Day celebrations as a national holiday in Kosovo equated to the institutionalisation of Albanian National Day as a symbolic representation of the underlying nation that made Kosovo an independent state. In one parliament session, Kosovo Albanian MP Miljailm Zeka confirmed, 'Most importantly, we [Albanians] won the war!' In exploring the civic principles of the Republic of Kosovo/a, this attitude is important because it contributes to the ambiguity undergirding the Kosovar identity. This ambiguity was the basis for the negotiation of identity among Albanian women in politics as well as a source of alienation for women of other or mixed ethnic identities within the Kosovar civic identity. Messages from politicians like Zeka to the effect that Serbs were the 'devils among us [Kosovo Albanians]' further alienated anyone of non-Albanian decent from the Kosovar civic identity. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo (2015), Serbs and Bosniaks are considered constitutional people of Kosovo/a. Protests regarding violations of the Constitution by certain Albanian MPs and the absence of any sanctions applied to them intensified the lack of trust in the ability of the government to guarantee equal rights to anyone but Kosovo Albanians in the Republic of Kosovo/a. According to Zeka, Serbs blocked the Republic of Kosovo/a from finding a successful pathway towards acceptance in the EU so that Albanian children from Kosovo would be unable to travel to watch Rita Ora perform in London.[42] He even suggested that Kosovo Albanians should vote for the Demarcation Law to 'eat their (Serbian) hearts'. Another Kosovo Albanian MP added that, 'We [Kosovo Albanians] are the factor in this state!'

Balaj Halimaj clarified the ambiguity of the Kosovar and the underlying Albanian *ethnie* identity behind the Kosovo/a flag:

> *'It's a little bit hard when you ask about identity, someone calls us Kosovar and I am Shqyptare. I still haven't decided on one …'*

[42] Rita Ora is a popular Kosovo Albanian singer living and working in the United Kingdom. She performed at celebrations marking the tenth anniversary of Kosovo's independence in January 2018 (Morina, 2018).

I observed Balaj Halimaj during my fieldwork. Her presentation of the Kosovar identity as predominantly ethnic Albanian suggested an absence of conflict between the two. Since the existence of Albanian symbols, myths, and rituals in Kosovo was institutionalised, there has been no open conflict when a Kosovo Albanian person has attempted to negotiate the two. However, tensions surfaced as soon as the existence of the Serbian ethnic identity emerged as a part of the Kosovar 'civic' identity. This was visible in one of her presentations during a session that dealt with the judicial process regarding land returned to the Serbian Orthodox Church. Namely, the Court had returned land to the Serbian Church instead of giving it to the University of Pristina. Balaj Halimaj disagreed with the Court's decision because it failed to consider the Albanian *ethnie* underlying the Kosovar identity in terms of blood and sacrifice. The decision, therefore, allowed other people's symbols to exist in the Republic of Kosovo/a:

> *'Because of that land, fallen soldiers of Kosovo [Albanians] gave their blood and the Church is a reminder of traumas caused by Milošević.'*

Balaj Halimaj's statement explains some of the processes mentioned above. Firstly, it revealed the underlying Albanian *ethnie* behind the Kosovar flag. She pointed to those who gave blood and life for the territory of Kosovo and, therefore, to those who have the right to it, regardless of any civic, legal, property, or ownership rights or the Constitution of Kosovo. Secondly, it depicted the struggle between ethnic (Albanian) and civic (Kosovar) nationalism and prioritised the former. The symbols of the fallen soldier and the giving of blood were stronger than any rulings of the independent legal institutions of a civic Republic of Kosovo/a. Thirdly, it informed citizenry about which symbols were acceptable and more easily reconciled in the Republic of Kosovo and which were not. For Balaj Halimaj, the Orthodox Church was a symbol and a reminder of the collective trauma of the Serbian 'occupier', as she often referred to Serbs in her own work. Therefore, there was no place for Serbian symbols in Kosovo's 'civic' imagery, even though Serbs were (along with other founding minorities) mentioned in the Constitution (Republic of Kosovo, 2015).[43]

Travelling throughout Kosovo/a, I realised the importance of 'performing the nation' (Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008, p. 538) for the production of national sensibilities through the ritual enactment of symbols in everyday life. Indeed, flagging of the homeland in Kosovo/a did not

[43] The Republic of Kosovo flag has six stars that represent Kosovo as belonging to its founding communities (Albanian, Serbian, Bosniak, Turkish, Roma [Ahkali and Egyptian], and Gorani) (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018; Republic of Kosovo, 2015).

only occur on 28 November, it was also a part of everyday life. It seemed strongest in the areas under dispute or where the blood of the martyrs for the 'homeland' had been spilled. I observed graveyards, for example, with the tombstones of the KLA fighters shaped as two-headed eagles. Interestingly, the Albanian, rather than the Kosovo, flag was flying above them. If I had been visiting the country for the first time knowing little of the region's history, I would have thought I was on the territory of Albania rather than Kosovo/a. In the same manner, I witnessed the flag change above my head in North Mitrovica (or Kosovska Mitrovica) where Serbs are still a majority. In this long street, Albanian and Serbian sides were divided into North and South Mitrovica, respectively. During my fieldwork, Albanian taxi drivers were known to drive a certain distance along the street before telling me, 'from here, you must walk'. The change of flag meant that I had to leave the vehicle and walk the remaining distance to my destination because Albanian taxi drivers did not travel into Serbian majority territory.

In the Republic of Kosovo/a, the flagging above one's head displays whose territory one is in. The main point here is the strength and symbolism of this coloured material on a stick. The flagging of contested homelands (Serbian and Albanian) in Kosovo/a affects the behaviour, the emotions, and political allegiances of women in politics. The underlying Albanian ethnic symbolism flagged daily has not only caused confusion and the need to negotiate identities for certain Kosovo Albanian women, it has also prevented the Kosovo flag from becoming a symbol that reconciles all ethnic communities living in Kosovo and undermines its civic character. Reminiscing about the change of flags between North and South Mitrovica, journalist Muharem Bazdulj (2019) observed:

> *'There are flags on every step of the way, many of them, but they don't recall any strength nor sovereignty. They resemble more a mantra for self-help … They are there for people who feel left out and neglected. The flags are the proof they exist. Bruce Springsteen once sang:*
>
> *We take care of our own*
> *We take care of our own*
> *Wherever this flag's flown*
> *We take care of our own.*
>
> *Which flag? Give me one that we all can stand under!'*

Valdete Idrizi perceived the Kosovar identity as inseparable from the Albanian ethnic identity. For her, Kosovar history (her history) could not be presented as the 'only' Albanian history; it

should be presented as both. There were things that differentiated Albanians from Albania and Albanians from Kosovo, including history and language:

> *'I think my history, it's Albanian history … The past and how we left … My history is very important, my personal history is very important, and if I share to someone, I can't only share Albanian history without including myself. Myself is important to me and I think it's because sometimes I feel Albanian, but sometimes I feel Kosovar … Because, when we go to talk to Albanians in Albania, sometimes our language, especially in the South, sometimes it's not easy to understand.'*

As aforementioned, Kosovar and Albanian identities are incongruent with one another, even for some Kosovo Albanian women. They may cause some slight confusion, but not conflict, as long as the underlying ethnic identity behind the Kosovar is Albanian. This is not the case for other Kosovo women of mixed Albanian and other ethnic background. Some of these women would prefer to be only Kosovar. As one woman claimed:

> *'I do not like flags. Until recently, I did not have flags in my office, but now I put this one [Kosovo flag] because everyone has that other one with two eagles [Albanian]… I say [to people with the Albanian flag): This is not Albania! I know that we were under [ruled by] Serbs and Turks, but we were never under [ruled by] Albanians. I am not Albanian; I am Kosovar and this is my flag! Not all of us are Albanians here! It is not mine, the flag with two eagles. For me, it makes more sense to have a Turkish flag on my desk …'*

One of the women I spoke with said that the continuous flagging of the two-headed eagle in Kosovo was a presentation of 'how strong Albanian nationalism [was]'. For her, the Kosovar identity had the potential to reconsolidate all identities under one civic identity encompassing all its citizenry. The relentless display of the Albanian flag, however, prevented the Kosovar identity from becoming that. The ubiquitous presence of the Albanian flag placed pressure on people who did not identify with the underlying Albanian identity to act and enact the Albanian *ethnie* daily. In this sense, this woman had created a strategy to negotiate this irreconcilability. She laughed as she showed me the postcard her child was assigned to make as a project for Albanian Flag Day. It had red and black glitter and an eagle with only one head:

> *'Look what we did … You see? [indicates the one head of the small eagle in the corner of the post-card while laughing], it does not look so nationalist, it has only one eagle. It is sick here. Everything is about that … Who knows under which flag in the future we will*

be …? I will leave, I was thinking where … I have cousins everywhere … I was thinking about my child, that it will be best for us to leave while still a teenager …'

Kosovo Bosniak MP Emilija Redžepi protested Albanian flagging at a celebration in her daughter's school. The school was primarily attended by Bosniak and Turkish children. The School Day, however, was 'all about Albanians and their nationalism' and it looked like Albanian Flag Day rather than a school day in Kosovo. She chose to protest by leaving the ceremony, as she explained, 'I am a very inconvenient politician'. Her main objection was that the recitals were in Albanian, even though most pupils were Bosniak and Turkish and this was 'the kind of nationalism' she disliked.

Language represented another key element in the construction of ethnic and collective affiliation that caused the alienation of non-Albanian women politicians from the Kosovar civic identity. Many theorists (Anderson, 1991; Gumperz, 1982; Sherzer, 1980; Woolard, 1989) deal with language and how it communicates ethnic affiliation or nationhood in daily life. The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo (2015) states that Albanian and Serbian are the official languages *de jure*, while Bosniak is an administrative language. De facto institutions of the Republic of Kosovo/a do not respect dual use of language. Even the Parliament does not translate every session. This means that Serbian, as well as Bosniak, citizens in the Republic of Kosovo/a cannot understand the laws and the political debates under discussion in Parliament. When there was translation, the quality was often poor, making it difficult to understand. This is yet another example of the Kosovar identity failing to include all its citizens under its civic umbrella and to implement the provisions of its Constitution. The reaction of Kosovo Albanian MPs to this problem was best illustrated by one particular situation I observed during a session of the CHRGE. When Serbian MP Miljana Nikolić, who is a member of CHRGE failed to understand some of the changes to the new draft law on religious freedoms in Kosovo due to poor and inconsistent translation, she asked additional questions. Her colleague, Kosovo Albanian MP Mexhide Mjaku Topalli, was slightly irritated by these interruptions. She brushed Nikolić off with a curt statement, 'You should learn Albanian …' The fact that this occurred during a meeting of a legislative body dealing with human rights, civic rights, and equality made the reaction of the Albanian MP sound even more akin to a violation of the constitutional rights of her Serbian colleague. However, no one from the CHRGE reacted or called Topalli out for her offensive and, above all, unconstitutional comments. This was yet another example of the alienation of women who did not identify as Albanian from the Kosovar 'civic' identity.

In this subsection, I presented the ways Kosovo Albanian women politicians understood and politicised their own *ethnie*/national symbols, myths, and rituals. I focused on the specific relationships and negotiations between the Kosovar national identity and its ethnic Albanian core. I found that even the Albanian women whose *ethnie* was at the core of the Kosovar identity and was flagged daily were indecisive when they negotiated between their ethnic Albanian and civic Kosovar identities. For them, this indecisiveness did not cause major conflicts, nor did it limit their human rights. For women of mixed ethnic origins, however, the Albanian *ethnie* behind the Kosovar identity was problematic. This was mostly because they could not easily identify with a state or 'civic' identity that failed to provide equal human and civil rights to all of its citizenry, regardless of their blood, roots, symbols, myths, and memories.

2.4.3. 'Bosniaks are autochthonous peoples of Kosovo, they did not just come from somewhere'[44]

In this last subsection, I analyse the ways in which Bosniak women politicians in Kosovo/a understood and politicised their own *ethnie*/national symbols, myths, and rituals. During my fieldwork, I observed two Bosniak MPs in the Republic of Kosovo/a Parliament, MP Emilija Redžepi and MP Duda Balje. In the introduction to the section 'Symbols, Myths, and Rituals', I quoted Redžepi who reiterated that the Bosniaks of Kosovo were 'autochthonous' and did not just come from somewhere. The political claims that Bosniaks have existed on the territory of Kosovo/a for centuries formed part of the work of these two women politicians. According to Redžepi, Bosniaks are constitutional people of Kosovo; they have their own identity that is recognisable by the name 'Bosniak' and the Muslim religion.

In further analysis, I present the different symbols, myths, and rituals that Bosniak women politicians shared and identified with. Afterwards, I analyse the dominant narratives and representations of Bosniak women politicians. Most importantly, I demonstrate how they negotiated their national identities in a political context involving strong and contesting ethnic Albanian, Serbian, and new Kosovar civic identities. I conclude that Bosniak women politicians have developed a certain pattern of 'national innocence and victimhood' (Helms, 2013) through the constant political struggle for recognition of the Bosniak *ethnie* by the dominant Serbian and Albanian *ethnies* in Kosovo/a. These kinds of political patterns are most visible in the appropriation of former Yugoslavian multiculturalism in terms of presenting the

[44] MP Redžepi, New Democratic Party (NDS).

self as a ‘nonaggressive’ and ‘peaceful’ nation that always co-existed with others unlike the hostile and aggressive Serb and Albanian nationalisms.

Similar to other national groups in the Balkans, Bosniaks are the product of a long and constructed history involving mutual relations of rooting and uprooting the other. According to Caner Sancaktar (2012, p. 2), conflicts with other ethnic and religious groups and central governments are important factors in the construction and development of the nation. Like the claims of the women in politics who I followed, Sancaktar also concludes that, ‘the Bosniak nation has not emerged suddenly but it is constructed and developed as a result of some historical events’. Sancaktar recognises three notable periods as crucial to the particular appearance of the Bosniak national identity today. The first period involves Bosniak relations and conflicts with the Ottoman central government. The second period is the Habsburg government in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the third period involves their relationship with Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats over time. In most of these historical processes, Bosniaks were either privileged (in the time of the Ottomans) or victimised (during Austro-Hungarian, Serb, and Croat rule). Historically, Bosniaks were often treated as an ‘invented’ nation by nationalist Croats and Serbs (Babuna, 1999, p. 195), hence, their nationhood was often denied (Friedman, 2018). The reasons for the denial of Bosniak existence are many. Some claim the lack of a strong collective name hinders their recognition; others suggest the absence of a robust state with a Bosniak Muslim majority rule that would ensure the protection of all Bosniaks living in Kosovo/a is a key issue. Certainly, as an *ethnie*, Bosniaks were in a process of formation and their collective name came about much later than their other chief marker, the Muslim religion.

Smith (1987, pp. 22-23) explains the significance of a collective name as an identifying marker of *ethnies.* In the antiquity, collective names were crucial to the potency and differentiation of a group. The mythic quality of a name is far more important to the study of ethnicity than any account of its origins and practical uses would suggest. Naming is equivalent to summarising the ‘essence’ of a group ‘as if in a name lay the magic of their existence and guarantee of their survival’ (Smith, 1987, p. 23). In the former Yugoslavia, religion and nationality were intertwined and everyone was required to declare their nationality on the census. Bosnian Muslims adopted ‘Muslim’ as an ethnic designation, regardless of their real practice of Islam. They preferred to be identified by reference to their religion rather than their ethnic origins or the place where they lived. Aydin Babuna (1999, pp. 211, 195) claims that the terms and descriptions of Muslim and Bosniak are used in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a basis for the

political and national development of Bosniaks in that state. They are also used to differentiate them from the rest of the population of Serbs and Croats. The name 'Bosniak' was adopted in Sarajevo in 1993 during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina when the so-called 'Assembly of the Bosnian Muslims' convened and accepted the description of 'Bosniak' or 'Bosnian' as the national name of the Bosnian Muslims.

As a religious, cultural, and national group, Bosniaks existed before their markers were officially recognised by others. They were recognised in the 1971 Yugoslav Constitution (Lapenna, 1972; Roberts, 1978) as Muslims. The Bosniak collective name emerged during the Bosnian war in 1993. Historically, Bosniaks included those who accepted the Muslim religion brought to the Balkans under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. The reasons why a population living in Bosnia and Herzegovina before the Ottomans descended (Bogomils, Orthodox Serbs, and Catholics Croats) accepted Islam is still a contested issue.[45] Some authors claim that the main reason was economic and those who changed religion enjoyed political and social privileges from the occupying Ottoman authorities. Other authors claim that the Bosnian church lost the confidence of the people, even before Ottoman rule and the subsequent process of Islamisation in 1463 (Babuna, 1999, p. 195; Lockwood, 1979; Sancaktar, 2012, p. 2). According to William Lockwood (1979, p. 209), 'the conversion of one wing of the South-Slavs marked the beginning of the ethnogenesis of the Bosnian Muslims'.

According to Pedro Ramet (1985, p. 170), however, there are three contested theories concerning the origins of the Bosnian Muslims. The first one, and probably the oldest, is a Serbophile theory claiming Bosnian Muslims are ethnogenetically Serbs who converted to Islam during the Ottoman rule. The second one is a Croatophile theory that implies that Bosnian Muslims are Catholic Croats who converted to Islam. The final theory is that the Bosniaks have their own unique identity and, regardless of their origins, cannot be equated with either Serbs or Croats. Some authors regard Bosnian Muslims as descendants of the Bogomils or as ethnic Serbs of protestant persuasion (Lodge, 1942, p. 180; Ramet, 1985, p. 171). All things considered, views concerning the origins of the Bosnian Muslims, or Bosniaks, are contested and have served to feed either Serbian, Croatian, or Bosniak mythologies. According to Michael Sells (1998, p. 35), Serb and Croat national mythologies claim that only the weak and cowardly converted to Islam. Bosnian Muslims, conversely, claim that most conversions to

[45] Bogomils were members of Bogomilism, a heretic sect of Christianity present in Bulgarian lands during the 11th century and who prevailed over Bosnia and Herzegovina during the 12th century (Sancaktar, 2012, p. 2).

Islam were from the Bosnian Church, which was Bogomilist. There is, however, no substantial evidence that the Bosnian Church was ever Bogomil.

Historical struggles for national recognition and distinction were visible in the politicisation of the Bosniak women politicians who I observed during my fieldwork. This was especially evident in their claims to a unique national and religious identity and recognition of the identity of 'Bosniak' in Kosovo/a as 'autochthonous'. I claim these struggles represented part of the ongoing assertions of historical continuity rather than a new struggle. That said, Bosniaks have struggled to obtain equal treatment as a constitutional minority of the Republic of Kosovo/a in the same way that Bosnian Muslims struggled to evolve from a religious community to full recognition as a nationality under the Austro-Hungarian Empire or in the former Yugoslavia. Bosniak MPs emphasised 'struggle' and 'victimhood and innocence' (Helms, 2013) as the primary determinants of their national imaginary, despite evidence from the Ottoman Empire demonstrating that Bosniaks were furnished with privileges after accepting Islam. Therefore, I found three important claims in the politicisation of the Bosniak *ethnie* by women politicians. The first assertion involved national and religious identity claims that Bosniaks were 'autochthonous' and had a need for 'differentiation' from others. The second assertion revolved around claims of absolute national victimhood. The final assertion concerned claims that Bosniaks were a 'nonaggressive', 'innocent', and 'peaceful' nation of people who could live with everyone, which appears to be an appropriation of Yugoslavian multiculturalism (in Bosnian, *'suživot'*).

In her comments on what it means to be Bosniak, Balje explained:

> *'Culture, tradition, language, history. Our way to fight for our place … We have a very rich culture and we are famous for good things. We have never been a community that is conflicting. We have always been known to live and coexist with other. Bosniaks live in the whole world. Wherever you go in the world, you can see Bosniaks and none of them are ashamed of being Bosniak. You can never hear that some Bosniak made something I don't know what [bad]. We are nice and peaceful, cultural people, that can adapt everywhere. We are the people who know how to survive in the worst and manage in good, there are a lot of Bosniaks in European states.'*

Historically, similar to other *ethnies* described within this section, Bosniak existence, recognition, and rights were always the subject of 'relative deprivation', defined by Ted Robert Gurr (1970) as the discrepancy between what 'ought' to be and what 'is'. Their co-existence

was never completely peaceful and often depended on the ruler at the time. Certainly, during Ottoman rule, Bosniaks as Muslims did not represent a problem for the Empire. In fact, they enjoyed many rights and privileges that other ethnic and religious groups did not and they comprised the upper class of society. During other eras, as in the period of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Bosnian Muslims were forced to flee Bosnia and Herzegovina for political and religious reasons (Babuna, 1999, pp. 199-200). In the former Yugoslavia, their struggle to identify themselves as Muslim continued until 1971. In the Republic of Kosovo/a, Bosniak women politicians emphasised that political participation of the Bosniak minority was the most important 'struggle' to ensure the preservation of the Bosniak identity, prevent assimilation, and maintain the Bosniak language. As Redžepi stated:

> *'We consider that Bosniaks deserve better as a nation because we are a constitutional category in Kosovo. Our rights are recognised by the state of the Republic of Kosovo and why should we not fight for it? Why let other communities take it from us?'*

Following the political statements provided by Bosniak MPs in Kosovo, the first struggle for the Bosniak population was to prove the 'autochthonous' nature of their existence and to 'differentiate' themselves from the other two mutually contested communities in Kosovo with whom they have different identity markers, such as language (Serbs) and the Muslim religion (Albanians). This was important because of the 'hard power-sharing guarantees' (Roeder and Rothchild, 2005, p. 31) that stem from the Kosovo Constitution (2015). Ethnic minorities in the Republic of Kosovo/a have a constitutional position, both in the context of institutional representation and in the rights and duties afforded to them (Doli and Korenica, 2012, p. 83). As such, proving their existence in a declarative (political) and a quantitative (physical) manner at the census was important for Bosniaks (among other groups). The multi-national political system in the Republic of Kosovo guaranteed Bosniak representation in the executive, legislative, and judicial systems, both at national and local levels. In the absence of a strong state to vouch for their rights (frequently mentioned by Redžepi) and to remind other communities to respect their obligations towards minorities (Bosniaks), they needed political representatives to guarantee the fulfillment of the rights prescribed in the Kosovo Constitution. As Balje explained:

> *'I was born in Novi Sad [Serbia] and I got married here in Kosovo; I know both societies and the problems. This here is a game between Serbs and Albanians. We [Bosniaks], as minorities, are sidelined. They think women are not nationalist, they are! They think nationalism is only for men, it's not! Women also represent their nations [communities].*

For example, there is this woman [you will see her] … She often offends me by asking, "Who are you? You're Bosniak", she says, "You're actually Serbs". Then, there are others that want to dismiss me by saying that we Bosniaks are Albanians … So, I have prepared answers to each one of those claims … Women that lost someone in the war [father or brother] are the worst nationalists, they don't consider anything except nationalism … We have education in the Bosniak language in Prizren, this means that in every municipality we have more than 5% of Bosniaks. We fought for education, we fought for our place at the local municipality, we fought for our place at the central level. We have a minister and we are present [in Kosovo] all the time.'

I encountered an additional form of 'differentiation' during my fieldwork. In revealing it, I aim to clarify the claims of differentiation and relations to others (Serbs and Albanians) and the contestation based on 'name'. I claim that this was simply a continuation of an old struggle under a new political context. In addition to identifying as 'Bosniak' on the Kosovo census, I was informed that some Bosniaks in Kosovo altered the ending of their surnames (from -iu to -iji) to 'differentiate' themselves from Albanians.[46] This interesting fact proved that the need for differentiation from other communities was part of the Bosniaks' desire to demonstrate ongoing historical continuity, adding to the national imaginary of the *longue durée.* Balje claimed that, although the political representation of only one community in Kosovo/a was not perfect, it was necessary due to the political context and the 'discrimination' of the Bosniak population in Kosovo/a. This also furthers my previous claims concerning the need for differentiation and Bosniak victimhood:

'Maybe it is not ok, but when you live in the multiethnic state in which you have seven or eight different minority communities, you cannot care for all of them identically. Normally, my task is to care about my community [Bosniak]. Practically, you cannot care for all. Every community cares for itself. I am a member of six-plus Parliamentarian groups and, at the moment, there are people from four communities, all of them know how to care about themselves.'

As aforementioned, suffering and victimhood are the core claims of every nationalist ideology. On many occasions within CHRGE, I observed Balje in conflict with Serbian MP Miljana Nikolić, contesting her claims that Serbs were the group most 'discriminated' against while adding that Bosniaks were discriminated against to a greater extent. The primary reason for

[46] The identity of this person has been concealed for protection.

this form of politicisation around issues of identity contestation and victimhood might have stemmed from the fact that Bosniaks lived in multi-ethnic localities due to their numbers. Given that their locations were not homogenous and they lacked a strong state to protect their rights outside of the 'homeland' (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Bosniaks may have felt more endangered than Serbians who still lived separately in majority populated areas or enclaves in Kosovo/a with a certain amount of autonomy. Bosniaks did not enjoy the same privileges as Serbs in the enclaves, such as limited social and political arrangements guaranteed by the Republic of Serbia, including education, health, and social security. What was symptomatic of Balje's opinions and their relationship to issues of identity contestation, differentiation, and victimhood was the enthralled opinion that 'the benefit of one group is an automatic loss for all the others' (Gurr, 1970, p. 125). In one meeting of the CHRGE over which she presided, Balje reacted to a Serb representative's (Nikolić) claims angrily:

> *'We [Bosniaks] are very discriminated, it's not only Serbs who are the minority here! I have information that Serbs in municipalities [North] work without diplomas being nostrified [recognised by the Republic of Kosovo]. That they are hired without public call and competition … It's not only Serbs that are discriminated, but we [Bosniaks] are also very discriminated against as well.'*

The politicisation of identity was a part of regular day-to-day politics in Kosovo/a. It included competition for the status of 'most discriminated against' and for the right to express the belief that a particular group had experienced a deprivation of rights by contesting the claims to discrimination made by another minority group (Serb). Contesting these claims was a strategy intended to prove the discrimination, or demonstrate the struggles, of another group. Some nationalism theorists regard this kind of political behaviour as the primary cause of nationalism. In line with the theory of 'relative deprivation', it is not the inequality of different ethnic groups but the frustration of people, differential access to social opportunities, and disadvantageous living standards that generates nationalism (Babuna, 1999, p. 196) and conflict (Gurr, 1970, p. 33).

Language represented another component implicated in the construction of the ethnic group and was emphasised by Bosniak women politicians in the Parliament of Kosovo/a. Politicians demanded that Bosniaks speak and represent their own people in their own 'Bosnian language'. Language, according to Smith (2000, p. 23), is a cultural element that gives rise to the feeling of communal belonging called ethnicity and forms a basis for a nation and nationalism. Preserving the cultural heritage of language as well as education in vernacular Bosnian

language was important for Kosovo Bosniak MPs. During parliamentary sessions, Redžepi and Balje presented in their own Bosniak language. The sessions were televised and their constituency, the Bosniak people, could understand their presentations. During the CHRGE meetings, however, Balje presided over the sessions in Albanian:

> *'Learning the Albanian language means a lot to me as I am not in deficit with information. I know what is going on, I can discuss, and it means a lot. I recognised the need to learn Albanian fast and it was the right move … because I can hold Commissions, discuss and participate in public debates on public and private televisions.'*

Balje's claim that an inability to speak Albanian in the Republic of Kosovo/a institutions effectively equated to participating in one's own exclusion and resulted in a deficit of information adds to my previous arguments around the failures of the Kosovo/a state to include all its citizens under one, civic umbrella. By failing to fulfil Constitutional guarantees to people of different *ethnies* and to ensure their political participation and education in their own vernaculars, the Republic of Kosovo/a fell short of meeting its civic constitutional obligations. While speaking Albanian had positive implications for Balje, not all Bosniaks agreed with her rationale, especially those who politicised the need for 'language' recognition and differentiation as well as the preservation of the Bosniak language as a form of resistance to Albanian assimilation. Some of her *ethnie* compatriots considered Balje's need to speak Albanian as a betrayal of her *ethnie* because most of the people she represented could not understand the discussions she engaged in within CHRGE.

Language, as with other markers of the Bosniak identity, emerged from and went through phases of differentiation and contestation. According to Željko Jozić (2012, pp. 35-38), it is impossible to speak about the Bosnian language without looking at the mutually contested Serbo-Croatian language in the former Yugoslavia. Linguistic nationalism was an important part of the national turmoil in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Serbia and Croatia, language policy became crucial for processes of nation-building and 'Serbian' and 'Croatian' were pronounced as the official languages of the two countries, respectively. During the early stages of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1993, the government initially pronounced that, 'both the Serbo-Croatian and Croato-Serbian (I)jekavian language pronunciation is in official use in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina'. After only six months, however, they decided to add the Bosnian language with the statement, 'the standard language with (I)jekavian pronunciation of the three constituent peoples which is called by one of three names: Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian, should be in official use in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina' (36). As both Serbia and

Croatia made efforts to introduce their own languages in their ethnic territories in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosniak linguists decided to write normative reference books for the so-called 'Bosnian language' in 1996. This language has been disputed by both Serbs and Croats because of the inference that it is the language of all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Croats and Serbs suggested that the Bosnian language should be called the 'Bosniak language', given that ethnic Serbs and Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina already had their own language named after their own nationalities. Bosnian linguists, however, use the Bosnian language to denote the Bosniak-Muslim standard.

Bosniak MPs in Kosovo referred to their language as the 'Bosnian language' and they made significant efforts to politicise the Constitutional failures of the Republic of Kosovo/a to ensure the education of Bosniak children in the Bosnian language. The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo (2015) states that the official languages at the national level are Albanian and Serbian, given that Albanians and Serbs are the two largest ethnic groups in Kosovo. Turkish, Bosnian, and Roma languages have the status of official administrative languages at the municipal level and should be in official use at all levels, as provided by law. Minorities in Kosovo/a also have the right to receive public pre-school, primary, and secondary education in one of the official languages of their choice at all levels and to have their own media in their own language. However, even though it has been prescribed by the Constitution, education in the Bosnian language is still a matter of contestation and struggle.

The constituency of the Bosniak minority have often complained to their representative MPs about the lack of implementation of constitutional guarantees. Markers of the Bosniak nation, including the use of the Bosnian language in public education and the media, were also the subject of 'relative deprivation' (Gurr, 1970) in Kosovo/a. Grievances that have stemmed from a political context that has deprived the Bosniak nation (although not exclusively) of exercising their own culture and language and that has discriminated against them in the distribution of jobs and resources strengthens Bosniak nationalism. It has also led to further ethnic homogenisation. Questions concerning these problems have often been raised at meetings of the constituency with Bosniak MPs. For these reasons, the politicisation of education in the Bosnian language, alongside the political participation of Bosniaks, have become inseparable issues that formed part of the 'struggle' for Bosniak MPs in the Republic of Kosovo/a. This is how Bosniak MPs became the primary defenders of the Bosniak nation and its markers in the Kosovo Parliament. As, Redžepi stated:

'Bosniaks must vote for their own [ethnicity]. Look what Bosniak children in Pristina [schools] must cope with just because they are the only ones of their kind there. It is a struggle for survival. We must see how long we want to survive here, in this geographical area … Survival of people depends on the preservation of their language. We must be against assimilation, and nurture tradition and language, our culture. We owe it to our children. Kosovo belongs to everyone.'

Education in the Bosnian language in Kosovo is, therefore, necessary for the survival of the nation; an important marker that has been under attack and requires protection. Here, I share the testimony of one Bosniak mother whose child attended a predominantly Albanian school. The daughter (angrily) said to her mother:

'You did to me what I would never do to my child!'

And the mother asked:

'*Is that a shame to be the only Bosniak in an Albanian public school in (….)?'*

Parents of Bosniak children in the Republic of Kosovo/a were placed in a difficult situation. They were forced to consider whether to send a Bosniak child to an Albanian school and risk their children resenting them for it. Or, whether they should move to a place with a predominantly Bosniak majority and send their child to a school that taught in the Bosnian language knowing the low-quality of education would lower their chances of employment in the future. Here, I am trying to depict how important markers of the Bosniak nation, such as education in one's own language, have the potential to impact upon the life choices and future of those in the Bosniak *ethnie*. This is yet another example of the aforementioned failure of the Kosovo civic state to fulfill its constitutional and legal obligations to guarantee minority rights, causing further alienation of non-Albanian citizens of Kosovo/a. Consequently, these issues have led to a greater sense of endangerment and struggle; they have enhanced the need for the *ethnie* to engage in political struggles, and they have served to strengthen nationalism. As Redžepi once stated in Parliament:

'If you want to degrade one people, community, sabotage their education system and they will directly or indirectly assimilate, die, or disappear. Dear citizens [of the Republic of Kosovo/a], Bosniaks are constitutional people in Kosovo and they have the right to their language, culture, and education system.'

Bosniaks were an *ethnie* that did not have a strong state in the region to turn to for protection. As well, Bosniaks as a nation were not numerous enough to have their own entity where they

might have had the autonomy to decide on their own political, social, and economic issues, including language and representation. Often the political solutions they were faced with, therefore, followed one of two directions. The first direction was to continue the struggle to strengthen Bosniak nationalism and its markers. The second direction was one of assimilation. As Redžepi confirmed:

> *'Bosniaks do not have a mother state as Serbs do, Bosniaks cannot choose. They don't have the state like Turks [in Kosovo] have the Republic of Turkey or as Albanians have [Republic of Albania]. We [Bosniaks], we are the only people in Kosovo that fights for its survival in this geographical location alone, without the protection of the mother country or any country in the region.'*

The politicisation of the Bosniak people's historical struggles for survival in the absence of the protection of a mother state or other great powers has fuelled the Bosniak community's feelings of abandonment and has fed into the need for greater mobilisation to preserve the group's endangered markers. It has also enhanced populism, which has simplified the political field to create binary political and social divisions between people who are split into two opposing camps where there is the sense of an irreconcilable and antagonistic relationship between 'the people' and the 'other' (Sofos, 1996, pp. 74-75, 1994; Sofos and Tsagarousianou, 1992). This mode of identity formation, based on the reproduction of binary images and political solutions, was reflected in a conflict I observed taking place between two young people from Bosniak political parties at an event of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in Pristina. A young Bosniak man claimed that Bosniak schools needed to incorporate Albanian as a subject. In his view, the standard of education in the Bosniak language remained poor and did not teach the Albanian language, which was essential for Bosniak youth to find employment after school in Kosovo/a. A young Bosniak girl vociferously protested his proposition, stating that Bosniaks needed a better quality of education and more schools and universities in their own Bosnian language. She believed that learning Albanian in Bosniak schools would lead to further assimilation. A moderator of the event was struck by the mutual exclusiveness of both attitudes, asking, 'Why not have both?' Unfortunately, in an environment where basic human and civil rights guarantees depended upon the size of the *ethnie*, it was difficult for young people to conceptualise solutions that were not mutually exclusive. The only possible political solutions became either the enforcement of national markers or assimilation. Heterogeneity was not considered a solution as it became a problem for the crafters of the nation.

Another set of claims existed in the political work of Bosniak women politicians. These were claims of national victimhood that depicted Bosniaks as a 'nonaggressive', 'innocent', and 'peaceful' people who were able to coexist with anyone, unlike other aggressive nationalisms, such as Serb and Albanian. According Elissa Helms (2008, pp. 90-105), the specific patterns of 'nesting orientalisms' (Bakić-Hayden, 1995) in the former Yugoslavia are not a rarity and encompass the attempts of one ethnic group's members to portray themselves as superior/western/Europeans while casting their neighbours as part of the oriental East. In regard to the Muslim population or to the religion of Islam (Bosniaks), western dominance has been evoked and they have been perceived through the lens of the East or Orientalism, regardless of their geographic location in Europe or elsewhere. For this reason, there is an ongoing need to persuade westerners that, for example, Bosnian Muslims are not fundamentalists or terrorists, as the Serbs have portrayed them, and can coexist with anyone. Similarly, Bosniak women politicians have romanticised and reclaimed the traits of coexistence assigning them exclusively to Bosniaks – as a people with a long history of living in multiethnic Bosnia alongside Serbs and Croats. According to Balje:

> *'We [Bosniaks] do not forget who we are, wherever we are, and I am very proud of that. I am very proud and I pray to God to give me the strength to represent [Bosniaks] as I should because we are a community that can be given as an "example". I am very proud about my community and I can see that the Albanian community does not have anything against us. We are very good with the Serbian community too, the Roma community as well, Turkish community as well. Because, in Prizren, you cannot live if you do not speak three languages. We all speak Turkish and Albanian. I am telling you, we are not bothered by anything, we learned from olden times to live in diversity. In my community, we just ask, "Who are your people and what are their customs?" We do not have a problem to accept diversity.'*

In this last subsection, I analysed how Bosniak women politicians in Kosovo/a understood and politicised their own *ethnie*/national identity markers, especially in a political context of strong and contesting Albanian, Serbian, and Kosovar identities. I concentrated on the politicisation of the ethnogenetic claims of Bosniak women politicians representing Bosniaks as 'autochthonous' people in Kosovo and their political struggle to obtain constitutional rights in the Republic of Kosovo/a. I explained some of the political strategies against assimilation and for national recognition that were employed by Bosniak women politicians to represent their constituency in the Parliament of the Republic of Kosovo/a. I also focused on the efforts to

romanticise Bosniak patterns of ‘national innocence and victimhood’ (Helms, 2013), presenting the Bosniak nation as ‘nonaggressive’ and ‘peaceful’ and accustomed to co-existence, unlike the hostile, dominant, and aggressive nationalisms of ‘others’.

Chapter Three: Women Politicians, Gender, and/in the Nation

This is the third chapter in which I present my own ethnographic research results and it corresponds to the main research question as well as the second and third subsidiary research questions. In this chapter, I focus more on how women politicise their gender identity within the *ethnies*/nations/states. Specifically, I explore the ways women politicians produced, reproduced, and navigated gender roles within formal political structures. My primary intention was to examine women's political positions within their *ethnies* and as active participants and contributors to the politics of their nations/states. Given that national and gender identities are strongly entangled, I examine both in the context of such complexity. In their day-to-day work, women in politics navigated between these contested, intertwined, and highly 'negotiable' (Cockburn, 1998, p. 228) collective identities.

Extensive research on gender and the nation has established that all nationalist movements from the former Yugoslavia were highly gendered. Gender was an essential addition to nationalist tactics (Batinić, 2001, 2001; Bracewell, 2000; Brownmiller, 1975; Collin, 2012; Hansen, 2000; Hassentab et al., 2015; Helms, 2013; Herr, 2003, p. 138; Hughes et al., 1995, 1995; Kesić, 2010, 2003; Krasniqi, 2018, 2007a; Mertus, 2010, 1999, 1994; Mlađenović et al., 1993; Nikolić-Ristanović, 2000; 1996; Ramet, 2010a; Sofos, 1996; Taylor, 2000). Gender roles and discourses were used by all sides in the conflict, in different ways, and they continue to be used by women politicians from both sides of the political spectrum. Nationalism and the post-conflict democratisation process were drivers for the greater political participation of women. As mentioned earlier, due to the complex political context, the participation of women centred primarily around issues of the *ethnie* and the nation state. Later, following democratic changes and the liberalisation process, women began entering political structures in greater numbers and politicising gender.

This was mainly because, in reconceptualising the nation, women held insider/outsider positions. The nation is produced as a heterosexual male construct whose ego is intimately connected to patriarchal norms and hierarchies (Davis et al., 2006, p. 3; Mayer, 2012, p. 6). Women are defined as the 'other' within the nation because of their biological sex and the social construction of their gender roles (Allen, 2002, p. 55; Davis et al., 2006, p. 3). In my analysis, I demonstrate how women politicians grounded these political claims by drawing on

traditional gender roles to claim their positions within their *ethnies*/nations/states. While they actively participated in the (re)conceptualisation of the *ethnie*, they were still treated as outsiders and their participation remained undervalued. I argue that the lack of recognition of women's contributions has affected the politicisation of gender and national identities, steering women towards identifying with the *ethnie* as the primary marker and gender as the secondary one. For this reason, women politicians have actively drawn on patriarchal gender roles to emphasise women's contributions to nationalist projects and to shift their positions from outsider to insider. In my work, I found that women politicians often emphasised their biological roles as reproducers, mothers, sisters, educators, and contributors to the *ethnie* in pursuit of greater gender equality with men. This was not unusual given that the extent to which women have been able to work on women's rights and demands within nationalist movements has always varied across time and place (Vickers, 2002, p. 271). Sadly, the most common politicisation of women's rights in society has revolved around traditional gender roles and their contributions to the *ethnie*.

In their politicisation of authentic women's contributions to the *ethnie*/nation, women politicians have operated through several forms established by Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1989, p. 7). Theorists of gender and its relationship to the nation, state, and *ethnie* have generally opposed fixed forms of women's participation. Nevertheless, they have located five major forms through which women tend to participate in nationalist projects. The first and most common form of participation is as biological reproducers of members of their national collectives. The second form is as reproducers of the boundaries of their national groups (including restrictions on sexual or marital relations). The third form is as transmitters and producers of the national ideological reproduction of the collective and transmitters of culture. The fourth form is as signifiers of ethnic and national differences and the fifth and final form is as active participants in national, ethnic, military, political, or economic struggles. To politicise their positions within their communities and advocate for their rights, women have actively drawn on these roles. In this chapter, I use Anthias and Yuval-Davis' forms to explain how women have navigated their gender identities in order to advance their *ethnies*/nations/states and to problematise their own individual positions as women within them. Before I commence the analysis, I want to clarify that the second and third forms of women's participation in nationalist projects have been merged and are presented as one in this thesis.

My findings confirmed that women politicians today still tend to renegotiate their positions within patriarchal constructions of the *ethnie* (nation) without questioning the nation as a patriarchal construction itself. In most cases, I observed that representations of gender and the rhetoric of women politicians was consistent with the dominant nationalist narratives of 'dead bodies politics', a term coined by Katherine Verdery (1999, pp. 33, 36). In her work on post-socialist political transformations, she claims that dead bodies have specific properties that make them effective political symbols with the means for the accumulation of something essential for political transformation, such as symbolic capital. Dead bodies, thus, might serve as sites of political conflict related to processes of political reordering. Women politicians have used dead bodies from past wars – heroes and heroines – to justify the present political claims of their *ethnies* and to advance their moral authority as women of the *ethnie*. They have also claimed women's authentic agency in strengthening the *ethnie* by adding masculine traits to their own ideas of womanhood. In most cases, women politicians remained within the established traditional gender roles reserved for women in the state/*ethnie*/nation, thus, supporting patriarchal gendered constructions of the family, tradition, and gender order. They used gender both negatively and positively, depending on the context and the audiences they were speaking to.

In day-to-day politics, women politicians navigated between the peculiar dualities of gender and national identity, presenting themselves as traditional and modern or nationalist and civic, depending on the audiences. When it came to gendered representations, women politicians merged the modern discourses of women's rights with the traditional, patriarchal values of their *ethnies*. I remember one incident during which my young male Albanian interpreter, who had been translating one of the events of the LDK for me, began laughing when women politicians stated they would serve traditional Kosovo/a food after the conference on women's rights. He wondered, 'How come these women oppose traditional values, but for lunch they serve traditional food?' On the one hand, women appeared to oppose traditional values yet, on the other hand, they seemed to take pride in and promote them whenever they could. When it came to nationalist and civic duality in Kosovo/a, I witnessed the same woman MP speaking on women and democracy at an international conference in the morning and throwing tear gas to prevent the democratic voting process in the Parliament of Kosovo/a in the afternoon. Unequivocally, the relationship between gender and national identity, nationalism, and democracy was far from static. In this chapter, I explain how women politicians navigated the

demands imposed upon them by their *ethnies* and, in the case of Kosovo/a, by the international community.

In my work, I found that when it came to navigating between gender and national identity in politics, women politicians rarely recognised the 'double link' (Peterson, 1994, p. 83) of gender hierarchy (masculine over feminine) and nationalist domination (insiders over outsiders). According to Peterson (1994, p. 78), nationalism is gendered because the construction of group identity of what a nation is (allegiance, 'us' vs. 'them') depends upon the division between masculinity and femininity. The process of nationalism, therefore, presupposes gendered social relations. Nationalism, moreover, has naturalised domination ('us' vs. 'them') as it depends upon previous presumptions of the hierarchy of men/masculinity over women/femininity. In their views on gender and national identity, women politicians rarely noticed that denial of their rights lay within the hierarchical structure of the nation they actively worked to promote. As a result, women largely advocated for the recognition of women's contributions to the *ethnie*/nation through traditional gender roles.

Before I begin my analysis, I want to clarify the political context in which women began participating in formal political bodies in Serbia and Kosovo/a. The nexus between gender and the nation was an important determinant without which the political participation of women in the whole of the Balkans would not exist. Some of the women I observed during fieldwork, especially in Pristina, were elected because they were women of a certain *ethnie*. For example, MPs in the Parliament of Kosovo/a, Duda Balje and Emilija Redžepi, were political representatives of the Bosniak community. Their political participation was inseparable from their gender and national identities. This was mainly because they engaged in politics because they were women of the Bosniak minority in Kosovo/a. In one of her speeches at the UN Women's Conference, Balje clarified this point, stating that she had entered politics primarily because she was an educated Bosniak woman at the time when the Law on Elections in Kosovo/a had changed obliging political parties to include women. Therefore, her political party was forced to list women for the upcoming local elections and they approached her husband to request his permission to put her name on the list. After her husband had provided his approval, they approached her at home to ask for her permission. Thus, the opening of the political sphere for women did not come about voluntarily and as part of a natural progression within the political culture at the time. It was imposed under the pressure of the international community and under the umbrella of democratisation. That is not to say that there were no women in politics in the former Yugoslavia, nor is it to imply that there was an absence of

politicising ethnicity and gender. It was, however, a different political context. In the following analysis, I focus on the ways women politicians from Serbia and Kosovo/a have navigated their gendered and national identities in their political work. I present it through the five forms established by Anthias and Yuval Davis.

3.1. When a Nation is in Need: Women as Biological Reproducers

In their seminal work on women, gender, and the nation, Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1989, p. 7; 1996, p. 17) argue that women's role in biological reproduction is important for ethnic and national processes. Women are affected by, and they actively participate in, these processes through highly gendered roles. To bear children is considered the 'natural' role of a woman. Yuval-Davis (1996, p. 18) explains that there are three hegemonic discourses in relation to national reproduction: the 'people as power' discourse, the *eugenist* discourse, and the Malthusian discourse. She discusses how women are constructed within each of these three frameworks. The assumption behind the first discourse, 'people as power', is that the survival of the nation depends on population growth. Nations/states, therefore, consider ways to increase the population through different methods, from immigration through to policies that encourage women to bear more children. The second framework, the *eugenist* discourse, focuses more on the 'quality' of the nation in terms of the purity of race and blood. In this sense, countries apply different policies to encourage or discourage childbearing within different segments of the population marked by race, class, and ethnicity. The third framework, the Malthusian discourse, is based on a fear that the uncontrolled growth of the population might have disastrous consequences for the state. Women's fertility, therefore, must be controlled/regulated by the state and state policies.

In the context of the former Yugoslavia, all three discourses were used to mobilise for war and to organise against the ethnic 'other' by all sides in the conflict. In Serbia and Kosovo/a, nationalist depictions of women's fertility and observations of the high birth rate among the Albanian population were portrayed as a deliberate plan to build an 'ethnically pure' Albanian Kosovo/a (Bracewell, 1996, p. 26). Albanian women were represented as subordinate and controlled by their men. Serbian women were urged to give birth to more sons. I will write more about this later within this section. In further analysis, I demonstrate how women politicians engaged with these highly gendered discourses and how they politicised the biological contributions that women made to the nation.

It is important to mention that women politicians, and women in general, are not simply passive objects of hegemonic discourses. Women actively politicised these discourses in their advocacy for women's rights as a means of reasserting the unique female contributions to the *ethnie*/nation/state. Women politicians have typically drawn on traditional gender roles and identities as a basis for their political action – potentially reinforcing these identities (Ashe, 2007, p. 767). Consequently, gender discourses contributed to the construction of women's identities and roles and women themselves actively participated in making and reinforcing these constructions, using them for their individual and collective political gains. Without women's active participation in this process, nationalist discourses could not be sustained, especially in terms of biological reproduction and the preservation of ideological and political boundaries between *ethnies*. In further analysis, I offer several concrete examples of the politicisation of women's biological contributions to the *ethnie* from women politicians themselves.

According to Vesna Nikolić-Ristanović (1996, p. 360), all nationalisms in the former Yugoslavia have given women a special status as 'mothers of the nation' and 'protectors of offspring'. Women's bodies were regarded as production units and sites of political contestation during the wars of the 1990s in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Kosovo/a. The celebration of women as incubators of the nation has been written about as a form of disregard for women as people. It has produced a mass violation of the human rights of women as well as their reproductive rights and resulted in widespread SGBV against women. Christine Chinkin and Mary Kaldor (2013, pp. 167-168) explain that traits associated with masculinity are valued more highly than those associated with femininity in many spheres of life, especially those connected to political and military leadership. Given that all wars and conflicts are highly gendered, the masculine traits of physical strength, action, hardness, and aggression are valued more highly than, for example, passivity, empathy, care, and emotion that are largely defined as feminine. For this reason, women politicians have found an efficient way to politicise female biological qualities – such as the ability to give birth – equating their importance to fighting on the frontlines in the projects of raising a nation and winning war(s). Giving birth to sons of the nation was a female contribution to nationalist projects and some women, like MP Albulena Balaj Halimaj, were unafraid to voice these feminine traits as equally important to masculine ones in their pursuit of better positions for women of the *ethnie*.

In my research, I found that the biological role of women as reproducers of members of their ethnic collectives was perceived as one of the most important forms of women's participation

in the nation. Women politicians used it as a fundamental theoretical and political claim when they positioned themselves within a nation and advocated for greater women's rights. It was theoretical because the biological role of women was employed to analyse gender relations and it was political because it was also used to analyse women's reproductive rights (Yuval-Davis, 1996, p. 17). Women often politicised and renegotiated their positions within their *ethnies* by emphasising their contributions as biological reproducers. They frequently renegotiated their position as women within a patriarchal construction of their nations without questioning the patriarchal construction of the nation itself. Balaj Halimaj, an MP in Kosovo Parliament, explained:

> *'Albanian women or Kosovo women gave their contribution to the country, especially in the time of Serbian occupation, every male child that was born was called a soldier, the new soldier for our … Our mothers always give birth to eight or five children.'*

In her exploration on how women and men are constructed through the peculiar dualities of gender, such as private and public, femininity and masculinity, biological and cultural, Sara Ruddick (1995, 1980, p. 145) claims that, 'a boy is not born but rather becomes a soldier'. Hence, it is not biology that determines the gendered roles of boys and men as soldiers; it is, rather, political, cultural, and social practices that do so. These claims came from Simone de Beauvoir who theorised gender as an aspect of identity that is gradually acquired rather than a biological destiny (Beauvoir, 1989, p. 301; Butler, 1986, p. 35). In politicising women's roles as biological reproducers of the *ethnie*, Balaj Halimaj defined the gendered construction of newborn Albanian boys as soldiers and the related construction of women as biological contributors to the production of soldiers as positive. Balaj Halimaj's claims also served to provide evidence of women's equal participation in the Albanian nationalist project. She also pointed to the peculiar dualities of the nation, portraying Serbs as aggressive occupiers and Albanians as the defensively occupied. Balaj Halimaj politicised the biological roles of women by putting them at the centre of the *ethnie*, i.e. women as producers of 'common origin' were central to the ethnic myth (or reality) (Yuval-Davis, 1996, p. 17).

This should not come as a surprise. I have already elaborated on the notion that one is considered a member of an *ethnie* by blood and that blood is 'thicker than water' when it comes to familial ties in Serbia and Kosovo/a in the section 'Women Politicians and/in the Nation'. As blood defines the *ethnie*, the role of a woman in the production of new blood (baby, infant, soldier) defines a woman's position within the *ethnie* and demonstrates her authentic, irreplaceable contribution to it. Not only has the woman fulfilled her gendered, biological role

in becoming a mother but she has also fulfilled her gendered role as member of the *ethnie*, which is a much nobler goal according to nationalists. This idea is underscored by her contribution to the defence of the *ethnie* from hostile outsiders, which Balaj Halimaj among others, referred to as 'the Serbian occupiers'.

Throughout history, women have politicised their biological roles to advance their positions as women and as citizens of their own *ethnies*/nations/states. As aforementioned, gender, demographics, and population politics were important for nationalist mobilisation, even before the Kosovo/a conflict descended into war in 1998. The high birth rate of Albanian women in Kosovo/a, politicised here by Balaj Halimaj as women's contribution to the Kosovar state, was also used by Serbian nationalists to mobilise Serbian people for war and to call upon Serbian women to produce more children. High fertility rates among Albanian women in Kosovo/a were used to dehumanise Albanians as a nation and to portray them as backward, primitive, and animal-like. In the section on 'Roots', I explained certain dehumanisation practices that encompassed identifying the 'other' as someone who could not control their animal and sexual drives (Jahoda, 1999, p. 3). While Albanian women were portrayed as unemancipated baby incubators and their offspring as 'biological bombs' (Mertus, 2010, p. 178, 1996, p. 265), Serbian women were denounced for their emancipation, their low fertility rates, and their refusal to carry children for the nation (Bracewell, 1996, pp. 26-27). Thus, gender was an important part of the puzzle in Serbian nationalist logic (among other nationalisms) and in their mobilisation for war and their othering of the Albanians (Salihu, 2018).[47]

Highly gendered nationalist narratives led to the adoption of a new anti-abortion law in Serbia (Papić, 1999, pp. 160-163) that significantly curtailed the reproductive liberties of women. Albanian women's biological role, politicised by Balaj Halimaj as 'women's contribution to the nation', was crucial for the Serbian nationalists' portrayal of Albanian women as martyrs and Albanian girls as barefoot and pregnant. Some Albanian women (Salihu, 2018) attempted to challenge this narrative by arguing that the natality rates among Albanian and Serbian women in the 1990s from both rural and urban areas (i.e. uneducated and educated regions) of the country were similar, if not the same, and not as depicted by nationalists in Serbia. That

[47] Serbian nationalists also opposed the population politics of Josip Broz Tito who was a 'godfather' to every tenth child born in Yugoslavia and every ninth child born in Kosovo/a. The problem for Serbian nationalists was not the political practice itself but the fact that the majority of families in Yugoslavia that had nine or more children were Albanian. Serbian nationalists considered Tito a supporter of Albanian nationalism and separatism in Kosovo/a because of these policies (Pokret Obnove Kraljevine Srbije, 2018).

said, for both Serbian and Kosovo Albanian nationalists, the politicisation of women's biological roles as contributors to the nation served as an effective tool for nationalist domination. Some women politicians, including Balaj Halimaj, politicised the authentic biological contributions of Albanian women to the *ethnie* through the 'mantle of a martyr, the victim, saint position' (Mertus, 2010, p. 178).

Yuval-Davis (1989, 1996, 1991) points out the implications of women's political engagement in the construction of women as biological reproducers of the nation. Women's membership of the nation is of a 'double nature' because they are members of the collective, but their belonging is always undervalued and associated with specific gendered rules and regulations. As aforementioned, I found that women politicians questioned gendered domination (masculinity over femininity) within their nation but did not question the nation's domination itself. On a personal level, they often expressed disagreement with patriarchal gender roles and regulations and they advocated for the dismantling of gender relations within *ethnies*. However, this did not automatically translate into advocating for the dismantling of nations/*ethnies* themselves. On the contrary, women politicians worked to strengthen their *ethnies* by promoting traditional gender roles for women, potentially reinforcing them (Ashe, 2007, p. 767).

I observed this on numerous occasions during my fieldwork. For example, I travelled to Prizren to interview Balaj Halimaj as she did not have the time to meet with me in Parliament. She brought her eldest daughter to the interview, while her youngest child remained at home with her husband. We sat in a coffee shop near the river Prizrenska Bistrica below the Castle (in Albanian, *Kalaja*, in Serbian *Prizrenski grad*) that dates back to the 11th century Byzantine era. An old man selling honey approached us and as Balaj Halimaj agreed to buy a jar of honey from him, he began a dialogue:

'Lucky your husband to have you! Do you have children?'

'Yes, two daughters', Balaj Halimaj replied.

The man said, *'May God give you two sons'*.

'I hope that my daughters are healthy, just that …', she replied.

After the old man had left, she turned to me and said:

'One tradition we have is that we must have a son. Kenza is always asking for a brother, but I am happy with two daughters. Kids are kids, boy or girl, same to me. The bigger problem in Kosova is that the fortune of the house, inheritance, always goes to the boys,

men. The woman does not get anything, but I will change that, all will be equal, even if I have a son, it will be split equally.'

This dialogue revealed Balaj Halimaj's reconceptualisation of gender and national identity. It demonstrated her awareness of the damaging elements of a patriarchal and patrilineal society's practice of son preference and it showed that she did not intend to replicate these cultural traditions within her own family. On the one hand, she identified as a member of the collective, while on the other hand, she refused to adhere to some of its patriarchal rules and regulations for women. She refuted the practice of son preference within her own family that she otherwise supported in a different form through her statement on the importance of sons as soldiers.

Son preference is symptomatic for all patriarchal and patrilineal societies, from the Balkans through to societies across Asia (Cain, 1993; Denich, 1974; Gupta et al., 2003; Halpern et al., 1996; Mason, 1993; Sofos, 1996; Todorova, 1993). In my section on 'Roots', I explained that when women politicians advocated for certain cultural elements within their nations – such as roots, tradition, 'people as power', or *eugenist* discourses – they, in fact, reproduced the highly patriarchal, traditional, and gendered norms of their nations. This was mainly because their nations were founded on patriarchal and patrilineal social and cultural practices – the very systems that ascribed social positions to women according to gender and awarded men the principal roles in society.

In the first quote in this section, Balaj Halimaj praised Albanian women's contributions to 'people as power' and the *eugenist* discourses of her nation that encouraged women to give birth to many Albanian children (sons and soldiers). After the salesman's interruption, however, and his attempt to apply the discourse to her own situation (i.e. through his suggestion that she give birth to two sons with the help of God), she demurred. She reconceptualised the complex multidimensionality of national and gender identity; the public/collective one (every male child that was born was called a soldier) and the private/individual one ('I am happy with two daughters. Kids are kids, boy or girl, same to me'). Balaj Halimaj decided that, in her private life, she would not follow the narratives and the associated expectations of son preference imposed upon her by her patriarchal and patrilineal *ethnie* systems. However, she did not eschew her membership and solidarity with her state/*ethnie* because of this. Yet, as a participant in the ideological reproduction of the collective and a transmitter of culture (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1989, p. 7), her statement represented a significant departure from dominant gender narratives. Individually, she stated that she would not contribute to the nation through

the birth of sons/soldiers but, as a politician, she would continue to promote their importance as well as the traditional biological role of women as mothers in the reproduction of the nation.

Lois West (2014, p. xiii) argues that women in feminist nationalist movements actively struggle to define and reconceptualise their relationship to their states/nations/*ethnies*. Women's positions are neither homogenous nor even dualist; they are, instead, eclectic. Women often juggle competing roles within their households and families as well as in their societies and workplaces against the dominant nationalist politics of their states – as one role surfaces, the other recedes into the background. However, there is no doubt that women actively create and re-create opportunities for social change. Balaj Halimaj's departure from reproducing the cultural practices of her *ethnie* in relation to son preference was illustrative of how women politicians could recreate social change through the reconceptualisation of patriarchal gender roles. This, however, did not automatically lead to a reconceptualisation of nationalist domination of men over women or its patriarchal and patrilineal foundations.

Kosovo Serb politician Rada Trajković also reiterated the importance of women's biological roles in the reproduction of the nation. She claimed that 'birth becomes politics':

> *'You know, where you have a territory in which Albanians and Serbs are fighting for domination, every birth becomes political. When a Serbian child is born, they say, "One more for survival". When the Albanian child is born, they say, "One more for the conquest". Taking into consideration that the territory was always of the Serbian state since you are born, you know your side, you know your politics, and every movement beyond these borders is considered as a betrayal of national projects.'*

Similar to Balaj Halimaj's claims, Trajković drew boundaries between the *ethnies* at the beginning of her arguments, thus, promoting nationalist domination. In her claims, the roles of 'survivors' (Serbs) and 'conquerors' (Albanians) were clear at first. She also politicised women's biological roles as reproducers of the nation and placed the act of childbirth at the centre of state politics. I have elaborated in this section and in the literature review on several consequences of birth when treated as state politics in the former Yugoslavia and the world. Some ethnographies of the state have illustrated the tragic consequences for women and children when reproductive policies have been informed by ideological and religious tenets rather than consideration of the actual socio-economic factors that affect quality of life (Kesić, 2003; Kligman, 1998, p. 2; Papić, 1999; Ramet, 2010a). In the section 'Symbols, Myths, and Rituals', Trajković also praised the 'rural Kosovo Serb' and their readiness to sacrifice male

offspring for the preservation of the Serbian identity in Kosovo. In a similar manner to Balaj Halimaj, however, Trajković later reconceptualised gender and national identity on a personal level:

> *'As a mother, as a doctor, I would never give my children [to fight in war]. There is no price for which I would allow it, like the mother of nine Jugović's did. That time has passed and belongs to something else; I want life.'*

When it comes to mothering, 'holding' and 'letting go' are equal parts of maternal thinking and practice (Ruddick, 1995, p. 13; Scheper-Hughes, 1996, p. 354). Under conditions of scarcity and political turmoil, to hold on and to let go are two sides of the same coin. Trajković also reconceptualised her internal relationship with her nation while still maintaining clear boundaries between the nations (Serbs and Albanians). She recognised the gender hierarchy in refusing to accept certain rules relating to her as a woman/mother of the nation (i.e. to send her children to war). However, she did not recognise its link with nationalist domination, nor did she question it. She compared her motherhood (as a woman and a doctor) to the fatherhood of a Kosovo rural Serb and the motherhood of the mother of nine Jugović sons (in Serbian, *Majka devet Jugovića*). Unlike these examples of motherhood/fatherhood, in which each parent chose to 'let go', Trajković chose instead 'to hold'. In the section on 'Symbols, Myths, and Rituals', Trajković admired the virtuous role of letting go at the collective level for the sake of the nation and for the Serb nation's preservation in Kosovo and Metohija. At the individual level, however, she chose differently. Even though she strongly identified with her collective, she made a significant departure from the dominant expectations of the nationalist 'birth as politics' narrative on an individual level – by choosing not to sacrifice her offspring to war. However, this also did not automatically translate into a reconceptualisation of the nationalist domination of women and its patriarchal and patrilineal foundations.

Trajković's mention of the Kosovo Mother of nine Jugović sons had both gendered and nationalist political purposes. The statement implied a connection with gender because the Kosovo mother was a Serbian archetype for women as biological reproducers of the nation. The statement followed the nationalist ideology of Kosovo and Metohija as the cradle of Serbdom. Mother Jugović lost her nine sons in the Battle of Kosovo in a tragic, but heroic, defeat (Mostov, 1995, p. 106; Slapšak, 2005b, p. 103). In Kosovo epic songs, the Mother Jugović does not have a name, but is, instead, referred to by her role as a mother. Hence, she is the mother of nine sons and the wife of a hero, the old Jug Bogdan. In an epic poem about her death (in Serbian, *Smrt majke devet Jugovića*), she begs God for the 'eyes of the hawk and

wings of the swan' to fly to Kosovo and see if her sons had survived the battle. The poem ends with her holding the hand of her son and speaking to it, as if it were a living creature. She describes Kosovo as the place in which her sons' lives ended in great sacrifice:

My hand, my green apple,
where did you grow, where have you been cut!
You grew on my lap,
you were cut in flat Kosovo.

Kosovo Cycle epic poems are important as they narrate events from the Serbian nation's history depicting the bravery, heroism, tragedy, and struggles of Serbian heroes and heroines with 'varying degrees of accuracy' (Auty, 1980, pp. 196-207; Marinović, 2000, pp. 6-8; Sfetcu, 2014, p. 224). Melissa Bokovoy claims (2006, p. 159) that the characters of women and men in epic songs prescribe values for Serbian people. When Partisans in the 1940s mentioned Mother Jugović, for example, it was as a model for motherhood to remind women of their duty to send their sons to the partisan units (Batinić, 2015, p. 51). Female characters embody the traits that every real Serbian woman should possess, such as those of Mother Jugović (or of the *Kosovo Maiden*, discussed later in this section). Each deviation from the model of a real Serbian woman is sanctioned, not only by male members of the *ethnie* but by female members as well. I discuss this in the chapter 'Women Politicians, Democratisation, Gender, and/in the Nation'.

Many theorists of gender (Cock, 1992; Cockburn, 2007; Connell, 1987; Enloe, 2000, 2004, 2014b; Mežnarić, 1994; Moghadam, 1994a; Nagel, 1998) claim that both the nation and nationalism are hierarchical and gendered. Nationalism nourishes, and is nourished by, the subordination of women, whether it concerns racial, ethnic, religious, or even political fundamentalism. Women politicians recognised that women were still treated as 'outsiders' (Woolf, 1938, p. 107), even though they had contributed as biological reproducers and mothers to the 'liberation' or the 'perseverance' of their nations. At the same time, they politicised and renegotiated their own gender roles within their patriarchal nations, leaving national boundaries intact. The examples provided illustrate that women politicians were active participants in the nationalist processes of their *ethnies*/nations/states. They questioned and renegotiated the gender hierarchy within a patriarchal construction of their nations without questioning the patriarchal construction of the nation and nationalism itself. Even though, for example, it looked as if Trajković and Balaj Halimaj were renegotiating the nation through their individual decisions not to give birth to sons or to send their children to war, they still romanticised and promoted it at the political level.

A group of young, right-wing oriented Serbian women politicians who appeared in Izabela Kisić's (2015) documentary *'What Right-Wing Women Want'* positioned women's biological role as mother and their responsibility to reproduce the nation prominently on their political agendas. Specifically, they advocated for special gender-privileges for Serbian mothers. In the documentary, activist of Serbian People's Movement 'Ours' (in Serbian, *Српски народни покрет 'Наши'*) Mirjana Stanković claimed that women do not have to demand 'additional' rights because rights were guaranteed to them through childbearing. Women from this political movement advocated for the provision of different privileges to those who gave birth to children, including tax exemptions if they owned businesses. They also argued for the granting of particular benefits to women who bore more than one child, such as life pensions with the benefits increasing with each child borne. Thus, the greater the contribution made through motherhood, the greater the woman's value, and the greater the privileges. Young women politicians from this documentary promoted the biological role of 'mother' as the meaning of life for every woman. Thus, being a mother, daughter, and wife were 'privileged categories' in Serbian society. Stanković, for example, perceived children as a 'gift to the fatherland'. Women from the Serbian Radical Party, moreover, advocated for national retirement for women at 60 years of age if they had given birth to more than three children. For them, the responsibility of raising children was the highest 'national task' of a woman. Likewise, for the Women's Caucus of the political party Dveri, women's rights in Serbian culture stemmed from the Middle Ages in which a woman was a wise ruler whose task was childbearing: '(a) wise woman and a mother' was their political role.

According to women of the right, gender privileges are biological givens, similar to those of the *ethnie*. They claim that, as a woman fulfils her biological role of 'mothering the nation' (Alexander, 2014), rights and benefits should be automatically afforded to her. These young women politicians located women's biological and nurturing roles at the very centre of their political advocacy. They accepted the gender hierarchy and the masculinist narratives hidden behind the 'mothers of the nation' imagery and promoted it as proper womanhood. In their representations, other women – who refused to bear children for the nation or who did not fall under the archetype of proper Serbian womanhood – were often publicly shamed as 'foreign' or as 'Soroš mercenaries' (referring to George Soros, the American multimillionaire). They have often been pejoratively labelled 'whores', 'traitors', and 'Other-Serbs' (I explained the meaning of 'First-Serbs' and 'Other-Serbs' in the section 'Symbols, Myths, and Rituals'). Many publicly-outed feminists who advocated against, or questioned, the patriarchal concept

of the *ethnie*/nation/state and the gender roles imposed upon them by Serbian society were attacked. Irrespective of whether they had fulfilled their presumed biological roles, they were still considered outsiders because they recognised the links between gender hierarchy and nationalist domination. The key reason for their persecution was their lack of consent in serving the Serbian man and the Serbian *ethnie*. They were accused of anti-Orthodox Christian behaviours that eroded the family and defied men's authority, which, in turn, eroded the nation. The fight for women's rights (feminism) was regarded as disconnected from the nation and was equated with the imposition of 'individualism', which was viewed as extremely dangerous for national and familial unity and the 'natural' positions of women within them.

During one of my participant observations with MP Sanda Rašković Ivić, she took me to observe a radio talk show entitled, *'Bringing the Role of Mother Back to Women'*. The debaters included a psychologist and a journalist that both had quite critical views on gender/feminism. In comparison to these two, nationalist Rašković Ivić sounded moderately liberal. Debaters considered feminism, for example, the main reason why mothers must work ten hours a day and compete in the labour market. They all agreed that being a mother was the 'most important role for a woman', while patriarchy and capitalism were completely absent from their analysis. As Rašković Ivić described the situation:

> *'The archetype of a mother, the great pleasure of serving is present in every mother, and mothers who have a negative attitude and hate it, they hide something else. Women should be stimulated to be mothers and to have children. I must agree that to be a mother is the most important role of a woman because we leave new people on the planet and if we spend only one hour a day educating them [children], then we will leave bad people, the street will educate them. Women should have 100% paid maternity leave and the right to work only 50% for the next six years. "Mothers should have their own dinar" [Serbian currency]. It is very sweet for the children when mum gives them money to buy shoes. I think that the real emancipation is the economic one. It is irrelevant if we have 30 or 40% of us [women] in the Parliament unless we are not economically independent. We need a network against poverty, all women, right, left, centre, media, we need that a woman can be a mother and be able not to die or get sick because she doesn't have time for herself and gets sick because she must do ten things every day, by herself.'*

According to Rašković Ivić, the biological role of mother as one who serves others is the highest task for a woman and provides immense satisfaction. It also forms part of the archetype. State institutions, thus, must relieve a woman of the hard burden of the labour market and

motivate her for the role of childbearing. The paradox in this story was that Rašković Ivić, in contradistinction to her debating counterparts, believed that women should have their own money (income) so that they might give it to their offspring 'for shoes' or to ensure that they, themselves, had some level of protection in case of sickness or death. The question that arises from this paradox is: if both childbearing and the biological role of mother are important for the nation, why are they undervalued? Why does a mother need money for her own protection? Why does the nation not protect her automatically?

According to Jelena Višnjić (Kisić, 2015), the political claims of Serbian right-wing women are paradoxical because they use feminist terminology to advocate for Serbian patriarchal and traditional ideology, which regards women solely as wives, daughters, and mothers. The women's liberation movement in the former Yugoslavia advocated for universal rights for all women, irrespective of their *ethnie,* race, and sexuality. Right-wing women advocate for women's rights using feminist terminology while, at the same time, supporting gender hierarchy, which ensured that women would remain in the subordinate positions of mothers, daughters, and wives. Nada Sekulić (Kisić, 2015) claimed that the policies of women of the right-wing were predominantly hybrid; they were a synthesis of the political promotion of a modern women's rights discourse and the traditional patriarchal values of Serbian society. She claimed that nationalism and women's rights could not go hand-in-hand because nationalism was a 'unique discourse of discrimination' based on nature, similar to that of race. As one young woman from the political party Dveri explained (Kisić, 2015):

> *'Abortion … is a sin [for both the doctor and a mother]. Women do not need quotas, they are fake, they need mother privileges, to be tax-exempt because they are mothers. Women have many roles, daughter to someone, wife to someone, and mother to someone and this is the essence of life. To be wife, daughter, and mother is a privilege, women should care for their fathers and help mothers in the household. A son will help dad to wash the car and a daughter will help mum to make lunch. Women should be rewarded for "bestowing the children to the fatherland".'*

In this section, I presented how women politicians used hierarchical and nationalist discourses to prove their authentic biological contributions to the reproduction of the nation and to advocate for greater rights for women within it. I demonstrated that, on an individual level, women occasionally rebelled against the gender hierarchies that undervalued women's contributions to the *ethnie*. However, in their public politicising, they continued to promote

women's traditional gender roles as contributions to nationalist domination, including as biological reproducers of the nation.

3.2. Women as Drawers of Ideological, Symbolic, and Political Boundaries and Transmitters of Culture

Women are regarded as important for drawing ideological, cultural, and symbolic boundaries between *ethnies* and for transmitting cultural practices. According to Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989, p. 9), women's role as biological reproducers is controlled by encouraging women to have children through population policies and by promoting a 'proper' way to have or raise children. This makes them significant in the reproduction of the boundaries of their own, and their husbands', symbolic identities. Therefore, women are perceived as the main 'cultural carriers' of ethnic groups; they are the main socialisers of children and, in the case of ethnic minorities, they may be less socially and linguistically assimilated within wider society than their children. More often than not, women are required to transmit the rich heritage of ethnic symbols of their particular ways of life to their children.

In my research, I found that women often politicised and promoted the boundaries of their *ethnies* by reproducing the characteristics of an archetypical woman, adding their own personal positions into the story and creating an image of a 'real woman of the nation'. In this section, I elaborate on the politicisation of the different ideological, symbolic, and political boundaries used by women politicians in their advocacy for the recognition of women's contributions to the nation. In the first subsection, I use the example of the reproduction of a character from a Kosovo epic song, the Kosovo Maiden, as an archetype of a 'real' Serbian woman. The second subsection explains the contribution of Albanian women in the reproduction of ideological, cultural, and symbolic boundaries between *ethnies* to demonstrate how this helped bring about the final liberation of Kosovo/a. The third subsection addresses the reproduction of the highly gendered ideological, cultural, and symbolic boundaries of the purity of Bosniak women.

In their quest to prove women's contributions to the nation and their advocacy for equal positions within the state, women drew from traditional women's identities as a basis for political action, potentially reinforcing these identities (Ashe, 2007, p. 767). In their politicisation of gender and the nation, women politicians often invoked historical or prominent female characters who had been immortalised in heroic battles for the nation and described in epic songs, underlining their feminine characteristics and sacrifices. The archetypical woman

figure was a product of women's past and present experiences. I illustrate this through several examples of women politicians renegotiating their position within their nations by recreating the past in the present through the highly gendered symbolic and ideological patterns of their *ethnies*. Through this discussion, I endeavour to contribute to the body of literature that considers gender and gender roles as flexible categories that serve to renegotiate women's positions within their *ethnies*/nations.

Women politicians were not the only group of women who used gender traits to achieve their political objectives. Rachel Einwohner, Jocelyn Hollander, and Toska Olson (2000, p. 187) establish that many social movements claim or construct gendered identities to achieve goals, regardless of the nature of those goals and whether they were gender-related or not. This is part of a wider concept they term, 'gendered tactics'. In my research with women politicians from Serbia and Kosovo/a, I discovered that many women politicians also used gender traits to achieve their political objectives. In most cases, women referred to gender traits to prove their authentic contributions to the *ethnie's* struggles, to claim rights and privileges, and to advocate for greater gender equality with men. In the following text, I present the cases of three different women politicians and their attempts to revoke certain highly gendered cultural, political, and ideological boundaries in order to expose the gender hierarchy and assert nationalist domination.

3.2.1. The Archetype of a Serbian Woman: The Kosovo Maiden

Serbian MP Sanda Rašković Ivić held the Kosovo Maiden (in Serbian, *Kosovka Devojka*) as the archetype of a real Serbian woman. Originally, the Kosovo Maiden was a female character from Serbian epic poetry. In the same manner as Mother Jugović, the Kosovo Maiden does not have a name. Instead, her name is comprised of a location (from Kosovo/*Kosovka*) and her gender identity (in English, *Maiden*, in the original Serbian, *devojka* or girl). In Serbian epic poetry, after the Battle of Kosovo, the Kosovo Maiden takes a walk on a holy Orthodox Sunday through the Field of Blackbirds in search of her fiancé while carrying water, wine, and bread to tend to the wounded and fallen Serbian heroes. After some time walking and inspecting the corpses, she finds a wounded hero and while attending to him, she asks if he knows the destiny of her fiancé. In a dialogue in which they refer to each other as 'brother' and 'sister', the hero reveals that her fiancé was killed in the battle. The woman bursts into tears and curses her evil fortune. The scene of the Kosovo Maiden is recreated in a famous painting of Uroš Predić

(1919) where a young woman in Serbian national attire gently holds the head of a wounded Serbian hero in Kosovo's Field of Blackbirds, giving him a drink from a golden cup.

Over the years, the figure of the Kosovo Maiden has been politicised in various ways depending on the political context but always with a similar aim: to promote gender roles and to remind Serbian women of the personality traits they should possess. The archetype of a Serbian woman is a product of a traditional, national, patriarchal Orthodox Christian model that, according to Marina Bogdanović (2002, p. 2), supports violence against women. In these constructed projections, a woman is either a 'virgin mother' or a 'sinful mistress', two opposites that cannot be integrated into one (Vasiljević, 2012, pp. 99-100). In most cases, as Rašković Ivić suggested, the Maiden represents the proper Serbian woman who is feminine, devoted and nurturing, and ready to sacrifice for her man, her nation, and the family. In the late 1940s, Partisans evoked the image of the Kosovo Maiden to invite women to nurse the wounded and sick Partisan men (Batinić, 2015, p. 51). During the war in Bosnia in 1993, one of the all-female Serbian brigades was called 'the Maidens of Kosovo' (Kesić, 2010, p. 189) whose women fighters were represented as de-feminised, modern-day Amazons, warriors for the nation.

Serbian women politicians have frequently politicised the patriarchal gendered constructions of the women of the nation. Rašković Ivić, who also taught at the Community College for Nurses in Belgrade, often read about the Kosovo Maiden in the graduation theses of her female students. Not only did she politicise the Kosovo Maiden as an archetype in her work as an MP, but she also educated her young female students about the mythical figure:

> *'The painting is not only because of the codex and the content of [what is in a golden cup], it is because a woman is a nurturer, a wound curer, a woman that will help and nurture, protect the hero. Therefore, that protection of a hero is very interesting in a Serbian archetype, where a woman as the weaker one protects the hero and that would be one of the very interesting parts of Serbian national markers that, to some extent, the women themselves transmitted and strengthened.'*

In the constructions of gender and national identity and its symbolism, women usually take on passive roles even though they are very active in the reproduction of these complex social and cultural processes. The revival of the story of the Kosovo Maiden by Rašković Ivić and her young female students suggests a certain continuity in the transference of Kosovo Cycle symbols to new generations of Serbian women. Throughout history, women have used different forms to transmit national symbols. In this case, the Maiden and the Nation, female purity, and

the Kosovo Serbian legacy have merged into one unique destiny (Humphreys, 2013, p. 67). The Kosovo Maiden is an invented character who embodies the traits that every Serbian woman is expected to uphold, and these have often been politicised by women in politics. This confirms that women play an important role in transmitting the rich heritage of highly gendered ethnic symbols and medieval ways of life to other members of the ethnic group (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1989, p. 9).

3.2.2. Women as Motivators for Kosovo Albanian Liberation

In their advocacy for gender equality, Albanian women politicians often emphasised their traditional roles as educators of children during the crucial time leading up to liberation. In this subsection, I explore different strategies of Kosovo Albanian women politicians in advocating for the recognition of women's contributions to the nation. Specifically, I discuss the legacy of Kosovo Albanian women and their different contributions to liberation, from activism to the formal and informal education of children and, most importantly, the internationalisation of the Kosovo conflict. According to MP, Albulena Balaj Halimaj, Albanian women contributed to raising awareness of what it means to be a 'free person':

> *'Our mothers are the ones that provide children with education, culture, and motivation to live in a free country, to be a free person … Mothers give children the motivation for liberation as the right thing to do.'*[48]

Under the expression 'free person', Balaj Halimaj may have been referring to 'free from Serbian occupation', i.e. the fight for an independent Kosovo. Albanian women educated their children with the spirit of liberation at heart, not only at home, but also through an informal system of education.[49] Even though women were the minority among employees in the public sector, they contributed significantly through a so-called 'parallel system' of education, health, and social community services and through the Mother Teresa Society in the 1990s (Haug, 2015, p. 153). Parallel education was a hallmark of civil resistance (Luci and Gusia, 2015, p. 205).

Women did much of the legwork for the common struggle for the Albanian nation in Kosovo under Slobodan Milošević's regime. The Albanian national struggle in Kosovo was a highly

[48] Citation edited for clarity.

[49] Home schools were established after Slobodan Milošević introduced a new curriculum for the Albanian language program in Kosovo in 1990/91.

gendered one. Women's role in the struggle was to sacrifice for the nation, which had several forms. The first obligation involved giving birth to multiple children (as Balaj Halimaj observed earlier in this chapter). The second obligation related to women's work as caretakers and educators (both inside and outside the home). The third obligation concerned supporting men. Women's participation varied, from servicing roles to working in underground movements or, as Kosovo Albanian MP Mimoza Kusari Lila said, 'carrying weapons', taking up arms, and rarely leading troops. Various theorists on the region (Haug, 2015; Krasniqi, 2007a; Luci, 2014, 2005; Luci and Gusia, 2015) established that women did not achieve the positions they deserved in society after liberation. I discuss this in more detail in the section 'Women as Active Participants in *Ethnie* and Nationalist Struggles'.

In her role as MP, Balaj Halimaj politicised women's roles as educators and highlighted gender equality within the Albanian family in Kosovo. In her speech in Parliament on the occasion of International Women's Day, she called on parents in Kosovo to cease practicing gender discrimination within their families. She later contemplated these thoughts with me:

> *'We are the ones that educate men too, our sons will be the men of tomorrow. Our role is to educate our sons and we should not tell our daughters, "Bring a glass of water to your brother", or, "Do that for your brother" … Maybe this speech will be misunderstood, I hesitated to do it … Because women will think I am against women because I criticise them how they raise their daughters. But then, I said [to myself], "Someone has to do it" … Because some women see women as inferior to men… These women are raising their children to think that women are inferior.*

Two interesting paradoxes arose during discussions about gender and the nation in conversation with most women politicians in Kosovo/a. The first paradox was the absence of any hesitation in promoting gender roles and relations to highlight women's contributions to the nation. The second paradox related to the rebuttal of gender roles that appeared only when women's rights within the family and *ethnie* (with their own men) were at stake. In both paradoxes, gender roles and relations were strongly embedded. Only in the latter one, however, did gender roles become politically problematic for women politicians. The main reason for the paradox is that women's rights and demands in Kosovo/a were linked to nationalist demands. Women politicians claimed there was no difference between women and men during the national fight for Albanian independence. Both women and men, within the boundaries of their own roles, did whatever was needed in order to affranchise themselves from Serbian manacles. Kosovo Albanian women, similar to other women around the world (francophone

Quebec, Catalonia, and Scotland), constructed their identities as feminists within the nationalist movements of their communities (Vickers, 2002, p. 248). For most, advocating for women's rights through the promotion of gender roles by referencing women's contributions to the nation did not sound nationalist. It did not create any problems or internal conflicts for negotiating gender and national identities. In their claims, they emphasised the unity of Kosovo Albanian women and men acting together during the time of liberation. They also promoted women as important grummets in the chain for national liberation without which men would not have been able to succeed. They also endorsed the narrative that women were essential for winning the war through their gendered roles as biological reproducers and educators. For Albanian women, therefore, gender roles during this period were not as politically problematic as they are today because the national focus on liberation was more important than any other demand for women's rights.

Hitherto, gender roles and gender hierarchies have received different levels of support from women politicians within the Kosovo Albanian family and broader society. This is because women politicians and women, in general, recognised that their men appeared to develop 'amnesia', forgetting about women's contributions in the post-liberation period. Several texts on gender and Kosovo Albanian nationalism refer to women's claims that 'their men will not have amnesia' (Luci and Gusia, 2015; Mertus, 1996, p. 261). However, like in many liberation movements around the world, history seems to have repeated itself and, as soon as the liberation movement ceased, the sacrifices women had made to reach that point were largely forgotten. For this reason, the main strategy of Kosovo Albanian women politicians has become, not only the education of children on the definition of a free nation, but also reminding men of the great sacrifices made by women. The only problem with this kind of politicisation strategy was that it created a paradox. At the national level, it promoted the same gender roles that have been refuted at family and state levels. This might speak to gender as an embedded and flexible category that was often used for different political purposes.

In some cases, gender roles and hierarchies have been used to frame the desirable and undesirable behaviours of women and men within the nation and to 'police' women who failed to fall within the categories of mother and educator. In my research, it became evident that women felt more comfortable promoting gender roles in terms of contributions to the nation than promoting gender roles within their nations/states and families. Women often balanced the peculiar dualities of gender and national identity, either challenging or reaffirming the symbolic and ideological borders of both. In some of the examples previously mentioned,

Albanian women in politics worked against the politics of son preference and the devaluation of daughters in Kosovar society. At the same time, they promoted the gendered roles of women as biological contributors to the nation or as educators of children.

In her work, Haug (2015, p. 152) argues that recent studies on the role of Albanian women in Kosovo have one thing in common. While they are all critical of the influence of patriarchy on gender roles, they still seek to acknowledge women's participatory roles in the movement to assert national aspirations and resistance against the Milošević regime. Haug also acknowledges that feminist ideals have not been embraced by all women in Kosovo. Hence, women's active social participation remained in accordance with discourses on national resistance, which were decidedly anti-feminist in some cases. Kusari Lila stated that women contributed significantly to the education of Albanian Kosovars after WWII. Two other significant actions that women undertook, according to Kusari Lila, included 'taking off the scarf and going to school'. In the 1960s, there were already many women in the education sector teaching Albanian Kosovars to read and write. The other consequence of Kosovo Albanian women's education was their budding interest in male-dominated professions. Kusari Lila recognises that the crucial political moment was women's contribution to liberation through the internationalisation of the Kosovo conflict:

> *'The crucial point when actually women made a turn when it comes to pressure in Milošević's time was during the women's protest and women's movement. This was a time when actually women felt that whatever the consequences, or no matter the consequences, we have to raise our voices and we have to tell everyone what's going on in Kosovo. In 1998, during the Drenica Women's March [Bread for Drenica] in 1999, then was so much engagement of women for basic human rights, literally, it was not a politicised movement, it did not have in terms of political character that, after this, then we would turn into a political party, it was a national movement for human rights. Then the organising of these women, different women, doctors and nurses with the Mother Teresa Foundation or association that actually created a parallel system of health because we were ousted completely from the hospital. All of this, I see it as evolving, you realised that everything you see in society had great women's involvement and it shaped us.'*

It could be said that, among Kosovo Albanian women politicians, there was a consensus on women's authentic participation in Kosovo Albanian statehood. Without exception, they all emphasised women's crucial roles in winning the war and in shaping the Albanian Kosovo/a

nation of today. Even though Kusari Lila claimed that the organising of Kosovo Albanian women did not have a 'political character' because it did not result in a political party in the aftermath of liberation, it would be misleading to claim that it was completely apolitical. Women played crucial roles in the internationalisation of the Kosovo question, especially in drawing on gender traits to attract the support and attention of the international community for Kosovo independence. Mertus (2010, pp. 173-174) explains that Albanian women participants sponsored by the parallel Kosovo government decorated an NGO forum with photos of Ibrahim Rugova, the Kosovo Albanian leader, and Adem Demaçi, (colloquially referred to as the 'Albanian Mandela'), at the Women's International Conference in Beijing in 1995.[50] Kosovo Albanian women spoke of Albanian victimhood and Serbian violence instead of gender and women's rights, such as domestic violence, early marriages, the lack of reproductive rights, access to labour markets, and education. On the one hand, the image of a woman was used to bolster the larger Kosovo Albanian identity as that of a victim and the Serbian identity as that of a perpetrator. For Kosovo Albanian women, the cost of being Albanian meant the loss of other identities, i.e. that of 'woman'. On the other hand, women who placed gender problems ahead of national ones were policed and accused of undermining the national struggle. According to Mertus, only women and women's groups who spoke in an affirmative manner regarding nationalism and liberation were safe to stand out in Kosovo/a.

Extensive research from the Balkan region has already established the gendered character of ethnic nationalism and the ways national movements are used to construct gender differences to advance war tactics (Batinić, 2001, 2001; Bracewell, 2000; Brownmiller, 1975; Collin, 2012; Hansen, 2000; Hassentab et al., 2015; Helms, 2013; Herr, 2003, p. 138; Hughes et al., 1995, 1995; Kesić, 2003; Krasniqi, 2018, 2007a; Mertus, 2010, 1999, 1994; Mlađenović et al., 1993; Nikolić-Ristanović, 2000; 1996; Ramet, 2010a; Sofos, 1996; Taylor, 2000). Albanian women in politics were particularly proud of their participant roles in nationalist processes. On the occasion of the 19th anniversary of the Drenica March, Vlora Citaku (2017), the Ambassador of the Republic of Kosovo in the U.S., reiterated that, 'Kosovo women have been instrumental for building up Kosovo's statehood'. The March of Bread for Drenica Women and Children was only one of a series of events that Albanian women politicians frequently mentioned to

[50] Adem Demaçi was imprisoned for 28 years by Josip Broz Tito for his political collaboration with Albania.

prove women's internationalisation of the Kosovo conflict and their contributions to the Albanian Kosovo/a nation.[51] As Citaku (2017) stated:

> *'Draw the attention of the international community to the atrocities of the Serbian regime against women and children in Drenica. The Serbian police forcefully stopped this March. However, these courageous Kosovo women continued to persevere and battle the apartheid logic until Kosovo's liberation. We don't have to look far for examples, women like Xheve Lladrovci, Fahrije Hoti, Majlinda Kelmendi are there to remind us every day that wisdom, strength, and courage are gender blind.'* [52] [53] [54]

In order to enhance her claims for women's participation, Citaku uses claims of 'gender blindness' as a positive political argument. In most feminist theory (Budlender, 2002, 1998; Elson, 2004; Himmelweit, 2002), especially in relation to the political participation of women in history and economics, gender blindness has negative connotations and it serves to demonstrate that the experiences of women remain unaccounted for. The term has been used to criticise the gender neutrality of laws, institutions, budgets, and policies and the lack of women's participation. Citaku, however, found a successful way of turning a predominantly negative gender term into a positive one. The goal was to reclaim women's ownership over traits that are typically defined as masculine, such as 'wisdom, strength, and courage' and assign them to Albanian women because of their indispensable participation in the liberation of Kosovo.

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[51] The protest was attended by 12,000 women carrying bread and walking from Pristina to Drenica (Clark, 2000, p. 175).

[52] Xheve Lladrovci was the wife of the Kosovo Liberation Army commander, Fehmi Lladrovci. She died in clashes with Serbian forces. She was especially celebrated for her high rank in the predominantly male KLA structures, her heroic death fighting for liberation, and for her refusal to leave her husband's side until the 'last breath'.

[53] Fahrije Hoti was a war widow from the village Krusha e Madhe, also known as the Village of War Widows because of the killing of its entire male population during the war (Embassy of Kosovo in Washington, DC, 2018).

[54] Majlinda Kelmendi is Kosovo's first Olympic medallist (CNN, 2018). Media has often represented her as a woman who could have been wealthier if she had accepted offers to compete for another country but, for patriotic reasons, she chose to compete under the flag of Kosovo/a. For this sacrifice, made out of love for her nation-becoming, she has been celebrated as an example of a true woman patriot.

3.2.3. The Poetics of Womanhood: Real Bosniak Women

Bosniak women in politics have used the slightly 'softer' political strategy of utilising gender roles and images to prove their unequivocal support for men in national struggles. In the political narratives and claims of Bosniak women in Kosovo/a, the brazen-faced, rebellious women who fought alongside their men were relatively absent. The gendered images, instead, have tended to parallel gendered essentialisms of women as feminine, innocent, pure, and chaste: women who place family and tradition before their own needs. As MP and Bosniak representative in Kosovo Parliament Duda Balje explained:

> *'The first association to a Bosniak woman, to me, is something clean. Firstly, it reminds me of something white, something clean. Our women are women who respect the family, that is very important. Let's say, I lived and grew up in Novi Sad [North Serbia, Vojvodina region]. I came to Prizren to get married and I stayed here to make my family. For my mother, it was never important how much education I get, whether I am a Ph.D. or not, nor is it important that I am an MP or not. For her, it is most important that my husband is satisfied with me and my children are satisfied, alive, and well and that she sees that … So, the first thing that is asked from a Bosniak daughter, or a Bosniak mother, is the creation of the family and the preservation of the family as is. So, not as traditional as before, but far more serious than a family we can see in the Western world. Our women are clean, hardworking, ready for all. They are so hospitable that you can even feel uncomfortable. I would be so happy if I could compete with them. But, I can't. After all, I am a woman that has a job and I have far less time than them. I think that, here in Kosovo, everyone has so much to learn from Bosniak women.'*

In the section 'Symbols, Myths and Rituals', I explored the complex historical processes involved in how the Bosniak nation was constructed. I mentioned that the origin of claims associated with tolerance, innate peacefulness, and the presentation of Bosniaks as adaptable, peaceful, and neighbourly stemmed from historical narratives about the becoming of the Bosniak nation. In the complex political history of the Bosniak *ethnie* – always located in-between greater nations/powers and inevitably enduring a lack of recognition and rights – lies the moral ground for their claims to purity and victimhood in the present political context. The collective innocence of the Bosniak nation has now been applied to Bosniak women in Kosovo/a. Women's acceptance of their own perceptions of natural peacefulness and struggle is inevitable in dangerous environments. Undoubtedly, the struggle has shaped the Bosniak

collective's self-perceptions of innocence as they have always had to defend themselves against others. Women have integrated these forms of being into their political claims for women's rights. For Bosniak women in politics, their men are pure and innocent, but their women are even more so.

Friedrich Engels (1884, p. 36) wrote that 'within the family, he is the bourgeois and the wife represents the proletariat'. This is a great analogy to more closely examine how Bosniak women politicians described their relationship to other *ethnies* of the former Yugoslavia (Croats, Serbs, Albanians), their women and menfolk. For Bosniak women in politics, other *ethnies* of the former Yugoslavia and their women were the bourgeoisie and Bosniak men were the proletariats. Consequently, Bosniak women were the 'proletarian of the proletarian', to borrow a term from Flora Tristan (cited in Bard, 1995, p. 58).

Unlike the perception of the Western family as frivolous and loose, the Bosniak family was perceived by its own as serious and closed and this nature was considered a legacy of women's active roles in conserving the family structure in its traditional form. Bosniak women were envisioned as caring about the preservation of the Bosniak family and its traditional values, which is one reason why their familial structure is still considered solemn. Similar to Albanian and Serbian women, Bosniak women followed familiar notions of gender relations as accepted by the majority community. Conforming to gender essentialisms seems like the most common political strategy used to reclaim women's power in public discourse.

As in the cases described earlier, Bosniak women have engaged in many small rebellions against the established gender hierarchy and the imposition of their roles within their community. I endeavour to highlight these efforts throughout this section. Most of the politicisation of gender and its representations, however, has revolved around the familiar and rooted narratives of traditional gender roles, victimhood, and 'organized innocence' (Jalušić, 2007, pp. 1181-82). The narratives were used to shield the nation and the women against any form of responsibility even before responsibility was brought into question. This absolute state of cleanliness of Bosniak men and women has stemmed primarily from the beginnings of the Bosniak nation and their victimisation in the most recent war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, i.e. the Srebrenica genocide and their position as, not the first, but the second minority in Kosovo.

The politicisation of women's purity is not a new phenomenon, it is rather common. In some cases, it has been a very efficient strategy to advocate for women's rights within the *ethnie*. This was predominantly because women's purity, in general, falls under 'acceptable

femininity' (Ashe, 2007, p. 782). Emphasising women's purity is a common political strategy among all women politicians and has frequently been employed to advance the political agency of Bosniak women and to make their claims to innocence more credible. As demonstrated in the case of the Serbian Kosovo Maiden and Mother Jugović, for example, women who exhibit saintly virtues that serve the nation have been perceived as more credible than women who refuse to do so. To frame women as pure, or to fit the figure of a 'good woman', means constantly proving one's moral and sexual purity, chastity, and innocence (Bernstein, 2011, p. 41; Ticktin, 2017, p. 580). This has been echoed throughout history and is especially visible in cases of rape where the burden of proof is reversed. Instead of proving the guilt of attackers and prosecuting them, women are automatically considered guilty, their sexuality is policed, and they are expected to prove their own innocence.

Similar to their Serbian and Albanian counterparts, Bosniak women politicians have also drawn on traditional gender roles and identities as a basis for political action, potentially reinforcing these identities (Ashe, 2007, p. 767). In Balje's representation of Bosniak women, they have been portrayed as the embodiment of whiteness, purity, and guardianship of the Bosniak family. We should not forget, however, that these depictions may also be used as tools for policing women who fail to fit within these preconceived gendered images. In some of the cases I observed, the use of these images worked against the women politicians who promoted them. I witnessed judgment among Bosniak women because their 'blood was not purely Bosniak', the 'location of their birth' was not Kosovo/a, or their 'clothes were not deemed appropriate' for a Bosniak woman. One female Bosniak politician shared that she had been outed from her *ethnie* because she was not a candidate of a Bosniak political list, but was part of the list of the 'other' nationality in Kosovo/a. Blood, the location of birth, women's sexuality, and political affiliations were considered important zones of every nationalist topography. This might be the reason why Bosniak women politicians chose to project the familiar images of a Bosniak woman crafted by their *ethnie*, rather than others.

Miriam Ticktin (2017, p. 580) claimed that gender configurations suggest women are easier to understand if they are presented as apolitical victims and can, therefore, more easily fit traits associated with moral purity. For both the MPs in Kosovo Parliament who I observed during fieldwork, Balje and Redžepi, a Bosniak woman was the 'pillar of the family'. As Balje claimed:

> *'A Bosniak woman is responsible for the quality of the culture in our community, preservation of tradition, respect towards the elders. Because, if you respect the elders,*

your children see it and they will respect you. My father worked outside of the house … so, the woman was the pillar of the house, in a true sense of that word … pillar in the sense that she was taking care of elders, the house, education of children, everything … Women projected the husband, house, and the family. All of us, now, try to practice this in a modern way and in accordance with our possibilities, and it's very important …'

The promotion of traditional gender roles may seem like a good political strategy for advancing Bosniak women's contributions to the *ethnie*/state/family. However, its potential for stretching the boundaries of gendered hierarchies within the Bosniak *ethnie* is questionable. The stretches, if any, are often minimal and completely confined to the *ethnie.* As previously mentioned, in the past, it was not unusual for the same political claims that celebrated a woman as the guardian of the home, culture, and traditions to be used by others in the Bosniak community to police women who fell outside the narrative. Svetlana Bajić (2013, p. 46) explains that between 1463 and 1878 the Muslim woman was viewed as the pillar of the family. Her duties and obligations were to help her husband and raise the children. The politicisation of Bosniak women suggests that the situation has not changed significantly and the moral qualities and traditional roles of the Bosniak nuclear family are, therefore, guarded, preserved, and transferred by the women themselves today.

Swanee Hunt (2004, p. 309) argues that these ideas evolved from women's immediate experiences. If women were brought up to be bad housewives, the family would collapse. In one of our conversations, for example, Balje expressed pride that Bosniak, 'women who live in Switzerland marry a Bosniak man and return to Kosovo to organise a Bosniak traditional wedding in their village'. This was the ultimate proof of a Bosniak woman's devotion to the maintenance of a certain gender order and 'tradition'. Balje admitted that tradition often 'ensures the peace' for women. This peace was maintained only if a woman remained within the margins of the normative gender behaviours prescribed by the ethnic community. This meant that she unequivocally agreed to play the role of the 'pillar of the family'; a role that was, unfortunately, largely guarded and promoted by the women themselves. Balje also recognised that this kind of politicisation of traditional gender roles 'does not guarantee significant progress to women if they want to succeed'. For example, she stated:

'We have so many educated women that want to be teachers, just because they think they will be protected. Because that profession is defined as 'women's profession' and they say, "well I want to be a teacher, I want something peaceful" …'

According to Balje, remaining within the confines of the appropriate behaviours prescribed for women was a safe response, but not a revolutionary one. Being aware of the limitations of a particular position, however, does not necessarily result in the refutation of it. Ann Snitow (1990) analyses the position of women in ethnically divided societies. She claims that women cross the border of the house into the political and public arena to politicise certain women's issues like security, integrity, work, and education. However, most of the claims made are drawn from, and based on, traditional identities.

Advocating from a traditional perspective does not offer significant transformative potential for women by any means. Balje herself recognised this but, even so, she did not alter her strategy of representation based on the social expectations of how Bosniak women should appear. At an event during Women's Week organised by NDI in Pristina, for example, two young Bosniak women, who were both emerging leaders for the Bosniak political party, attempted to explain the position of young Bosniak women in Prizren to a group of their peers from a predominantly Serbian community:

> *'Women in Prizren [Bosniak] are not active, they get married very young and have children, stay at home. This is also their perception, that there is nothing else for them, so they only look to get married.'*

The moderator of the panel was, judging by accent, a Croatian woman from the urban centre and had been attempting to negate the experiences of the two young Bosniak women by saying that they, 'must stop stating that young women are not active'. This made a journalist from Radio Television of Kosovo 1 furious. She interrupted the moderator:

> *'In their communities, it is like that, they are telling you the truth! In their place, you will see only boys playing outside, not the girls, they are at home. To talk to the person that is not from their community, they need the permission of their father or a husband.'*

Democratic changes in Kosovo/a, pushed by small number of politically active Albanian women and Western internationals, opened the doors of politics for Bosniak women. However, democratisation did not erase patriarchal gender relations in the Bosniak family. For Bosniak women, asking permission to exit the home transformed into asking permission from their husbands to enter politics or, in the case of Balje, to be added to the political list for the upcoming elections. As previously mentioned, Balje's party colleagues obtained permission from her husband for her to be listed as a candidate before actually asking her. Moving away

from the restrictive traditional norms assigned to Bosniak women is hard and unsafe and requires balance. As Balje observed:

> *'I live in a multi-ethnic drum [Kosovo] where everything is turning around, interests and groups are changing, and you have to doze your insolence. Normally, in a positive manner, but always in the interest of your community [ethnie]. However, it is, I think, not good to give in all the time. I am teaching my daughter to be like this way [not to give in and to doze the insolence], but I also teach her to respect her husband, her children, and the elderly. A woman is not successful, if she's not successful in her home, primarily.'*

The political strategy of promoting women as 'pillars of the family' is safe, but not revolutionary, and it could be both beneficial and harmful to women. It could be regarded as beneficial in helping women prove their worth and in persuading men to acknowledge their contributions to the *ethnie* and, in some cases, in securing certain rights. It could be considered harmful because the same kind of politicisation was often used for policing women who attempted something different, rather than settling for serving the *ethnie*/nation/family at all times. During her presentation at the International Women's Day conference, organised by UN Women in Pristina, Balje explained:

> *'You must talk with the girl that wants to do politics and then with her father and husband … I organised the conference once. It was called, "With high-heels through thorns and stones". With the title, I wanted to depict how politics looks like to young women … Comments coming from men because of the title were so terrible! Even women called me and said, "Duda, go home, cook, and clean. What are you doing in politics? You have a home and a husband and kids…" Women do not understand you!'*

Women in male-dominated nationalist societies often draw from traditional women's identities as the basis for political action, potentially reinforcing those identities (Ashe, 2007, p. 767). In this case, promoting women as 'pillars of the family' was used against Balje when she attempted to promote women's political participation and bring more young women into politics. She was policed by both men and women of the *ethnie*. The simultaneous politicisation of women as good wives and mothers and guardians of the Bosniak family alongside the promotion of women as politicians was not a successful strategy for Balje. These forms of political engagement do not usually challenge the traditional ideology of femininity (2007, p. 779).

Redžepi claims that the politicisation of the traditional role of women as 'pillars of the family' was a great basis for political action:

> *'I consider that a woman is a pillar of the family and, if she can be the main actor within her family, why could she not give her contribution to public life and society as a whole?'*

Throughout this section, I have explained the different ways women politicians drew ideological, symbolic, and political boundaries and transmitted their culture to 'self' and 'others'. The first subsection dealt with Serbian women politicians and their means of promoting traditional women's identities through the figure of the Kosovo Maiden. The second subsection analysed how Albanian women politicians drew on traditional women's identities as educators to prove their unique contributions to liberation and to advocate for equal positions alongside men. The final subsection presented the modes through which Bosniak women politicised traditional women's identities to advocate for women's rights. Each of the three cases confirm that the promotion of women's political participation through the politicisation of traditional women's roles has limiting potential.

3.3. Women as Signifiers of Ethnic and National Differences: *Shkijet, UĆK,* and *Šiptarke*

Women not only impart the ideological and cultural traditions of their *ethnies*, but very often they constitute their symbolic figuration. According to Yuval-Davis (1993, p. 627), women often symbolise the roots, the spirit, and the national project itself or the national 'honour'. In some cases, the distinction of one group from another was constituted by the sexual behaviour of women. The actual behaviour of women, moreover, can often signify ethnic and cultural boundaries. One method of retaliating against women who betrayed collective honour was mass head shaving. This happened to women accused of befriending Nazi soldiers from different European countries after WWII (Warring, 1996; Yuval-Davis, 2003, p. 18).

Women as signifiers of their *ethnies* or collectives in Serbia and Kosovo/a was particularly important as gender was a trump card for all political leaders and the media during the conflict and in its aftermath. Gender was used to manipulate and construct truths about 'us' and 'them, 'our women' and 'their women', 'our men' and 'their men'. It was used to mobilise and divide the populace and sound the alarm for conflict (Mertus, 1996, p. 262). The political use of sexual and gender-based violence as a tool of national victimisation for all ethnic identities was a dominant political strategy of every nationalist leader involved in the conflict (Banjeglav,

2011, p. 23). In short, the exploitation of femininity, masculinity, and gender was crucial for wartime mobilisation (Kesić, 2010, p. 187). In the first part of this section, I explore how women politicians in Kosovo/a were perceived and treated as signifiers of the ethnic other. In the second part, I explain the ways in which women politicians in Serbia and Kosovo/a participated in the construction of nationalist narratives of women as signifiers of the *ethnie* other.

Anne McClintock (1993, p. 62) claims that women are typically constructed as the symbolic bearers of the nation in male nationalisms but are denied a direct relationship to national agency. Thus, the differences between men and women are deployed to symbolically define the limits of national difference and power between men. This is particularly visible throughout the following section, especially in terms of the use of traditional gender roles by women politicians to reclaim agency and authentic contributions to nationalist projects. It is also evident through the nature of their common rebellions against the established gender hierarchy, but rarely against nationalist domination. The political participation of women is never entirely feminist or nationalist and it always holds the potential to change political narratives depending on the likely challenges to traditional gender roles.

A Serbian politician who spent significant time working for Kosovo security forces was often called *shkijet* by her Albanian colleagues.[55] The word was used by Albanians to describe Slavs as 'the neighbouring foreigner' (Pipa, 1989, p. 178). Among the Kosovo populace (both Albanians and Serbs), however, it had a highly derogatory meaning. This Serbian politician understood *shkijet* to mean 'pig'. She stated that her Albanian male colleagues shouted the term at her in passing or whenever she attempted to impose any orders upon them. Occasionally, she fought back and punished those who said it, given that she was of higher professional rank. After work, when she returned to her family and her community in one of the isolated Serbian enclaves, Serbians frequently shouted 'UĆK' (the Albanian abbreviation for *Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës – UÇK* or *Kosovo Liberation Army [KLA]*). Interestingly, her male *ethnie* compatriots (Serbs) used the Albanian abbreviation for KLA, rather than the Serbian one. Shouting UĆK to a Serb was a means of alienating her from her own *ethnie* and labelling her a 'traitor', a person who consorted with the enemy without her *ethnie's* approval.

[55] *Shka* (m.); *shkinë* (f.), plural, *shkijet*, is a derogatory term in Albanian used to describe Serbs (Oral History Kosovo, 2017, 2016).

After some time spent in Kosovo, I discovered that the approval for deviating from national projects within the Serb community must come from two primary sources. The first source was the nation or, as Serbians might phrase it, 'from above', which originates from Belgrade (meaning the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić). The second source of approval must come from the family, a father, primarily. It is a matter of patriarchy, hierarchy, order, and power, i.e. Belgrade is above Kosovo and Metohija and the father stands above the woman/daughter in the family. This woman, unfortunately, lacked approval from both sources and she suffered various forms of punishment as a result. Both communities with which she interacted (Serbian and Albanian) treated her as symbol of the 'other'. For Serbs, she was a collaborationist because real Serbs did not collaborate with the enemy let alone work for/with them unless they were instructed to do so by their menfolk for a higher, nobler national or political purpose. For the Albanians, she was the 'other' (a Serb), the enemy, *shkijet*. The primary reason for her disapproval in both communities was her *ethnie*, while her gender was secondary. As a consequence, she resigned from her job because of threats to her family and her father's refusal to speak to her for several months.

Armstrong (1982, p. 8) introduced a system of 'border guards' to explain the concept of belonging to a community. In a 'border guard' system, linguistic symbols are used to delimit group boundaries. On the one hand, the term, *shkijet* served as a border guard intended to delimit this Serbian woman by both blood and vernacular and demonstrate that she did not belong to the Kosovo Albanian community and 'their' institutions. The community rejected her on the basis that she represented a signifier of the ethnic other. On the other hand, in her own community, the abbreviation 'UĆK' served to oust her for overstepping gender and national hierarchy. Serbs disowned her for her position as a woman politician who consorted with Albanians without approval from the *ethnie* and/or the family. In a like manner, as a Serbian woman who lived in the enclaves and worked for Kosovo institutions, she disturbed many of the traditional perceptions of acceptable 'femininity, masculinity and social order' (Enloe, 1983, p. 7) of both communities. As a woman, she did not naturally belong to a male domain like security structures or politics. As an ethnic Serbian woman, she did not belong to Kosovo Albanian security structures, especially as she did not have approval to be there. In between a couple of very deep breaths and shrugging of the shoulders, she clarified the motivation behind her political participation:

'I wanted to help my people, to build roads and protect Serbian men that are a part of security structures. I had the power to deliver help where needed, make possible for the roads to be built, they [Serbs] don't understand that …'

The woman was promoting traditional gender roles, similar to those embodied by the Kosovo Maiden, where women's political engagement was discussed in reference to the protection of her fellow *ethnie* men, rather than her own political goals. She lacked the permission of her *ethnie* and her family, however, and so she fell outside the traditional archetype, regardless of her belief that her personal political engagement contributed to its maintenance. This was mainly because the borders of ethnicity, nationality, and gender were not rigid categories. In the case of this Kosovo Serbian woman, Serbian nationalism accepted only certain images of Kosovo Serb men and women. In addition to the sharing of primordial blood, roots, language, and history, they must share an arguably more modern nationalist characteristic, that is, political approval from Belgrade (be a member of the Serbian List).

Some women politicians directly participated in the construction of nationalist narratives that treated women as signifiers of the *ethnie* other. An MP in the Serbian Parliament, Marija Janjušević, protested the movie *'Follow Us'* (2015) about an initiative of female parliamentarians from Serbia and Kosovo/a that promotes women's active involvement in peace building. Her main objection to the initiative was her dislike of a section of the movie in which *'Šiptarke'* speak in *'Šiptarski'*, which was deliberately not translated into the Serbian language. Janjušević emphasised that she could:

'Talk with those women about gender equality and the consequences of the NATO bombing to the spreading of cancer caused by low levels of uranium, but only if Kosovo and Metohija are considered a part of Serbia and if they are not representing their "Republjik"'

Janjušević used ethnic and linguistic 'border guards' (Armstrong, 1982, p. 8) to oust Kosovo Albanian women as signifiers of ethnic and national differences. As demonstrated, both Albanians (who call Serbs *Shkijet*) and Serbs (who call Albanians *Šiptar*) used name-calling in their practices of othering and dehumanisation of the ethnic other. This is a well-known behaviour observed in theories of nationalism and ethnicity (Bauman, 2000; Chalk and Jonassohn, 1990; Haslam, 2006, p. 252; Jahoda, 1999; Kelman, 1973; Moller and Deci, 2010). Janjušević used a derogatory Serbian term for Kosovo Albanians, *'Šiptarke'*, and the word *'Republjik'* to define the ethnic and national differences between them. In Serbian, *Šiptar* (in

Albanian, *Shqypetar*) is an ethnonym originating from *Sqyperia* (for a country, Albania) or *shqype* (in Albanian, *eagle*) (Horvat, 1988, p. 28).[56] When uttered by a Serbian person and written in Serbian language, *Šiptar* has derogatory inferences and implies cultural and ethnic inferiority. When employed by Albanians in Albanian, *Shqypetar* defines, more simply, an Albanian person (Wilmer, 2002, p. 282). Janjušević's use of the word *'Republjik'* (in Serbian and Albanian, *Republika*) with an accentuated *'lj'* mimics the Albanian language and the Kosovo self-proclaimed independence, i.e. their so-called 'Republic'. Serbians use a hard 'lj' when they mimic the sound of the Albanian language and, in most cases, it has disparaging implications. Representing 'our' nation as superior is at the heart of all nationalisms and, for Janjušević, it was also central to how she navigated gender and national identities. While she recognised gender hierarchy and claims that Kosovo Albanian and Serbian women could talk 'gender equality', she exercised absolute national domination by accentuating that talking was only possible if Kosovo Albanian women renounced their national/state identity. This meant recognising that Kosovo and Metohija were still part of Serbia.

During one of our coffee breaks between Parliament sessions, Bosniak MP Emilija Redžepi shared another example of women politicians and their direct participation in the construction of nationalist narratives of women as signifiers of the *ethnie*. The story was based on the split with her Serbian childhood best friend who used to live in her building in Prizren. During the Siege of Sarajevo in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Markale Market bombing in February of 1994, her friend said to her cheerfully:[57]

> *'Did you see what "ours" did in Bosnia? They hurt them really well!'*
>
> Emilija asked, *'Who is "ours" and who are the victims?'*
>
> The Serbian friend responded, *'Muslim Bosniaks'*.
>
> Emilija asked her Serbian friend, *'And what am I? What am I?'*

Her Serbian friend had fled Prizren, as did most Serbs, after the Serbian army retreated from Kosovo in 1999. Redžepi still speaks to her friend, on occasion, but their friendship has suffered since that conversation. After the attack on Markale, Redžepi and her former Serbian

[56] A name used to refer to an ethnic group, tribe, or people (Merriam-Webster, 2019).

[57] Despite the lack of conclusive forensic evidence (Baldwin and Crain, 2012, p. 24), Serbian General Stanislav Galić was indicted by the ICTY for this event (2003). The massacre of Markale was heavily reported in the media and the first assumption was that the victims were Bosniak Muslims and the perpetrators were Serbian, more precisely, the Military of Republika Srpska.

best friend knew they no longer belonged to the same 'ours', by either *ethnie* or by sides in the war (Yugoslavs or, in Serbian, *Jugosloveni*, which was a civic and an umbrella identity encompassing all ethnic identities living in the former Yugoslavia until the war in 1991). The interesting fact was that both women lived in Prizren in Kosovo/a, but their ethnic solidarities were located elsewhere. They both felt greater solidarity with their 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1991), i.e. the Bosnian Serb and Bosniak Muslim communities who fought on different sides during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is why each woman sought to identify with the symbols of different ethnic and national 'others' in the neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina instead of prioritising their friendship.

3.4. Women as Active Participants in *Ethnie* and Nationalist Struggles

This last section examines the final form defined by Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989), women as participants in ethnic and nationalist struggles. Central roles that women play in relation to ethnic and national projects must consider three important elements (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1989, pp. 7–13). Firstly, they must consider the complex relationship between ethnic/national processes and the state. Women are constituted through the state, but are also often actively engaged in countering state processes, especially in relation to participation in national, political, and economic struggles. Secondly, they must consider the fact that gender divisions are irreducible to class or other divisions because they extend over and above state mechanisms and specific historical moments. Thirdly, they must acknowledge that the roles women play are not merely imposed upon them, but are, instead, actively reduced and modified by women in ways that are sometimes intended to control other women. In my elaborations on the work of women politicians from Serbia and Kosovo/a, these three elements need to be taken into serious consideration, especially in terms of the women's own explications about the use of certain gender and feminist ideologies to contribute to the nation/*ethnie* and vice versa.

As previously mentioned, when navigating gender and national identities in predominantly male nationalist societies like Serbia and Kosovo/a, women politicians have usually drawn on traditional gender roles and identities as a basis for political action, potentially reinforcing these identities (Ashe, 2007, p. 767). Women choose how gendered they want to be in their political participation (Snitow, 1990, p. 9).. Changing sides is important for the formation of political identity and women change levels of participation constantly. This inconstancy is predominantly a result of the fear of remaining unheard if they choose to speak as a woman alone, because the 'female voice is by our culture's definition that-voice-you-can-ignore'

(Snitow, 2015, p. 25). For this reason, most women politicians included in this study chose to speak as women of the *ethnie* and to emphasise their contributions to nationalist projects in the first instance and to sorting out gender inequalities in the second.

In the following text, I demonstrate that women politicians from Serbia and Kosovo/a very rarely recognised the 'double link' (Peterson, 1994, p. 83) of gender hierarchy (masculine over feminine) and nationalist domination (insiders over outsiders). In cases where they did recognise it, they were mostly uncomfortable with the first connection, but not with the latter. As previously mentioned, especially in the second chapter 'Women Politicians and/in the Nation', women politicians usually perceived their own *ethnie* in the position of victim in relation to the ethnic 'other' and they actively participated in reinforcing nationalist narratives based on a framework of one victim/one perpetrator. Nationalist domination was, therefore, practiced against their own *ethnie* by default and this was why they, as women, have had to contribute to its defence/liberation. Consequently, the gender hierarchy (domination of masculine over feminine) was recognised by women politicians but, according to them, it began after the liberation of Kosovo/a.

The most common explanations given by the women politicians (especially, Kosovo Albanian) with whom I spoke concerned the idea that gender differences and hierarchies were unimportant at the time of national liberation in Kosovo/a. Some women politicians went as far as to claim there had always been absolute gender equality between all members in Kosovo Albanian families. In fact, it was unlikely that the deep societal, patriarchal, and patrilineal structures embedded in Serbia and Kosovo's societies simply appeared out of nowhere after the conflict. It was more probable that patriarchal structures and hierarchies always existed, but women began noticing them much later than they did, for example, those of national domination. It might be possible that romanticising the harmony between gendered and national identities corresponded more closely with political strategies based on portraying traditional roles as the foundation for political action rather than, perhaps, the recognition of all national projects as sources of women's oppression, regardless of their liberatory potential for the *ethnie*. As Kosovo Albanian politician Edita Tahiri stated:

> *'I am fighting for the independence of Kosovo for already 30 years … I would say that when the nation is in danger and in need, there is no gender difference, every individual wants to help, in every possible way … Women participated in the national project … and without any hesitation.'*

Potentially, women's political participation in Kosovo/a has taken the particular form of reinforcing traditional gender identities as the basis for political action because women were pushed back into the home following independence. As discussed in earlier sections, for example, Albanian men from the KLA were awarded all the leading positions in the government in Kosovo/a based on their participation in liberation, rather than on their qualifications. Very few Albanian women shared the same fortunes in spite of their qualifications. Tahiri observed that the history of women had repeated itself after the Kosovo conflict ended and women were sent home. Women, however, did not allow this to happen easily. Women politicians used the momentum and the presence of the international community to push for a law that would guarantee women's political participation (Shala, 2015, p. 103). Their contributions to nationalist projects and their participation in liberation formed the basis of their claims. It is important to note that the change of law was universal for all women in Kosovo and it opened the door for women from minority communities to participate in politics, including Bosniak, Serbian, Roma, and Ashkali women. As Tahiri stated:

> *'[They did not go home], women are sent home. But we didn't let [them], I told you, I was on top of initiatives to not let this happen, I didn't let this happen. Not because of me, I could get votes, for me, it was not difficult to be back in politics. But I am saying, I didn't let that women after all their contributions to simply go home.'*

The negotiations with men from various political parties and international officials were difficult, but women dared to ask the feminist question, *'Where are the women?'* Describing her experiences in negotiating for women's political participation, Tahiri, who was a Minister for Dialogue of the Government of the Republic of Kosovo (2014-2017), stated:[58]

> *'After the war, I had the responsibility of fighting for equality in decision-making. That is how, by seeing this marginalisation of women's role in politics after the war, I initiated activities and different lobby groups for women in politics and CSOs to install a quota for women's participation and I got the quota. The quota came in a very interesting way, it did not come naturally. It was through talking to leaders of the parties that they agreed. I also talked to the UNMIK chief at the time, Bernard Kouchner [1st Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Kosovo, 1999-2001]. Rhetorically, all was fine but, in practice, nothing was moving to bring women back to politics. Our goal was not to give women power just because they are women, but to bring women back to*

[58] Citation edited for clarity.

power because of our political credibility that we gained in times of the struggle for independence. I told Kouchner:

"It's not about reparation, it's about ideology. First, look at your administration. Where are the women? All top leadership positions are held by men. You, the internationals, you should be coming here as a model of gender balance…"

There were four pillars [of the mission] and no woman among the leadership.

"So", he asked, "what can I do?"

I said, "You can help approve a quota".

This is how Kosovo became the first country in the region to accept a quota for women's representation in the national parliament and municipal assemblies. Therefore, it is not because of some "democratic culture" but because of bargaining … Of course, it was artificial anyway.'

Jennifer Schirmer (1993) refers to the model of women's participation in nationalist struggles – such as the example of Albanian women in Kosovo – as, 'political motherhood'. It is a problematic kind of participation because of its inseparable links to nationalism and the essentialised representation of women's roles, but it is 'still valid, as it guarantees women political agency' (Luci and Gusia, 2015, p. 205). This political agency enabled women to seize the momentum and guarantee women's political participation in the future. The quality of that participation, in terms of its substantive power and inclinations towards trans-national feminism, however, needs further examination. Nevertheless, one thing is certain, the changes to the *Law on General Elections in the Republic of Kosovo* benefited all women in Kosovo/a, especially women from minority communities whose chances to enter politics were even lower than the chances of the Albanian women.

As argued by Miranda Alison (2004, pp. 448-449), anti-state and 'liberatory' nationalisms often create ideological and practical space for women to participate in nationalist struggles. This space, however, does not automatically translate into social change for the benefit of all women after the war. In some cases, the post-war marginalisation of female ex-combatants suggested that they may be considered a threat to the nation's ideological and political future. Women were, thus, viewed as agents making their own choices and acting within multiple hierarchical structures and contexts. According to Alison (455-456), examples from Sri Lanka and Northern Ireland demonstrate that liberatory nationalisms not only empower women for the nationalist cause but also mobilise them for the purpose of women's rights. As women

become more empowered, the tensions between nationalist and women's causes emerge and women, thus, begin questioning masculinity and sexism and start demanding greater rights. Albanian MP Donika Kadaj Bujupi explained her struggle with party colleagues after she engaged in negotiations for the quota system with the international community:

> *'I came back to the party and I remember all the deputies said, "What have you done?"*
>
> *I said, "I changed it for the better, for the benefit of women".*
>
> *And they said, "Oh no, are you mad? Listen, let's make a deal, let's have a list of 110 people, we put you on the top because you deserve it, not because you are a woman".*
>
> *You know, when you are strong, they say, "You deserve it". And, then they said, "Let's have 80 men and at the end of the list 30 women".*
>
> *I said, "No, because I changed the law and you cannot run if on the list every third [person] is not a woman".*
>
> *They continued, "Aawww, you destroyed us, we don't have qualified women".*
>
> *Then it comes that we don't have qualified women. Do we have qualified men? I don't think so; we could have much better! Yet, when it comes to the women, then they raise issues of qualification, merits, and general knowledge.'*

Kosovo Albanian women politicians recognised gender hierarchy, i.e. the domination of masculine over feminine when it came to post-war rewards for the contributions that people had made during the struggle for liberation. However, they did not relate that same pattern of oppression to similar forms of nationalist domination. They believed that their female talent and their contributions to the nationalist project would be valued and rewarded with leadership roles and positions in a form of gender parity and they hoped that it would not turn out to be a 'meritocracy fallacy' (Racioppi, 2019).[59]

Ashe (2007, p. 780) established that violence and politics are considered unnatural activities for women, therefore, protests organised by women attract greater public and political support. However, she confirms, women's engagement in politics through these means do not challenge the traditional ideology of femininity, even though they involve women transcending their domestic roles and moving into the public arena, which is considered a male space. This

[59] The meritocracy fallacy is the belief that female talent and contributions will be noticed and rewarded with leadership roles and, as a result, gender parity will be achieved (Racioppi, 2019).

premise can be applied to the significant political contributions made by Kosovo Albanian women to the internationalisation of the Albanian liberation struggle and to the independence of Kosovo/a from Serbia. Some Albanian women politicians in Kosovo/a with whom I spoke worked hard to gather international support for the recognition of Kosovo/a as an independent country. This was demonstrated earlier in the examples of the women's protest entitled, 'Bread for Drenica' and the presentation at the Beijing Conference where Kosovo Albanian women spoke about the national struggle instead of the position of women. Kosovo Albanian politicians Edita Tahiri and Teuta Musa assert that Albanian women's greatest levels of participation were in the internationalisation of the Kosovo conflict and in the promotion of Kosovo/a as a progressive 'newborn' democracy. However, the line between the individual and the collective in the representation of their efforts is rather blurred. Musa travelled internationally for her party (LDK) on many occasions, breaking the cultural 'stereotypes' of Kosovo as a backward Muslim country where women were veiled, passive, and uneducated:[60]

> *'I remember one thing after the war … I was leading a Kosovo delegation. When we started the Conference in Strasbourg, one man from France told me that they had prejudice about Kosovo. They thought that women from Kosovo are wearing a scarf and that they are not educated … When he saw my name in the agenda before the conference, he thought that I am a male, he was surprised when he saw I was a woman and that I was a leader of the group … He had prejudice, he thought that we [in Kosovo] are all patriarchal.'*

Musa's political activism is a great example of drawing on the gendered images of women as participants in their *ethnie* and nationalist struggles. Her political participation was multifaceted because she presented herself as a Kosovo Albanian woman – unveiled, politically active, and educated – and promoted other Kosovo Albanian women in the same light. Most importantly, she positioned Kosovo/a as a free, Western-like, progressive, and liberal democracy. Luci and Gusia (2015, p. 204) agreed that allowing women space in the political sphere in the LDK became a 'structural necessity to create an image of a European nation'. The images of the women who participated in the internationalisation of the Kosovo/a conflict were moulded through traditional feminine identities. The roles of women that re-emerged from the protests, therefore, were reframed within the domestic sphere while their political identity was

[60] Citation edited for clarity.

reduced to supportive and supplementary roles in the interests of the nation (Luci and Gusia, 2015, pp. 204-206; Slapšak, 2001).

Gender is a 'flexible political tool' (Einwohner et al., 2000, p. 694) and its uses can be twofold. It has been used to advance certain rights for women, such as advocating for changes to laws based on women's contributions to the *ethnie*. It has also been used to police those women who refused to live according to traditional female identities. Tahiri and Musa, alongside other Kosovo Albanian politicians who participated in my research, used traditional gender identities and roles as a basis for their political action, potentially reinforcing them. During the ethnic conflict, gendered representations of women as symbolic embodiments of territory, state, and culture were certainly dangerous. Women were viewed as particularly prone to infiltration by the enemy (Ashe, 2007, p. 783; Gray and Ryan, 1997). During the wars in the former Yugoslavia, women's violated bodies were constructed as ethnic territories (Žarkov, 1997, p. 250), while sexual and gender-based violence and rape were used as tools to delineate the borders between bodies, territories and, especially, men.

Tahiri explained that her contribution to the internationalisation of Kosovo's Albanian national struggle was most crucial in terms of independence as well as during the war itself:[61]

> *'From 1989… I started to grow into politics and, for years, I was the Foreign Minister of Kosova. I travelled throughout the world, mainly U.S. and Western countries, working so the international community understands what is going on and why are we requiring our right to self-determination and independence. I was explaining the position of the federal status of Kosovo. This is how Kosova, for the first time, got onto the international stage and was accepted internationally. However, the key support and understanding came after, in 1990, from the U.S. and some Western countries. In all these ten years, I was doing diplomacy and I was also active in LDK. I was helping people in different ways. Firstly, to keep up with moral of resistance because the policies of Serbia were to subjugate people. We [Albanians] organised a parallel system of state, schools, health sector, Parliament, and government. Nevertheless, the government was operating in exile. I was a few months in exile as a Minister of Foreign Affairs. However, I decided to return. The reason was that, by living abroad, I was not credible in presenting to the world what was going on in my country. So, I decided to return to Kosova. At the time, I was supported by the Prime Minister Bukoshi and President Rugova and I worked as a*

[61] Citation edited for clarity.

Secretary of Foreign Affairs of LDK, in fact, I was a Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Government.'

Albanian women politicians agreed that women have contributed significantly to the internationalisation of the Kosovo conflict. Tahiri, for example, refused to live in exile, outside of the borders of Kosovo/a while her people were suffering. Her decision to live with her *ethnie* during a time of suffering served both internal and external political aims. Internally, it served to demonstrate solidarity with the suffering of her *ethnie*/nation. Externally, it served to grant her political credibility, given that she could claim her part in the shared suffering and speak from the 'logic of a stand-point' (Harding, 2004, p. 3) of, once again, primarily, the *ethnie.*

Women also participated in winning independence for Kosovo/a physically, as soldiers and as combatants. The KLA had around 800 female combatants (Haug, 2015, p. 154). In the post-war period, however, Albanian women witnessed gender hierarchy at work when only one woman received official public recognition as a martyr of war. The memory of one female heroine in the nationalist struggle, Xhevë Lladrovci, who fought alongside her husband, remains alive today solely because of the insistence of her husband's family (Luci and Gusia, 2015, p. 2010). Women politicians were unhappy about her representation. In an explanation of her dissatisfaction, Kadaj Bujupi stated that it was unfair that Xhevë remained 'in the shadow of the husband'. The typical image of female participation in nationalist struggles was a woman with 'a baby in one hand and a gun in the other' (Lyons, 2004, p. 290; Maunaguru, 2009, pp. 161-164). The Kosovo Albanian image of women's participation in the nationalist struggle, however, was the female hero Xhevë standing behind her husband. Another image of an Albanian refugee woman breastfeeding a baby was used as the cover of Time magazine under the title, 'Are ground troops the answer?' (Mcgeary, 1999a, 1999b) and served to draw attention to the struggle and justified international intervention in Kosovo/a.

All nationalisms are gendered (Vickers, 2002, p. 520). Gender roles are used to define ethnic and nationalist projects and to delineate physical and ideological borders between *ethnies*. Floya Anthias (1989, p. 160) demonstrated that the Greek-Cypriot state used discourses and practices around women to pursue the 'ethnic question' and to articulate its political project. In this contestation, most women were symbolically engraved in public consciousness as mothers, martyrs, and fighters who gave their 'precious' possessions for freedom. At the same time, they were rarely rewarded for their efforts and, after the revolution took place, those same women retreated into anonymity. This was also a visible outcome in the position of women politicians within Kosovo/a's political parties today.

Kadaj Bujupi spent 40 days in solitary confinement during 2018 for throwing tear gas during a Parliament session. During her time in jail, she watched a political TV show where her party colleague stated that men obstructed women's entry into positions of power because they wanted to protect them. This made her particularly angry and she stated:

> *'I never let people treat me like, "You can't do it" or, "They did this to you because you are a woman" … I don't like the role of victim; it's something I try to avoid, usually, I am more a fighter. Sometimes you should be a bitch to beat them because they don't, you know, they use all kinds of ways to beat you. So, it's kind of a battle where you just can't stop. They will always judge you, even if you are an angel, they will try to misuse your gender identity when it comes to the [access to] power. Like, let me give you an example. Recently, I spent 40 days in jail, last year, it was October, November, and I was watching TV. Jeta Xharra, a man from my party was there.*
>
> *Jeta asked, "Why didn't you give the positions and the functions to women in the municipalities, like directorates, and …? In Pristina, you had only two women [in leadership positions]!"*
>
> *The man responded, "It's a very difficult job and we wanted to save them [women] because it's very difficult, you know. It's not easy to be a woman executive in Pristina."*
>
> *Jeta said, "But, you send them to jail, which is not easy at all for women or men. So, you didn't tell them to step aside, but you have put them in front when it was hard and tough and now you have women in jail."*
>
> *So, it's ok, when it comes to the function, it's too hard, it's because of you, we do you a favour … Oh, you still don't know how hard it is … [laughs].'*

Women politicians struggled with gender discrimination within their *ethnies*, states, families, and political parties. The relationships within each one of these areas were far from static. In relation to political parties, gender identity was the most commonly used mode to discredit women who dared to participate. Women politicians have developed different strategies to deal with gender discrimination, which vary depending on political context and situation. In certain situations, including the case of Kadaj Bujupi, women have distanced themselves from their feminine features in order to indicate that they are as 'tough' as men and, in some cases, even tougher. This was predominantly because they perceived women's positions as victims. They understood, in this sense, that the 'female voice is by our culture's definition that-voice-you-can-ignore' (Snitow, 2015, p. 25). For this reason, women have adopted the roles of men

without asking any questions about the costs. They were rarely rewarded for their efforts. Tahiri claimed that she had never received any form of public recognition for her contributions to the political movement for independence:

> *'Let me say a very interesting thing, I was the only woman in political leadership during the occupation period, I was never given any international award, although I worked hard for the peaceful resolution of the conflict. You know why? Because I belonged to a political movement for independence, so because of its political character my peacemaking effort as a woman was disregarded. There were women leaders from NGOs who got awards … I want to say, there is some contradiction, even chicken and egg contradiction, how can you have women in peace processes and negotiating tables if they don't belong to a political party or movement? I was in a political movement, a peaceful movement, and never got an award. But, I saw my colleagues doing humanitarian and NGO activity and they got awards because it's an easy way to avoid political implications.'*

Tahiri suggested there was a double standard in the international community when it came to the giving and receiving of awards for women from political parties. On the one hand, the international community advocated for more women in politics. On the other hand, they only rewarded women from the NGO sector. This approach, according to Tahiri, was essentialist in nature because it considered women through the prism of their traditional peacemaker roles in the civilian sector. In this sense, it was not only Kosovo Albanian men or Kosovo/a as a state that ignored women's political contributions to liberation and denied them political positions; it was also the international community who failed to offer adequate credit to women who dared to participate in politics. Politics is a sphere in which men dominate, thus, it was problematic that the international community avoided acknowledging women who engaged in it after advocating for their political participation. This lack of support for women politicians might be another reason why most women in politics escaped 'doing femininity' (Butler, 2004, p. 213; Paechter, 2006, p. 255) or speaking with a female voice (Snitow, 1990, p. 12).

On closer inspection, essentialist notions around gender assisted some women to enter politics. Serbian politician Rada Trajković claimed that the opportunity to engage in politics as an active participant was situational for most Serbian women. They assumed the greater burden of politics when Serbian male politicians were forced to depart Kosovo/a because of alleged 'war crimes' charges lodged against them and carried out by the new Kosovo/a Albanian administration. According to Trajković, Albanians had a strategy to remove every Serbian male

who posed a political problem by accusing each one of war crimes. Women were considered incapable of engaging in such things as war crimes because of gendered essentialist views about their peaceful nature. Hence, women's natural associations with nonviolence and humanitarian professions, paired with the Albanian strategy for the prosecution of Serbian men for war crimes, opened new spaces for women to participate in politics. As Trajković stated:

> *'I took a position in the Temporary Administrative Council because all the Serbian men who would be candidates would pose a problem for the Albanians. Very quickly, they would accuse them of "war crimes" … Many Serbian men were candidates but, after just a few days, you would hear that they were accused of war crimes or they had to flee to Central Serbia during the night … It was a terrible period that person survives, I don't even know how … Not many women were profiled and ready to enter politics … Because there were men whose biographies were tied to, or were considered from our side, tied to crimes against Serbs … They could not accuse me of war crimes because Kosovo is only 10,000 square meters; they knew I am a doctor and that I have always been fair to patients … that I performed surgery on many Albanians, I fought for their lives, and they saw me in a different way. Because of that, I had a space to say whatever I think and it was not gentle for their ears …'*

I previously mentioned that women rarely recognised the 'double link' of gender hierarchy and nationalist domination (Peterson, 1994, p. 83). I also argued that they often opposed the first form of domination, but were frequently comfortable with the latter. Within these perceptions, they envisioned their own nationalisms as liberatory and the other *ethnie's* nationalisms as oppressive. Although women politicians recognised they had been excluded from power within their own nationalist projects because of their biological sex, this did not necessarily compel them to 'look at nationalism with suspicion' (Moghadam, 1994a, p. 3). On the contrary, in some cases, women were even more motivated to prove their invaluable participation in the act of making 'the nation become an extended family writ large' (Moghadam, 1994b, p. 4). Kadaj Bujupi explained:

> *'… I sound nationalist due to my resistance on agreements and tear gas, probably, I am somehow perceived as a person that is nationalist, but I don't think that is the case … I think it's more the way of democratic protest not against, of course not against Serbs that live in Kosovo, because I had projects and initiatives that were trying to get them integrated and open-up this internal dialogue with women … I told you that I have been to Mitrovica [North] many times and met a lot of Serbian women there … I see them as*

people who live in Kosova, as Kosovars who are not integrated because of two arguments. First of all, Serbian politicians misuse them and our politicians didn't have proper policies to integrate them, so they are some kind of victims of politicians who are irresponsible and didn't really do their best to try to support people. They have these special needs due to specifics, the way they live.'

Kadaj Bujupi's statement supports my argument that women rarely recognised the 'double link' between gender and nationalist domination and, while they often opposed the first one, they frequently supported the latter. She, firstly, considered Serbian women to be 'Kosovars' and, secondly, she perceived them as 'instrumentalised' victims of their politicians. The Kosovo Serbian women with whom I spoke, however, rarely described themselves as Kosovar. This was mainly because Kosovo and Metohija belonged to Serbia, according to the Republic of Serbia's Constitution, so they considered themselves to be Kosovo Serbs. Some of them, however, did consider themselves instrumentalised by their politicians, but not in the manner of Kadaj Bujupi's representation. Many of them opposed pressures from Belgrade, fiercely, and have paid a high price for doing so.

Tahiri, recognised the political strength of playing the nationalist card in their work. However, she differentiated between healthy (good) and unhealthy (bad) nationalisms:

'Nationalism is the strongest ticket to win the elections everywhere in the Balkans. There is a healthy nationalism and that is the one that builds the state and the bad one that is harming people.'

Tahiri shares her interpretations of the good and bad faces of nationalism with Tom Nairn (1997, p. 63). Specifically, she suggested that in defending their nationalist projects and advocating for recognition of their contributions, women politicians often presented their own nationalism as good and other groups' nationalisms as bad. Similarly, Bosniak MP Emilija Redžepi explained that she 'hates nationalism' because 'Albanian and Serb nationalism is strong and aggressive while Bosniak is soft', which is why most victims (in the wars in the former Yugoslavia) were Bosniak. In their efforts to support their nationalist projects, therefore, women politicians tended to produce dualist and narrow representations of 'us' and 'them', of 'our' women and 'their' women, of 'our' nationalism and 'their' nationalism. Women politicians often enforced the 'organized innocence' (Jalušić, 2007, p. 1182) of nationalist projects by representing the 'self' as good and the 'other' as bad. As Jalušić writes, political practices of this nature constructed prior to conflict later enhanced the collective

mobilisation for war and were used to accommodate the mass crimes that had occurred in the former Yugoslavia.

Not all women politicians were advocates for the nationalist projects of their *ethnies*/states. Certain politicians were irritated by my questions concerning national identity, perceiving nationalism and ethnic divisions as a principal 'cause of war' in Kosovo. A politician from North Mitrovica, Adriana Hodžić (now the former Minister of Local Government Administration in the Kosovo government), claimed that 'differences in nationality has brought the conflict'. She wondered why people looked at the poor through the lens of ethnicity or nationality, rather than their economic status. According to Hodžić, the needs of different people were still the same, regardless of their ethnicity, 'we are all sick and hungry in the same way and we are all victims of high politics'. She asked, 'What is a national identity?' For her, dividing people into ethnicities was a waste of time. For that reason, she spoke as a woman in her political engagement:

> *'I see myself as a woman that is ready to take on problems, a woman that is ready to identify societal problems. I appreciate that other women politicians [naming Albanian women politicians] are not radical, but I do not like that in some segments they have that [Albanian] nationalism that is not appropriate, especially for women … Nationalism leads to radicalism and radicalism leads to conflict. This means that our sons and daughters will be on the battlefield. I am someone who was here before, during, and after the war and I am a witness of all in post-conflict as well. Sometimes, people cannot even be compared to animals … I think that women, the role of women is, before all, to participate in post-conflict, to prevent conflict. Do you understand now why I think that nationalism and women are not compatible?'*

Hodžić connected gender hierarchy and nationalist domination. She also disapproved of nationalism and saw it as incompatible with women because of their biological roles as reproducers and nurturers. In the section 'When a Nation is in Need: Women as Biological Reproducers', I explained Sara Ruddick's (1995, 1980) claims that maternal thinking was not only biological but also experiential. Hence, according to their biological and experiential characteristics, women chose different strategies in their dealings with war and the military, either distancing themselves from nationalism and conflict or reconciling with the idea of the 'acceptable death' that war brings upon women (Scheper-Hughes, 1996, p. 355). Thus, defending nationalist projects belongs to the politics of what Ruddick considered 'maternal thinking'. Acceptable death for the sake of the nation or giving away sons to war might be

explained by knowing when to 'hold' and 'when to let go', which is related to the politics of maternal thinking. In conclusion, women politicians oscillated between complete support or complete denial of nationalism in their politicisation of gender and national identity. On the one hand, Hodžić applied the strategy of distancing herself from the *ethnie*/nation and nationalism. She rejected nationalist domination and characterised all nationalisms as 'causes of conflicts'. On the other hand, Tahiri, Musa, Kadaj Bujupi, Redžepi, among other women politicians, defended nationalist projects by claiming that their nationalism was good, while other nationalisms were bad and aggressive.

In conclusion, women became active participants in the nationalist struggles of their own *ethnies* and states either by choice or by chance. They have affected, and been affected by, state projects as well as ethnic and nationalist struggles and they have also actively engaged with them. Nonetheless, they were rarely publicly recognised and awarded for their political engagement. Women politicians have always sought recognition for their participation as they navigated through their multi-faceted and highly contested identities as women and citizens of their states, as members of their *ethnies*, and as biological reproducers.

In this last section, I addressed the last form of women's participation in nationalist projects. I explained the ways women recognised gender hierarchies within their *ethnie*/nation/state projects as they actively engaged in advocacy for the recognition of women's contributions. A positive outcome was that women succeeded in pursuing some political and legal guarantees, including, for example, introducing the electoral quota system in Serbia and Kosovo/a. A negative outcome, however, was that women politicians had little impact on social transformation, leaving patriarchal national structures and their hierarchical gender systems intact because they drew solely from traditional gender roles and refused to recognise and engage with nationalist domination.

Chapter Four: Women Politicians, Democratisation, Gender, and/in the Nation

This is the fourth chapter in which I present my own ethnographic research results and it corresponds to the main research question as well as the fourth and fifth subsidiary research questions. In particular, I explore how women politicians have navigated gender and ethnic/national identity in relation to the democratic transition process in Serbia and Kosovo/a. In the first section of this chapter, I analyse how women have utilised the space that was opened to them through the democratisation process, the quality of this space, and the outcomes of their participation. I claim that the political space created for women through democratisation was not fundamentally innocuous. Traditional gender narratives and constructions of gender and *ethnie* were still key elements at play and they unequivocally affected women's political and survival strategies in this space. In the second section of this chapter, I elaborate on a phenomenon I term 'rings around sisterhood'. I use 'rings' metaphorically to describe the impediments to achieving political sisterhood among women politicians from different political parties, *ethnies,* and states. I draw on the observations made during my fieldwork where I followed individual women MPs during internal meetings of the WPN in Belgrade and sessions of the CHRGE in the Parliament of Kosovo/a as well as from the interviews and women's testimonies about the *Follow Us* initiative.

Before I begin the analysis, I want to clarify some of the specificities of the politically sensitive environments of Serbia and Kosovo/a and the processes of democratisation. Shirin Rai (1994, pp. 209-213) established that democratisation is an uneasy process in Third World (developing) countries. On the one hand, it presents women with painful and contradictory options, while on the other hand, it provides them with new opportunities to mobilise in support of their own interests. For women in the Third World, democratisation is not only about the public/private dichotomy; it is also about divisions of class, cultural differentiation and, especially, race, ethnicity, and religion. According to Rai, democratisation is concerned with marketisation and representative democracy. It is important, therefore, to be careful in assessing what it is that women might gain or lose through these processes, given that their exclusion from the public sphere in terms of political representation is based on the same oppressive norms and relations that exist in the private sphere. The process is shaped by constant negotiation and struggle in which women represent themselves to others in their own cultures and build coalitions with

others outside of them. This process requires grounding in the cultural specificities that women in the Third World should not neglect. The cultural specificities I refer to, when talking about Serbia and Kosovo/a as developing countries, are primarily patriarchal and patrilineal traditional and cultural patterns that have been institutionalised and reinforced, rather than abolished, through the process of democratisation. For this purpose, I analyse the political participation of women in terms of their negotiations and struggles in navigating gender and *ethnie*/national identity in their own cultural and political contexts, the consolidation of democracy, and the problems of transitional post-war hybrid democracies.

In my work, I build upon the theories of democratisation, liberalisation, and consolidation of democracy, as instituted by Linz and Stepan (1996). I do this with specific reference to the ways these processes influenced the political space for women's participation. Serbia and Kosovo/a have both struggled to implement all three processes successfully and this has affected the quality of the political space created for women. In the following analysis, I demonstrate that Serbia and Kosovo/a's attempts to fulfil the requirements of democratisation, pro forma, such as organising elections, does not automatically guarantee that all women will be safe should they stand as candidates and run for elections. Likewise, I demonstrate that the pro forma creation of formal and non-formal institutions with missions to protect women's rights and human rights does not immediately indicate that women and their rights will be safeguarded. I witnessed incompetence of some internationally-backed independent political bodies to combat sexism, misogyny, and put a stop to smear campaigns against women politicians in cases of obvious breaches of the newly-adopted anti-discrimination laws and policies. I provide examples for each of these claims in the following analysis.

To conclude, the democratisation process has opened new spaces for women and boosted their political participation. The spaces, however, remain limited and conditioned by traditional gender roles, patriarchy, and *ethnie* because of problems associated with the processes of democratisation and liberalisation and the consolidation of democracy in developing countries. Consequently, instead of providing freedom for women to 'mobilize for their own defence' (Rai, 1994, p. 217), protected by the powers of newly-formed democratic institutions, these spaces have directed women towards reinforcing traditional gender and *ethnie* political representations.

4.1. 'Patriarchal Bargains': Entering the 'Oda'

In this section, I analyse the means by which women entered male-dominated political spaces and how they navigated and politicised gender and *ethnie* while doing so. The process of democratic transition does not happen in a vacuum, or 'overnight', as claimed by Kosovo Albanian politician Edita Tahiri. It is highly dependent upon political, economic, historical, and cultural specificities. For this reason, awareness of these specificities was important for the survival of every woman politician. Women were constantly under scrutiny for their qualifications and the relevance of their participation. Questions around whether their participation advanced the position of other women were all-pervading. In conferences, parliamentary sessions, and conversations in the hallways, questions about the personal lives of women politicians, their family relations, sexual and blood purity, morals, partner choices, and clothing were probed on a daily basis. For these reasons, women's survival in politics involved the occasional 'patriarchal bargain' (Kandiyoti, 1988, p. 274) within the patriarchal systems of their states and *ethnies*. In some cases, women succeeded in utilising the space effectively and widening the borders of patriarchy in the hope that greater participation would bring about emancipation. Efforts to bring about changes to electoral laws that would guarantee the political participation of all women in Serbia and Kosovo/a is a great example of this practice. In other cases, women became 'participants with vested interests in the system that oppressed them' (Johnson, 1983, pp. 21, 245). Indeed, women have always participated in their own oppression through the double-edged strategies of simultaneous resistance and complicity. In the application of these strategies, as argued by Kay Ann Johnson (1983), women shared parallels with other oppressed groups living in a larger system of domination. In the following analysis, I explain some of the 'patriarchal bargains', double and triple loyalties, and their outcomes for women's political agency, while I draw on the examples and illustrations from my fieldwork in Serbia and Kosovo/a.

The statistics around the political participation of women show that democratic transition benefited women in the former Yugoslavian republics. New electoral laws guaranteeing the political participation of women were adopted under the wave of democratic transition. The multi-party system was introduced in 1990. After the elections for the federal Parliament of the FRY in December 1992, women constituted only 2.6% of the total number of parliamentarians (Božinović, 1996, p. 249). Today, in Serbia, 37% of Parliamentarians are women (National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, 2019). In Kosovo/a, since its first elections after proclaiming independence in 2008, this figure has increased and today stands at 44% (Zymberi

and Zogiani, 2016, p. 23). In the Serbian government, women hold 26% of ministerial positions (Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2019), while in Kosovo, they hold only 5% (Zymberi and Zogiani, 2016, p. 20). The process of democratisation brought significant increases in the political representation and participation of women in Serbia and Kosovo/a, particularly in terms of inhabiting spaces that were traditionally reserved for men.

The story of MP Mimoza Kusari Lila is an interesting example of changing cultural specificities that result in women taking-up the space opened to them by the democratisation process. During the first local elections after the proclamation of independence, Kusari Lila entered the Oda. At the time, she was a candidate for mayor of her hometown, Gjakova. Despite losing her chance to become mayor in 2009, Kusari Lila ran again in 2014 and won the election, becoming the first female mayor in the history of Kosovo/a and the first woman to enter the Oda. As she described her experience:

> *'There were cases when I was the only woman in the Oda. Yes, I think that other women go as well from other political parties. I was the one that was running the show, that was the difference … I was not the one that was following men in the Oda, but I was actually the one that was the main person in the Oda, I was sitting in front of them because they sit in podiums, sort of, they have, it's a very traditional Albanian custom, where Chambers are divided for men and women. The Oda is called a Chamber for men, where women are not allowed, only when they bring food or drinks can they come in. So, often, I am in the Oda, I have conversations about public services, even during campaign talk about the program, and I ask, "Where are the women?" and I go and see women separately. They don't mix, they don't still mix in certain parts in rural areas. When it comes to holding rallies and meetings, yes, they come together, but this is a traditional setting, when there are only men there, up to this point, I didn't see women challenging that element in rural areas.'*

The process of democratisation contributed significantly to women's political emancipation and empowerment through the establishment of an elected government via a free and popular vote. For the first time in history, women were taking-up public political space and agency in mainstream politics in larger numbers and disturbing the long tradition of a patriarchal gender order within the traditional Albanian Oda. On this occasion, men were required to negotiate with a female political representative regarding their communal demands. The symbolic significance of engendering male political spaces in patriarchal settings was indisputable, as evidenced by women politicians like Kusari Lila. At the time, her act of entering the Oda was

celebrated by the international community as a step towards greater gender equality and political emancipation for women in Kosovo/a. However, the question of whether women's increased access to political spaces might guarantee permanent changes to the structural patriarchal scripts of the traditional Albanian society still remained.

Feminist theorists have already established that patriarchy and the state function well together and, in most cases, they support and reinforce one another (Rai, 1994, p. 214). This is primarily because the state is a form of institutionalised patriarchy. The state encourages and institutionalises the oppression of women, sexism, and patriarchy. According to Michael Marinetto (2007, p. 82), there are many ways to institutionalise patriarchy. One of the best examples is the sexual division of labour (Becker, 1985; Breen and Cooke, 2005; Hoffman and Hurst, 1990; Parr, 1988; Spierings, 2014). However, the list of the examples of state institutionalisation of patriarchy is inexhaustible and expanding constantly, from the adoption of laws that criminalise abortion (Zajicek and Calasanti, 1998) to institutionalising sexism and legalising sexual violence against women (LeGrand, 1973).

Introducing democratisation in Serbia and Kosovo/a guaranteed space to women in the public domain, however, they still struggled to navigate through patriarchal gender, *ethnie*, and cultural specificities in advancing their political agendas. In some of these struggles, women politicians lacked support from their political parties, internationals, and other women as well as non-formal or political networks and democratic institutions. I analyse this lack of support throughout this section. As has been noted previously, in taking-up space, Kusari Lila asked the popular feminist question. In the end, however, she went to speak to women separately.

Women politicians in the Third World must navigate through many dimensions of patriarchal gender, cultural, and *ethnie* realities. This included constant awareness of the specific dualities women live in, including public and private, male and female, tradition and modernity, femininity and masculinity, and urban and rural. Their survival in politics is dependent on successful navigation through these mutually-dependent and interchangeable dualities. As Kusari Lila explained:

> *'There is a protocol in the Oda, they have their own protocol, it's not just you can go there and start a conversation. First, there is a protocol about asking each and every guest how they are, how are their family members? Then, they give you the word, so it's quite a traditional way of having a moderator and having a protocol and, yet, it's interesting, in a sense, to be kept and analysed as a part of our culture. After a while, I*

got used to it. It was 2009 when I entered for the race in Gjakova when they started setting-up meetings for me in the Oda. So, that was kind of awkward and uncomfortable because I was born and raised in town. As a kid, I was visiting my grandfather's friend who lived in the village so, as a kid, I have seen the Oda … So, I didn't pay attention to the rules and protocols. But, then you go as a woman, in a different setting, you get a different feeling.'

Kusari Lila's example reveals an interesting paradox I repeatedly witnessed during my fieldwork. That is, while she worked to change and challenge traditional gender roles, at the same time, she grounded herself in them. In this case, Kusari Lila grounded herself in the cultural specificity of the ethnic Albanian rural tradition that structurally excluded other women. Rather than standing in opposition to traditional practices that excluded women, she identified herself with this highly patriarchal cultural specificity. In embracing it as her own, and as part of 'our culture' (ethnic Albanian), she chose to adopt it, even though she, herself, did not belong to a traditional rural Albanian family that practiced exclusion of women.

Deniz Kandiyoti (1988, pp. 274-275) explains that different patriarchal systems present women with distinct 'rules of the game' and call for different strategies to maximise security and optimise life options with varying potential for resistance, both active and passive. Women politicians have learned to work within sets of concrete constraints based on cultural, gender, and *ethnie* specificities. They strategised and made what Kandiyoti refers to as 'patriarchal bargains' within a system that maximised their life chances. These patriarchal bargains were subject to change, depending on caste, class, or ethnicity and were susceptible to historical transformations. As such, in some cases, they carried transformative and emancipatory potential for women while, in other cases, they did not. It was not a rarity, therefore, for women to use individual power tactics that maximised their own life chances but did little to alter structurally unfavourable patriarchal scripts. In this case, Kusari Lila failed to use the space to transform the power of structural patriarchal scripts by accepting the Albanian traditional 'rules of the game' and negotiating with women separately. This confirmed my starting claim that democratisation created space for women, like Kusari Lila, to enter the Oda. However, entering the space was not a guarantee for disruption of the patriarchal gender and *ethnie* orders that still regarded other women as outsiders.

Tahiri stated that the space for women in politics in Kosovo/a did not result from an existing, or even evolving, 'democratic culture'. It was, instead, a direct consequence of bargaining with

the international community. It emerged because she and other women politicians persisted in asking the same feminist question, 'Where are the women?' As Tahiri stated:

> *'It was artificial anyway. I still think that the quota should be there, but we must do more for quality because it's not sufficient that we have women only as numbers in parliament. Look, we had the President of Kosova, she was a woman, but it was a terrible example of how women can get the position. She was elected president as a result of a political agreement, which led to overcoming the political crisis at the time. She came from nowhere to a position … I think that we women should gain positions based on quality and credibility. This is why, immediately after getting the quota in 2000 at the local level and 2001 in Parliament, we immediately launched the campaign, "Quota and Quality", and this is how we changed the electoral system into the open lists. Women in Kosova achieved the open list system so we could have competition among women as well. Because closed lists bring you names as numbers. Our goal was not to come to the political position to be seen only as numbers. How much we grew in Kosova in politics as women, I can't say, but I must say that it is very important to have women in Parliament because today, after 18 years, these women are getting experiences as politicians, the public is getting used to seeing women in the Parliament. This was one kind of measure that helped reshape the mentality in the Balkans …'*

For Tahiri, the opening of political space for women was followed by another problem, that of the awarding of political positions because of a political agreement instead of individual credibility for the position. Many women politicians from Serbia and Kosovo/a shared similar sentiments. They often mentioned that some women who entered politics because of the quota system were not there because of their credentials, but because of personal relations or tokenism. More accurately, some women held their positions because of their willingness to do all the legwork and their will to comply with the instructions of those in positions of power (men) – the same men who placed them in their positions in the first place. In her theories on tokenism, Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1993, 1977a) claimed that a social category that is underrepresented in a particular context will face either negative experiences once they achieve an increase in visibility or a heightened sense of attention and social isolation due to an inability to easily connect with the majority (King et al., 2010, p. 483). Following Kanter's theory (1977a, p. 207), the tokens often feel like outsiders or strangers intruding upon an alien culture and they may, themselves, become self-estranged in the process of assimilation. They become symbols of how-this-social group-can-do and stand-in for all other members of the social group

in question. For women, the negative effects of tokenism were evident in the increased visibility of female politicians as the number that ought to reflect the democratic character of the state in terms of women's political participation. The most important fragment of their participation, however, remains under-researched – the real power women politicians have within their parties, *ethnies,* and communities. Tahiri added that a similar example occurred when Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić decided to propose Ana Brnabić for Prime Minister. In 2016, Brnabić was outed as a lesbian by the President himself when he appointed her as Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government. At the time, Vučić (Danas, 2016) had stated:

> *'Ana Brnabić and I talked about this aspect [her sexual orientation]. She doesn't hide it. She is so nice and sweet, she even asked me, "Are you bothered [with her sexual orientation]? I am sure they [citizens] will talk about it". I said to her, "I am interested in what you can do, how professional and hardworking you are".'*

The appointment of a lesbian woman as Prime Minister of an openly conservative Orthodox Christian country was a shock. Many international representatives and ambassadors in Serbia hailed Vučić for such a revolutionary step, claiming that now, 'Serbia looks like Scandinavian countries' (Norwegian Embassy in Belgrade, 2017). Others, however, argued that the decision was simply a decoy for Vučić to soothe his Western allies (Stojanović, 2017; The New York Times, 2017). Brnabić, herself, alluded to this by openly distancing herself from the LGBTTIQ community, stating that, 'I'm not here (in government) as an advocate of the LGBTTIQ community' (Anastasijević, 2017).

Tahiri remarked that this form of female political participation was not what she considered 'quality':

> *'I understood Vučić did this to improve the image of Serbia because the LGBTTIQ movement is rather trendy now. I am not for this kind of affirmation of women, not by quota, whatever is minority … I am for quality, but it doesn't work like that. Quality is delayed because women need more and more experience to know how to get into decision-making because, if you are not in, you cannot get experience. So, anyway, this quota may be somehow an interim measure for us to one day come to real democracy, where equality is there and it doesn't look artificial. Women in Kosova are the first to run NGOs. Women in Kosova have been quite vital and vibrant. First, NGOs, as a sign of the democratisation process, women were the first to do it.'*

Krasniqi (2007a, p. 2) explains that Kosovo/a is a transnational political theatre where an ongoing political competition exists between internationals and Albanian nationalists and among nationalists themselves. In this environment, gender is just one of the elements under manipulation to ensure the discipline, obedience, and education of a population and the development and democracy of a country in Western terms. The small number of women who dared to occupy the political space created by democratisation were under constant threat of having their positions revoked should they refuse to make patriarchal bargains in relation to their gender and *ethnie*. What would have happened, for example, had Kusari Lila not continued to make bargains with respect to the patriarchal gendered order of the ethnic Oda? What if she, instead of complying, had said, 'Bring the women in'. What would the price of this refusal have been? How would this have affected her political career? Or, for example, what would have happened if Brnabić had not distanced herself from the LGBTTIQ community? We can only speculate on what would have happened if Brnabić or Kusari Lila had chosen to act differently. This is yet more evidence that the political space opened by democratisation was not disengaged from the patriarchal, gender, or religious orders of states and *ethnies,* leaving women politicians to navigate between these contested and intertwined segments of their identity and make patriarchal bargains in order to remain in politics.

The space women politicians carved out through their political participation must be analysed by seriously considering the specificities of the patriarchal state and *ethnie* systems. During my fieldwork, a couple of women politicians complained about the way important political decisions in Kosovo/a's newborn democracy were reached. Despite the existence of democratic rules and procedures that instructed on how important decisions should be arrived at, they were often made in private houses and at bars during the evening. Visiting these spaces after hours was differently understood and translated by male and female politicians. As Yuval-Davis (1993, p. 627) claims, women often symbolise the roots, the spirit, and the national project or the national 'honour' itself. Women politicians, therefore, could not afford to attend these public or private spaces and participate in important decision-making activities. In one of the numerous conferences about the position of women politicians in Kosovo/a that were largely funded and pushed by the international community, Genta Gola from the Kosovar Gender Studies Centre (KGSC) observed that the meetings of the political parties were often held in the home of the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Behgjet Pacolli, instead of ministries or the Parliament. Kosovo Bosniak MP Duda Balje added:

'Do you know how the budget for 2018 is being agreed? Some men ask me to go to a bar at 9pm where they will talk about the budget. I can't go to bars where only alcohol is served and negotiate like that – what is that? Then, these men just tell you that they agreed on it and it's done. This is how they do politics here. I tell them, "Why don't you call a meeting and invite all of us to discuss…?" They solve things at the bar, not in the Parliament … I am sick and tired …'

While the process of democratisation has opened space for women, the hierarchical patriarchal gender norms continued to shape this space and impact upon women's political participation. In this particular case, a married Muslim woman politician could not be seen with a group of men in a private setting or in a bar where alcohol was served during the later hours. Patriarchal ethnic and religious norms obstructed women's political participation even when it was guaranteed by democratic political procedures and institutions. This was because women and men had different barriers and incentives for engaging in politics. Ana Garcia-Hernandez, Guy Grossman, and Kristin Michelitch (2018, pp. 1-3) argue that this may result in performance gender gaps of different directions and magnitudes, most of which are present in legislature. This often means that women find themselves on the periphery of political processes and excluded from professional networks, which is one key reason for their lower performance over time. In low-income countries, male politicians consciously and unconsciously exclude women from professional networks (Tamale, 1998; Tripp, 2000). This is especially the case when it comes to Parliaments and legislature as a result of the patriarchal notion that men belong to the public sphere and women to the private domain. The greatest obstacle to women's political participation is, therefore, the existence of the 'men's club character' that regards women as intruders (Tamale, 1998, p. 118). For this reason, assertive women who defy established norms are discriminated against and their contributions are often circumscribed.

Women politicians who did not want to experience this discrimination made different 'patriarchal bargains' that respected the gendered order of the patriarchy and 'maximiz[ed] security and optimiz[ed] life options' (Kandiyoti, 1988, p. 274), but resulted in their exclusion from important political decisions. These kinds of negotiations are not strange in classic patriarchal societies where patrilineal and patrilocal relationships dominate women's lives, behaviours, and politics. Under patriarchy, the highest value and the ideal definition of femininity is bound to a woman's chastity and hers and her family's honour (Kesić, 2003, p. 316). Women who infringe these rules are not well received by their families or their *ethnie*s. Women politicians were required to (re)negotiate their political participation while avoiding

any harm to their own and their family's honour by refraining from participating in meetings with men in private houses even when this was a part of the job. Given these points, we can state that the political space opened by democratisation did not automatically remove patriarchal gender, religious, and *ethnie* constraints for women politicians.

Many women politicians complained that in the process of democratisation, Kosovo institutions have installed, or are in the process of installing, the patriarchal systems of the Kosovar family. This has resulted in limited space for women's political agency. Certainly, the patriarchal structure of the Kosovar family needs to be modified before public political life can become fully democratised to provide the freedom for women of all *ethnies* to carve out their own political careers and mobilise freely in their own defence. The main problem with this is that the democratisation of family relations does not automatically fall under the ambit of any liberal state democratisation program (Rai, 1994, p. 224) imposed by the international community. Under these circumstances, leading the democratisation of the family and the state and using the presence of internationals in Kosovo/a and Serbia to push these processes was a great burden that fell on the shoulders of women politicians. All things considered, however, these modernisation projects will be hard because many women's political positions have depended upon their patriarchal bargaining power within their *ethnies* and states. The democratisation of the family and state has not been, and is not, possible without greater solidarity among women of all *ethnies*. As Rai (1994, p. 227) states, however, women's starting points for participation may be very different, some women entered the public sphere as mothers rather than feminist revolutionaries fighting for the cause for women's rights. I encountered a similar dilemma during my fieldwork with women politicians, especially while observing the internal meetings of the WPN in the Serbian Parliament and the CHRGE in Kosovo/a.

4.2. The Collaboration of Women Politicians: 'Rings Around Sisterhood'

In this section, I explore what I refer to as 'rings around sisterhood', i.e. the impediments to the collaboration of women from different political parties and *ethnies* within formal and non-formal political bodies and networks. I refer to examples drawn from participant observation during internal meetings of the WPN in Belgrade and sessions of the CHRGE in Pristina. I also analyse some of the recollections of women who participated in the *Follow Us* initiative of Serbian, Bosniak, and Albanian women MPs from Kosovo/a and Serbia. Prior to starting my analysis, I provide some information on the institutional bodies and networks I observed. It is

important to mention that the women MP members of WPN, CHRGE, and *Follow Us* were from different political parties/*ethnies*. By observing their work, I had the chance to observe three important aspects of their collaboration. Firstly, I observed how women from different political parties/*ethnies* collaborated with one another. Secondly, I observed the nature of this collaboration and, finally, I observed the constraints, limitations, and boundaries surrounding the political collaboration of women politicians.

All networks, committees, and initiatives that I observed emerged from the process of democratisation. All these bodies, therefore, were formed as part of the democratic changes taking place with the aim of improving the strength of democratic institutions in Serbia and Kosovo/a. Their creation did not come naturally, however; it was largely pushed by internationals and NGOs. This was very important because, in my analysis, I specifically focus on how collaboration, or the lack thereof, impacted upon the very purpose for the creation of these networks, committees, and initiatives, thus, hindering their democratisation and emancipatory power. In the same way, I claim that democratisation created space for women's political participation, but it did not automatically erase the patriarchal matrix. Instead, it further institutionalised patriarchal and traditional gender and *ethnie* roles within democratic institutions.

In her work on sisterhood and political solidarity among women, bell hooks (1986, pp. 127-128) claims that women are divided by sexist attitudes, class privilege, racism, and prejudices. The idea of a 'universal sisterhood' based on the concept of 'common oppression', primarily gender oppression, is not possible without tackling the more complex differences among and between women. According to hooks, women must confront, challenge, and eliminate these distinctions in order to achieve sisterhood. They must revise their own responsibilities, sexist and patriarchal attitudes, racial and class differences, and privileges and build their own ideologies. Hooks asserts that divisions will not be eliminated by wishful thinking about the 'common oppression' of women. She states that history has shown that 'sisterhood' and the emphasis on solidarity and the commonality of oppression have often been used to mask the opportunism of manipulative bourgeois white women and to hide the fact that women also oppress other women who hold lesser power than themselves. In brief, hooks states that the mere sense of shared victimisation cannot be considered a sustainable argument for the sisterhood to transform social relations among men and women. To achieve sisterhood, women must renounce the privilege guaranteed by class, race, and other markers and 'do the dirty' work. This means confronting the enemy within. In the following section, I use the idea of

'sisterhood', as framed by hooks, to analyse the political collaboration of women politicians from different political parties and *ethnies*. I place the idea of a political sisterhood at the centre and describe the ways patriarchal structures of the state, such as party and *ethnie* soldiership, limit its power for women's emancipation. I term these complex phenomena 'rings around sisterhood'. It is my conclusion that the reproduction of the patriarchal cultural practices of the state and *ethnie* by women politicians prevent political sisterhood from developing and solidifying within new, democratically-formed institutions. That said, in further text, I explain the core ideas of this hybrid version of sisterhood, developed under the wings of democratisation, and its very limited benefits for women.

4.2.1. Dangers of Double Loyalty: Sisterhood vs. Party Soldiership

In this subsection, I present the first and the strongest ring around sisterhood, party soldiership. I use the examples of the repeated failures of the WPN in Belgrade to fulfil its mission, that is, to support the establishment of laws that improve women's rights in Serbia. I also list cases where the WPN was unable to reach a consensus to protest the sexist, misogynist, and ethnic smear campaigns against certain women politicians. It is important to note that the WPN gathers women MPs from different political parties at the same table and they act only if they reach a consensus. The idea for the WPN and the gathering of women politicians into one, informal parliamentary network came about during the 'Women for Democracy and Equality' seminars. These seminars were organised by the NGO, Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence (BFPE), and funded by the European Commission and the Finnish Government (Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence, 2013). As stated by BFPE, the sole purpose of the WPN was to push for the adoption of laws that deal with women's issues, including health and family, the prevention of violence against women and children, economic empowerment, education, and the promotion of women's knowledge.

Not all women politicians agreed on the reasons behind the creation of the WPN. Some women MPs with whom I spoke claimed that the initiative came about 'naturally' because women felt the need for sisterhood due to a sense of 'common oppression'. Women politicians recognised the need to work together and to collaborate with one another to improve women's rights and positions. Other women politicians, however, claimed that the WPN had been created 'artificially' as the project of several international organisations who 'invented' work simply to justify spending large percentages of the project funds on their own salaries as part of a larger ideological 'contribution' to the democratisation of Serbia and Kosovo/a. The group of

women who claimed the WPN was 'invented' also asserted that common oppression and sisterhood were just excuses to mask the 'opportunism of manipulative bourgeois women' (hooks, 1986, p. 127). They specifically referred to women who were appointed by powerful men to occupy positions for women, for one, singular reason: to perform what their male bosses instructed, or better said, to serve the political party or *ethnie,* or both. I conclude that both claims found realistic foundations in practice.

During my fieldwork, the WPN in Belgrade failed to reach a consensus around issues that were stated as being its 'sole purpose'. Specifically, they repeatedly failed to reach a consensus around supporting two draft laws; the first being a *Draft Law on Gender Equality* (Paragraf Lex, 2017) and the second being a *Draft Law on Determination of Facts on the Status of Newborn Children Who Are Suspected Missing from Maternity Hospitals in the Republic of Serbia* (2017) in further text, Draft Law on Missing Babies. Both laws were proposed by women with the intention of significantly improving the lives of women. The Draft Law on Gender Equality was promoted by the Vice-president of the Government of Serbia and the leader of the Coordination Body for Gender Equality, Zorana Mihajlović. This draft law stated that 40% of decision-making positions in the corporate and public sector should be held by women. The law also sought to improve the existing legislative anti-discrimination framework and it proposed measures for women's economic empowerment. The second Draft Law on Missing Babies was proposed by democrat MP Aleksandra Jerkov and sought to resolve the even greater problem of mothers and families whose newborn babies had been stolen from Serbian (Yugoslavian) hospitals. The draft law initiative was a result of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruling in favour of mother Zorica Jovanović against the Republic of Serbia (Rakić Vodinelić, 2013). The ruling found that institutions of the Republic of Serbia withheld information about what had happened to her newborn baby who was stolen in 1983. As Jerkov explained:

> *'I proposed the law, it is full of compassion … it was rejected, no women from the ruling party supported it. They did not even support the possibility for the law to be on the agenda, let alone adopted.'*

At this point, you may wonder why a network of women MPs founded on the idea of supporting women's rights would fail to support laws that would seemingly improve the rights of women. The first and primary reason behind this lack of solidarity and support within the WPN was the notion that some women have referred to as 'party soldiership'. It was party soldiership that compelled them to choose party solidarity over political sisterhood. Women politicians still

chose allegiance to the first ideal rather than the latter, despite the existence of a 'common oppression' and the presence of other, arguably even stronger, arguments in favour of political sisterhood, like the founding goal of the WPN (improving the legislative framework on women's rights). The fact was that every woman in Serbia or, indeed, every woman anywhere could potentially have her baby stolen or experience discrimination based on gender. These arguments, however, were not strong enough for political sisterhood to prevail over the political party system. Women MPs in the WPN came out of political parties. Therefore, they were required to report back to political parties and, more often than not, their own power within political parties was directly proportional to their (dis)obedience. This is yet another argument that supports my previous claims that the process of democratisation was highly patriarchal and gendered. At first glance, it seemed that the space was open to all women but, at its core, it was only one type of woman who could survive in this kind of political system – women who chose party soldiership over political sisterhood. As MP Tatjana Macura explained:

> *'It is all about political parties that select women that will be on the lists. We are still not represented individually. If we were listed by name and surname, all these women would not be MPs. I can swear on it. We have some women in the Parliament who already had a couple of mandates that no one knows. They had a chance to do something … What did they contribute to Serbia? What was their impact on laws? Did they ever have some initiatives? Any? With less work, they have greater security … They are not even interested. While women who pose a danger [to the party system] are sanctioned and by other women. In the Parliament, they are sanctioned.'*

Women from the ruling party, or from the party that held Parliamentary majority, have nurtured a greater sense of solidarity with their own parties than with other women in the WPN or, more broadly, with ordinary women citizens in Serbia. It was my impression that the more power a political party had, the stronger the party soldiership. This might even seem logical because women from more powerful parties also had more privilege to lose in the case of their eventual disobedience. On several occasions, I witnessed women MPs from the leading Progressive Party (SNS) perpetuating patterns of dominance and oppression over their WPN colleagues from smaller parties and coalitions. In these situations, they often verbally accentuated the power delegated to them by their parties to out-voice and dominate their lesser politically powerful opposition colleagues. Women politicians from the SNS would state the number of women they represented at the WPN, which was the total number of women within their own party, just to prove the point of how small the party of another member of the WPN was –

indicating, by extension, how unimportant and powerless they were. Women from the ruling party, however, often failed to mobilise this enormous political power about which they bragged to support the establishment of laws that might benefit women, including the adoption of the Draft Law on Missing Babies or the Draft Law on Gender Equality. It seemed that the statements of women from the ruling party served to exercise power over other women within the WPN rather than benefit women's rights and fulfil the goal of the WPN. In one meeting with a British delegation, opposition MP Sanda Rašković Ivić explained this phenomenon and described her colleagues as 'party soldiers':

> *'I will call myself, as I always do, 'party breaker' and say that part of women in the WPN have 'double loyalty'. They must be loyal to both their parties and gender [women] and, most of the time, they are loyal to political parties and not women.'*

The loyalty of women MPs to political parties instead of other women was a primary impediment to achieving political sisterhood and fulfilling the founding goal of the WPN. Women from the ruling party were least inclined to renounce the privileges guaranteed by their political party and 'do the dirty work' for sisterhood (hooks, 1986, p. 128). There were many reasons for this, but I will examine the two I consider most important. The first one was the price women politicians paid when they disobeyed political parties, *ethnies*, and states. This price was usually very high and included becoming the subject of smear campaigns in the media where their chastity, personal life, morals, and ethnic origins were subjected to public scrutiny. Women politicians were 'dragged through the mud' in the mass media, being called traitors, whores, and 'starlets'.[62] The second point was that not all women politicians entered politics or joined women's political networks because they identified as feminist revolutionaries in the cause for women's rights (Rai, 1994, p. 227). Women from the political parties that were part of the ruling coalition had greater freedom to support issues of gender, however, this freedom often came at a greater price. Nataša Mihailović from the Social Democratic Party also confirmed that party solidarity was one of the main impediments to solidarity among women MPs:

> *'We, as a coalition, supported the Law on Missing Babies and we showed when there is a will, there is a way. We succeeded a lot by only having the WPN existing in the Parliament. The truth is that we must work on overcoming political differences when it*

[62] Starlet is a young female actor who hopes to be, or is thought likely to be, famous in the future (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2019b).

comes to women in the WPN and that those political differences should not be so big when it comes to gender. The truth is that women must have double loyalty: to the party and the women [in some cases] … Yes, we must find the strength to overcome political differences.'

I found it hard to believe that women politicians could have political differences around any issues of gender equality and missing babies if it were not for their political parties. It is my belief that the 'political differences' mentioned mirrored those of the political parties, not the women themselves. I conclude that women MPs could not agree with, or support, these draft laws because they were not permitted to by their political parties. This makes the party soldiership of women MPs in the WPN the greatest single impediment to achieving political sisterhood. In one of the meetings of the WPN, Macura expressed her understanding of the inability of women from ruling parties to achieve sisterhood within the WPN and revealed the possible ramifications for women MPs if they were to disobey their parties:

'We must decide if we, as MPs, fight for women's rights or our parties. I would stand for something which is the essence of our existence, but I don't want to pressure you [looking at MPs from the ruling party and coalition] because I know that if you go against your party, you will be attacked – in the same way Dragana Rakić did – and look what happened to her. That will happen and it will pass. It is the curse of being a woman in politics, that is exactly the curse … That kind of attack will pass, but it remains a stain, it leaves a scar … I understand if you agree not to support [the new draft Law on Gender Equality] … to avoid attacks on yourself… My suggestion would be to sign and support Zorana.'

Dragana Rakić, referenced by Macura in the above comment, was a member of the Democratic Party in the Local Municipal Council in Vršac. She faced a sexist smear campaign in the local media (funded by the public budget) because of her disagreement with local authorities from the SNS. The campaign was a mixture of discrimination based on her gender and her origins. She was described as 'a case for a psychologist' (a crazy woman) and 'a newcomer' to Vršac (meaning that she was not born in Vršac) (Danas, 2017). The inability of the WPN to protest in force each and every episode of discrimination or incidence of hate speech against women politicians based on their gender and origins revealed how strong party soldiership within the WPN members was. Women MPs in the WPN repeatedly failed to achieve sisterhood out of fear of the retribution they might be subject to if they disobeyed their parties. Very easily, they could have become the subjects of ruthless, sexist, misogynist media campaigns and stripped

of their power and privileges. Macura referred to this kind of smear campaign as the 'curse' of every woman in politics.

Virginia Woolf (2017, pp. 73-74) attributes the absence of women writers in the 16th century to the socially constructed fetish of chastity surrounding every woman who claims any form of male space. For Woolf, chastity has religious importance in a woman's life; to break free from it, or even to draw attention to it, requires courage of the rarest kind. In some cases, such a rare act has the potential to cost a woman her life. It is a relic of chastity, Woolf argues, that requires women to maintain anonymity. Women politicians who breached the socially constructed and patriarchal gender and *ethnie* rules before they acted were treated poorly by society in both Serbia and Kosovo/a. Women were severely punished, insulted, and many of them faced public smear campaigns. In this way, they were disciplined into following the socially constructed, patriarchal norms of their political parties and *ethnies*.

Political behaviour of this kind was typical for democratising countries, such as Serbia and Kosovo/a, just as much as it has always been an issue for developed democracies. According to Lauren Rosewarne (2018), slut-shaming and sexual smears against women politicians serve the purpose of maintaining male-dominated workplaces and pushing women further away from the goals of increased political participation and equality. On many occasions, Macura confirmed that the party system of sanctioning women politicians and party soldiership were two of the main impediments to the improvement of the social and political position of women in Serbia. The obvious silence of the WPN when something of this nature occurred to either a woman politician or a female citizen revealed the immensity of the fear women politicians carried in regard to the reactions of their political parties and the strength of the power of their (in)voluntary party soldiership. The ring of party soldiership around political sisterhood was most visible when certain women politicians became the target of highly gendered and sexist political attacks and when the WPN failed to reach a consensus around whether or not to address it.

A second factor that impeded the sisterhood was the essentialist presumption that all women politicians entered the political arena to serve a higher feminist goal and to make changes for other women. Some women politicians joined because of the highly privileged life that politics offered to women who chose not to make waves. These women were elected to play their parts, to remain silent, and to obey their parties, states, and *ethnies*. They were considered primary helpers in maintaining the status quo by filling quotas in the performance of gender equality in politics. In Serbia, these women were often referred to as 'ficuses' by other men and women,

i.e. plants that made the surroundings nicer but contributed little towards any change in the political environment. Simone de Beauvoir (1974, pp. 91-92) argues that this is an 'easy road' because the strains involved in undertaking an authentic existence and becoming a 'thing' are avoided. Some women were often pleased with the position of being a creature at the behest of 'other's will'. If they chose to decline this role; if they refused to obey, they would have been forced to renounce all the privileges that stemmed from their alliances with men, party, and *ethnie* or they would have been stripped of them, regardless. By consciously assuming the role of the other woman, they avoided the economic and metaphysical risks of liberty. Macura provided the following examples of women's conflictual positions within the WPN:

> *'I had a conflict with one of my colleagues from the WPN, that can operate like that. She told me directly, "I am good in this position and I do not want to change it". I trust her, she did not lie to me. The problem is, I am scared for my children, that there will be so many of women in politics like that. These are generations that are raised to "find a livelihood" so they can stay in politics and parasitise long-term without any purpose.'* [63]

During one of our informal discussions, women politicians spoke about the differences between new and old women in politics. One politician with a long political career who had felt accused of being a 'ficus' said to a younger politician:

> *'I joined politics when I was 18 ... I was an enthusiast, but now I have the experience and I am living it in politics. You [talking to another MP] are still young in politics and you don't understand how it works. You cannot change the political system. It is as it is.'*

After the 'young politician' had left the meeting, other women began commenting amongst themselves about her 'naivete' and how she would 'see when she spends more time in politics' how things worked. Later, the conversation turned to party leaders and the punishment that women politicians could expect if they refused to engage in party soldiership. They all agreed that the punishments they would face were well known and they had all experienced them or, at least, they were aware of women who had. They claimed that the women who chose to enter politics for the privileges and who agreed to involve themselves in party soldiership had once experienced punishment. These experiences removed any vestiges of naivete and exposed the system as rigged, unable to be changed. In one moment, a member of the WPN enthusiastically

[63] In Serbian, the expression *'uhlebiti'* is often used to describe people who find a job/position in the public sector for the sole purpose of economic security. These people often do not have any function other than to exist in this position for their own personal privilege and financial security.

chanted and hit the table to attract the attention of the others, saying, 'We need to start from somewhere, let's leave our political parties and make a new one as women of WPN?' She proposed mobilisation based on political sisterhood rather than party soldiership. Every woman around the table looked at her as if she had gone mad. What an impossible idea! It seemed that the sense of solidarity and sisterhood prevailed only in informal settings involving women politicians. As soon as the women were formally called upon to act on their solidarity publicly, however, political sisterhood was overruled by party soldiership.

Certainly, there were situations when the WPN succeeded in reaching moments of unequivocal sisterhood during which they condemned some of the sexist attacks on their colleagues, MPs, and citizens. Unfortunately, however, these occasions were infrequent in comparison to the moments of silence during which the WPN failed to react. In 2015, for example, the WPN issued a statement condemning the sexist remarks made by the former Minister of Defence, Bratislav Gašić, to the effect that, 'He likes female journalists that kneel very easily', labelling them, 'an insult to all women in Serbia' (Narodna Skupština Republike Srbije, 2015). They also condemned insults passed by the nationalist leader MP from the Serbian Radical Party, Vojislav Šešelj, during a parliament session where he stated that MP Marinika Tepić 'should suck his dick' (Narodna Skupština Republike Srbije, 2018). Before the WPN issued a statement denouncing Šešelj's actions, Rašković Ivić publicly challenged the WPN for its silence on the matter of these obvious insults against women MPs who did not have connections to majority parties (Novosadski Informativni Portal 021, 2018):

> *'Our WPN and all the majority of women MPs sleep like they are dead. They didn't say a word against the disgusting insults of Vojislav Šešelj because he is a favourite opposition of every majority from the 1990s until today.'*

Women from the majority and the coalition in the WPN were often called out for their silence on obvious violations of women's rights and dignity. As a result of this silence, women's NGOs and members of the WPN from smaller opposition parties sometimes speculated about the purpose of the WPN. The crippling problem of reaching a consensus about a minimum of women's rights, or in regard to issues that the organisation should react to, made women question the WPN's very existence. Macura often raised these concerns at internal meetings, calling out other women MPs from the WPN for 'losing integrity and purpose of existence'. If there was no consensus on a minimum level of political sisterhood for which the WPN would stand, was there a need for its existence? Is this what 'faking the sisterhood' in democratisation looked like? After all, democratisation did create space for women, however, it failed to

eliminate old feminist queries about the bare minimum of women's rights that women themselves should agree on and act upon. Ironically, the President of the Parliament that belonged to the political majority, Maja Gojković, who had the most political power in the Parliament noted:

> *'Lack of solidarity among women politicians is a problem for progress. Some women that talk about gender equality fail on the exam because they think gender equality is just good PR. When they need to condemn attacks on women politicians, they remain silent. It is a great problem for all women that deal with gender equality to start doing it truthfully and not just because it is good PR.'*

While Gojković was referring to women politicians in general, her observations could easily have been a commentary on her own position as a woman with the greatest power who often used women's rights as a tool for public relations. During my fieldwork, I noticed that she continuously failed to do her job and use her political power to sanction her party colleagues and coalition partners for breaches of the Parliament Code of Conduct. As President of the Parliament, she held jurisdiction over all mechanisms for the punishment of MPs who failed to respect the Code of Conduct and who offended women MPs. She completely ignored the complaints of several MPs who had been bullied and insulted by other male MPs from her own party and coalition. Gojković, for example, did not react when Jerkov complained that she found the phrase 'Ustasha whore' written on her desk.[64] She also failed to react when Šešelj told Rašković Ivić that she was a 'stupid goose'. If Gojković were to do her job and sanction breaches of the Code of Conduct of this type, it was very unlikely that she would have retained her position as President of the Parliament. Gojković, however, still believed that she could challenge other women with lesser powers for their 'lack of solidarity' and commitment to the sisterhood as well as for their insincerity in 'doing gender equality for PR'. This may have meant that some women – in this case, Gojković – suffered from cognitive dissonance. It may also have been indicative of the refusal on behalf of some women to 'do the dirty work' (hooks, 1986, p. 128) for political sisterhood. I conclude this section with a puzzling statement on sisterhood and party soldiership from Rašković Ivić:

[64] *Ustasha* (in Serbian, *Ustaša*) refers to the Croatian ultranationalist terrorist organisation formed in 1929. The organisation joined Nazi Germany in 1941 (Campion, 2006, pp. 38-39) and was responsible for Jasenovac, one of the deadliest camps for Jews, Serbs, and Roma on the territory of Europe. To label a Serbian woman an 'Ustasha whore' was akin to labelling her a gender traitor to her *ethnie*.

'For women in Serbia, it is not important if there is 40, 20, or 10% of us women in the Parliament if we are the modern slaves. Women in the Balkans are the unemployed, the poor. I was taught that economic emancipation is the most important one. If you don't work and have a lack of chances, the precariat … women are working on contract, insecure jobs … A situation where we have 30% of women loyal to parties in politics is just missing the point.'

4.2.2. Dangers of Triple Loyalty: Sisterhood vs. *Ethnie* Soldiership

In this subsection, I explore a second important constituent of the 'rings around sisterhood', *ethnie* soldiership. Women politicians were required to perform yet another burden of loyalty in addition to those they held towards the parties that included them on their electoral lists: that of their *ethnies*/nations/states. The silence of other women politicians over violations of women's rights, particularly women who were members of bodies founded to deal with these transgressions, sheds light on another problem regarding political sisterhood. In this section, I analyse the possible reasons behind this silence and how it inhibits political sisterhood. The silence becomes most evident at points when women politicians have been subjected to smear campaigns in the media for their disobedience to their *ethnies*, states, and political parties. On these occasions, women politicians who were members of formal and informal institutional bodies founded to protect human and women's rights often failed to do their jobs. One of the main reasons for this, aside from party soldiership, was *ethnie* soldiership and the fear of punishment. Standing with sisters of the same or other *ethnies*, states, and nations took courage 'of the rarest' kind (Woolf, 2017, p. 94). Every woman politician who chose to do so must be aware that she was consciously risking her own and her family's security and, very probably, her political career.

Serbian politician, Mirjana Jevtić, a former Minister for Local Communities from the Serbian Movement of Socialists in Kosovo, faced a smear campaign in the Serbian media as soon as she was appointed to the position by the Albanian Prime Minister, Isa Mustafa. For several months, Serbian media published stories targeting her chastity and morals until she eventually resigned. Reports appeared labelling her 'Vulin's starlet' (referring to Aleksandar Vulin, the leader of her political party) and calling her an 'insult for every decent Serbian man and woman' (Kurir, 2016). Photos of Jevtić in 'provocative' belly dancing attire and drinking alcohol were taken from social media, with images flooding newspapers under the title, 'Is this what Serbs voted for?' (Alo!, 2016). Jevtić became a matter of public scrutiny for the entire

Serbian nation in Kosovo/a. By accepting the nomination, newspapers claimed that Jevtić 'sold' the interests of the Serbian people in Kosovo for 'a handful of Albanian money and damaged state and national interests' (Kurir, 2016). Jevtić was even rated 'as compromitted, incompetent and loyal to Pristina [the capital of Kosovo/a]'. In conclusion, she was regarded as a woman with questionable sexuality and morals and, above all, a traitor to the Serbian *ethnie* because no decent Serbian man or woman would vote for a person with such dubious standing.

Similarly, another Kosovo Serb politician, Dijana Živić, who was appointed as Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, and Rural Development of Kosovo by the Albanian Prime Minister, Ramush Haradinaj, had similar experiences. Immediately following her appointment, Živić was labelled a traitor to her *ethnie* by the Belgrade-based Serbian Minister of Defence, Aleksandar Vulin. Among other insults, Vulin employed the term, 'private house Serb' (Danas, 2019). The term has a highly ethnic overtone and it implied that Živić was a paid Serb and not a real one. She was a Serbian woman who did not represent Serbs from Kosovo/a and she worked, instead, 'for herself'. In other words, only real Serbs worked for other Serbs. In this sense, Živić was accused of accepting the position for the money. Minister Vulin added that she had 'client' relations with Pristina, which might have suggested that she was a 'whore' and Kosovo Albanians were her clients. She had organised a protest against the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, and was awarded with a ministerial position by the Albanians as a result. In doing so, she was perceived as working against her fellow countrymen and women. As Vulin concluded, 'It is hard to find a Serb that will protest and rebel against his state' as Živić had done.

By and large, in both cases, Jevtić and Živić were besmirched in the media as traitors of the entire Serbian *ethnie* because, as women, they did not have approval from Belgrade to take-up the political space that was offered to them as part of the Kosovo Serb minority by the Kosovo state. One of the rare Albanian women politicians who publicly reacted to this situation was Kosovo's Ambassador in Washington, DC, Vlora Citaku (Kosovo Spectator, 2019):

> *'Serbian President Vučić is bullying the newly-appointed Minister. Any Serb living in Kosovo who dares to think independently becomes his enemy.'*

Citaku did not necessarily stand in solidarity with Živić because of their shared womanhood or a political sisterhood based on 'common oppression'. Citaku, herself, was often the target of bullying from Serbian officials, like the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ivica Dačić. Only recently, he raised his voice at her at the UN Security Council Headquarters (Al Jazeera Balkans, 2019).

In this particular case, Citaku reacted as a way of accentuating the bullying of her *ethnie's* political opponent, the Serbian president. Ultimately, for Citaku, it was not a sense of responsibility to the political sisterhood for which she gave her support; it was her *ethnie* soldiership.

Kosovo Serb politician Danijela Vujičić was labelled by her fellow Serbian men as 'Thaci's whore'.[65] The slur referred to her decision to run at the first elections in 2013 under the Pristina administration without Belgrade's approval. Her marriage to an American citizen, her chastity, her morals, and her patriotism all became matters for public scrutiny. Indeed, women and men in politics were frequently exposed to different rules and standards when it came to their behaviour (Crawford and Popp, 2003, p. 13). Men were largely judged on their patriotism and usually faced smear campaigns based on the 'war crimes' they had allegedly committed in the name of their *ethnies* (I write in greater detail on this in this chapter in the section 'Women as Active Participants in *Ethnie* and Nationalist Struggles'). Women, conversely, were typically judged and besmirched on the basis of their sex or sexuality and, in the case of Serbia and Kosovo/a, in direct correlation with their ethnicity and patriotism. Maligning women in such a manner served to limit their sexual autonomy and identity (Eder et al., 1995, p. 153). This was part of a larger picture of sexual double standards when it came to women and men in politics in which women always faced the 'Madonna/whore' dichotomy (Crawford and Popp, 2003, p. 13). Slut-shaming was, thus, a very effective strategy for undermining women's political autonomy. According to Rosewarne, slut-shaming is a means of 'punish[ing] women for going against the expectations of their gender and into fields where they are not wanted, it serves as a deterrent for others to join in' (Tuohy, 2018). As a result, Vujičić faced incidents of slut-shaming and accusations of 'fraternising' with the 'enemy' because her husband was an American citizen rather than a Serb, as expected of a woman of her *ethnie*:

> *'I witnessed the most terrible insults to my family, my marriage, and my professional life. I had to switch off all my social media, to not read those follies. They said I betrayed the Serbian people, that I was paid to merge North [Serbian] with South [Albanian]. I am not afraid of that, but there is a difference in why women run away [from politics]. I said a thousand times, for this job, you need to have guts and take the most terrible insults.'*

[65] Hashim Thachi is a former KLA commander and a Kosovo President. For a Serbian woman politician, the label 'Thachi's whore' suggested she was a gender traitor of her *ethnie*.

The cases of Jevtić, Živić, and Vujičić are just a few examples illustrating how women who disobey their *ethnies*/nations/states are treated. It might also indicate a reason why women chose *ethnie* soldiership over political sisterhood. The lack of support from their fellow women politicians, the silence from formal and non-formal networks, and the absence of protection from democratic institutions were just a few of the possible reasons why women chose party and *ethnie* soldiership over political sisterhood. The price for transgressing from the expectations of the *ethnie*, nation, and state was high and it affected not only the women politicians themselves, but also their entire families and, ultimately, their political careers. Judith Butler (1988, p. 522) explains that, as a strategy of survival, gender is a performance with clearly corrective consequences. She asserts that gender 'humanises' individuals within contemporary culture. Those who fail to do their gender 'right' are regularly punished. Following Butler's theory, I add that the same is true for *ethnies*. Women who failed to perform their gender and *ethnie* identities 'right' were severely punished, primarily by their own *ethnie*s, but also by others. What happened to Jevtić, Živić, and Vujičić, coupled with the silence of their fellow sisters and their networks in the face of these abuses, are perfect examples of practices of the public punishment of women who disrespected gender and *ethnie* norms.

4.3. The Collaboration of Women Politicians: Survival Strategies

In this final section, I deal with survival strategies that women politicians applied when attempting to navigate the hybrid democratisation process with its faulty institutions. According to Serbian MP Gordana Čomić, women of the *Follow Us* initiative used 'constructive ambiguity' in their meetings and communications. The U.S. Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, famously coined the term 'constructive ambiguity' to define 'the deliberate use of ambiguous language in a sensitive issue in order to advance some political purpose' (Berridge and James, 2003, p. 51; Hansen, 2016, p. 196). Ambiguity can be strategic, particularly in circumstances where clarity can create strong opposition (Jegen and Mérand, 2014, pp. 1-2). Ambiguity is often understood as concealing or postponing conflict. Therefore, coalitions and networks that were created solely on the basis of ambiguity did not prove strong enough without an institutional foundation. A key problem with ambiguity was that it was constructive only if it was used in order to push policy proposals. If not, it remained 'ambiguous'. According to Čomić, 'constructive ambiguity' was similar to 'having dialogue without talking to each other'. Through the use of constructive ambiguity, Serbian, Albanian, and Bosniak MPs from Serbia and Kosovo managed to form a Parliamentarian Coordination

Body that followed the implementation of the Brussels Agreement. This strategy assisted them in being able to sit at the same table and work on 'some' issues; the most complicated of which was the status of Kosovo, which remained 'ambiguous'.

For women politicians from the *Follow Us* initiative, the questions concerning the status of Kosovo were potential areas of conflict. The main reason for this was the *ethnie* soldiership I analysed in the previous subsection. Women politicians were required to perform their gender and *ethnie* identities correctly at all times. If they failed to do so, they risked being slandered in and smeared by the media and could not expect any sisters or democratic institutions to come out in solidarity with them. Therefore, women consciously chose strategies of survival to talk about issues they could work on that were, in most cases, matters of 'common [gender] oppression' (hooks, 1986, pp. 127-128), while they left areas of conflict for later, i.e. those related to the *ethnie*. As MP Sanda Rašković Ivić stated:

> *'In September, Gordana Čomić and I were at a conference with women from the region and we talked about women's issues in the region. We didn't deal with politics at all. For example, I didn't say that Kosovo is Serbia and Albanian politicians didn't say that Kosovo is independent. We dealt with women's issues. So, at the end of the conference, we issued a Declaration Appeal for New Politics. Women are not just women, but the whole society; they must work with each other, yes, but with men too. Serbia has a PM that is a shadow, she is a woman, LGBTTIQ, she didn't even stand for a new draft of the Law on Gender Equality. She had all the reasons to do so. She didn't.'*

Women's political space is truly limited in hybrid democracies that lack the institutional capacity to protect their citizens, irrespective of their *ethnie*, nation, or state, such as those of Serbia and Kosovo/a. Conferences involving women politicians organised as a result of international funding and based on wishful thinking about a 'common oppression' and a 'common enemy' were not lacking. Ambiguous declarations with no political power were also abundant. What was truly absent was the authentic political sisterhood with emancipatory and reformative potential. Also, as we can conclude from Rašković Ivić's statement, women's issues were frequently treated as separate from politics at these conferences. Instead of using the political space guaranteed by democratisation to strengthen political sisterhood among women of different *ethnies*, nations, and states, women politicians, firstly, chose to treat women's issues as separate from 'politics' and, secondly, they settled on 'political ambiguity' as a strategy to grant them political survival. Rather than using events and networks organised by international funds to mobilise around 'woman as a politically relevant category' with the

power to unite different women (Gal and Kligman, 2000, p. 106), women politicians chose *ethnie* or party soldiership. It was understandable in that the fear of being pronounced a 'whore' or a 'traitor' or of having one's political career terminated was always present. In either case, democratisation did create political space for women politicians, but it did not erase the dominant gender and *ethnie* ideologies that women politicians were required to perform. The expression of solidarities among women politicians was mostly present only when the audience (*ethnie*/nation/state) was not present and around non-political issues, i.e. women's rights. As aforementioned, political sisterhood and solidarity typically dissipated when the cameras were on and the *ethnie* was watching or when women were expected to toe the party line. MP Emilija Redžepi recalled her observations from the first meeting of *Follow Us*:

> *'It will stay in my memory forever when we met in Budva in 2011; Albanian and Serbian women MPs didn't want to talk to each other. I thought that they are being ridiculous because they had enormous prejudices about each other. I understand there was a war and there were victims on both sides. The past cannot be forgotten, but it should not become our present and especially not our future. It was incredible how they became friends after two days. I personally cannot become such good friends with someone in just two days. I had a public speech there as a "neutral" person between Albanians and Serbs [Bosniak]. It may have had negative consequences for Serbian women, but my intention was not to offend someone. I could not introduce myself differently, then, "I am an MP of Kosovo Parliament". Do not get me wrong, they must respect us. Serbia will never recognise Kosovo as independent, but it is the fact that I am an MP of Kosovo Parliament. Regardless, recognising Kosovo or not, we need to work together, especially when it's about women's rights. It is about all of us, our families, regardless of our ethnic background … Also, I didn't like it when they [Serbian MPs] were coming here [to Kosovo], that tightening of relations between us. If we are in this project for ten years and if outside Kosovo and Serbia we can work together but, when we visit each other in Serbia and Kosovo, we cannot work together, then we are not honest in this project and collaboration. We cannot be a part of the normalisation of relations if we are like that.'*

Erving Goffman (1959, pp. 93, 98) explains that there is a difference between the performance of an individual in front of an audience and their behaviours 'backstage'. When appearing in front of an audience, an actor makes certain that their performance maintains and embodies particular standards, morals, and instrumental demands that are sustained by a system of sanctions. In the backstage area, however, an actor can relax and step out of character. It seemed

that women politicians from the *Follow Us* initiative functioned along similar principles. When women were on their own territories (states), the audience, i.e. the *ethnie,* watched closely and so they upheld a certain level of moral and instrumental demands in their performances such that even introducing one another became problematic. The sides were polarised; it was Albanians and Serbs against one another, while Bosniak MPs appeared neutral. When backstage, or on neutral grounds (i.e. outside their states), and when the *ethnie* was not watching, women MPs became solid friends after little more than two days. However, the honesty in this instant, two-day sisterhood was questionable and so were its results. It was hard to imagine, therefore, that this form of political sisterhood could bring about some level of revolutionary feminist potential when even the most basic step of introducing one another became a political issue around which the sisterhood faltered.

Locked in a constant cycle involving the performance and reproduction of gender and *ethnie* and in a system that did not forgive attempts to exit any of the rings around sisterhood, women politicians adopted different survival strategies. Given that the systems of punishment were severe, strategies often came to revolve around silent solidarities. The idea of feminism around which women politicians gathered, particularly during events that were pushed and funded by the international community, was based upon the notion of a 'common oppression' and a 'common enemy'. This might be the reason why politicians perceived women's issues as separate and non-political. They silenced questions concerning the *ethnie* and the past because, firstly, they were perceived as highly political and, secondly, because of the very real risk they might cause conflict. The silence among other sisters when one of their fellow politicians was under attack indicated that women politicians and their networks were not even close to 'bonding on a basis of a political commitment to a feminist movement that aims to end sexist oppression' (hooks, 1986, p. 129).

Most women politicians recognised that it was beneficial to have spaces where they could meet to talk about women's rights. However, some also acknowledged the limited transformative potential of these spaces. In most cases, bodies and networks founded to protect women or human rights became powerless as women members of these bodies could not escape the patriarchal and *ethnie* power relations that dominated the political space in politically sensitive environments. Finally, most of these informal networks existed only as long as the foreign funding lasted. This might be one of the statements about the collaboration of women politicians in hybrid democratisation processes that struck me the most. Some of the women politicians I spoke with said that these initiatives would not have existed without international

support. Women in politics lacked the political will, the political power and, in some cases, both to make a commitment around constituting 'woman' as a politically relevant category strong enough to mobilise different women around the idea of feminism (Gal and Kligman, 2000, p. 106).

Across all categories of women, female politicians have been most unduly burdened by the double and triple loyalties required of their parties, *ethnies*, and families. This has been partly a result of their public visibility/tokenism. For this reason, the surfacing of political issues beyond those of a 'common male enemy' and a 'common gender oppression' often caused additional confusion among women politicians, although no one could claim with any certainty what the source of this confusion was. Was it the 'ambiguity' of political issues that caused possible conflicts (among themselves and their communities) that they purposefully silenced? Or, was it the fact that some women felt comfortable in the position of power guaranteed to them by their *ethnie/*party/state? Or, was it, perhaps, that not all women wore a feminist cape? Caught between loyalties and survival strategies in a patriarchal system that oppressed every woman who attempted to break free from the rings, women politicians from the *Follow Us* initiative agreed that the best political strategy was to avoid engaging with any issues that had the potential to cause division. This intentional and strategic avoidance of *ethnie* issues – particularly related to the past conflict – revealed divides along feminist lines and weakened the initiative, diminishing its political power. It also brought into question the existence of the initiative itself.

Čomić, who had been part of the *Follow Us* initiative from its very beginnings, elaborated on the policy of unification based on the concept of a 'common oppression' and a 'common enemy':

> *'It is important in politics to not give in easily [to not let oneself be attacked] and we [women politicians] will not talk about what divides us, but what we have in common. What is the difference if the husband that beats you is Serb or Albanian? What is the difference if you are Albanian or Serbian if you were fired from your job for being a 50-year-old? What is the difference between me, from the Democratic Party of Serbia, and an Albanian woman from the Democratic Party of Kosovo when men in the party ask us, "What do you want? You're a woman!" What brings us together is gender. We must create space for us. When people come together and look in each other's eyes, people make peace. Now, we will have another process at the Parliament level that will control normalisation. Nationalism exists because we let them make fools out of us. Nationalism*

tells me that I am better than Valdete Idrizi. Political parties make us be a population and not a society – they keep people in emotional dependence, a state of passion, and the question for political parties would be to put normalisation with Kosovo into their political programs. Political parties block good processes. Every woman's activism started with a sentence, "I don't want to live as a dog in a library". It's safe and warm, but you don't even know what is happening around you.'

For Čomić, the *Follow Us* initiative was a positive political process. She referred to it as 'constructive', even though it was covered with a veil of 'ambiguity'. As illustrated earlier, however, the initiative failed to fulfil a singular condition that would have made it constructive, i.e. that it had a clear idea of its political purpose, without which it remained 'ambiguous'. I have previously listed several possible reasons for the failure of women to reach a certain level of political sisterhood, including *ethnie* and party soldiership and the systems of punishment.

Before I conclude this final section, however, I want to add some additional examples concerning the political context, which permeated all the areas listed above. Women politicians from Serbia who joined the *Follow Us* initiative faced attacks from both their male and female party colleagues simply because of the fact that they met with Albanian and Bosniak MPs from Kosovo/a. On one occasion, they even had to move the location of a meeting from North Mitrovica (the Serbian section) to South Mitrovica (the Albanian section) because of security threats. The complex political environment of Serbia and Kosovo/a impacted the political space in which women politicians unpacked the issues of gender. The political context moulded the forms of mobilisation that were possible, which made discussing 'gender only' issues safer than discussing national issues. However, as we can see, even the slightest doubt that women politicians of different *ethnies* might sit together and consider discussing *ethnie* issues posed a threat so women had to change the location of the meeting. It was the complex political context that steered women politicians into the already carved-out paths of performing gender and *ethnie* in certain ways in order to minimise risk and maximise security. What I mean by this is that the politically sensitive environment also directed women politicians towards silences and strategies of survival that included avoidance of conflict among themselves and their *ethnies.*

In conclusion, democratisation opened political space for women, but this space was not tabula rasa. The processes of democratisation did not erase the structural patterns carved out by historical processes of gender and *ethnie* hierarchy. It was a burden placed on women to use these spaces in ways that extended beyond awareness-raising and create their own, new political sisterhood. Thus far, it has not been an easy task and the sisterhood platforms, such as

the *Follow Us* initiative, have remained more of a political form than an element of real substance. The negotiations of gender and *ethnie*, however, are processes of the *longue durée.* In this fourth chapter, I analysed only a brief snapshot of these relations through the *Follow Us* initiative. Performing the role of a good and obedient woman was a form of inauthenticity that stemmed from maternal practice, a requirement to fulfil the value of the dominant culture (Ruddick, 1980, p. 354). Judging by the threats that some women politicians who joined the *Follow Us* initiative received because they sat with women of the ethnic 'other' in Serbia and Kosovo/a, this act was solely an expression of political sisterhood. The existence of threats speaks multitudes about men's perceptions of women's lack of conformity to the *ethnie*, nation, and state. How much political strength women politicians will have in the future to break the rings around sisterhood in democratisation is a subject yet to be analysed.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This thesis has explained how women politicians in Serbia and Kosovo/a imagined, constructed, and politicised their gender and national identities in their everyday work. In doing so, it revealed a certain paradox in the politicisation of gender and the nation. That is, in spite of the degree of emancipation that women have obtained through the politicisation of gender and the nation during democratisation, they still revert to highly gendered and traditional roles when highlighting women's place within the nation and in advocating for women's human rights. Women politicians situated themselves within their *ethnie*/nation first and foremost and within their gender/women's identity second. I offered explanations for why identification with the *ethnie* often appeared more sanguine and simple than identification with, for example, other women with different blood, roots, symbols, ancestry myths, language, histories, and culture; women who, in the end, were unlikely to cast votes in one another's favour during elections. When identifying grounds for the self-government of political units in politically sensitive environments with weak understandings of civil politics and welfare governments, priority was granted to primarily, primordial *ethnie* attachments. Indeed, it is unlikely that Serbian women would vote for Albanian women or that Bosniak women would vote for Albanian women in elections and vice versa.

I also demonstrated that in highly patriarchal and ethnically divided societies, such as Serbia and Kosovo/a, it was almost impossible to mobilise around the concept of 'woman'. Unlike *ethnie* and nation, 'being a woman is not constituted as a politically relevant category' (Gal and Kligman, 2000, p. 106). Consequently, *ethnie* and nation were, and still are, the main categories for political mobilisation and cultural differentiation. Commitment to defining and advancing women's interests was never solely a reflex of one politician's, or one group of women politicians', subjectivity as women (or men). Nor was their experience and solidarity based on the shared cultural category of 'woman' or 'womanhood'. Each of these markers could also be understood and mobilised through different categories (107). Indeed, some women politicians considered gender and gender issues as irrelevant to their professions. Politicised identities, according to Kligman and Gal, are the result of public arguments and activities that allow individuals to redefine their sense of self and to treat events or social processes as 'problems', rather than as fixed conditions that must be endured, fixable rather than absolute, caused by gender engagement rather than social forces or processes.

I demonstrated that, for the majority of women politicians, the oppression, discrimination, and mobilisation carried out by the *ethnie* took place much earlier and was more intense than, for example, the oppression, discrimination, and mobilisation that resulted from being a woman in patriarchal Serbian or Kosovo/a society. Some women politicians specified that gender was unimportant in the beginning (specifically, Kosovo/a Albanian women). Some even claimed that absolute gender equality existed in their own families. They were, however, usually unable to explain where gender inequality stemmed from, if not from the patriarchal family/society. Adopting a romanticised image of the *ethnie* was seemingly an easier strategy for women politicians to embrace in order to situate themselves within their *ethnies*/nations first and to 'do' gender work later. As women distanced themselves from the family life and entered professional political spheres, they began dealing with gender inequality and the politicisation of gender while experiencing the limitations specific to the category of 'woman'. Some women attempted to escape, or to dissociate from their gender. Others claimed that gender was unimportant because women were not in immediate danger, unlike their *ethnies*. More, again, distanced themselves from any association with the status of 'victim', choosing to avoid identifying as women at any cost.

Reflecting on Kligman and Gal's theory, I presented women politicians' explanations and acceptance of the *ethnie's* dominance as fixed, rather than changeable. I provided reasons for their perceptions of the strength of the *ethnie's* unchangeability and deep association with historical, primordial elements, including blood, symbols, myths, and rituals. I presented their explanations of the contributions of women to their own *ethnie*/nation/state's projects as framed through their 'roles' (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1989), which, in turn, further solidified their *ethnie*/national identities. I demonstrated that women politicians invested significant energy persuading the men of their *ethnies*, as well as the international community, to acknowledge their contributions, rather than building the category of 'woman' as a politically relevant and powerful point around which to mobilise. The most frequent justifications drew on women's central roles in raising children and in educating them about history, ways of life, *besa*, tradition, love, and respect for roots and ancestors. For these reasons, women politicians believed that women deserved their fair share of power in politics and their equal positions within their *ethnies*/nations/states – and not because 'woman' might be considered a political category irrespective of marital, maternal, family, or *ethnie* status.

In extending the boundaries of 'woman' as cultural category into politics and in mobilising around the idea of 'shared oppression' with women of other *ethnies* on the same territory,

women politicians were prepared to negotiate, but only after *ethnie*/state identities had been acknowledged. If women politicians of other *ethnies* openly questioned the *ethnie* and the statehood of another, dialogue was unlikely to transpire. Some women found middle ground in the application of a strategy of 'constructive ambiguity' to conceal or postpone the conflict that would inevitably eventuate. Women politicians frequently agreed on issues of gender identity, given that they all identified as women who shared similar problems, to varying degrees, everywhere (i.e. Belgrade, Pristina, or Mitrovica), such as gender violence and discrimination. They failed, however, to agree upon *ethnie* and state issues, i.e. the status and rights to the territory of Kosovo/a.

I also probed the idea of the likelihood of creating a political sisterhood among women politicians from different parties and *ethnies*, especially within institutional bodies created during the period of democratisation and whose foundational missions revolved around enhancing inter-ethnic dialogue (between Serb, Bosniak, and Albanian MPs) or protecting and advancing women's civic or human rights. I discovered that democratisation opened space for the greater political participation of women, however, it did not automatically ensure the safety of this space for women. I concluded that political space created by the process of democratisation was still dominated by traditional *ethnie* and gender narratives and unequivocally impacted upon the political and survival strategies of women. I presented the modes by which women navigated the complexities of their gender and national identities in this space through the minimisation of risks and the maximisation of security, which rarely pierced what I referred to, metaphorically, as the 'rings around sisterhood'. Women politicians constantly struggled with the presentation of themselves within their *ethnies*/nations/states and the presentation of themselves as women.

In the patriarchal and patrilineal societies of Serbia and Kosovo/a, gender and *ethnie* identities could sometimes appear contradictory. Consequently, the main political strategies were twofold: making patriarchal bargains (Kandiyoti, 1988) or cutting through the 'rings around sisterhood'. The former strategy was more common than the latter, mainly as a result of the absence of protection and the lack of solidarity among women politicians, which, in turn, stemmed from the attempts to build a political sisterhood based solely on shared 'womanhood' (Gal and Kligman, 2000, p. 106) or 'common oppression' (hooks, 1986, p. 127). Both strategies served to silence other aspects of women's identities, such as *ethnie*, religion, and statehood, treating each marker as a threat to the already 'fragile' solidarity that existed between women or as issues better ignored in any dialogue between women politicians. As one Serbian MP

said, ‘gender brings us closer, nation divides us!’ The many unresolved, silenced, and unsaid issues shaped the edges of the political sisterhood that existed among women politicians. As one Serbian woman MP asked during a conference, ‘What is the difference if the husband who beats you is Serbian or Albanian?’ Certainly, theoretically, there may be no difference. In practice, however, the distinction emerged when women politicians voted in favour of laws that discriminated or excluded women of different *ethnies* from legal protections because of loyalties to their political parties or *ethnies*. It is doubtful that an appreciation for the common threads of women’s vulnerabilities might create a politically charged identity powerful enough to mobilise around in the name of political principles, rather than on the basis of their *ethnie*/state/party solidarities.

I concluded that creating a political sisterhood based on shared gendered oppression resulted in limited emancipation if it silenced other parts of women's identities. During one conference in Serbia, I noticed that the members of a particular political platform that gathered women politicians, NGOs, and academics predominantly applied the phrase ‘women’s movement’ instead of ‘feminist movement’ in their presentations. When queried, some politicians explained that the term ‘woman’ was considered more acceptable and less political ‘because of the negative image of feminism as being radical’. This hybrid, non-radical version of political sisterhood, developed under the wings of democratisation and advanced by the international community, offered limited benefits to women. Indeed, whether the greater participation of women in politics leads to the establishment of a politically charged category of ‘woman’ that enables, rather than silences, discussions around the differences between women is yet to be seen. Whether such a category might mobilise women under, for example, the newborn Kosovar ‘civic’ identity is also a matter for future determination.

In politically sensitive environments, such as Serbia and Kosovo/a, navigating multi-faceted and highly contested identities (i.e. women as citizens of states, members of *ethnies*, and biological reproducers) was far from easy. More commonly, one marker of identity tended to exclude others. As a result, women politicians restricted their political participation to demonstrating their contributions to their *ethnies*/nations/states. Despite recognising gender hierarchies within their own *ethnie*/nation/state’s projects, the engagement of women politicians was generally focused on recognising women’s contributions in the hope that this might abolish the *ethnie*/nation/state’s highly gendered, patriarchal, and hierarchical character. One positive outcome of women’s political engagement was their success in pursuing certain political and legal guarantees through the introduction of the electoral quota system in Serbia

and Kosovo/a. This opened greater political space for the participation of women. It had little impact on deeper social transformations, however, in drawing exclusively from traditional, patriarchal gender and *ethnie* roles, while simultaneously refusing to deal with nationalist domination over gender.

5.1. Contribution

This thesis contributes to the field of interpretative, multi-sited, political ethnography. It focuses on the work of individual women politicians (i.e. MPs, ministers, local council members) in Serbia and Kosovo/a, unlike other political ethnographies that primarily follow the work of political collectives, such as parliaments and negotiation processes (Aronoff, 2015; Aronoff and Kubik, 2013; Crewe, 2015; Shafer, 1986; Smith, 2011). This research only partially 'follows the people' (Marcus, 1995, p. 106), i.e. women working in collectives, such as the WPN, the Follow Us initiative, and CHRGE (in the chapter 'Women Politicians, Democratisation, Gender, and/in the Nation'). This research concerns with individual women politicians of different *ethnies* (Serbian, Albanian, and Bosniak) and political parties, in contradistinction to other political ethnographies that are based on the experiences of women outside mainstream politics, women from NGOs, or women survivors of SGBV (Đajić Horváth, 2009; Helms, 2014, 2013, 2003; Jambrešić Kirin and Povrzanović, 1996; Quillinan, 2019, 2018). Finally, my research tackles a politically and culturally contextualised period of democratisation in Serbia and Kosovo/a (two countries that still share unresolved territorial and political issues) as opposed to other ethnographies that explore democracy or democratisation as political theory and practice (Paley, 2002; Wedeen, 2013) or the process of nation-building (Luci, 2014).

In terms of theory, this thesis builds upon, and contributes to, theories of the nation and nationalism, gender and feminism, and democratisation. This thesis takes gender as a central point from which to explore how women politicians understood and politicised their *ethnie*/nation/state identities in their everyday work, bearing in mind that the founders of nationalism studies treated gender as largely irrelevant to the creation and reproduction of *ethnies*/nations/states (Ranchod-Nilsson and Tetreault, 2003; Yuval-Davis, 2004, 1997, pp. 621-622). It explores the constructions of *ethnic*/national/state symbols, myths, and rituals made by women politicians and the political translations of, and emotional attachments to, each one. Women politicians were observed drawing on elements from the three discourses of nationalism theory – primordial, ethno-symbolist, and modernist – as a means of situating

themselves within their communities. This research also contributes to theories that analyse the intersections of *ethnie*/nation/state and gender and advance the understanding of the nation as highly gendered, hierarchical, and patriarchal. It looks at the testimonies of women politicians through five key forms identified as inherent to women's participation in nationalist projects (Yuval-Davis et al., 1989, pp. 6-7). In explaining the different justifications and uses of gender and nationalism employed by women politicians, this research attempts to ease the tensions evident in the literature between nationalists and the more transcendent or transnational forms of feminism that insist upon the international unity of women. Furthermore, it sheds light on a range of impediments that exist in establishing collaboration between women politicians of different *ethnies* in Serbia and Kosovo/a. By listing specific examples of political achievement and emancipation linked to nationalist projects, the research points to an overlap in interests and contributes to theories that claim women can benefit from emphasising the importance of their participation in nation-building (Ashe, 2007; Herr, 2016, 2014, 2003; Kim, 2009). In illustrating the sanctions endured by women who refused to follow the prescribed patriarchal, hierarchical, and gender roles of their *ethnies*/nations/states, however, this research also contributes to theories based on counter-arguments that perceive nations as inevitably exploitative (Grewal and Kaplan, 1994; Kaplan et al., 1999) and with benefits that favour only certain groups of women.

5.2. Limitations and What I Would Do Differently (Next Time)

As indicated in the Research Design and Methodology section, this research was impacted by limitations that affected scope, access to participants, and data collection. Limitations can be classified into specific constraints on the research design and methodology and issues with the researcher. Research design and methodology constraints were both systematic and contextual, including, for example, the *ad hoc* application of rules around access to the institutions where women politicians conducted their work. The language barrier represented a second limitation in Kosovo/a as state institutions often disregarded the stipulation that Serbian is an official language in Kosovo/a and translated sessions only when Serbian MPs were present. This impacted access to information, especially during parliament and committee sessions and left an impact on the quality of data.

Another systematic limitation was the general lack of sensitivity, openness, and trust of political institutions and politicians towards academic researchers. This reticence may contribute to the general lack of political ethnographies focused on politicians (Joseph et al.,

2007), especially in politically sensitive environments. Generally, politicians were unfamiliar with ethnographic methods, such as participant observation, and often required time to understand that it necessitated more than a single day or an individual interview with each of them. A process of building rapport (developing connection and mutual trust) (Hennink et al., 2019) with me as a researcher, hence becoming accustomed to regular participant observation over a period of six months, in both locations, was more time-consuming than I had initially expected.

Contextual limitations also emerged within the politically sensitive environments of Serbia and Kosovo/a, which were explored thoroughly in the section on Research Design and Methodology. These included the as yet unresolved status of Kosovo/a, which affected the wording of my PLS and influenced the perceptions of certain women politicians towards me as standing either for or against them (i.e. for or against Serbia or Kosovo/a). Additionally, my ethnic and cultural background impacted upon how I was perceived by people in the field. In both Serbia and Kosovo/a, there were many situations during which I was perceived as someone who was 'ours', although still not completely 'ours', given that I was a Serbian woman attending a Western university. Other limitations that impeded my research and limited my access to data and participants included the arrest of one participant, MP Donika Kadaj Bujupi, and the assassination of a Serbian politician from North Mitrovica, Oliver Ivanović, which resulted in a loss of contact with his deputy, Ksenija Božović. Moreover, the politically unstable situation, the tear-gassing of the Parliament of Kosovo/a, and ethnic divisions that ran so deeply that even transportation depended on one's ethnicity impacted upon my fieldwork, particularly in terms of the amount of time needed to access spaces and events in a safe and timely manner.

If I were to design this research again, I would change certain elements. Firstly, I would alter the methodological framework. Rather than dividing fieldwork between two six months periods in Serbia and Kosovo/a, I would spend twelve months in Kosovo/a alone. Indeed, the initial phase of my research to find participants, explain the research framework and methodology, allow them space to adjust to me as a researcher, and gain trust was time consuming and took longer than planned. As a result, I had only a very short time (four months) to conduct participant observation with certain women politicians. It is my belief that the quality of the information collected would have benefited from following six women politicians for the period of a single year in one location only.

Secondly, I would attempt to tackle the problem of access to participants and institutions by working as an intern with women politicians and obtaining the credentials that would make access to certain institutions easier. Thirdly, I would learn the Albanian language to assist in the observation of sessions and in understanding Albanian participants better. In Serbia and Kosovo/a, language is an important marker of the *ethnie*/nation and speaking it, or avoiding speaking it, was more than a simple technicality to improve access to participants. Fluency in the language meant many things: it was a form of expressing respect or disrespect and a measure of belonging. Duda Balje, a Bosniak MP, explained some of the benefits of speaking the Albanian language in Kosovo/a:

> *'Albanians like when you speak Albanian with them, even though my Albanian is not great, they still love it … I like that I learned Albanian because I am not in deficit with information, I know what is going on …'*

5.3. Future Research

A number of additional emerging and important issues surfaced throughout my fieldwork that remained on the margins of my analysis because they fell outside the key research questions on which this thesis is based. My research focused on women politicians and the ways in which they imagined, constructed, and politicised ethnic/national and gender identities within the process of democratisation. A key conclusion was that the emerging Kosovar civic identity has a strong, underlying Albanian ethnic base, which was continually flagged by women politicians and the Kosovo/a state. Many Albanian women politicians explained that they did not experience the Kosovar civic identity and the Albanian ethnic identity as conflictual. For researchers of the nation and nationalism in the developing countries of the Western Balkans, however, the (re)construction of this newborn 'Kosovar' civic identity and its underlying Albanian ethnic core may represent an area of growing interest, especially given the recent political developments in Kosovo/a. In particular, the success of the Self-Determination Party at the 2019 Parliamentary elections underscores this area's relevance as a future topic of interest, given that the party's leader, Albin Kurti, is a passionate advocate for the historical 'unification of Kosovo/a and Albania' (Heil, 2019). One of the participants in my own research, Kosovo Albanian politician Edita Tahiri, described her mother's separation from her family who remained in communist Albania and how this had influenced her political fight for her *ethnie*/nation. As Kosovo/a continues its journey towards a more 'civic' and democratic form that resembles more closely the Western-like, EU democracies, a deeper analysis of women's

political participation and their navigation of civic and ethnic identities under processes of democratisation will become increasingly necessary. At this juncture, Kosovo Albanian women politicians have not felt compelled to choose between the Albanian *ethnie* and the Kosovar civic identity. It is my belief, however, that various and related conflicts and silences will continue to arise if the state of Kosovo/a strengthens the Kosovar 'civic' identity. At this very moment, the Albanian *ethnie* and the Kosovar civic identity may appear compatible, as suggested by some Kosovo/a Albanian nationalist leaders and women politicians whose contributions have been included within this research. In the future, however, this may change.

Another finding that emerged from my research was that women politicians were aware that their positions were universally devalued, both in the theories and in the practices of the nation/*ethnie*/state, despite their sacrifices for the nation. Women identified their biological sex as well as their traditional gender roles as the main factors keeping women and their contributions to the nation fixed within the private sphere, thereby leaving the public sphere to men. This, however, did not prevent women from drawing on traditional gender roles as a means of advocating for women's rights within the *ethnie*/nation. The issue that emerged and which may hold interest for further research is the treatment of women by their *ethnies*/nations/states as closer to nature and as belonging to the private sphere. For, if women belong to nature and men belong to culture (Ortner, 1996), and if the *ethnie* is considered unchanging and rooted in nature, blood, and biology – as claimed by a number women politicians in this research – why is it that women's natural position remains undervalued in terms of access to the powers and the privileges awarded by the *ethnie*/nation/state? Do women and nations belong to the same 'nature' or is it a different 'nature' in question?

Almost all the women politicians with whom I spoke raised the role of the 'West', or the international community, as an important, complex and, to a certain degree, problematic issue for local women. The nature and quality of the form of democratisation promoted by the EU – sometimes referred to as 'stabilitocracy' by scholars of the Western Balkans (Bieber and Bandović, 2017; Eror, 2018) – was one issue of specific concern. Women politicians questioned whether the EU would be willing to accept and support the same kind of democracy on their own soil that they were attempting to impose upon Serbia and Kosovo/a. Others raised problems associated with the 'copy-paste' nature of democratisation, complaining that it was unfavourable to women because it failed to seriously consider the cultural, political, historical, and other specificities of women in Serbia and Kosovo/a. Some women politicians who contributed to my research claimed that democratisation appeared to be more of a 'job' or

'another project activity' invented by Western EU bureaucrats, rather than a process offering peaceful 'normalisation' of relations between countries and a struggle for true democratic values, including gender equality. In the future, it will become necessary to explore even further the intersections of gender, *ethnie*/nation/state, and democratisation processes in developing countries, especially those mediated by the EU, such as in Serbia and Kosovo/a.

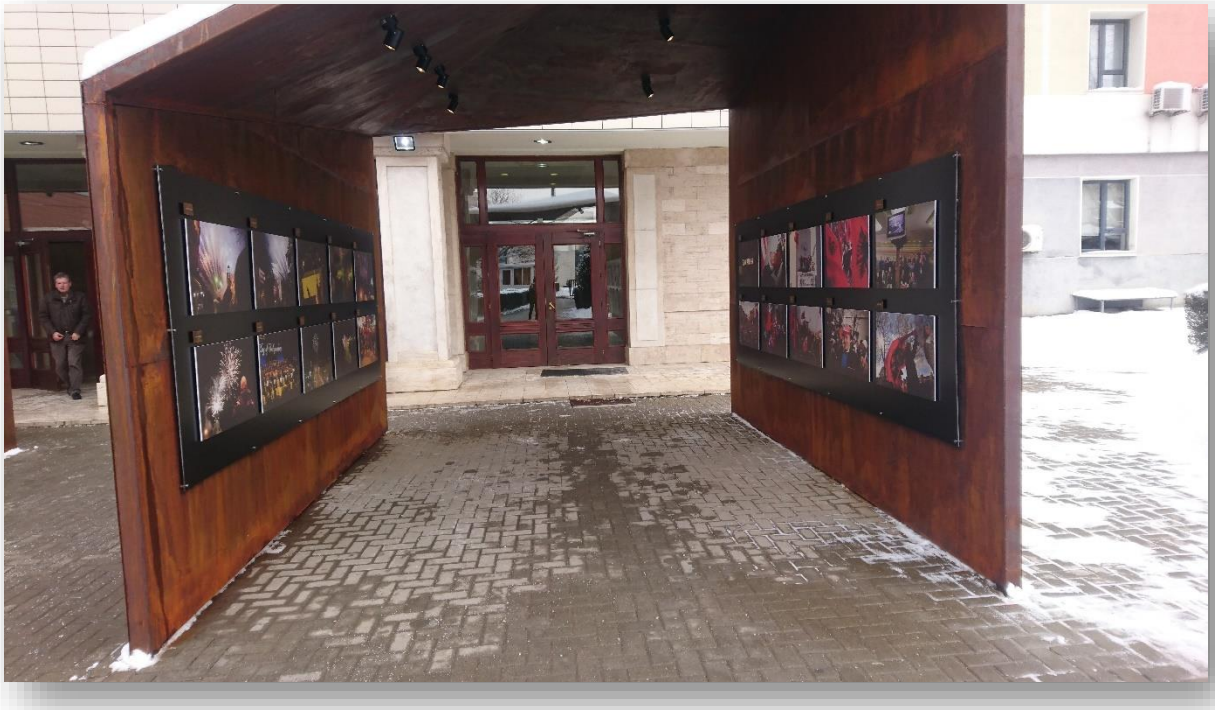
In my research, I noted that the public space opened by the democratisation process in Serbia and Kosovo/a did not automatically erase the patriarchal and traditional gender roles and narratives that women were required to navigate in order to remain relevant in politics. The focus of my research questions did not allow me adequate space to thoroughly explore the impact of the international community on women's political participation and advocacy efforts in Serbia and Kosovo/a, especially in terms of considering the international community as an accomplice in the institutionalisation of patriarchy. On some occasions during my fieldwork, the presence of the international community appeared to impact negatively upon women's political participation. International bureaucrats were observed questioning and pressuring certain women politicians because of their decisions to vote in favour of a particular law. Furthermore, they were seen sanctioning 'rogue' women politicians and banishing them from certain institutions and women's networks that were financed by international funds. This calls for a thorough investigation of the model of democratisation pushed by the EU in the Western Balkans and its direct and indirect implications for women's political participation and advocacy efforts. I suggest that these complex questions might be viewed through several theoretical frameworks, including *Orientalism* (Said, 1979), *Balkanism* (Todorova, 2009), or *nesting orientalisms* (Bakić-Hayden, 1995). In the section 'Women as Active Participants in *Ethnie* and Nationalist Struggles', I presented a dialogue between Kosovo Albanian politician Edita Tahiri and Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Kosovo, Bernard Kouchner, during which Tahiri questioned the model of gender equality and power balance practiced and pushed by the international community in Kosovo/a. This dialogue represents a point of departure for deeper analysis of the democratic model pushed by the EU in the developing countries of the Western Balkans and the ways in which it affects the space that women politicians have entered in greater numbers over the past 20 years.

Appendix A - Fieldwork Photographs

Photograph 1: Local Memorial Tournament remembering the deaths of three former Kosovo Liberation Army fighters who died in Nekoc, near Drenas (Pristina, 2018).

Photograph 2: Entrance to the Parliament of the Republic of Kosovo celebrating Kosovo Independence (Pristina, 2018).

Photograph 3: Entrance to the Parliament of the Republic of Kosovo celebrating Kosovo Independence (Pristina, 2018).



Photograph 4: Entrance to the Parliament of the Republic of Kosovo celebrating Kosovo Independence (Pristina, 2018).

Photograph 5: International observers at the Session of the Local Council of Mitrovica North (Mitrovica North, March, 2018).

Photograph 6: Memorial plate quoting the leader of the political party, Freedom, Democracy, Justice, Oliver Ivanović (*Sloboda, Demokratija, Pravda [SDP]*), assassinated on 16 January 2018 (Kosovska Mitrovica, March, 2018).

Photograph 7: Graffiti depicting Serbian perseverance and belonging in Kosovo *'... Because from here, there is no going back'* (Kosovska Mitrovica, March, 2018).

Photograph 8: Session of the Kosovo Parliament (March, 2018).

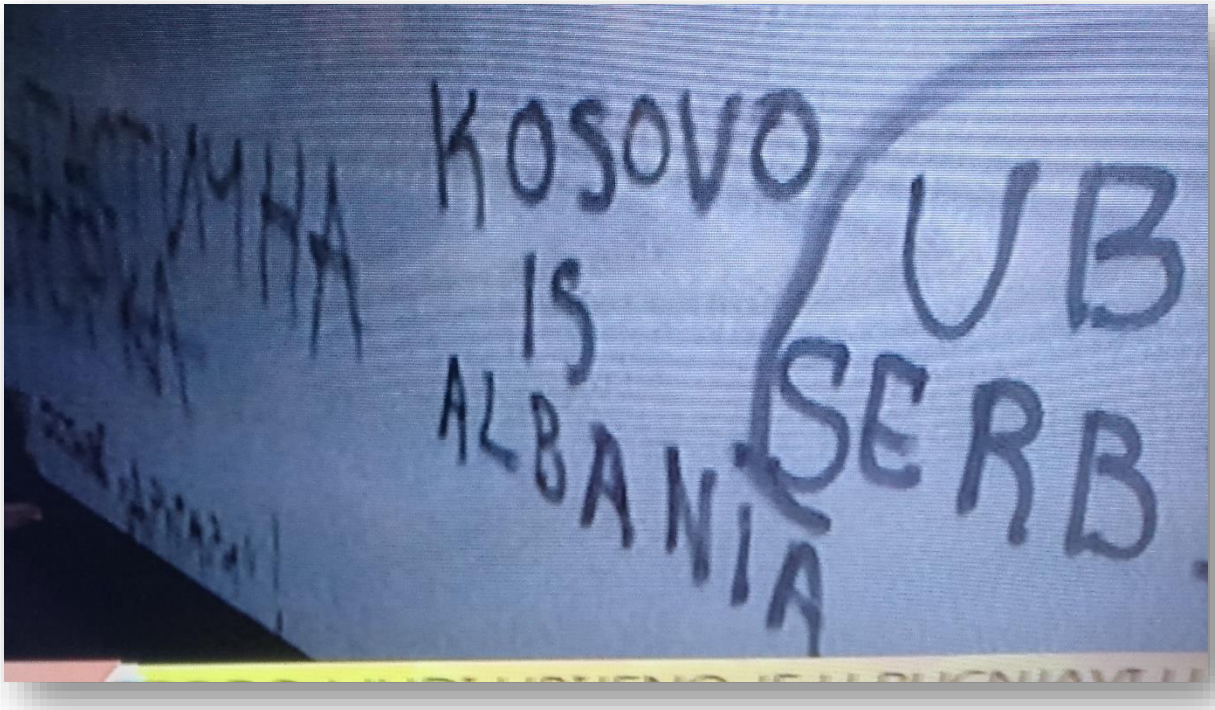
Photograph 9: Celebrating the Day of the Albanian Flag (in Albanian, *Dita e Flamurit*), 28 November, in the Republic of Kosovo.

Photograph 10: Memorial plate commemorating the fallen KLA soldiers and civilians from the Kosovo war in Pristina city centre (2017).

Photograph 11: Statue of Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeu (1405-1468) in the centre of Pristina (2018).

Photograph 12: Monument *'Heroinat'* (in English, 'heroine'), designed by artist creator Ilir Blakçori (2014) and built of 20,145 medals, which symbolically honour the versatile contribution and sacrifice of every ethnic Albanian woman during the 1998-1999 war in Kosovo (Pristina, 2018).

Picture 13: Billboard of Ibrahim Rugova, leader of the non-violent movement for the independence of Kosovo and the Democratic League of Kosovo, LDK (Pristina, 2018).



Photograph 14: Graffiti in Kosovo Polje stating, ‘Kosovo is Albania’ and ‘Kill Serbs’ (Blic, 2018).

Photograph 15: Participant observation of MP Duda Balje, Chairwoman of the Committee on Human Rights, Gender Equality, Missing Persons, and Petitions on the new Draft Law on Religious Freedoms in Pristina (March, 2017).

Photograph 16: Participant observation of MP Emilija Redžepi leading the delegation of Bosniak businessmen from Germany to the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj (Pristina, January, 2018).

Photograph 17: Debate on the 'Expectations of Kosovo Serbs from Belgrade Pristina Dialogue' in one of the Serbian enclaves, Čaglavica (December, 2017).

Photograph 18: Street vendors selling sweatshirts with ethnic Albanian symbols, including the Albanian flag (left) and the map of 'Greater Albania' with claims to parts of Greece, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia (right) (Pristina, Kosovo, 2017).

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