The Role of Identity Perceptions on Security: The Western Balkans Case

Master Thesis
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Abstract

This thesis tries to provide valuable insight and explain the role of identity perceptions on security as a means to avert conflicts and security threats. The aim is to provide an identity based explanation to security problems. Constructivism and ‘social identity theory’ are its theoretical points of departure which help us understand how we construct social identities and have the tendency to be prejudicial towards others. Our prejudices and negative identity perceptions play a major role in security issues.

We will use process tracing to find how identity perceptions are constructed and how they affect security. More explicitly we will trace the process of how identities were affected by historical events as well as the ethnocentric interpretation of these historical events. For thorough analysis, Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia are chosen as case studies. The findings will hopefully propose better solutions to security problems and built knowledge applicable to other similar security threats.

Key words: ethnicity; nationality; identity perceptions; security.
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List of Abbreviations

BiH - Bosnia and Herzegovina
ECtHR - European Court of Human Rights
EU - European Union
FYROM - Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
GM - Geographical Macedonia
IC - International Community
JNA - Yugoslav National Army
NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NLA - National Liberation Army
OFA - Ohrid Framework Agreement
OHR - Office of the High Representative
RS - Republika Srpska
SIT - Social Identity Theory
UN - United Nations
USA - United States of America
WB - Western Balkans
1. Introduction

1.1. Research problem and purpose of the study

In general political scientists as well as international relations scholars agree that their research should address real-world problems and that theory and methodology are mainly tools to study them.\(^1\) Security, as part of these real-world problems and a quite important dimension of international relations should be constantly studied and promoted to the benefit of all. Thus, this thesis focuses on understanding and explaining the role of identity perceptions on security as a means to avert conflicts and security threats. However, we must note that it is a two way process i.e. security affects identity perceptions too.

It is of prime importance that we understand security issues in order to prevent them, manage them and even try to find possible solutions. Hence the purpose of this study is to find how identity perceptions affect security by taking the Western Balkans (WB) as a case study. More specifically, this study will analyze three cases or three countries found in the WB, namely Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia. The reasons for my cases choice are mostly pragmatic, i.e. the WB suits the criteria for conducting a proper research, seeing the prominent role that identities had in the regions past. This region is unfortunately known for its security problems, the continuing instability of some of its members to date and perhaps to a lesser extent for the slow progress in the European Union integration process.

However, understanding the role of identity perceptions on security and explaining it will not do justice to the self imposed objective of modestly helping security promoting. Hence, we must extend the purpose of the study to complement it. Our ultimate goal includes efforts to pinpoint possible solutions as well. Thus, we have an obligation to find how to implement the findings i.e. after we have understood how security is affected by identity perceptions we should try to pinpoint possible solutions based on case specific revelations and theory.

As late as the 1990s Yugoslavia which comprised all three our case choices plunged into an uncontrolled disintegrative war stemming from ethnic conflict. The violent breakup was

somewhat surprising since Yugoslavia was considered until then a successful multiethnic country. After all it was peaceful for some 45 years and, if we don’t count the Second World War which was an international conflict it can be argued that this peaceful coexistence (despite problems) can be extended to its creation in 1918. Nevertheless this chaotic breakup had significant repercussions not only for the region but for the whole Europe and the international arena, which eventually intervened more than once to put an end to the devastating conflicts. The fact that these conflicts marked these countries by leaving to this day a dysfunctional Bosnia, an internationally disputed Kosovo, and a problematic multiethnic Macedonia, gives relevance to the study. The fact that the problems today are based on ethnic strife and are inherited by the previews conflicts makes it an appropriate case choice for an identity based security study.

To fulfill the purpose of this research we will take a constructivist approach and focus on ‘social identity theory’. However taking into account that individuals have multiple social identities and that not all identities play the same role in the behavior of the social group we will focus on ethnicity and nationality as prominent parts of identity and as major players in security issues worldwide and, more specifically in the Western Balkans. Since I am trying to understand and explain the role of identity perceptions on security and I focus on ethnicity and nationality, one might be confused that this is one more study about nationalism. It must be noted that nationalism refers to the efforts of a social group to form or expand a political organization (typically that of a state) based on ethnicity and/or nationality while I try to find how ethnic and national identity perceptions and simplistic negative identity perceptions towards other social groups affects security i.e. how a people identifies oneself and others affect security. Nevertheless we will delve at length in their respective chapter the conceptual clarifications of identity, ethnicity and nationality as well as their relation to security and the Western Balkans.

It must be noted that notwithstanding the fact that the WB is a quite complicated region it is by no means unique or incomprehensible. Maria Todorova, a prominent Balkans historian explains in her book ‘Imagining the Balkans’ exactly this relationship between what she coins as

2 Note that identity and social identity is used interchangeably throughout this study even though identity may refer to personal identity which is what makes a person unique and social identity stems from a person identifying him/her with a social group. We will shed more light in the theoretical framework as well as on the second chapter.

‘Balkanism’ i.e. the persistent negative image and discourse implications of the Balkans as being inherently backwards, war prone and barbaric with an objectively different existing reality. The fact that this region is not uncommon will hopefully make a study of this sort helpful to other similar cases in the world which focus on identity’s role on security.

This thesis will focus on two research questions. The first, which is also the more obvious, tries to find how identity perceptions affect security. While the second research question, tries to pinpoint possible solutions based on a combination of case specific findings and theory. All three cases will be confronted with these two research questions on an individual level and then we will try to draw general conclusions at the end. Hopefully by understanding the paradigm we can try to avert conflicts and security threats.

This study will argue that identity perceptions affect security heavily and can do so in a negative as well as positive way. We are well aware of the armed conflicts that stem from identities, be they cultural such as ethnicity and nationality, or religious, racial etc. Since identities are social constructions, their perceptions of the ‘self’ and ‘other’ are subject to change. By identifying the causes of the creation of negative identity perceptions towards other social groups, we could try and change the circumstances that affect them into good or at least neutral perceptions in order to prevent conflict and security problems. However since the aim is a bit broad we will focus on ethnicity and nationality and the Western Balkans as a case study to draw more general conclusions which could be complemented by further research.

This approach is novel in the sense that it tries to give an identity based explanation to security issues and tries to build on this paradigm possible solutions to case specific security threats. To my knowledge, security and identity studies though indeed vast and to an immense help for this study have not taken such a specific approach.

Lastly I would like to add that although we will see that all the parties are guilty of security breach and atrocities towards others based on negative identity perceptions, this does not mean that they are equally responsible or that bad deeds average out. Some are indeed more responsible than others.

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1.2. Theoretical framework

Theorists in general agree that the main function of theories is to guide the research. Theories ease our efforts and make possible for us to grasp the world because they conceptualize it, simplify complexities and outline possible avenues of enquiry. They are great tools to challenge conventional knowledge of the world and prejudices we might have. Taking into account the prominence of theoretical framework in a research we will proceed to its explanation in this section.

Constructivism

This thesis will be using a constructivist theoretical approach and focus on theories of identity, more specifically the ‘social identity theory’. We are trying to find out how identity perceptions affect security thus aiming for an identity based explanation to security issues. However to explain such complex phenomena we take a different stance and challenge the perhaps rigid and more mainstream security explanations focusing on power, interests, preservation of balance, rational choice etc. or in this case by not simply taking ethnic and/or national groups and their aims as a given. Instead we take into account their constructive nature and their perceptions of the self and others and try to find how they affect security with the aim to promote it. In this sense this is a novel way to approach such issues and is not intended to dismiss other explanations but rather to complement them.

In fact Henry Nau has shown that realist and social constructivist theories of identity and power can very well be considered as complementary theoretical positions. Even though these perspectives are built on different presumptions and help on different insights their relations are not necessarily conflicting or competing. Jørgensen argues that this goes also for other international relations theory traditions such as liberalism and international society.

Friedrich Kratochwil one of the most prominent constructivists explains that social constructivism or constructivism should not be mistaken with misconceptions that the physical world is a product of our imagination or that it preaches relativism but rather that we are the ones who place order into it. He argues that theories are not simple descriptions of a discoverable

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6 Nau cited in Knud Erik Jørgensen, Ibid., 161.
7 Ibid., 161.
reality but represent partial ways of how the world is understood and they should be compared for better explanatory power.\textsuperscript{8} He argues that ‘categorical frames are not simply natural, but the result of specific conceptual developments’ and that ‘if we accept that the human world is one of artifice, then the notions the actors have about their actions matter’.\textsuperscript{9} For example, a constructivist does not deny the existence of physical beings but asserts that we classify them for our convenience in animals, mammals, species and many other forms; this impacts our reality. Similarly, money is both, a social fact and a social construction with very real behavioral consequences. In the same line this thesis does not argue that identities are not real social facts but rather, they are complex social constructions subject to change and which affect security.

Constructivism is indeed a useful approach because it asserts that knowledge is filtered through the theories that we choose and not that the world simply is here waiting to be discovered by applying empirical research. Kartochwil states: ‘the social world is of our making, and it requires an \textit{episteme} that takes the questions of our world-making seriously and does not impede an inquiry on the basis of a dogmatic conception of science or method.’\textsuperscript{10}

Constructivism has flourished in the last two decades and has contributed significantly to knowledge in the field of IR. This approach has generated research programs which would be unimaginable within traditional IR research.\textsuperscript{11} Constructivism is useful not the least for this thesis because it aims to complement material ontology with ideational or social factors like identity or culture.\textsuperscript{12} After all our research questions refer to ethnicity and nationality which are part of identity and a cultural category. This thesis as we said will focus on identity theory where the aim is not to find which is better, an interest based or identity based explanation but rather to find how identities cause interests and how they translate into policy.\textsuperscript{13} In our case the question is how they affect security. However, we must note that this thesis takes a general constructivist approach and does not choose one stream in particular despite acknowledging them.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{8} Friedrich Kratochwil, ‘Constructivism: what it is (not) and how it matters’, In D. Della Porta and M. Keating (eds.), Op. Cit., 80-98.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., 84; 86.
\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 97.
\textsuperscript{11} Knud Erik Jørgensen, Op. Cit., 160; 162.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 163.
\textsuperscript{14} See Knud Erik Jørgensen, Ibid., 160-163.
Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory (SIT) will guide this research because it takes a constructivist stance and analyses identity as well as behavior of social identity groups.

Social identity theory explains Hogg, analyses ‘the role of self-conception in group membership, group processes, and intergroup relations’. The SIT defines the social identity as the individual’s knowledge that she or he is part of a social category or group. Hence, we are to understand that this theory analyses the role of individual’s identity as a group member on group processes and intergroup relations. This theoretical approach is particularly useful for this research since we will analyze the role of ethno-nationality on security by looking at intergroup relations. For example how does perceiving one’s self as Bosniak or Serb affects these intergroup relations in terms of security; i.e. why perceiving each-other and themselves in a negative light has resulted in devastating war and ethnic cleansing.

According to SIT, people tend to classify themselves as well as others into diverse social categories and these categories are prototypical characteristics which are abstracted by the group members. Therefore a social group is a set of persons who share a common social identity or see themselves as part of the same social category; the SIT defines the group in these terms i.e. as the individual’s self-conception as a group member. This social classification or social categorization serves two main functions. On one hand it places order in the social environment by providing individuals with the means to systematically define others, and on the other hand, the individual himself/herself is bestowed with the characteristics of the category or group of which he/she belongs. This is quite important for us because as we will see the ethno-national identities in the WB stem from this self-conceptions as part of the group and definitions of others as part of a competing group.

Two important processes are involved in the formation of social identity and they are the self-categorization and social comparison. However both have different consequences. Self-categorization emphasizes the similarities between group members as well as the perceived differences in out-group members. This emphasis occurs for attitudes which are believed to be correlated with relevant group categorization such as behavioral norms, values, beliefs etc. While the consequences of the process of social comparison, is the selection of the emphasis effect towards those characteristics that are positive about the self or in-group and negative for the out-group. This leads to positive judgment of the self group or category and to negative judgment of the other groups. This process as we will see throughout the analyses of our cases is present in all ethno-national groups, namely Croatians, Bosniaks, Serbs, Albanians and Macedonians. They do tend to emphasize their values and negative aspects of the ‘other’ in a rather simplistic manner which rarely corresponds to the complex reality; they also all have in common that they feel that they are the victims and defenders and the other the aggressors. The fact that this theory is completely adaptable to these groups makes it an adequate tool for research guide.

An important aspect of social identity theory is the individuals perception of the group fate with his own, or the persons fate intertwine with that of the group. Throughout the thesis we will notice that this sharing of the fate perception it is quite common in the WB and rightly so I might add in many circumstances (although not necessarily all). For example during the ethno-national conflicts there, ethnic cleansing was part of the war and rightly any individual of the group targeted saw his fate related to that of the group.

However we have to take into account that an individual’s identification with the group is a matter of degree. Ethnicity is a prominent social identity and a central element of self-definition. While in the past social scientists focused more on racial categories, based on physical traits, it lost usage with time due to the increased awareness of the arbitrary in such social constructions. Nowadays it is more common the categorization based on ethnicity which is defined in terms of culture. Nationality is closely linked to ethnicity and these terms often overlap and in others they represent different ways of one’s identification. While in Finland they

23 Ibid.
highly overlap, in the USA they are quite different.\textsuperscript{25} For this reason we use ethno-nationality to indicate the overlap. Also we must note that in the WB they overlap extensively. However much needed explanation will follow in the second chapter.

Hogg argues that ‘social identity theory addresses phenomena such as prejudice, discrimination, ethnocentrism, stereotyping, intergroup conflict, conformity, normative behavior, group polarization, crowd behavior, organizational behavior, leadership, deviance, and group cohesiveness.’\textsuperscript{26} We will notice throughout the research that many of these phenomena are present in our research, namely prejudice, discrimination, ethnocentrism, stereotyping, and intergroup conflict. Hence, one more reason to make use of SIT.

Social identity theory is a relatively new theory. It started to develop in the 1970s by Tajfel and Turner and has gained considerable ground and prominence since the 1990s.\textsuperscript{27} The importance that it has gained can be contributed to its achievements. Brown names a few such as the distinction between personal identity and social identity where the former refers to the values and ideas of individuals and the latter refers to the identity derived by group membership. SIT, he suggests has made its most significant contributions especially in intergroup bias, responses to status inequality, stereotyping and perceptions of group homogeneity, and changing intergroup attitudes through contact.\textsuperscript{28} Briefly put intergroup bias refers to biases of group members towards their group; responses to status inequality refers to how group members react to inequality and how it affects intergroup relationship; stereotyping and perceptions of group homogeneity refers to the explanation of intergroup relations based on stereotypes and perceptions of group homogeneity; changing intergroup attitudes through contact asserts that contact between groups affects attitudes.\textsuperscript{29}

For the reasons described above constructivism and social identity theory are deemed as the right choice for conducting this research.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 3-4.
\textsuperscript{26} Michael A. Hogg, Op. Cit., 111.
\textsuperscript{27} See Michael Hogg, Op. Cit.
\textsuperscript{28} E. Ashforth and Fred Mael, Op. Cit.
1.3. Methodology

Methodology, as defined by Della Porta and M. Keating ‘refers to the instruments and techniques we use to acquire knowledge.’\(^{30}\) Given the paramount importance of methodology in a research study this section will describe the methodology used and why it is appropriate for this thesis.

We mentioned earlier that in order to answer the research questions we will analyze three cases, namely Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia. This most probably hints that we will be using a case-oriented approach. As Vennsson asserts case studies have contributed largely to knowledge about the social and political world and more importantly for us, to international security in the field of international relations\(^ {31}\) thus, making such an approach appropriate and relevant to our study. In fact, beside large contributions, in the interpretative social sciences since the 1970s there was a growing attention that emphasized the importance of ‘thick descriptions’ of few cases.\(^ {32}\) And in the beginning of the 1990s the aim was limited generalizations, focusing on middle-range and/or lower-level theories where the specificities of the historical context played a critical role.\(^ {33}\)

In a case-oriented approach, stresses Della Porta:

an in-depth knowledge of a small number of cases provides the basis for generalizations that are temporarily limited to the cases studied and whose wider relevance should be controlled through further research. Macro-units (such as countries) are therefore considered as unique and complex social configurations (…), even though concepts are built that transcend the validity of individual cases (…).\(^ {34}\)

Indeed this thesis focuses on an in-depth analysis of a small number of cases (three to be precise) while taking into account the complex social configuration of these macro units. Despite the fact that this type of study provides the basis for generalizations that are temporarily limited

\(^{33}\) Mair, cited in Donatella della Porta, Ibid., 213.
\(^{34}\) Donatella della Porta, Ibid., 206.
to these case studies, the concepts used, as we will see in their respective chapters transcend the cases in question.

One of the valuable features of the case-oriented approach suggest Della Porta “is the development of an extensive dialogue between the researcher’s ideas and data in an examination of each case as complex set of relationships, which allows causal complexity to be addressed.”

This thesis focuses on understanding and explaining a complex phenomenon that is the role of identity perceptions on security and the cases selected are in no way coincidental. Case oriented researchers may intentionally select cases which differ relatively little with each-other or put more explicitly, cases where the phenomenon is present. Hence these cases are chosen on purpose precisely because the phenomenon which interests us is present in all three of them. Case studies are quite useful since they can be used by researchers for theory development or theory evaluation but also for formulating hypothesis or explaining specific phenomena by using theories and causal mechanisms.

This study appropriately employs qualitative research methodology which according to Della Porta and Keating ‘aims at understanding events by discovering the meanings human beings attribute to their behavior and the external world. The focus is […] on understanding human nature including the diversity of society and culture.’

However, Vennsson tells us that within case analysis “several options are available: congruence method, process tracing, and typology theory, which integrate comparative and within-case analysis.” From these choices we will be using process tracing as the more appropriate. Process-tracing indeed finds its place in the constructivist approach which as we explained this thesis makes use of. Process tracing is also the core of descriptions of causal mechanisms which in social sciences requires case studies and historical scholarship.

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35 Ibid., 207.
36 Ibid., 212.
38 D. Della Porta and M. Keating, Op. Cit., 26
41 Alexander Wendt, cited in Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, Ibid., 206.
We mentioned above that case studies can be used by researchers for theory development or theory evaluation but also for formulating hypothesis or explaining specific phenomena by using theories and causal mechanisms. Hence process tracing is an appropriate tool because it too can be used for theory testing and theory development as well as it can be applied also to the explanation of macro-phenomena and micro-phenomena.\textsuperscript{42}

Process-tracing is a useful choice not the least because it provides the possibility for political scientists who recognize the complexities of historical events but are more concerned in explaining individual cases as well as theorizing about their categories.\textsuperscript{43} It is also a method that allows the researcher to look not only on what happened but also on how it happened. Process-tracing makes it possible to investigate the relationship between belief and behavior as well as inspect the reasons actors give for their actions and behavior.\textsuperscript{44}

Process tracing will be used not only to trace the process of identity construction and how this affects security but also how the ethnocentric interpretation of these historical accounts affects identities and security. Hence, we will be tracing the historical account of how these people understand history as well.

By combining the case-study approach with process tracing as methodology and by employing constructivism as theoretical framework this thesis will try to explain the complex phenomenon that is ‘the role of identity perceptions on security’.

However it should be noted that by using process tracing as a method we face some limitations as well. In order to work, process tracing requires not only a wide array of empirical resources but they need be diverse, reliable and sufficiently accurate.\textsuperscript{45} We already mentioned that process tracing requires historical scholarship and that we will trace the process of identity construction and perceptions. This in itself is rather difficult to do as is highly dependable on diverse and reliable materials. Having a degree in history is of immense help; however I still face the challenge of selecting appropriate material and empirical sources which take into account collective identity specifically. Recognizing that social identity is a delicate topic, difficult to

\textsuperscript{42} Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, Ibid., 207-209; 213-214.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 223.
define and perhaps somewhat controversial as well as subject to perceptions the reader is advised to be cautious and themselves assess the materials used.

Similarly, tracing the process that leads to outcomes helps narrow potential causes but it is still difficult to eliminate other explanations. This is a concern especially when human actors are involved in the process.\(^{46}\) Also as George and Bennet assert “the extent to which a historical narrative is transformed into a theoretical explanation can vary. The explanation may be deliberately selective, focusing on what are thought to be particularly important parts of an adequate or parsimonious explanation”\(^{47}\) The above mentioned pitfalls are indeed very important and should be kept in mind. Even though we recognize that security problems are subject to different explanations and causes we should also assert once more that this is study is meant in a complementary fashion to other more mainstream explanations.

Another limitation of process tracing as well as a common problem of social science research is cognitive biases. The researcher might pay more attention to information that confirms his/her beliefs and simply disregard what is contradicting to the initial hypothesis. In using process tracing the researcher might ignore negative evidence i.e. he/she might overlook at the thing that don’t happen.\(^{48}\) For example when assessing historical events that have shaped identities and their perceptions we might overlook the events which have no seeming relevancy. Hopefully awareness of this problem will impose caution. Other limitations that this thesis faces will be dealt in their respective section latter on.

However, George and Bennet caution that process-tracing must not be confused with a simple historical narrative of the causal process as they are not the same.\(^{49}\) Vennsson identifies three ways in which they differ. For one, process-tracing is focused and deals selectively with certain aspects of the phenomenon. Secondly it is structured, in the sense that it develops an analytical explanation based on the theoretical framework outlined in the research design; and thirdly, its goal is to provide a narrative explanation of a casual path which leads to a specific outcome.\(^{50}\)

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\(^{46}\) Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, Ibid., 207.

\(^{47}\) Ibid., 211.


\(^{50}\) Pascal Vennesson, Op. Cit., 235.
1.4. Outline and limitations

This section is the final part of the introductory chapter. We will divide it in two parts; the first will present an outline of the thesis while the second will briefly explore some of the limitations and the problems which this thesis faces.

Outline

In order to make the navigation through the study easier we will describe below the outline of this study. This thesis is divided into five chapters and their respective sections.

The first chapter is the introductory chapter of which this outline is part of. The introductory chapter is itself divided in several sections, each dealing with its respective problem. In the first section we describe the research problem and purpose of the study. We put forward explicitly the research questions as well as the reasons why a study of this kind is relevant, interesting and why we chose these particular cases. The second section deals specifically with the theoretical framework and its issues. The third section describes the methodology used and its importance. At the end we conclude by providing some of the limitations facing this study.

The second chapter focuses on much needed conceptual clarifications to avoid misconceptions based on different understandings of complex concepts. It provides the conceptual bases upon which the later analyses are built on. In this chapter we also try to clarify the relevance and relationship of the concepts used such as identity, ethnicity and nationality with security and the Western Balkans. Here we will provide some more insight on the appropriateness of the case choice as well as the relevance of such study.

The third chapter tries to ease the understanding of the cases at hand by providing vital information about them. Here are made the necessary explanations and clarifications about their complexity. To avoid the erroneous assumption about beforehand knowledge on the cases, we provide in this chapter insight on the WB and in particular on Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia ethno-national composition as well as what it means. For example before we deal with the analysis of Bosnia we provide some preliminary information about the people that inhabit it, their location, similarities and differences in their identity as well as their relationship. This
chapter is essential to provide a bridge between the previous conceptual chapter and the thorough case analysis chapter that follows it. Here we will shed some light on a region which is covered by the shadow of complexity and show that is not so incomprehensible after all.

The fourth chapter is the longest and perhaps the most important one, since it comprises the analysis of the cases. To be more explicit this chapter will be divided into three parts each analyzing the specific case, namely Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia. In each of the cases there will be a thorough analysis in order to answer the research questions. At the end of each case analysis we will point to possible solutions as well as draw brief conclusions.

The fifth and the final chapter will be that of general conclusions. Here we will generate a summary of the findings and see if we did answer properly the research questions. This chapter will build upon the case specific analysis as well as their respective conclusions. The conclusions remarks will summarize more explicitly the explanation of the phenomenon of the role of identity perceptions on security and see if the findings and solutions proposed created a valuable hypothesis applicable on other similar cases.

**Limitations**

As mentioned earlier this section will explore briefly some of the limitations which this thesis faces.

Despite considerable advantages and the appropriateness of the methodology and theoretical framework explained above, we naturally face also limitations. One of the pitfalls of case studies and process tracing is that they are theory dependent. The theoretical framework is supposed to guide the research; however the theoretical framework itself can be lacking or can be ill suited. Often, when theories exist, they are not sufficiently specific and rarely apply completely at the problem at hand.\(^{51}\) Although quite true, this does not represent a major problem as it is not an absolute necessity for a theory to be that specific, nor it is for us to be bind strictly to theory. Instead we can adapt and improve parts when and if necessary.

Another challenge is represented in the form of empirical sources, i.e. case studies depend heavily on existing and accessible materials. It is necessary to have diverse empirical resources and have sufficient time for the research process.\textsuperscript{52} The research should indeed draw from a diverse pool of information and resources and this research has taken great care on finding relevant material. Although a qualitative study in itself we draw also form quantitative studies which contribute significantly to the research.

One more problem common to social science research is cognitive biases that can interfere in the quality of the study.\textsuperscript{53} Hopefully by being aware of this quite common problem we will try and avoid it, also this research does not aim to an absolute explanation of the phenomenon at hand but rather to provide sound alternative complementing explanations.

Also process tracing is specifically vulnerable to more than one hypothesized causal mechanism which leaves the researcher with the difficult task of assessing the value of different explanations.\textsuperscript{54} Thus, in the analyses we will assess the possible explanations carefully and point to the best one or best ones.

Social identity theory is prone to occasional challenge of empirical evidence and conceptual ambiguity. But Brown argues that this should be viewed as an opportunity to refine it and contribute and as proof of its vitality.\textsuperscript{55} Either way we explained above that such problems can be overcome by not sticking too strictly to theory. Also the second chapter should remove any ambiguity of the concepts used.

However Vennesson argues that despite natural limitations, researchers should be given confidence and encouraged in their research; they should also keep in mind these limitations to conduct better studies.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 237.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 237-238.
\textsuperscript{54} Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, Op. Cit., 222-223.
\textsuperscript{55} Rupert Brown, Op. Cit., 753.
\textsuperscript{56} Pascal Vennesson, Op. Cit., 239.
2. Ethnicity and Nationality, Prominent Parts of Identity

Before we begin our analysis on the role of identity perceptions on security and how this affects security in the Western Balkans, we are faced with the necessity to understand what constitutes identity, i.e. on what grounds does a people establish the distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’. How do we come to the conclusion and definition of our identity and how does this perception of the ‘others’ affect our behavior? We must beforehand explore identity in itself and within it ethnicity and nationality as prominent parts of it. This is of crucial importance to us because in the Western Balkans ethnicity and nationality have played and continue to play a central role in the regions security; but also because the conflict that caused the Yugoslavian breakup stemmed from ethno-national divisions. The conflict that swept Yugoslavia was fought under these principles thus making questions about identity as embedded in ethnicity and nationality a natural starting place.

2.1. Identity

Throughout history we (humans) have formed a vast variety of different groups based on countless different criteria, which are used to distinguish ourselves from one-another. We have the natural tendency to divide ourselves in ‘us’ and ‘them’ often on characteristics conditioned by space and time. These characteristics and distinctions that divide us constitute our different identities. Among many other characteristics, ethnicity and nationality are prominent parts of identity. They are often forged through history and are quite closely related to territory. In Grosby words: “The nation is a territorial relation of collective self-consciousness of actual and imagined duration.”

57 In fact ethnicity and nationality are so closely related to the territory they inhabit that most people share simultaneously the same name with it. It is hard to state if the names stem from the people or the territory but what is important to us is that people are perceived and perceive themselves accordingly. For example we have Japan the territory and Japanese its people, Germany-Germans, Egypt-Egyptians, Brazil-Brazilian, Canada-Canadian, and etc. 58

We will later see that in the Western Balkans this special relation between territory and identity has posed in the near past serious security concerns.

58 Ibid., 10-11.
As individuals we have many characteristics that contribute to our self-image and which overlap at all times; these characteristics that constitute our identity play different roles in our behavior without generally conflicting with each-other. Here we refer to identity or more accurately to social identity as the feeling and identification of individuals as part of a group based on real or perceived characteristics. Clearly some characteristics are stronger and prevail over others in one’s identity. For example characteristics such as being an academic and perceiving oneself as part of the academic community or being a fan of a football club or being an artist etc. are surely part of one’s identity; however they tend to succumb to stronger characteristics or at least do not play as an important role in how we behave. On the contrary other characteristics like being a member of a monotheistic religion, our sexual identity, racial identity and of course ethno-national identity play much greater role in general in regard to our behavior and towards that of the group. To put it more explicitly, a stronger characteristic part of our identity like our religion is more likely to prevail over others like being a fan of the same team. In other words even though we might have both characteristics and belong to both groups we are more likely to place more importance to a stronger characteristic and choose the according group (if or when faced with such choice). This is especially important when it comes to ethno-national characteristics since they usually prevail over others and push us into conflict with other groups which we would otherwise identify ourselves with. Ethno-national characteristics have a more central role compared to others due to the tendency of humanity to form societies with special relation to a territory.

2.2. Ethnicity and nationality

Identity it is not an easy concept to define and neither are ethnicity and nationality; hence we find ourselves in obligation to explore these concepts as well, not the least because they are critical to our analysis.

As it commonly happens in social sciences, concepts often lack desired clarity, and the problems that result are not unknown to the academic community. What perhaps makes matters

60 Steven Grosby, Loc. Cit.
worse is the understanding and usage of these concepts by common people in their every-day life. Unfortunately concepts relating to ethnicity and nationality do not make an exception and do not escape this trap. It is for this reason that I will try to briefly bring some needed attention to this issue.

Sometimes these concepts are used interchangeably by social scientists and common people alike as Francisco Gil-White explains in his paper titled: “The study of ethnicity and nationalism needs better categories: Clearing up the confusions that result from blurring analytic and lay concepts”. 61 Here the author tries to shed some light in the confusion that exists within the academic community when defining concepts relating to ethnicity and nationalism while making an effort to create better categories. Needles to say, when such confusion exists between academics, the tendency of common people to descend into even more confusion is quite understandable. Gil-White in turn coins the term ‘ethnie’ instead of the more largely used ‘ethnic group’ and argues that it must fulfill three elements in order to be called such. An ethnie must have: (1) An ideology of membership by descent, (2) The perception of a unique and homogenous culture (typically, associated with a particular territory), (3) Category-based normative endogamy. 62 Therefore he defines an ethnie as “a collection of people who, at a minimum, represent themselves as a self-sufficiently and vertically reproducing historical unit implying cultural peoplehood”. 63 The author makes a plausible definition of ethnicity, while drawing from a considerable pool of statements by other nationalism scholars which resemble his definition. 64

What is interesting is that despite the clear and good definition of ethnicity the relation that this term has with nation and nationality is quite blur. Gil-White argues that ‘nation’ is just a politicians term and is useless analytically thus making ‘nationality’ as futile. However he defines a ‘nationalist’ as a: “Person who believes his ethnie should be a unified and politically sovereign unit…” 65 Some, like Thomas Eriksen agree with Gil-White when say:

62 Ibid., 7-8
63 Ibid., 8
64 Ibid., 21-22
65 Ibid., 25-27.
Like ethnic ideologies, nationalism stresses the cultural similarity of its adherents, and by implication, it draws boundaries vis-a-vis others, who thereby become outsiders. The distinguishing mark of nationalism is by definition its relationship to the state. A nationalist holds that political boundaries should be coterminous with cultural boundaries, whereas many ethnic groups do not demand command over a state. When the political leaders of an ethnic movement place demands to this effect, the ethnic movement therefore by definition becomes a nationalist movement.\(^6\)

One can anticipate that other scholars partly disagree. Walker Connor for example is in the same mind when he notes that the terms nation and nationalism have a slipshod use and this constitutes a rule rather than an exception. However he also tries to define the nation by saying that it, “…connotes a group of people who believe they are ancestrally related.” and that “Nationalism connotes identification with and loyalty to one’s nation as just defined. It does not refer to loyalty to one’s country”.\(^6\) In the same line Steven Grosby has this to say about ethnicity and nation:

Similar to the nation, one is born into an ethnic group. Because of this characteristic of birth, both the ethnic group and the nation are often perceived as being ‘natural’ relations. Despite this perception, both of these forms of kinship incorporate other cultural traditions, such as language and religion, as boundaries of the social relation. While it is sometimes difficult to distinguish clearly an ethnic group from a nation, ethnicity tends to emphasize beliefs in descent from a supposed ancestor or ancestors, as if the ethnic group were an extended family, while the focus of the nation is territorial descent. Important to realize is that kinship is an ambiguous relation, as it is a consequence of the perception of being related. Usually any nation contains within it numerous ethnic groups.\(^6\)

Philip Spencer and Howard Wollman again assert the difficulty in defining these concepts and express that: “…the central focus of nationalist attention and energy, the nation, is a slippery and elusive object.”\(^6\) In any case they too give some definition to the nation when they say that the nation “…has to do with relationships between people, with how people see themselves as connected over both time and space, as sharing some kind of collective identity” and define nationalism as an “…ideology which imagines the community in a particular way (as

national), asserts the primacy of this collective identity over others, and seeks political power in its name, ideally (if not exclusively or everywhere) in the form of a state for the nation…”.

Antony Smith one of the most prominent scholars of nationalism walks the same direction when he makes the distinction between feelings of national belonging, ethnies or ethnic communities, nations and nationalism where the last term refers to a political movement containing an ideology of the nation. He too recognizes the hardship in defining these concepts and sees the nation as indeed a useful and real concept.

What can be understood from the examples given above by different scholars of nationalism is that there is no universal definition or agreement in how to define these concepts but rather strong similarities and few substantial contradictions. While we can find common ground for concepts of ethnicity and nationalism we find obstacles in the definition of the nation. Some as we saw reject the very term as futile while others see it as quite important. Nevertheless, now we have an understanding of ethnicity, nation, and nationalism. The term nationalism is perhaps the less debated and is defined by all, nearly the same way i.e. the idea or action to transform or keep the nation or ethnic group into a political formation like the state. Despite the disagreements on the ‘nation’ we are obliged to choose and use this concept much like the authors who view it as a useful and define it similarly to each other. This is done because the term is quite useful for analytical purposes but also because we need a term for societies which are multiethnic and simultaneously a nation. For example in USA people consider themselves a nation even though they are racially, and ethnically different, the same applies arguably to many other countries like Belgium, Afghanistan, South Africa, India, Switzerland etc. where the nation as a characteristic and part of identity is above the ethnic or racially or linguistic identity. Smith and Grosby among others assert exactly this.

Other reasons for our choice are that, the academic debate (though important no doubt) is not a primary concern, what is indeed important is how people in general and the people in the WB in particular view the nation, and they believe and think that the nation is as real as it can be. Walker Connor notes: “…it is not what is, but what people believe is that has behavioral

70 Ibid., 2.
consequences.\textsuperscript{73} Furthermore a social construction like the nation is not perceived as such; on the contrary as Alexander Motyl explains people are not conscious that they construct these realities, they are not conscious that they engage in social construction and as a result take for granted a socially constructed reality.\textsuperscript{74} Since it is real to the people in the WB and since we are interested how these perceptions of the ‘self’ as an ethnic group and nation (i.e. Serbs, Albanians, Macedonians, Bosnians, and Croatians) impacts security in the region we are obligated to use concepts of ethnicity and nationality much the same way.

At this point it is important to explain that beside ethnicity and nationality the term ‘ethno-nationality’ will be used. This is largely due to perceptions that the people of the WB have on these concepts i.e. for them the ethnic group is also the nation, but also because in the WB case (like in many other parts of the world) it coincides that ethnicity and nationality overlap extensively.

\textbf{2.3. The relation between ethno-nationality and security}

Now we briefly turn our attention to the relationship between security and ethno-nationality. Before we scrutinize this relationship we shall shed some light on the concepts of ‘security’ and ‘ethno-national conflict’. Security in this thesis is meant in the traditional way i.e. it has at its center the traditional level where the focus is on the international and national/domestic level as opposed to the nontraditional level where the focus is on the individual. The meaning of security should not be confused with later developments such as ‘human security’ which has a much broader meaning. To be more explicit it does not include individual economic security, environmental protection, healthcare etc. The thesis uses the term specifically to portray state or national security, region security (in this case the WB) and the implications that a breach of it may have on neighbors and wider geographical scale.\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{73} Walker Connor, Op. Cit., 75.
\textsuperscript{75} Michael E. Smith, \emph{International Security: Politics, Policy, Prospects} (GB: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 11-15; 316-319.

For the other very important concept, namely ‘ethno-national conflict’ this thesis acquires the definition that Wolff so eloquently employs. He defines an ethno-national conflict as one in which the goals of at least one party to the conflict are defined in (exclusively) ethno-national terms, and in which the primary fault line of confrontation is one of ethno-national distinctions. Whatever the concrete issues may be over which conflict erupts, at least one of the parties will claim that its distinct ethno-national identity is the reason why its members cannot realize their interests, why they do not have the same rights, or why their claims are not satisfied. Thus, ethno-national conflicts are a form of group conflict in which one of the parties involved interprets the conflict, its causes, and potential remedies along an actually existing or perceived discriminating ethno-national divide. In other words, an ethno-national conflict involves at least one party that is organized around the distinct ethno-national identity of its members.76

Having an understanding of the concepts presented above clears us the way to pursue and fathom the relation between ethno-nationality and security. Wolf comes once again at our help when notes, “Ethno-national conflicts are among the most intractable, violent, and destructive forms of conflict that society, states, and the international community have experienced and continue to face.”77 It is hardly difficult to deduct from such statement the serious security concerns that ethno-national conflicts bear. It seems that many scholars agree that ethnic intrastate wars or, conflicts that stem from disputes between ethnic groups are more violent and harder to resolve because of the strong loyalties that exist between its members. On the contrary ideological intrastate wars seem to be less so precisely because loyalties are less passionate and rigid compared to conflicts or wars with an ethnic background.78 Not only ethno-national conflicts are very violent but they seem to be quite common too. Since the Cold War ended to the mid 1990s, more than fifty ethnic conflicts were being fought around the world, out of which thirteen of them had caused each more than 100,000 deaths.79 One such conflict that quickly springs to mind is the ethnic conflict in Rwanda between Hutus and Tutsis where in a very short time period of three and a half months (April-July 1994) an estimated 500,000-800,000 Tutsis

77 Ibid., 162.
78 Kaufman; Brown et al.; King; Snyder; Gurr and Harrif, cited in Michael E. Smith, Op. Cit. 100.
79 Gurr, cited in Michael E. Smith, Ibid., 101.
were murdered.\textsuperscript{80} The numbers speak for themselves; they leave no doubt that ethno-national conflicts are a grave concern for security.

Furthermore it appears that the increase in ethno-national conflicts in the twentieth century is almost inevitable considering the circumstances, i.e. when we consider the rise of nationalism on one hand and the fact that in the world there are approximately 600 language groups and 5000 ethnic groups which live in less than 200 states.\textsuperscript{81} Huge discrepancies such as these make ethno-national conflicts very hard to avoid hence, threatening security. There seem to be strong arguments that probabilities of violent conflicts to break out increase substantially when ethno-national heterogeneity is present which manifests itself as lack of congruence between ethnic, national and state boundaries.\textsuperscript{82} This clearly states that violent ethno-national conflicts are more probable in multiethnic communities or when the boundaries of the state, ethnicity and the nation do not match. Now that we can view clearly the relation between ethno-nationality and security we shall proceed in the next section with the relation between ethno-nationality and the Western Balkans.

\textbf{2.4. The relation between ethno-nationality and the WB}

The Western Balkans, as we will see later on, is quite complex, especially when we consider the overlap that exists between ethnic groups territoriality. Perhaps the best start to understand the relationship between ethno-nationality and the WB is the conflict that plagued Yugoslavia. The Yugoslavian breakup came due to ethno-national conflicts between its people. The diverse ethnic groups that fought each-other so fiercely failed in the attempt to create an identity above the ethnic one, i.e. a failure to create a Yugoslavian nation one in which the individual could call itself a Yugoslavian national. The explosion of nationalism in this multiethnic state was based on the ethnic group and that one precisely was seen as the nation

thus making the two to be viewed as one.\textsuperscript{83} The Yugoslavian breakup was the most destructive conflict since the end of the Second World War in Europe and as an ethno-national conflict it was perhaps to be expected. This makes it hardly difficult for us to recall the security problem that the conflict posed for the region and Europe and makes it easier for us to understand the relationship between ethno-nationality and the WB. To be more explicit Ethno-nationality has played a great role in the regions security and moreover continues to do so even nowadays.

It is true as Oberschall says that “religion or ethnicity are very real social facts, but in ordinary times they are only one of several roles and identities that matter”\textsuperscript{84} However the role that ethno-nationality has on the identity of the people in the WB compared to other identities is somewhat more dominant in general and, as the 1990s war demonstrates, even determinant. Furthermore the 1990s war left scars and other security threats through-out the whole region. These security threats manifest themselves nowadays mostly in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Macedonia. Once more they are based on the different issue disputes between the ethnic groups that compose each state. It is for this reason that this relationship has major importance for our case.

Our concern here relates to security and the role that these identity perceptions play on security. In the Western Balkans case, precisely the strong role that these identity perceptions played on security in the past and the fact that they still do to some extent today makes the question on the role of identity perceptions in the security of the WB so relevant.

\textsuperscript{83} Michael E. Smith, Op. Cit., 111. 

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 983.
3. Western Balkans, just how complex?

There is little doubt that the WB is a complex region burdened by many problems, some of which had serious spill-over effects in the 1990s. However we must understand just how complex it is in order to analyze its security. Therefore in this part of the thesis we will try and shed some light on the regions composition.

With the accession of Romania and Bulgaria in the European Union in 2007 the WB became a region surrounded by EU member states. The last enlargement of the EU raised the need to find a better term to refer to the remaining countries aspiring for EU membership. Thus, since the term Southeast Europe meant a larger area, the term ‘Western Balkans’ was coined. The region of the WB comprises seven countries i.e. Croatia; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Serbia; Montenegro; Kosovo; Albania and Macedonia and is sometimes described as the former Yugoslavian states minus Slovenia plus Albania. The whole region has a slightly bigger area than UK (some 264,000 km\(^2\)) but roughly one third of its population, i.e. approximately 21 and half million people. According to the World Bank, all WB countries are classified as lower-middle income countries, except Croatia which is classified as an upper-middle one.\(^85\) Despite the relatively small population and relatively poor economy, the WB has represented big problems for the EU; this stems largely due to the composition and location of the population in each state, namely the ethno-national divisions and their present location.

A glance at the Western Balkans map (map 1) and we will easily notice just how complex this region is. As we have previously mentioned heterogeneity does seem to increase substantially the probabilities of a violent conflict break out. Even so it must be stated that heterogeneity per se, even though increases the probabilities for violent conflict does not make predictions for civil war. Another factor that contributes largely to incentives for ethnic conflict in a heterogeneous state, is the territorialization of ethnic groups.\(^86\) As we can see, ethnicities in

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By territorialization is meant that in a multiethnic state at least one of the minority ethnic groups is a majority in a certain area of that state and at times bordering the mother state i.e. where that ethnic group constitutes the majority. For example: Croatians in Bosnia. (Authors’ explanation).
countries such as BiH, Kosovo and Macedonia are territorialized, thus providing incentives for security problems. It is no coincidence that we have security problems precisely in these three countries in the WB and not in the others. As Wolf suggests:

Bosnia, Macedonia, and Kosovo remain inextricably linked as three cases in the Western Balkans that, despite superficial stability in the former two, and an apparent “solution” of the latter, represent unresolved self-determination conflicts which all have significant potential to contribute to further regional instability.  

3.1. Bosnia and Herzegovina composition

Bosnia and Herzegovina has the most complicated ethno-national composition of all the WB states. The ‘Dayton Agreement’ which ended the horrible war in 1995 divided BiH in two main political entities, namely ‘The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina’ (51%) and, ‘Republika Srpska’ (49%) (Article III, Annex 2). The ‘Federation’ is mostly populated by Bosniaks and Croatians while RS is populated mostly by Serbs.

However it must be noted that there is a substantial difference between the terms ‘Bosnian’ and ‘Bosniak’; the former has a citizenship meaning and includes all nationalities and ethnicities (Bosniaks, Croats, Serbs and other national minorities) while the latter only refers to ‘Slavic Muslims’. To be more explicit, in Former Yugoslavia up to the years after the Second World War Slavic muslims were not considered an ethnicity or nationality but rather as Croats or Serbs with muslim faith. It was not until later, in 1963 that Muslims were recognized as a nationality. It is to be noted that there was (still is to some extent) a debate on whether they should call themselves Muslims or Bosniak. However the trend is to use the term Bosniak rather than Muslim. In fact in 1993 there was a Congress of Bosnian Muslim intellectuals that accepted the Bosniak identity and Bosniak has become the official name for Slavic muslims resulting in a complete replacement of the term Muslim. Nowadays, Bosniak has an ethnic and national connotation and is arguably similar to the Jews which have among them not only members belonging to the Jewish faith but also atheists and other religions as well.

The Former Yugoslavia had six official nationalities (narodnost), namely: Serbs, Croats, Macedonians, Ethnic Muslims, Slovenes and Montenegrins. All of them formed the largest

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group in one of the republics although not necessarily the majority (as in the case of Bosnia). Yugosla
via means ‘South Slavic’ and as the term itself suggests it was a state inhabited primarily by south Slavic people. The main defining criteria of nationalities in Yugoslavia were language, religion and to some extent history. The official language of the country was Serbo-Croatian and was spoken by Serbs, Croats, Ethnic Muslims and Montenegrin. Slovenians and Macedonians on the other hand speak similar languages to Serbo-Croatian, but not the same, i.e. Slovenian and Macedonian are different languages. Bosniaks wanted to differentiate themselves due to a different identity perception, but since they all speak the same language and have similar cultural traits only religion seemed to be a distinction. For others as well the same rules apply; i.e. Serbs are predominantly orthodox and Croats are predominantly catholic but speak the same language and are both south Slavic people. Hence due to religion differences the Bosniaks engaged in a social construction process that resulted in the creation of a different nationality. Thus the recognition of the Muslims as a nationality in the early 1960s seems to be part of a developing process of identity perception different from the others that existed previously.

This process is noticeable even nowadays. After the breakup all ethnicities emphasized the differences and call with their respective names what used to be previously the Serbo-Croatian language; more bluntly Montenegrins now call their language Montenegrin; Bosniaks Bosnian; Serbs Serbian and Croatians Croatian. This seems to be a very clear example of how people engage in social construction and demonstrates the process of social construction in the identity of the people in the WB.

It can be argued that the extreme focus on this new social identity perception is one more reason why the raise of nationalism in the region resulted in such massive destruction when there were so many similarities between the belligerents that sadly didn’t matter as much.

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94 Ibid., 6-7.
The territorial position of Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats in BiH made it a nightmare in the middle of 90s to find a solution to the conflict and makes it a nightmare now for the security of the region. We will pursue and go deeper on this problem into the chapter of BiH.

3.2. Kosovo and Macedonia composition

Kosovo and Macedonia are the other two cases which we will discuss in length. Both countries are inhabited in large numbers by Albanians; in the former they constitute a majority while in the later they constitute a significant minority. Interestingly Albanians were considered a minority in Yugoslavia even though they were in greater number than Montenegrins, Slovenes or Macedonians. They have a completely distinct identity from the other peoples inhabiting the Balkans. Namely they are not South Slavic, nor are they similar to other cultures like Greek or Romanian. They speak an Indo-European language which has its own unique branch that is not similar to any other language. Interestingly, it is language that has defined the identity of Albanians, i.e. the Albanian language is what makes an Albanian which presents a strong contradiction to the other Balkans people where religion has primarily defined them as nations.97

Religion, as we mentioned, contrary to the other Balkans people is not a distinctive contributing factor in Albanians ethnic identity perception. This stems because they belong to many religions i.e. they are predominantly Muslims (divisions Sunni and the Sufi Bektashi sect), but with considerable numbers of Christians (orthodox and catholic) and atheists.98 Perhaps another reason which helps our understanding is the divisive role played by religion in the Albanian national awakening. To be more explicit since they belonged to many religions it had to be transcended and its role diminished in order to emphasize the unity between them. A very good example for this is an old line from a poem of the Albanian renascence poet Pashko Vasa which says ‘the religion of Albanians is Albanianism’.99 This is not to say that religion does not play an important role on the people’s lives but rather that does not constitute a distinctive factor between Albanians in general and others, or Albanians themselves. Either way Albanians which inhabit territories of the former Yugoslavia are overwhelmingly muslim (Sunni) and quite

religious compared to Albanians from Albania which are in majority non religious. This shows that while religion might not be a distinctive factor between Albanians it did contribute to the distinction of Yugoslav Albanians from especially Serbs and Macedonians which are predominantly orthodox. Albanians are interesting for our study due to the role they have in Kosovo and Macedonia.

Albanians of the Former Yugoslavia are found as the map shows mostly in Kosovo and Macedonia while a small fraction of them lives in Serbia and Montenegro. While Montenegro does not have an ethno-national problem, at least not enough to be a security concern for the region, unfortunately Kosovo and Macedonia very well do. Kosovo seems to be the most problematic State after Bosnia. Even though ethno-nationalities are not as entangled as in Bosnia the legacy of the war and disputes of the status makes it a country with security problems especially in its northern territory. It is no coincidence that the territoriality of the Serbs there poses a security problem, confirming the claim that territoriality of ethno-nationality increases the chances of ethnic conflict. To be more explicit the majority of the Serbs which are found throughout Kosovo and don’t have a territorial relation with Serbia or are mixed with Albanians lead normal lives and do not pose security risks. On the other hand, Serbs in the northern Kosovo precisely because they are not mixed with Albanians (few Albanians live there) and have a territorial continuity with Serbia threaten with secession, thus increasing tension in the region. The same can be said for Albanians found in the southern tip of Serbia (Presevo valley) which share many similarities with their counterpart in northern Kosovo.

It can very well be argued that the same applied to Albanians in general in Serbia before the independence of Kosovo or the war that led to its independence. Namely the territoriality of Albanians in Serbia, the fact that they were in a majority in the province of Kosovo and had continuity with each-other and Albania were major incentives that led to an ethno-national conflict between Serbs and Albanians, a conflict that shook the security of the region and beyond. These reasons and of course the extensive different identity perceptions between the

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belligerents led ultimately to the situation we have today. Hence the relation between identity perception and security on Kosovo will be deeply scrutinized in the chapter on Kosovo.

Macedonia presents a somewhat more relaxed security problem based on similar principles as the other cases mentioned, i.e. on different identity perceptions or ethno-nationalities. The disputes rise between ethnic Albanians there and Macedonians. It must be said that divisions between Macedonians and Albanians are as significant as the ones between Albanians and Serbs. They too are quite different in cultural, ethnicity, language and religious terms. Macedonians are a south Slavic people, predominantly orthodox and have their own language similar to Bulgarian. These differences unfortunately are quite often perceived as reciprocal threats to each community and lead to security concerns. Albanians are mostly concentrated in the northwestern and western part of the country. It is here that in 2001 a minor ethnic conflict erupted but that it was fortunately contained by the international community and lack of real will from the parties to fight a war. However while Albanians found in the northwest of the Country are more prone to conflict Albanians which are spread throughout Macedonia even there where they are a majority but do not have a territorial continuity with either Albania or Kosovo do not seem to pose a security problem. The problem obviously is much more complicated and we will rightly deal with it in its respectful chapter on Macedonia. We will see on that chapter the relations between identity perceptions of Macedonians and Albanians and the security of the country.

Before we proceed with the individual chapters on each country/case it must be mentioned that the map presented above changed after the Yugoslav wars. The breakup resulted in enormous changes to the country’s borders as well as its ethno-national composition. To be more explicit the results of ethnic cleansing, genocide and population movements due to war and fear produced what we have today. Map 2 (Yugoslavia ethnic composition before the war) and map 3 (population displacements) show that ethno-national borders used to be quite different, especially in Croatia where few Serbs remain nowadays. A simple comparison between ethno-nationalities before the war and after it (map 2 and map1) helps a lot to understand the role of identity perception on security and as a consequence on peoples’ lives.

Map 2
Source: CIA

Map 3
Source: Philippe Rekacewicz, UNEP/GRID-

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4.1. Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia is a dysfunctional country whose future is uncertain. The fact that it has three major nationalities whose interests don’t line up and, the fact that three presidents govern a territory divided in two autonomous entities one of which is a federation further divided in cantons has made progress quite difficult to almost impossible. This is the result of the horrible Bosnian war (1992-1995). What is surprising and appalling at the same time is the fact that Bosnian citizens belonging to all ethnies were the most tolerant in all of Yugoslavia. While Kosovo and Macedonia wars, were fought between very different ethno-nationalities whose relations were strained most of the time and had relative negative identity perceptions of each-other, in Bosnia the three belligerents were quite similar. In fact they speak the same language and had the highest inter-ethnic marriages in Yugoslavia, whereas marriages between Albanians and Slavs were the absolute exception. In the 1991-2001 timeframe, six conflicts erupted; the more destructive, with more victims and the longest of which, was that of Bosnia. The death toll mounted to some 100,000 differing greatly from the second most brutal war, that of Croatia with 20,000 victims.

What stated above indeed raises many questions. Why did the most destructive conflict occur between three peoples who didn’t have negative identity perceptions? In fact why did it happen at all? Yet the fact that the conflict was fought along ethno-national lines shows precisely that these identity perceptions played a great role on the war. Bosniaks, Serbs and Croatians were all at each-other’s throats. Then how can we explain this seemingly paradox i.e. that they fought along ethno-national lines and before the war were in good relations? The soundest explanation is one which many failed to grasp at that time due to manipulations from nationalist elites. This shows that identity perceptions based on ethno-nationality unfortunately are not very stable and prone

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to manipulation if the right (or wrong, obviously) circumstances exist. Hence peculiar Bosnia demands attention not only for understanding purposes but more importantly to avoid renewed security problems between these peoples for whom tolerance is a virtue of the past.

Richard Holbrooke, the diplomat who negotiated the Dayton Agreement that ended the dreadful conflict, characterized it as the “greatest collective failure of the west since the 1930s”.\(^\text{106}\) In fact the international community saw this conflict as a civil war based on ancient hatred.\(^\text{107}\) But nationalism didn’t develop until the XIX cent and ethnicity and nationality did not play an important role in the groups’ social identity until after it. Hence ancient hatred is a very flawed view of the international community as well as some of the Balkans people themselves, who were taught a distorted history and believe it to be true. This belief matters because it affected identity perceptions and led to conflict. Also, the failure of the IC to properly understand the nature of the conflict adds the need to double guess their security policies nowadays, with a modest aim to improve them. However, the fact that, negative identity perceptions gained prominence at such great extent raises further questions as to why identity perceptions affect security so much!?

We will use process tracing not only to explain that ancient hatred is a myth and to show explicitly that national identities are social constructions but, also to show how negative identity perceptions are easily absorbed and lead to conflict. Process tracing will help us understand how negative identity perceptions are taught and take root on simplistic ethnocentric historical accounts. Hence this case study uses process tracing as the adequate tool within a constructivist theoretical framework. SIT on the other hand, will further help us shed light in the constructing process of these national identities, i.e. how they are accompanied with creating prejudices and stereotypes of others. SIT also shows how these perception then play a strong role in intergroup relations and ultimately on security.

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\(^{107}\) Ibid., 4.
4.1.1. Ancient hatred or artificial construction of negative identity perceptions?

After the devastating war, identity perceptions between the parties but primarily between Bosniaks and Croatians on one hand and Serbs on the other deteriorated.\textsuperscript{108} This shows that the conflict itself generated further negative identity perceptions which have brought the country to a standstill and jeopardize security. Bosnian Serbs want to secede from BiH while Bosniaks regard division as a reward to ethnic cleansing done to them. Croatians on the other hand ally with Bosniaks mostly to counteract Serbs but do not hide themselves the fact that they would rather be part of Croatia. However, the idea of ancient hatred is erroneous, and conflict is rather the result of gradual increase of negative identity perceptions. Even though these three communities saw themselves as different from each-other, they didn’t have notable negative identity perceptions and didn’t threaten security,\textsuperscript{109} rather their differences were exploited, emphasized and induced with negative perceptions which resulted in war.

In fact Croatians, Serbs and Bosniaks are all South Slavs who speak the same language but who differ mostly in religion; Croats are mostly catholic, Serbs orthodox and Bosniaks muslims. As anywhere else in the Balkans they were taught a rather biased and ethnocentric history were differences are emphasized, where there is a clear ethnic linear continuity and where sufferings are mostly attributed to others. The differentiation process and emphasis of a distinct identity is noticeable even nowadays in successful efforts of calling their language according to their nationality, namely, Croatian, Serbian and Bosnian as opposed to the previews name: Serbo-Croatian. Below we will see how ethnocentric historical accounts can construct animosity between groups where there wasn’t.

While it is recorded that South Slavic people came in the Balkans in the VI and VII cent and both Croatians and Serbs tribes are mentioned, it is quite debatable that they had the same ethnic connotations that they took in medieval times since 1000 CE. But, Croatians and Serbs nationalists emphasized a supposed difference since the beginning, and further argue that


\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.
Bosnian inhabitants are “really” Croatians and Serbs respectively. However Malcolm argues that that all these theories are subject to politicized history rather than real factual events and argues that 1000 years ago they were just Slavic people with no distinguished or clear ethnosc. In fact, Medieval Bosnia’s inhabitants are a conglomerate of Illyrians, Slavic people as well as Germanic people, Hungarians, and others. Even so, these claims gradually induced negative identity perceptions during the XX cent Yugoslavia because they emphasized differences of the groups while making a distinct Bosniak identity feel threatened.

Ottoman Bosnia is viewed in a similar ethnocentric light. Again, Serbs and Croatians claim that Bosnians were “really” Serbs and Croatians who were forcefully Islamized. But force as a factor is dismissed by most accounts and the islamization process is rather slow and extended over a century. Other reasons are more plausible, such as: continues clashes between the Orthodox and Catholic Church over Bosnia and their loose grip over extended periods of time or the clear advantages gained from being a muslim in the Ottoman Empire. Either way, Bosnians were not divided in national terms until nationalism started as an ideology in the XIX cent; namely they saw themselves as Slavs or Bosnians with different faiths. As a matter of fact, Malcolm argues that Bosnians of catholic and orthodox faiths embraced the corresponding nationality i.e. Croatian and Serb in the beginning of the XX cent only on religious grounds though there was no notable difference in their ways of life. This clearly shows not only that ancient hatred didn’t exist but differences at this time based on a national or ethnic identity are at the very least debatable. Even if ethno-national identities were crystal clear, ancient hatred is impossible to support due to absence of ethno-national conflicts and because before nationalism, ethnicity didn’t had a prime role in the social identity of a group, hence didn’t affect behavior to

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111 Ibid., 27-43.
113 In all the Balkans different people and cultures naturally mixed and the fact that some cultures evolved and prevailed over others is hardly any argument for racial purity and continuity.
115 Ibid., 149-153; 166-168.
the extent as to affect security. In fact before nationalism these social identities were no more important than say: being a Californian or Venetian today i.e. it doesn’t affect behavior to the extent that it could threaten security. However, these erroneous accounts were braced by most people in the late XX cent and constructed the negative identity perceptions that led to war.

WWI is no exception either. When it started, Bosnia had been under Austro-Hungarian Empire since 1878 (which gained it from the Ottoman Empire) while a much smaller Serbia was recognized as an independent state that same year. In the 90s normal war suffering are seen through ethnocentric glasses; naturally it’s much more complex. In fact, little evidence exists that Austro-Hungary or Serbia really wanted a war or that animosities between the two were as high as to justify one. The real reasons already accepted are context and geopolitics at that time especially between an unhappy and ambitious Germany and Russia. Either way, Bosnian Muslims as well as Croatians fought mostly on the Austrian-Hungarian side not in spite of the Serbs but because they identified with that state. The war was not fought along ethnic lines either because many others fought in the Serbian army too.116 This demonstrates that what came to be seen as suffering and animosity between the parties was just normal geopolitics. The fall of the Austria-Hungarian Empire saw the ‘Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes’ (in 1929 named Yugoslavia) centralized and directed by Serbs emerge.

In the interwar period, Slav Muslims (which had large secularized segments due to studies in Vienna and elsewhere) started to gain a political connotation rather than a simple religious one.117 The new state hardly had any interethnic security problems at this time. A distinct Bosniak identity is still in a construction process and the already established Serbs and Croatians were also rather peaceful.

WWII has perhaps the strongest role in the construction of negative identity perception between the parties in the late 80s. This period is largely interpreted in an ethnocentric account where, the “others” are to blame for atrocities and immense number of deaths. In reality it was just a complete and utter mess. In fact several wars were being fought simultaneously. The first war was between Germany and Italy against Yugoslavia, followed by the Axis war on the resistance movements. While at least two other civil wars were also being fought; one between

117 Ibid., 166-167.
Croatians extremists and collaborators called Ustaša against Serb populations of Croatia and Bosnia and a war between two resistance movements where Serbs were enlisted, i.e. the Communists Partisans and Četniks. However, these resistance movements were joined latter by other ethnic groups as well. Malcolm argues that from at least 1 million deaths the probabilities are that most of them were between Yugoslavs. On the other hand Muslims fought and died beside all the groups. This shows that WWII was a mess of inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic cooperation and killing. However, this didn’t stop Serb and Croatian nationalists to label each-other as Ustaša and Četniks.

Hence, the process of constructing different identities traced so far shows that what created strong negative identity perceptions that led to the Bosnian conflict is the teachings of ethnocentric and nationalistic historical accounts in the XX cent Yugoslavia. The absorption of these views seem to have been rather easy since as SIT points out group members already have the tendency to stereotype and judge each-other in simplistic and biased ways.

4.1.2. Further construction of negative identity perceptions and their role on security

Ethnocentric views continue and though the second Yugoslavia was peaceful it came at the price of massive murders and imprisonments of all communist enemies, regardless of their ethno-nationality. However, despite all non-communists sufferings, Serbs regard this period as the only victims. Tito was born to Slovenian and Croatian parents and balanced power in Yugoslavia by recognizing a Muslim, Macedonian and Montenegrin nationality, and latter on Vojvodina and Kosovo provinces. His efforts were to consolidate his power are regarded by Serbs as actions against them specifically since these recognitions undermined their claims that Muslims, Macedonians and Montenegrins are “really” Serbs. Claims, that indeed affected identity perceptions in a negative way and constructed myths and fears that brought the awful Bosnian war.

In fact, the Yugoslavian disintegration should be understood as nationalist exploitation of biased accounts in order to gain and retain power. The master exploits of which became

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118 Ibid., 174.
119 Ibid., 192.
120 See Noel Malcolm, Ibid., 193-212.
primarily Milošević. During his time nationalistic rhetoric of erroneous historical accounts described gained a complete new level.\textsuperscript{121} Facing his efforts to control Yugoslavia, Slovenia and Croatia opted for secession to which Serbian nationalistic rhetoric portrayed Slovenians as traitors and Croatians as Ustaša while evoked the supposed historical sufferings of the Serbs under Croatians, as well as Muslims and Albanians. Croatians on the other hand started to portray Serbs as Četniks. Heavy propaganda and fear eventually sneaked to Bosnians as well.

At first Bosnia and Macedonia didn’t want to leave Yugoslavia but seeing the successful attempts of Slovenia and Croatia left them no choice. By 1992 propaganda was at its peak, yet Bosnians were still reluctant to fight each-other.\textsuperscript{122} One Bosnian Serb in Sarajevo argued that hope was not lost until mass murders begin.\textsuperscript{123} The Yugoslav National Army which was supposed to protect all Yugoslavians became a tool on Serb hands and it was its forces and Serbian Serbs that attacked Bosniaks and Croatians. In his successful attempts to portray the Bosnian conflict as a civil war Milosevic withdraw the JNA but some 100,000 of its members created the Bosnian Serb army.\textsuperscript{124} Once the killings started, negative identity perceptions peaked and large scale war followed.

All parties have their part in the conflict and efforts to increase negative identity perceptions but that is not to say that everyone is equally guilty. According to Holbrook the Serbs committed some 90% of the atrocities.\textsuperscript{125} Serbia bombarded with propaganda and claims that Bosniaks wanted to create a muslim state and ethnically cleanse Bosnian Serbs. Supposedly they had done so before during Tito’s time pointing to the population fall of Bosnian Serbs and Muslim increase. But in Yugoslavia there was natural population movement due to economic reasons; the fact that Bosnia was the poorest and less developed of all the Yugoslavia (except Kosovo) drove Serbs and Croatians to seek better opportunities in Serbia and Croatia respectively. Bosniaks on the other hand didn’t have anywhere else to go since they didn’t have a mother state outside.\textsuperscript{126} Similarly, Serbia attributed Serbs falling numbers in Kosovo to ethnic

\textsuperscript{121} See Noel Malcolm, Ibid., 213-234.
\textsuperscript{124} Adriana Camisar et al., Op. Cit., 3.
cleansing rather than normal population movements from the poorest province and Albanian high increasing rates.\textsuperscript{127} In fact, Bosniaks were the only one fighting for a multiethnic Bosnia because a division would hurt them most considering how they mingled and spread throughout the whole territory. As social identity theory points out group members have a biased stance towards their group and serotypes of others thus explaining why propaganda was embraced instead of normal events rational explanation.

Similarly Croatia’s efforts to include Bosnian Croatians into a greater Croatia led to conflict with Bosniaks. It was not until 1994 that both sides reached an agreement to create a federation divided into cantons. However, the agreement was not sincere but out of convenience in order to face Serbs since they had gained some 70\% of the territory since the beginning of the war. Consequently after this agreement Croats and Bosniaks made territorial gains which pushed the Serbs to accept peace.\textsuperscript{128} Hence the Bosnian war is the result of outside induced fear, nationalist propaganda and a vicious creation of negative identity perceptions as events went further. Unfortunately the IC helped the prolongation of the conflict by defining it as a civil war based on ancient hatred; its role is heavily criticized on many grounds including the Yugoslavia arms embargo which crippled only Bosniaks efforts to defend themselves since Serbia already had plenty of arsenals from the JNA as well as factories. Its reluctance to intervene or its strategy to put few ‘U.N. Blue Helmets’ who were captured and used as human shields by Serbs to avoid air strikes or to threaten further IC intervention were a disaster. Similarly other events such as failure of the Blue Helmets to protect Bosniak civilians in so called “safe havens” such as Srebrenica where some 8000 man and boys were killed stand as proof.\textsuperscript{129}

Hence, we can safely assert that negative identity perceptions were constructions which led to the conflict and that failure to understand it prolonged the devastating war. This imposes us the need to keep them in mind when pointing to possible solutions. Also, ethnocentric views today seem the norm while tolerance has become a debatable notion. Process tracing showed us how negative identity perceptions are constructed and SIT explains why this is easily and, why it

\textsuperscript{127} See the analysis on Kosovo.
\textsuperscript{128} Adriana Camisar et al., Op. Cit., 3-4.
constitutes a trend. Hopefully, by understanding the role of identity perceptions on security we gain valuable insight which could then contribute to better policies.

### 4.1.3. Possible solutions

Even though the war ended 17 years ago Bosnia remains deeply dysfunctional and without clear perspectives. In security terms, 2011 was the worst year since the war with, political deadlock and inability to create a government after months from general elections. The Dayton Agreement was indeed necessary to end the war but is unfitted for a normal functioning state or prolonged security. The latest 2012 regional elections showed that Bosnians are deeply divided and still vote along ethnic lines. Bosnian Serbs would like secession whereas Bosniaks would like a more central state; Bosnian Croats on the other hand linger between the two.

Minorities have it the worst since ethnic politics sidelines them from power, jobs and other areas as well. In fact the ‘European Court of Human Rights’ ruled that the Bosnian constitution violated the European Convention on Human rights; hence it has to be changed but there is no agreement in sight as to what it should look like. Bosnia continues to have three presidents, a two chamber parliament at the country level of which the upper chamber is dived equally between Croats, Serbs and Bosniaks with 5 members each. Moreover there are two other parliaments representing the federation and RS. Most of the areas such as education, healthcare and etc. are on the entities hand. In 1991 Bosnia had a single constitution, now it has 13 with the federation having more due to its cantonal division. These power divisions and competing inter-ethnic interests have made progress close to impossible.

Hence possible solutions must take into account which helps the parties improve their identity perceptions so that we can assure security and progress. Kuperman argues that at least five possible solutions (which range between power sharing and breakup) exist: (1) current IC

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push for power sharing; (2) formal partition; (3) a international conference for adjusting borders; (4) kicking the can down the road and (5) a middle ground.\textsuperscript{132}

The international community is following the first path. Perhaps with time the two entities importance will fall and a natural road towards centralization will follow. Bosnians may very well turn to the previous state, i.e. to being tolerant and coexisting peacefully as historical examples of intermarriage and tolerance show. But the IC has failed Bosnians before and various actors and interests should be taken into account. Studies of other ethnic conflicts suggest that successful power sharing and coexistence after war are limited, do not apply to such large scale suffering and are not very successful in the long term.\textsuperscript{133} In fact, Kuperman argues that reform and centralization push comes exclusively from EU and USA pressure through the UN high Representative (OHR) considerable power and threats to pass legislation in case of deadlock.\textsuperscript{134} This also shows that there is a democratic deficit problem which upsets citizens. The OHR has warned of the dangers that follow especially from increasing ethnocentric politics and constant feet dragging to blocking by the Bosnian Serbs.\textsuperscript{135}

On the other hand some argue that a Bosnian breakup is imminent and that the west is merely trying to postpone it.\textsuperscript{136} The tremendous war seem to have left little will for turning to what used to be. Also, studies show that partition cases are more likely to succeed and have provided longer peace than any other solution.\textsuperscript{137} In fact there are numerous examples of multicultural society’s failures. Some nowadays EU examples are of no comfort either. After cent in a union and peaceful coexistence Scotland is set for an independence referendum; Catalonia secessionists gained majority in the regional parliament and are on the same path. In Belgium, Flemish separatist also gained majority and are likely to succeed.\textsuperscript{138} Worryingly these

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., 21-39.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 40-41.
three examples represent developed and democratic countries with centuries of coexistence. A gradual and negotiated partition would solve in the long term negative identity perceptions as well Bosnia’s security since no land to fight for, no mixing and staying out of each-others way would help towards that regard. However there could very well be regional repercussions on Kosovo and Macedonia. Even though a Bosnian breakup might be more likely than not, clear predictions are somewhat difficult.

Other solutions such as: a Balkan conference of adjusting borders is almost impossible while kicking the can down the road could test the parties’ patience to much\textsuperscript{139} as well as is unattainable because the constitution must be changed following the ECtHR ruling.

Perhaps a middle ground solution might have avoided war in the first place as well as serve positively identity perceptions and security. Kuperman argues: “Rather than rejecting the Serb Republic’s demand for strong regional autonomy, the international community should embrace it, halt the pressure on Bosnians to strengthen their central state, and accept the de facto, though not de jure, partition of Bosnia into a very loose confederation of two entities.”\textsuperscript{140} This would avoid security issues altogether and there would not be regional repercussions. Secession demands wouldn’t hold nor be supported by the Serb majority if they don’t fear anymore Croat-Bosniak dominance. Though Bosniaks would grief over lost centralization perspectives wouldn’t pick up arms; while Croats might require an entity they wouldn’t resort to violence to achieve it.\textsuperscript{141} However, to be more explicit, this appears as the least of evils to keep Bosnia together while creating long term opportunities for reconciliation, improve negative identity perceptions as well as preserve security.

In any case the IC should be very careful and not haste or push for one option or the other just yet. The new population census could be a good quantitative tool to see in what direction are Bosnians going. Elections show ethnic lines voting but the census can provide insight of a desired trend. Beside the three ethnic choices a citizen choice should be included i.e. ‘Bosnian’. If a considerable number of Bosnians choose it, it will mean that the groups are reconciling and

\textsuperscript{139} Alan J. Kuperman, Op. Cit., 43-44.
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid., 44.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 44.
prefer a citizen’s connotation rather than an ethnic one. In order to avoid security problems and provide a real opportunity for Bosnians to reconcile and improve identity perceptions the last solution seems more plausible.

**4.1.4. Conclusion**

By using process tracing in this case analysis we saw that the misconceptions of ancient hatred do not hold and that constructed negative identity perceptions impact heavily security. Though prejudices exist and group members tend to be prejudicial as SIT explains, this is not necessarily a recipe for security problems. Circumstances such as: territorialization, heterogeneity and will for manipulation, can be surprisingly successful in inducing negative identity perceptions based on ethno-national social identity compared to say other less relevant social identities. These ones indeed affect security to great extent. However, different identity perceptions do not predict war but they can be manipulated enough to negative ones and as this case shows conflict becomes quite possible. Hence not only they should be kept into account when we analyze possible security problems but extra attention should be provided to them when possible solutions are presented.

The case of Bosnia shows that identity perceptions are not trivial but indeed at the center of security concerns. Misunderstandings or misconceptions can lead as this case shows into policies which not only hamper conflict solution but prolong war and human suffering. We explained that identities are social construction and as such subject to influence and change. Since these social constructions affect to great extent security, attention should not be lacking but should be full when building possible conflict resolution and prevention policies. Bosnia as we will see is quite different from the other two cases because though the belligerents divide themselves into ethno-national categories and perceive themselves accordingly their perceptions do not result from the same characteristics. Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs see themselves as different and as nation or ethnic group based primarily on religion and history while Albanians base it primarily on language. Though they all can be called nationalities or ethnies, differentiation stems from different characteristics, which is partly why this study focuses on identity perceptions and not nationalism.
4.2. Kosovo

Kosovo plays an important part in the security puzzle of the Western Balkans. Without doubt the conflict in Kosovo was the last chapter of the Yugoslavian breakup, even though unfortunately it’s a chapter not yet fully closed. If the security situation in Kosovo were to deteriorate it would have significant repercussions towards the region as a whole and beyond; thus it is important that this security issue be analyzed.

In Kosovo as in the rest of the Western Balkans we have an ethno-national security problem i.e. the security issues that we have today stem from ethno-national differences. These differences can be real, perceived or constructed but nonetheless part of identity perceptions. Therefore in order to find the role of identity perceptions on the security of Kosovo we must trace the process of identity creation in history i.e. how were these identities created and why they are so negative between these groups. Also we must trace this process to understand how ethnocentric interpretations of historical accounts affect identity perceptions, or how people understand history affect intergroup relations based on perceptions of the self and others.

4.2.1. The myth of territory

We have mentioned previously in the thesis the importance and the special relation that exists between the nation and territory. In the case of Serbs and Albanians this is crucial to explain the role that the relationship between these two peoples and the territory of Kosovo plays on their identity and thereof on security. However, to explain it we should turn our attention to history which plays a major role in these peoples’ minds. We will try to present it as shortly as possible. Before Kosovo became a country, a province of Serbia and many other administration forms during history, it used to be in antiquity a region inhabited by a people called Illyrians.\textsuperscript{142} Since medieval times it has been inhabited by Albanians and Serbs, both of which have strong connections to the land and see it as historically and rightfully theirs.\textsuperscript{143} This is quite important because it has determined the relations between these two groups of people during history and as a result is embedded in their identity and how they perceive each-other.

\textsuperscript{142} Illyrians were an ancient people that inhabited roughly the Western Balkans since the first millennium B.C.E.
\textsuperscript{143} Tim Judah, Op. Cit., 18-19
For long there has been debated between Albanian and Serbian academia and as a result people in general as to who inhabited Kosovo first. This is perceived by both parties among other things as rights over the land. The Serbs refer to their medieval times and cultural heritage to state that they were always there and to prove continuity. On the other hand Albanian academia supports the theory that Albanians are descendant of Illyrians. They argue that, since Illyrians or more specifically Dardanians (an Illyrian tribe) inhabited the western part of the Balkan Peninsula including Dardania (roughly nowadays Kosovo) they were there first, before the arrival of Slavic people in VI-VII century CE of which Serbs are part of.\textsuperscript{144} Both parties claim to have been in Kosovo before the other arrived.

Along the debate of who inhabited it first there is also the debate of who was a majority in the land and what it represents in terms of culture. The Serbs refer to Kosovo as the heart of Serbia and Serbs itself. They usually start their references to the glory medieval times in XII century with the reign of Stefan Nemanja and later his son Sava which secured the autonomy of the Serbian Orthodox church and began the tradition of building churches and monasteries. Sava is considered as the founder of Serbian statehood and national identity. In the XIV century Stephen Dušan of the Nemanjić dynasty expanded the Serbian state into an empire including Macedonia, much of Albania, Epirus and Thessaly found in modern Greece today. During this period the Nemanjić dynasty similarly to other monarchies in Europe were church builders and built many in Serbia proper and Kosovo. Nowadays the churches are for the Serbs proof of their might, medieval glory and that they were the only inhabitants of Kosovo.\textsuperscript{145}

Serbian history books argue that only Serbs lived in Kosovo at the time and see the churches as proof.\textsuperscript{146} Albanians on the other argue that they were a majority but registered with


\textsuperscript{146} Tim Judah, \textit{Kosovo: War and Revenge}, Ibid., 3.
Slavic names. Noel Malcolm, a British historian writes that Albanians though indeed continually present in Medieval Kosovo were a minority. Kosovo was mostly during this period under Bulgarian and later Serbian rule except for a brief time in the second half of the XIV century when it was under an Albanian Feudal state “the Balshas”. However, who inhabited it first can hardly mean rights over Kosovo. Historical accounts merely show that both people lived there. Either way, these ethnocentric interpretations have created negative identity perceptions because the counterpart is seen as usurpers.

There is one particular event which is deeply embedded in Serbian memory and identity and that is the battle of Kosovo in 1389. According to Serbs, they, under prince Lazar fought the invading Ottomans and lost. This battle has a myth level among the Serbs and makes Kosovo the cradle of Serbia. However, in reality the battle was not only among Serbs and Ottomans but a Balkan coalition lead by Serbs including Albanians. Also, historians regard another battle as far more militarily significant than the Battle of Kosovo. This is the Battle on the Maritsa River (Bulgaria) in 1371 where the Serbs lost to the Ottomans after their empire had fell in 1355 with the death of Stephen Dušan. Either way, Kosovo remained under Serbia until 1459 which after the Battle of Kosovo was a semi-autonomous state. It is after this period that the population ratio goes in favor of Albanians who also started to brace the Islamic faith easily since they didn’t have a common church and were divided between Catholics and Orthodox.

While both parties have inhabited the land only the ratio changes with a Serbian majority in the beginning of the Second Millennium shifting to an Albanian one in the second half. However what is portrayed by nationalists as struggle and invasions between Serbs and Albanians since medieval times is actually more a story of cooperation and successful cohabitation. It is not until the beginning of nationalism that these two groups of people start

their bloody conflicts between them and are fed with erroneous historical accounts. After all “as Ernest Renan famously remarked, to get one’s history wrong is an essential part of the making of the nation”. Myths like the battle of Kosovo have an essential role in the identity perception of a people. Hondus explains:

Myths offer good explanations for the present fate of a community by usually blaming others. Ironically, the actual threat in the myth may not exist, but if repeated enough many times, ordinary people will endorse it. For example, the myth of territory. This myth usually holds that there is a piece of land where the nation first discovered itself and saw its magnificent progress until “others” arrived. If these “others” are current occupants of the land, the political mobilization for the “liberation” of that land is well justified in the eyes of myth-makers.

The myth of territory plays an essential part in the identity of Serbs and Albanians alike. After all since Kosovo is believed to be the heart of Serbia and where the Serbs became Serbs they cannot lose it. For Albanians similarly Serbs are just usurpers who invaded their lands which they inhabited since antiquity. This kind of thinking strongly embedded in the people’s minds and identity brought 150 years of struggle and the infamous Kosovo war, not to mention justifications of ethnic cleansing. It is important to note that sometimes a collective memory of suffering unites people more than a glory past and this seems to have helped animosity between Serbs and Albanians.

4.2.2. Relations between Serbs and Albanians in the first half of the XX cent and their role on identity perception and security

As we explained, negative identity perceptions between these two peoples did not begin until the nationalistic era in the second half of the XIX century. However once they began they were horrible and are marked in the memories of both parties as collective suffering. Cultural differences and the myth of territory explain only in part this animosity. Here historical events shape the parties identities more than ever. Also, the ethnocentric interpretations of these events further add to negative identity perceptions as if history wasn’t enough of a burden.

154 Patric Hondus, Ibid., 7-8.
Looking at Serbs and Yugoslav Albanians relations in the past one hundred years or since the incorporation of Kosovo in Yugoslavia, this becomes evident. The Balkans wars in the beginning of the XX cent brought much suffering and an increased nationalist feeling. In these period Serbs, Montenegrins, Bulgarians and Greeks were fighting against the Ottomans. Albanians which fought the Ottomans too in order to create their independent state found themselves threatened by their neighbor’s success, since the territories the latter wanted although under Ottoman administration were largely inhabited by Albanians. When Albanians declared their independence in November 1912 much of their territories were invaded especially by Serbs in the north and northeast. This invasion was accompanied with massacres and brutal treatment of the local population. 155 Needles to say, this deteriorated intergroup relation. The start of the First World War and the invasion by Austro-Hungary of Serbia and other parts created the chance for Albanians to retaliate since many cooperated with the Austro-Hungarians; 156 contributing to animosity once more.

The end of the war in 1918 saw the incorporation of half of Albanian inhabited territories by Yugoslavia after some 500 years and against the latter’s will. The period between the two world wars was accompanied by strong animosities which culminate perhaps with the plan of Vasa Cubrilovic (a distinguished Serbian academic) on how to ethnically clean Kosovo from Albanians. 157 The ‘Second World War’ “unifies” Albanians under the Italian and later German occupation. Invaders used this card to attract Albanians on their side. Although this “unification” is marked in the population’s memory, it indeed had limited success. Kosovo Albanians joined German forces mostly to retaliate against the Serbs rather than for ideological reasons which are absent; 158 while Albanians from Albania collaborated more with the allies and Yugoslavian partisans (mainly Serbs) due to their own interests. 159
This period greatly affected intergroup identity perceptions in negative ways and Kosovo (including other Albanian inhabited territories) were incorporated once more under Yugoslavia; again against Albanians will.

**4.2.3. Yugoslav Albanians status under the second Yugoslavia (1945-1999), implications on identity and security**

To further understand the relationship of identity perception between Serbs and Albanians and how this latter affects security we must further explore the status of Albanians in Yugoslavia and how were they seen by Serbs.

The incorporation once more of Yugoslav Albanians into Yugoslavia was not liked by them not the least because they were in larger number than Slovenes, Montenegrins or Macedonians and still didn’t possess the right of their own republic. Not only they were different from other Slavs, but they didn’t even enjoy the basic right to be taught in the Albanian language. Things get better after Kosovo becomes an Autonomous province with the 1974 constitution and the prosperity that follows all of Yugoslavia in the 70s. Albanians are allowed at these time to learn Albanian along Serbo-Croatian and, even though they still remain the poorest and the least developed this is considered a good period. It is in the 80s that nationalistic views start dominating the scene again. Kosovo Albanians naturally want more, they want the status of the republic and Serbs fear them since their population increases rapidly. Kosovo’s population although had been for centuries now an Albanian majority it shifted even more. In 1971 Serbs where 23% and in 1989 their number dropped to 10%. This was later used by Serb nationalist as evidence that Albanians were terrorizing Serbs into leaving and they were not being punished for crimes against the Serbian population and were raping Serbian women.\(^{160}\)

However, high fertility rates characterized Albanians throughout the Balkans and a Serb study on violent crime statistics in Kosovo in the 1980s showed that rates of rape and attempted rape in Kosovo were the lowest in Yugoslavia; also they tended to be within the same nationality, not across. This of course didn’t prevent the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts

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\(^{160}\) See Noel Malcolm, ibid., 314-339.
Paulin Kola, ibid., 100-109; 133-143; 156-161.
to call the allegedly victimization of Serbs as “genocide”. Unfortunately, nationalists acquire more and more power in Yugoslavia. Milošević takes away the autonomous status of the province and fires Albanians from the administration (including hospitals, schools etc.) to replace them with Serbs. Kosovo Albanians in turn respond in the beginning of the 90s by declaring Kosovo a republic and then claiming independence. The 90s are characterized by further enmity between Serbs and Albanians. All these events, the reciprocal negative treatment and labeling had strong effects on identity perceptions. They made normal cohabitation between these two communities impossible and the result was the Kosovo war. This time frame is much more complicated but in brief it is characterized by strong animosity. Also, more negative perceptions stem from ethnocentric interpretations where the fault lies always on the counterpart.

This makes sense why in Yugoslavia in contrast to the other peoples, Albanians and Serbs didn’t have good relations or significant interaction. A study by Karyn Dyrstad on the relationship of ethnicities before and after the Yugoslavian wars shows that generally there were good relations between the people in Yugoslavia before the war (except Kosovo) and after it they changed for the worse considerably. Wars obviously influence negatively the warring parties and contribute to the deterioration of relationships. Anthony Oberschall states the same when he talks about a ‘normal frame’ where the people of Yugoslavia were in good relations with each other and a ‘crisis frame’ when nationalistic propaganda exploits their fear and apathy to build animosity. However in both cases Kosovo is the exception since there Serbs and Albanians didn’t have good relations before the war either and certainly as one can imagine after it. Indeed the study of Dyrstad shows that animosities might have been so high that the war barely affected them, i.e. animosities might have a ceiling effect. This brought the war, which itself created continuity in the memory of Albanians and Serbs of past atrocities.

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161 Noel Malcolm, Ibid., 339
162 See Noel Malcolm, Ibid., 343-356.
165 Karyn Dyrstad, Ibid., 7; 22.
Anthony Oberschall, Ibid., 989.
166 Karyn Dyrstad, Ibid., 22.
As we mentioned Milošević accession into power and his deeds made relationships between Serbs and Albanians in the 90s impossible. In 1998, only three years after the Dayton agreement, an estimated 200,000 Kosovo Albanians had been displaced out of Kosovo.\textsuperscript{167} Before NATO air strikes began this number is estimated to have risen between 250,000 and 300,000.\textsuperscript{168} The reasons for NATO and especially US intervention in Kosovo are complicated however the primary concern was to avoid another Bosnian type scenario and a spillover of the refugees. The war itself had far greater repercussions on the local population as one can imagine. By the time the bombing stopped some 850,000 Kosovo Albanians were driven from Kosovo to its neighbors, primarily to Albania and Macedonia while internal displacements numbered to a total of 1.45 million Kosovo Albanians.\textsuperscript{169} By the end of the war the number of Albanian dead is estimated around 10,000.\textsuperscript{170} The end of the war left the Serbs with the natural fear of Albanian revenge similar to WWI and WWII. Roughly 100,000 out of 220,000 Serbs left or were driven from Kosovo while 800 died.\textsuperscript{171} These numbers present a gruesome picture indeed. We can now understand rather easily that identity perceptions affect security and that security affects identity perceptions in return, i.e. this is a process that goes both ways. Everything explained up to this point shows clearly the implications of identity perception on security and brings us to questions on how to avoid further security issues.

The process traced so far clearly indicates that historical events have shaped identity perceptions between Serbs and Albanians in a negative way since nationalism. Similarly, biased and erroneous interpretations of these events where the fault is always of the other have contributed further to negative perceptions. In the end, the war that resulted was almost inevitable. SIT duly points to the tendency of groups biases and Albanians and Serbs are the perfect example.

\textsuperscript{168} Tim Judah, Kosovo: What Every One Needs to Know, Op. Cit., 82.
\textsuperscript{170} Lenard J. Cohen & John R. Lampe, Ibid., 43.
\textsuperscript{171} Tim Judah, Kosovo: What Every One Needs to Know, Ibid., 88

4.2.4. North is the key

After the NATO military intervention and the bombings of Serbia, in June 1999 the Serbians agreed to withdraw from Kosovo under the UN Security Council Resolution 1244.\(^{172}\) The resolution was to run until the determination of a final status and it established the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) with interim administrative authority comparable to the High Commission in Bosnia.\(^{173}\) A NATO military mission named KFOR (Kosovo Force) was also established in order to prevent violence between Albanians and Serbs.\(^{174}\) After 14 months of negotiations between Pristina and Belgrade the ‘Ahtisaari Plan’ was adopted (although not accepted by Serbia) with its objective, creating a functional multiethnic democracy that would eventually lead to independence.\(^{175}\) In February 2008 Kosovo declared independence unilaterally based on that plan, marking a new beginning burdened by old conflicts.

However Kosovo’s case is far from solved; the country is in limbo due to the continuous international dispute of its status. To date it has been recognized by almost half of the UN members (91 out of 194) of which most of EU and NATO members (22 out of 27 and 24 out of 28 respectively)\(^{176}\); however this is far from impressive since Kosovo does not enjoy UN membership while faces major challenges for integration in Euro-Atlantic organizations such as EU and NATO.

Nowadays we have in Kosovo two peoples with a powerful past and a population ratio and location which the least evoke attention. Data about demography in Kosovo should be taken with reserves (as in all the Balkans) but is necessary nonetheless in order to understand the big picture. The ‘CIA World Factbook’ estimates the number of Kosovo’s population at 1.8 million in 2008. According to it 92% of the population is Albanian.\(^{177}\) On the other hand the number of


\(^{175}\) Named after its chief negotiator Martti Ahtisaari, the former president of Finland. See Tim Judah, Kosovo: What Every One Needs to Know, Op. Cit., 111-116.


the Serbs is around 130,000 in total.\textsuperscript{178} What is more important however, is their location. Roughly one third of them live in three communes found in the North, namely Zубин Поток, Zvečan and Leposavić and northern Mitrovica where they constitute the overwhelming majority and where Pristina does not have factual sovereignty. The rest of the Serbs are spread across the country forming small pockets. The later present somewhat a success story since despite problems they cooperate with Pristina and have accepted the Ahtisaari plan.\textsuperscript{179} Contrary to the Serbs in the south the ones in the north not only reject the authority of Pristina and the Ahtisaari plan but in mid to late 2011 this mounted to a crisis.\textsuperscript{180} Belgrade has implicitly accepted that it has lost Kosovo; nevertheless it has actively worked to undermine its sovereignty because it wants to keep the Northern parts under its rule. Serbia wants Kosovo’s partition in exchange for recognition.\textsuperscript{181} This is possible due to the territorial continuity of the north with Serbia and the clear majority of the Serbs in these communes; namely the territorialization of the north Kosovo Serbs. It is precisely this piece of land (roughly 1000 km\textsuperscript{2}) that is the real dispute between Serbia and Kosovo.\textsuperscript{182} This dispute however has lead in an unstable status quo and may very well lead to a frozen conflict.

See also Dušan Janjić, ‘Il Piano B Della Serbia Sconfita’, Limes, 2 (2008), 107-116. (Limes is an Italian magazine of geopolitics - authors note)
4.2.5. *A possible solution based on identity perception’s role on security*

Different drives make IR scholars take on the challenge to study a wide array of international questions. My impetus stems from a deep desire to apply knowledge in order to avoid hot conflicts. Hence my modest research will try on and carry this function, i.e. based on our understanding of the role of identity perception on security we will try and present what a solution to the Kosovo case could look like.

Three solutions are conceivable for Kosovo, all focused on the north. Namely the Ahtisaari plan, stronger autonomy for the north and a land swap.\(^{183}\)

The EU and USA have opted so far for the first, i.e. preserving Kosovo’s “territorial integrity” and creating a functional multinational democracy. To achieve it they have adopted an open-end talk strategy between Pristina and Belgrade.\(^{184}\) But this strategy has lead to a stalemate; the Ahtisaari plan is not being implemented in the north and it hasn’t produced more international recognition. Moreover Serbia seems to strengthen its position while diverging from a reconciliatory path. Former ultra-nationalist Tomislav Nicolić was elected president in May 2012, while a nationalist government was erected under the direction of Ivica Dačić (also called “little Sloba” as in Slobodan Milošević).\(^{185}\) Serbia continues to block Kosovo’s further international recognition while controls its Northern part and undermines Kosovo’s sovereignty. These facts and EU policies which continue to support Serbias’ EU accession seems to contribute to a dangerous status quo. In the beginning of 2012 Serbia was granted EU candidate status\(^ {186}\) and quite recently the enlargement commissioner Štefan Füle declared that Kosovo recognition is not a condition for Serbia’s EU integration.\(^{187}\) EU and USA policy seems flawed because Kosovo problems can’t be solved unless there is a political agreement with Serbia.

\(^{183}\) International Crisis Group, *Kosovo and Serbia After the ICJ Opinion*, Ibid., 8


However, Serbian leaders have always declared that they will never recognize Kosovo’s independence and a future Serbian EU membership would only enhance its blocking powers towards Kosovo. This would lead to an inevitable frozen conflict in the region and might have major repercussions on the ground.

EU and American policy is instead trying to create a new identity in Kosovo i.e. the ‘Kosovar’ nation (which would be above ethnic identities) as the means to keep Kosovo together. Although good on paper that is quite a dangerous gamble when one considers previous failures of such efforts in Yugoslavia. This is not to say that multinational or multicultural communities are not viable solutions per se but the construction of a new identity takes enormous time and time is of the essence. In a region where nationalism is this strong, such process will hardly be allowed. Moreover, for it to promote peace it has to be embraced by all its nationalities but seeing that the considerable majority of Kosovo is ethnic Albanian the minorities will naturally continue to strongly identify themselves with their ethnic group. Although there are small chances for Albanians to adopt such identity, questions can’t be helped but raised: what would be the purpose if indeed successful? How would it solve the negative perceptions if in Serbs eyes it wasn’t the Albanians who “stole” their land but the new Kosovars?

Recognizing Kosovo’s independence without anything in return would be a political suicide thus no politician will opt for it in Serbia. Kosovo will not become a UN member without Serbian recognition, making a deadlock inevitable. But as we mentioned above there are repercussions to the status quo and the possible frozen conflict. This strongly hinders reconciliation between Serbs and Kosovo Albanians because the former will be regarded by the later as a continuous threat to their new established independence. Kosovo citizens have difficulties traveling abroad due to not recognition and will not adhere to Euro-Atlantic organizations without the recognition from all members. Recognition without Belgrade’s nod will not come since some members have problems with secessionist movements of their own and don’t want pretexts. Serbs in the north on the other hand will continue to be played by

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189 In the Second Yugoslavia Tito made efforts to create a Yugoslav nation to prevail above all others and since 1971 it was one of the ethnicity choices in the census.
190 The author strongly supports it in the right circumstances.
191 For example: Spain, Cyprus, Romania and Slovakia.
Belgrade at the latter’s will and interest,192 nor do they have reason to be ruled by an Albanian majority which as we have explained is viewed in the worse light. Hence the politics followed by the international community is defined here as flawed for this case.

The second solution, i.e. stronger northern Autonomy, although somewhat viable is rejected by Kosovo Albanians and Serbs alike.193 Northern Serbs reject it on grounds that they gain nothing from it since they already rule themselves, in fact they view it as a loss and Serbia simply accepts nothing less than to include it in its own territory for good.194 For Albanians on the other hand the Ahtisari plan was a hard pill to swallow because Kosovo Albanians had to give large concessions to the minorities such as being a multinational state while constituting roughly 92% of the population.195 The discrepancies with other countries are obvious. Serbia for example without Kosovo has only 82.9% Serbs,196 yet is not considered a multinational country. Also Kosovo’s sovereignty is crippled because Serbia controls the north de facto while the constitution of Kosovo forbids the right to join another country such as Albania which according to a Gallup poll in 2010 is supported by 82% of the population.197 It seems however that the international community might be shifting its support towards this solution but unfortunately it might have repercussions on its neighbors.198

194 Ibid., 11.
197 Gallup Balkan Monitor, Insights and Perceptions: Voices of the Balkans Op. Cit., Despite having little chances, it is viewed as a major concession by ethnic Albanians.
Hence, the third solution, namely the territorial swap seems the most viable and is largely based on constructivism. This solution seems the only one which can neutralize the awfully long and strong negative identity perception of the ‘other’, thus promoting security. It is much easier if the parties, i.e. Albanians and Serbs instead of adopting new identities alter their negative perception of each-other to at least neutral ones or to construct new perceptions. Ethno-national conflicts can be prevented and security not threatened if people do not perceive each-other as threats or enemies to their identity and culture but instead as partners.

The territorial swap or a ‘border adjustment’\(^\text{199}\) between Kosovo and Serbia is supported by some prominent individuals such as the former coordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, Erhard Busek, international relations professor John Mearsheimer and, US Congressman Dahna Rohrabacker.\(^\text{200}\) This is a solution rejected continually by the international community by arguing that it would open Pandora’s Box of all border disputes worldwide. However this is similar to an old myth hard to debunk. A border adjustment would be an agreement between the two countries in a complete democratic fashion where the respective populations would express themselves in a referendum.\(^\text{201}\) The swap proposed comprises roughly the same space of territory and population, but more importantly it would be acceptable by both Serbs and Albanians.\(^\text{202}\) The argument of precedent is quite implausible as it is naive to think that strife for self-determination or territorial integrity depends on Kosovo’s territorial swap.

The argument of precedence is faulty not the least because successful secessionist movements existed before and will surely exist after. If indeed territorial swap would be a precedent than unilateral secessions would have been far more strong incentives. We have seen

\(^{199}\) Border adjustment is a better term because Kosovo’s borders were redrawn in 1959 by attaching northern parts and removing Presevo Valley. See: Tim Judah, *Kosovo: What everyone needs to know*, Op. Cit., 5.
\(^{200}\) See: B92, *Kosovo Partition Would be “Best solution”*, [web page], (5 February 2012),
John J. Mearsheimer, *The case for Partitioning Kosovo*, [web document],
\(^{201}\) The result is quite predictable as they have done so before.
that recognition of unilateral secessions of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Macedonia, and most recently Kosovo which would have given such pretexts to other secessionist movements; Pandora’s Box would have already been opened. Yet in International Relations is business as usual. Also, fierce opponents of Kosovo’s independence such as Russia have recognized secessionists such as Abkhazia and South Ossetia, a paradox indeed.\textsuperscript{203} Palestine which would resemble Kosovo hasn’t recognized it nor has Kosovo recognized Taiwan. Turkey was among the first countries to recognize Kosovo despite the Kurdish secessionist problem and so on and so forth. What about South Sudan did they lead their successful independence efforts because of Kosovo???

Hence, a territorial swap cannot possibly be a precedent not the least because it would be accepted by Belgrade. In fact it resembles more the good example of Czechoslovakia’s peaceful division. The International Crisis Group (ICG) 2010 report on the Territorial exchange option and the more recent January 2012 report of the ‘German Institute for International and Security Affairs’ assert that such an event wouldn’t have any repercussions on the neighbors such as Bosnia or Macedonia;\textsuperscript{204} indeed, a paramount concern to be kept in mind when suggesting solutions.

In any case there are some solvable shortcomings\textsuperscript{205} but beneficiaries are far greater. The argument is not against multiculturalism or of creating an ethnically pure state\textsuperscript{206} as that is plain wrong but because such solution would finally settle strife between Kosovo Albanians and Serbs. On the constructivist principle with the status settled and accepted by Serbia both parties will not have loose ends for which to blame each-other. If the threat and fear factor is removed from the perception of the locals, Kosovo Albanians won’t fear for their state and can proceed to UN, EU and NATO integration while the northern Serbs will achieve what they want i.e. to be governed by Belgrade. Only then will the parties be finally free to direct their anger towards what really

\textsuperscript{203} For a wider account see Tim Judah, Kosovo: What everyone needs to know, Op. Cit., 130-139.
\textsuperscript{204} See International Crisis Group, Kosovo and Serbia after the ICJ Opinion, Op. Cit., 14-16.
\textsuperscript{205} See International Crisis Group, Kosovo and Serbia after the ICJ Opinion, Ibid., 18-22.
\textsuperscript{206} Two thirds of Kosovo Serbs are found in the south hence their number would only diminish as would that of Albanians in Serbia.
bothers them, i.e. huge political and economic problems. On the constructivist principle would be created a fertile ground for accelerating the creation of new perceptions by altering negative old ones. A similar example is the relation between Croatians and Serbs which are quite neutral since they don’t have land to fight for. Needles to say, remaining minorities on both countries must have all the rights, such as education in their own language and assured institutional representation.

4.2.6. Conclusion

As we have showed, in this case study we have identified three core causes which incentivize security problems. The first is the territorialization of the social group, the second that of continuing loose ends (the international status of the country and that of northern Kosovo) and the most important of the strong negative perceptions towards each-other. Indeed all these animosities between these two peoples stem from very strong perceptions of the ‘self’ and ‘others’. The negative perceptions and the desires for dominance at the expense of the ‘other’ have lead to grave security threats. Unfortunately the people there have a primordialist understanding of their nationality and do not take into account the constructive nature of it or that of ethnicity. History and its interpretation have contributed strongly to the negative identity perception and security. Nowadays the territorialization of the Serbs in the north as well as that of Albanians in Presevo combined with the old enmity between them is a powerful cocktail for the reopening of a dreaded new security issue.

Needless to say that living in a peaceful multicultural society is the ideal choice we would rather have. However, in this particular case the findings suggest a different approach. Understanding the direct relation between identity perceptions and security in Kosovo suggests that to have a sustainable solution we should focus our attention on how to reverse or alter the negative perceptions between Kosovo Albanians and Serbs. The territorial swap can achieve that. It would eliminate the territorialization of the populations in Kosovo and Serbia alike as well as it would solve the international status dispute of Kosovo. Such a solution would offer the possibility to construct new perceptions of each-other once reciprocal threats are eliminated and there is no more land to fight for. Societies there would be little less multicultural but peaceful.
4.3. Macedonia

Macedonia\textsuperscript{207} did not experience a violent secession from Yugoslavia/Serbia and wide scale interethnic conflict has been avoided somewhat successfully compared to Croatia, Bosnia or Kosovo. However, this country has not been immune to interethnic conflict. In the 90s, following its declaration of independence, tension mounted between the two largest national groups until it erupted in 2001. Even so, thanks to the intervention of the international community and lack of real will from the parties to have a real war, wide scale civil war was stopped in its tracks.\textsuperscript{208} This is generally considered a success when compared to the other regional conflicts. The conflict had a rather limited number of casualties; there were some 1000 dead compared to the 100,000 in Bosnia, 20,000 in Croatia and 10,000 in Kosovo.\textsuperscript{209} Although, it must be noted that success here is defined in a rather normative fashion.

As elsewhere in the region, the 2001 conflict stemmed from a complex process of identity construction, biased interpretations of historical events and, prejudicial identity perceptions of the other. Despite notable improvements, Macedonia remains a problematic country with security problems worthy of attention.\textsuperscript{210} 2012 saw tension rise again between Slavic Macedonians\textsuperscript{211} and Macedonian Albanians and they are considered the worst since the 2001 conflict,\textsuperscript{212} thus to avoid a possible repetition of security problems, care is needed. Either way these security problems in Macedonia do not confine with negative perceptions between Macedonians and Albanians but rather are intertwined with the historical process of a distinct Macedonian identity construction and its strained relations vis-à-vis the neighbors. Thus before analyzing identity perceptions between Macedonians and Albanians and their impact on security

\textsuperscript{207} The form Macedonia instead of FYROM is used more often for ease and should not be confused as the author’s stance on the name dispute.
\textsuperscript{209} Ibid., 68.
\textsuperscript{211} Macedonian and Slavic Macedonian terms are used interchangeably unless otherwise indicated.
we shall use process tracing to find the causalities of the problematic formation process of a distinct Macedonian identity. This process and its interpretations on the other hand have major repercussions on security. In return security perceived threats as well as security breach such as the 2001 conflict influences directly Macedonian-Albanian relations. The so called ‘Macedonian Question’ comprises these conglomerate complexity of: identity construction problems, identity perceptions and security; hence the next section will proceed in its analysis.

4.3.1. The Macedonian Question, consequences on identity perceptions and security

The Macedonian Question refers to two main issues: (1) the origins and identity of the Slavic Macedonians and (2) territorial claims over ‘Geographical Macedonia’. We have already mentioned that today Macedonians are a Slavic people which belong primarily to the orthodox faith. However a distinct Macedonian identity is questioned and challenged primarily by Bulgaria and Greece and to some extent Serbia. On the other hand, Geographical Macedonia, which comprises Vardar Macedonia or FYROM; Pirin Macedonia or Bulgarian Macedonia and Aegean Macedonia or Greek Macedonia (See Map 4, left) is claimed by Macedonians, Bulgarians, and Greeks extreme nationalists. Both issues have affected and continue to affect the construction of a distinct Macedonian identity and their perceptions which as a result has implications on security.

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213 See the third chapter, section 3.2.
Historically speaking, Geographical Macedonia similar to Kosovo has been subject to many different rules and was inhabited by different peoples, including: ancient Macedonians,\(^{215}\) Slavic people, Greeks and Albanians. GM has been ruled by the Roman Empire, Byzantine Empire, Bulgarian Empire, Serbian Empire, and Ottoman Empire. After WWI it was divided between Greece, Bulgaria and the ‘Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes’ (which in 1928 was named Yugoslavia). It was not until 1944, (under Tito’s Yugoslavia) that a Macedonian nation and state are recognized.\(^{216}\) Today’s problems stem from the parties ethnocentric interpretation of this historical process.

As we have explained earlier, questions of identity are quite difficult since identities are social constructions and moreover products of a process which does not necessarily reflect historical accuracy but rather a somewhat subjective interpretation of historical events. The already quoted Renan’s remark ‘to get ones history wrong is an essential part in the making of the nation’ explains it so eloquently.\(^{217}\) In this line Roudometof argues that research shows that history in the Balkans is taught in a highly ethnocentric fashion where the nation’s sufferings are emphasized, achievements and good deeds are mostly attributed to the nation’s work, while neighbors and other powers are usually blamed for “injustices”.\(^{218}\) Though hardly unique to the Balkans, it shows the constructivist process and what the social identity theory has pointed out i.e. that group members tend to be positively biased towards their own and prejudicial of the ‘others’.

We have also noted that, people in general are not self-conscious that they themselves engage in social constructions and tend to project the current perceptions of identity into the past. To be more explicit, in the WB people in general view their ancestors in today’s lenses i.e. they think that their ancestors had the same idea of unity and perception of the group similar to their views today. In fact, Schoolbooks in the Balkans revolve around concepts of homogeneity, preservation, continuity, resistance and superiority and, national identity is viewed as

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\(^{215}\) There still is an ongoing debate whether ancient Macedonians were Greeks or a barbaric tribe (they were called by the Greeks barbarian, which in antiquity meant not Greek) which was Hellenized later on. For a wide account, see: Joseph Roisman and Ian Worthington (eds.), *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia*, (John Wiley & Sons, 2010).


\(^{217}\) See page 50.

transcended and continuous from ancient times to the present.\textsuperscript{219} This biased and erroneous historical interpretation affects identity construction and perception, as well as security.

Either way, nationalism emerged in the XIX cent; hence though ethnicities existed before, they had not a prime role in social identity. In the WB people do not make a clear distinction between the ethnic group and nation, thus continuity seems quite plausible to them. While cultural or ethnic evolution is rather plausible, today member’s perceptions of the group unity as a nation aren’t. For example, Gil-White, analyzing Weber’s quote: ‘The Poles of Upper Silesia, until recently, had hardly any feeling of solidarity with the ‘Polish nation’. They felt themselves to be a separate ethnic group in the face of the Germans, but for the rest they were Prussian subjects and nothing else’, argues that before nationalism people though understood their belonging to different ethnic groups gave little importance to this social identity.\textsuperscript{220} But as previously mentioned it is not what is that matters, but what people believe is that has behavioral consequences and, in the Balkans what people believe affects their perceptions of the self and others. These perceptions however conflict with each-other and, as a consequence regional security is compromised.

What stated above is crucial to understand why the Macedonian identity is a contested issue today and why impacts so fervently identity perceptions and security.

Macedonia’s declaration of independence in 17 September 1991 inevitably boosted quarrels between Macedonians and their neighbors. Bulgarians, Greeks and to some extent Serbs and Albanians argue that a Macedonian nation was the product of an artificial nation-building process under the direction of Tito’s Yugoslavia.\textsuperscript{221} FYROM’s official point of view states that Macedonians are descendents of ancient Macedonians and, state led projects that commemorates this continuity has been implemented by building statues of Philip the II and Alexander the Great among others. Other moderate Macedonians, acknowledge that they are a Slavic people with no relation to antiquity.\textsuperscript{222} Not only these claims are inconsistent between themselves but they show explicitly the biased historical interpretation as well as the projection of today’s understanding into the past. Also the division of Geographical Macedonia is considered by Slavic Macedonian

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\textsuperscript{219} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{220} Francisco J. Gil-White, Op. Cit.
\textsuperscript{222} Ibid., 6;12-13.
\end{flushright}
as a national disaster hence they see GM as a territory taken from them. As we have noted above Macedonians diminish the fact that GM was always inhabited by many peoples, or that their identity is a social construction which passed through a complex process. These claims over territory and continuity have created fertile ground for negative identity perceptions primarily between Macedonians, Bulgarians and Greeks. Territorial claims on the other hand not only contribute to negative identity perceptions but create also negative perceptions of security where parties fear an imaginary attack to take what was supposedly theirs to begin with.

In the same line, though Bulgaria was the first country to recognize the new independent Republic of Macedonia in 15 January 1992, it officially denied the existence of a distinct Macedonian nation and language. Bulgaria claims that Macedonians are Bulgarians that speak a western Bulgarian dialect which was transformed artificially into a different language in 1945.\textsuperscript{223} This is because in the Balkans, the process of Nation construction in the XIX and XX cent was largely based on ethnicity and Slavic people of GM have historically identified themselves as Christians, partly as Bulgarians, Serbs, and Greeks.\textsuperscript{224} Only in the XIX cent a small proportion started to identify themselves as Macedonians, but Roudmeof argues that is rather difficult to state if it was a regional identification or a national one.\textsuperscript{225} As Lory points out, in the middle of the XIX to early XX century a Macedonian identity was difficult to be distinguished from a Bulgarian one.\textsuperscript{226} Since we explained that in the Balkans ethnicity and nationality are viewed as one, we can understand why Macedonians have so much difficulty asserting a distinct identity. From this point of view, Bulgarian claims represent the strongest challenge for Macedonians. Roudometof rightly asserts that even though, a Macedonian national identity has a recent historical origin and certainly does not descend from antiquity, it still is legitimate.\textsuperscript{227} We have already explained that nations are constructions and Slavic Macedonians have constructed theirs, thus a distinct Macedonian identity is a real social fact. SIT defines the group as the member’s perception of belonging together and distinct vis-a-vis to others; Macedonians fit perfectly this description.

\textsuperscript{223} Bulgaria chose an eastern Bulgarian dialect for its official language instead. See Geert-Hinrich Ahrens, \textit{Diplomaci mbi Tehun e Thikes}, (Tiranë: Toena, 2010), 21-22; 386. Title in original: \textit{Diplomacy on the Edge}.


\textsuperscript{225} Ibid., 66.

\textsuperscript{226} Bernard Lory, \textit{Europa ballkanike nga 1945 në ditët tona}, (Dituria, 2007), 196. Title in original: \textit{L’Europe balkanique de 1945 à nos jours}.

On the other hand, claims over GM or the nationalist’s claims for a ‘Greater Macedonia’ and ‘Greater Bulgaria’ coupled with challenges of identity has created tension and more importantly has built the scene for negative identity perceptions. Macedonians feel pressured and perceive themselves as pushed into a corner where all neighbors want to do them harm. They perceive their nation’s denial as a threat to their statehood. This has significant repercussion on the Macedonian negative perceptions of the neighbors as well as impacts their relations with Albanians.

Greece is also involved in bitter disputes over Macedonia’s name and identity which naturally has strong repercussion on identity perceptions and security. The declaration of independence under the name ‘Republic of Macedonia’ and claims over ancient Macedonian symbols and identity as well some maps circulating in the beginning of the 90s of a Greater Macedonia resulted in a strong reaction from Greece who accused the former of identity theft and irredentism. Greece maintains that ancient Macedonians were ancestors of today Greek Macedonians found in Aegean Macedonia and consider Macedonian name as part of their cultural heritage. Failure to find a solution to the name dispute in the last twenty years has resulted in Greece’s blockade of Macedonian NATO membership in 2009 and the stagnation of its EU integration process. Also due to Greece’s blockade Macedonia is still recognized today by the UN as FYROM. Both parties view the process through their own lenses in a rather ethnocentric fashion. It can be suggested that the fact that Slavic Macedonians have constructed their identity and perceptions under neighbor’s threats is perhaps partly the reason behind their exaggerated claims; i.e. Slavic Macedonian claims of continuity with ancient Macedonians and appropriation of their cultural figures and symbols are a result of insecurity vis-à-vis neighbor’s challenges. Indeed, this is a process that has created a vicious circle where parties due to reciprocal “threats” find shelter in nationalism. However it must be noted that territorial threats are not quite realistic but they do affect perceptions between the parties in a negative fashion.

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228 It must be noted that, nationalists who claim a greater respective country can be found in all Balkan countries. Despite claims being unrealistic they induce negative perceptions and compromise security.
230 Ibid., 93-106.
Serbia on the other hand has contested a distinct Macedonian identity at various times but nowadays it just contests an autonomous Macedonian church which is also perceived as part of the Slavic Macedonian identity.\textsuperscript{231} Albania on the other hand doesn’t have a problem with Macedonian’s name or identity but is interested in the rights of Albanians there. Relations between the two countries have mostly been in good terms primarily because of Albania’s weakness and, low profile due to concerns of damaging the Kosovo issue and Albanian issues in general with nationalism.\textsuperscript{232}

The contested process under which the Macedonian nationality was constructed has pushed them to emphasize their social identity and increase the simplistic and stereotypical view of the neighbor’s threat. This complex and contested process of Macedonian identity construction as well as ethnocentric interpretation of historical events by all parties has led primarily Macedonians, Bulgarians and Greeks towards stereotypical perceptions of each-other. But Macedonians feel more security threatened due to their limited power compared to the larger and stronger neighbors.

In the XIX and XX century national identities were in a construction and shaping process. That is why using process tracing helps us trace the identity construction process and locate causes that affected it. Constructivism helps us grasp that identity construction is built and influenced on biased and ethnocentric interpretation of historical events as well as by an ethnocentric interpretation of the identity construction process itself. Unfortunately most of us fail to perceive identities as social constructions, have simplistic and prejudicial views of others, and exaggerate threats of security. While constructivism shows us how people construct identities and then fail to realize it, SIT shows that group members have the tendency to act in an ethnocentric, prejudicial, discriminative and stereotypical manner. This SIT predicts, leads to intergroup conflict. SIT shows that all parties are positively biased towards their groups own members and, view the others in rather simplistic and negative lenses. In this line ethnic groups in the Balkans are prone to quarrels.

4.3.2. Macedonian - Albanian relations, implications on identity perceptions and security

According to the 2002 census Macedonia has: 64.2% Macedonians, 25.2% Albanians and 10.6% others. Macedonian Albanians are primarily a majority in the northwest and west of the country and can theoretically breakup it up along ethnic lines or at least descend it to civil war. However, despite empty rhetoric, this is hardly their wish or aim. Nonetheless, Macedonians naturally fear such a scenario and as a result it greatly influences Macedonian perceptions of Albanians. Albanians on the other hand regard Macedonians as an oppressing majority which impedes their cultural and language rights. Even though numbers suggest that Macedonia is a multiethnic state, Macedonians consider it their nation-state where Albanians are merely a minority. Albanians on the other hand have constantly requested equal status and rights as a composing nation. Both perceive the other as the problem and both feel as the victims. Albanians view with suspicion and do not justify Macedonians keen emphasis of their identity while the later don’t regard most Albanians claims as legitimate. Again, an ethnocentric view of history and negative identity perceptions as SIT points out impedes substantial progress and leaves a vulnerable security environment. This process of a vicious circle of negative identity perceptions led to the 2001 conflict and to security threats today.

Before we proceed with the analysis of Macedonian–Albanian relations it is of prime importance to state explicitly why a contested Macedonian identity affects relations with Albanians and security. The fragile relationship between Macedonians and Albanians is naturally subject to Macedonians security fears and negative perceptions that result from a contested identity because these fears and negative perceptions are projected towards Macedonian Albanians as well. Studies have shown that both parties, if little else agree on two things: NATO membership and EU integration. Both organizations are seen as guarantees of preserving Macedonian statehood and security from outside as well as domestic threats. Prospect NATO

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235 Stojan Slaveski, ‘Macedonian Strategic Culture and Institutional Choice: Integration or Isolation?’, Western Balkans Security Observer [online journal], 14 (July-September 2009), 44-48,
and EU membership relaxes Macedonians as well as Albanians security and socio-economic concerns while it guarantees cultural and human rights for the latter. EU membership is also seen specifically as a road map to much desired economic improvement having as example Romania and Bulgaria.\textsuperscript{236} Hence, the fact that both processes are blocked by Greece has led the country into a dangerous stalemate. Albanians strongly feel being held back by issues that concern only Macedonians and think they suffer unnecessarily from the latter’s stubbornness.\textsuperscript{237} The impasse towards these two vital objectives adds needles tensions to already existing animosities. The 2012 increased tensions stem partially from this frustrating deadlock. That is why solving the name dispute with Greece would help a great deal in the improvement of Mac - Alb relations and perceptions, as well as security.

As we have already mentioned, Yugoslav Albanians never liked being part of Yugoslavia, not the least due to their status of second class citizens and substantial cultural differences with Slavic people. Recall that though in greater numbers than Montenegrins, Slovenes, or Macedonians, Albanians didn’t have their own republic. Also a distinct Macedonian, Muslim (Bosniak) and Montenegrin identity were and still are contested issues hence the recognition of Montenegro, Bosnia and Macedonia as republics under the second Yugoslavia emphasized double standards and increased Albanian frustrations. Hence until 1991 Albanian-Macedonian relations developed under this context. Understandably, significant cultural differences and the status of Albanians in Yugoslavia marked perceptions between the two communities. Either way, both communities lived rather peaceful lives.

After Macedonian independence, relations deteriorated. Ragaru argues that an unsecured Macedonian majority, due to external as well as internal threats, engaged in ambitious nation-state building emphasizing the Macedonianes of the state.\textsuperscript{238} They felt threatened externally because Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia did not recognize a distinct Macedonian nation and, state

recognition preceded rather slowly. They felt threatened internally because Albanians boycotted the independence referendum and later in 1992 opted for autonomy within Macedonia; hence Albanians were viewed not as loyal subject of the new state.\textsuperscript{239} Albanians feared that independence meant division from Kosovo Albanians which indeed created much difficulty for them due to strong cultural, economical and family connections. In fact University diplomas gained in Pristina and Tirana were not recognized by the new government and efforts from locals to establish a private Albanian language university were harshly suppressed.\textsuperscript{240} Macedonians established a highly ethnocentric constitution where Macedonia was considered the nation-state of the Macedonian people and where Albanians were regarded as another minority. An extensive study by Belamaric of both Macedonian constitutions before and after 2001 conflict shows how much Albanians are discriminated in the first.\textsuperscript{241} She also argues that in the 2001 constitution: ‘changes were largely on the level of terminology rather than principles, a trend that could play a part in the rekindling of the ethnic conflict’.\textsuperscript{242} In fact previews enjoyed rights under the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution such as the right for minorities to use their own language in public space in units of government where they were in a majority was suppressed along with the right that on specific public occasions they could fly their flag.\textsuperscript{243} Not the least other later reforms excluded them from central power and diminished their local authority as well.

As can be understood the 90s events affected greatly negative perceptions between the parties and added to existing animosities which would later mount to war. Arens argues that if both parties had been more careful, if Macedonians had tried to make a historical agreement with Albanians and not alienate them from the republic instead and, if alb hadn’t been unreasonable and didn’t make exaggerated claims for their numbers, perhaps today we wouldn’t have had security problems.\textsuperscript{244} The international community made some efforts to resolve interethnic

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{239} Ibid., 5-6.
\item \textsuperscript{240} Ibid., 6.
\item \textsuperscript{242} Ibid., 25.
\item \textsuperscript{243} Nadège Ragaru, Op. Cit., 6.
\item \textsuperscript{244} Geert-Hinrich Ahrens, Op. Cit., 398-399.
\end{itemize}
issues in the 90s but Macedonians dragged their feet and both parties moved further apart towards the arms of nationalism. Indeed a fatal mistake that led to the 2001 conflict.

4.3.3. The Kosovo war and 2001 conflict, repercussions on identity perceptions and security

The Kosovo war and expulsion of some 300,000 Kosovo Albanians into Macedonia strained considerably interethnic relations and increased Macedonians fear and negative perceptions. Rightly, Macedonians worried that the new comers could shift the ethnic balance towards Albanians and threaten division of the country. However, despite increased tensions fortunately no conflict erupted at this time and after the war Kosovo Albanians returned en masse to Kosovo.

But conflict didn’t delay by much. In 2001 an Alb. movement not known until then called NLA led by Ali Ahmeti declared that it fought for secession and the creation of a greater Albania. However, it didn’t gained local support until it moderated its views for Alb. rights under Macedonia and fighting corruption of existing alb parties. This clearly shows that Albanians preferred equal rights rather than division; also, it speaks to great frustration towards Macedonians actions as well as disappointment from Albanian ruling elites. Interestingly, during this time there have been talks by Macedonians for a voluntary exchange of territories between Macedonia and Albania. However, Albania and the international community both rejected such solution. This is another reason for Macedonians not to fear a bogus greater Albania since Albania itself has denied it. In 13 August 2001, after six and half months of conflict and 1000 dead the parties signed the Ohrid Framework Agreement which was a road map for improving Albanians rights. Though brief, the conflict seriously affected Macedonian perceptions which saw it as a victory for Alb. insurgents. Albanians on the other hand saw it as a righteous process towards fixing their legitimate demands. Either way, despite notable progress

245 Ibid., 455-458.
246 He is today in a government coalition with Nicola Gruevski, also a nationalist. What nationalists say and how they act at the very least raises questions and should be viewed with reserves.
248 Ibid.
250 Geert-Hinrich Ahrens, Ibid., 460.
since 2001, negative perceptions continue to persist and both parties act rather poorly towards reconciliation. Albanians feel that Macedonians drag their feet in the implementation of the agreement and the latter still consider the former’s request as unjustified. Incidents have been rather sporadic but recent years saw an increase of nationalism in the entire region, especially since the economic crisis, while 2012 was worryingly unstable in Macedonia.

4.3.4. A possible solution to improve identity perceptions and security

These are complex issues indeed but far from hopeless. The prime challenge rests upon negative identity perceptions between Macedonians and Albanians. To improve these relations and perceptions is best if first some external issues impacting them be solved. Below I will argue why solving the name dispute will help extensively Macedonian perceptions of the neighbors and their self security as well as their relations with Albanians. After we will argue that some political adjustments can help a great deal to bring Macedonians and Albanians closer with each other and sustain a truly functional multiethnic state. By possibly fixing these issues identity perceptions will improve and security will follow.

Macedonians indeed face tough issues ahead, but stalemate is worst than compromise. Between all possible solutions from: (1) division, (2) autonomy for Alb., (3) a dual ethnic state, (4) a civic state and, (5) a Macedonian ethnic state, the fourth option seems the most appropriate for reducing negative perceptions, keeping the country united and, avoiding security problems. However, first the name dispute with Greece should be solved. The ICG has made more than once recommendations towards this goal. Both Macedonia and Greece should achieve a pragmatic agreement to the benefit of both. Macedonians, ICG argues should retreat from provocations such as naming its international airport ‘Alexander the Great’ and, similar ancient identity claims and commemorations. They should accept a regional definition of the country’s name similar to the UN mediator proposal: ‘Republic of North Macedonia’ instead of a national connotation. Greece on the other hand should accept a Macedonian identity, language and nation with that name (or perhaps Makedonians in Macedonian language) as well as Skopje

251 Ibid., 401-403.
assurances that their name has no exclusivity or territorial claims.\textsuperscript{253} By solving the name deadlock NATO membership and EU integration process will follow thus making both Macedonians and Albanians happy in their country moving forward. Not the least this will decrease tensions in the region and Macedonians will feel more secure with their identity unchallenged. Serbia too has been considering steps to acknowledge an autonomous Macedonian church which will help the latter’s perceptions and regional security.\textsuperscript{254}

However additional steps will be needed to built a stable Macedonian state. Due to its ethnic composition Macedonia is a de facto multiethnic state and this should be cherished as a value in the likes of Switzerland’s example. A civic unitary state as opposed to other options would satisfy in the long run Albanians as well as Macedonians. Albanians wouldn’t be second class citizens and Macedonians would preserve territorial integrity as well as security intact. If Albanians are viewed as partners rather than a threat than building a tolerant state should be easier. Both Macedonians and Albanians should stop ethnic based politics or exploiting ethnic issues for gaining votes and popularity. Cross ethnic parties or coalitions based on ideology and economic policies similar to other European countries should be considered. The large phenomenon of nepotism and using ethnic grievance as well inducing fear by biased media accounts should be kept to minimum by political parties. Giving rights to Albanian should not be seen as zero-sum game where the gaining of one are the loss of the other but rather as a positive-sum game where both parties win. Also a civic state is preferred to the dual ethnic one for other minorities to feel home and not second-class citizens. Secession, autonomy and to some extent a federation would inevitably construct more negative perceptions and security problems in the long run. A civic state also undermines every Alb. nationalists request for secession, autonomy or a federation thus neutralizing threat perceptions of Macedonians. If history and the 2001 conflict are of any lesion, the alienation of minorities especially when they are in large numbers creates inevitably security threats, while inclusion in the society will very likely keep Macedonia: united, stronger, and away from ethnic based security problems. More importantly this will improve interethnic relations and perceptions between the parties. Obviously there are no recipes for absolute peace but better options exist.

\textsuperscript{253} Ibid.
4.3.5. Conclusion

Through process tracing in this analysis we traced the process of some key historical events that have shaped identity perceptions as well as showed that this process is shaped itself by an ethnocentric view of history. Also, attitudes of Bulgaria, Greece and to some extent Serbia based on similarly ethnocentric historical views are the cause of negative identity perceptions and security threats. As we explained this process has constructed negative perceptions between the parties and security problems have followed. Macedonian insecurity is also projected towards Albanians, relations of which are problematic in their own right. Both, Macedonians and Albanians have an ethnocentric historical view as well and view reciprocal actions at the very least with suspicion. Both parties as SIT explains are biased towards their own members and prejudicial towards others. They have constructed negative perceptions and simplistic views of each other based largely on misunderstandings and reciprocal fear. Unfortunately negative perceptions led in 2001 to a conflict which was going to be much more horrible without international intervention. In fact Smith argues that intrastate conflicts are much more likely to be deadly and difficult to resolve than other conflicts\textsuperscript{255} hence international intervention might have very well stopped not only a horrific civil war but a split of Macedonia and ethnic cleansing as well. Either way, the 2001 conflict had considerable impact on identity perceptions as well. The war increased animosities but it did make Albanians in due time more comfortable in their state. However the trend after 2001 reversed and made both parties more secure. Unfortunately the economic crisis and the name dispute lead to rising nationalism which has deteriorated identity perceptions again.

By understanding the causalities of negative identity perceptions and their impact on security this paper argues that solving the name dispute and promoting a civic state where all national groups can feel at home will improve and possibly reverse negative identity perceptions. By improving negative identity perceptions the parties won’t make requests which alienate each other but rather cooperate and see value in cooperation. Security threats are based on negative identity perceptions; hence improving these negative identity perceptions by solving the name dispute and promoting a civic state will as a consequence neutralize security threats.

\textsuperscript{255} Michael E. Smith, Op. Cit., 100.
5. Conclusions

This thesis has tried to provide an identity based explanation to security problems. We have tried to show that reasons behind conflicts often stem from how people identify themselves and others i.e. the fact that we divide ourselves in ‘us’ and ‘them’ has behavioral consequences which sometimes lead to armed conflict. The Constructivist theoretical framework helped us emphasize and explain the constructive nature of these social identities as well as their abstract dimension. More explicitly constructivism showed how ethnicity and nationality are actually social constructions which often prevail over many other forms of social identification. This is quite important when we consider that people involved in armed conflicts generally have a primordial understanding of identity and are not self-conscious that they engage in social constructions. This theoretical approach is also complementary to other more main stream security studies based on power, interests and etc.

Our three case studies chosen for thorough analysis, namely Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia explicitly show how important are identity perceptions in security issues. All three cases suffered from armed conflict due to negative identity perceptions between their different ethno-national groups. Through process tracing we discovered how these people have constructed their different social identities and how historical events have shaped these identities and perceptions of themselves as well as their competing groups. However, the analysis of our cases suggests that though historical events have constructed different social identities and their according intergroup perceptions, it is the ethnocentric interpretation of these historical events that plays a major role in identity perceptions. In fact, biased interpretations where people often believe themselves as victims of the ‘rival’ social group have induced fear and belief of threat. Accordingly these negative perceptions have pushed for more aggressive stances and justifications of violent acts in the belief that protection comes only by correcting historical ‘wrongs’ and from the arms of their respective social group. Simply put, people part of these conflicts believe that the others are to blame for past suffering and they constitute a threat to their protection, hence violence towards them is justified.
Unfortunately, these beliefs and negative identity perceptions have at times materialized and have lead to security problems. Similarly we have found that this resembles more a vicious circle where negative perceptions of others lead to conflict and conflict itself leads to more negative identity perceptions. Indeed, our analysis suggests that the Yugoslavian breakup and the following wars stemmed from negative identity perceptions but also that these wars as a result induced even more negative identity perceptions. Also, our case studies show that not everyone is equally aggressive and willing for conflict; some are more than others. Though, this does not necessarily mean that they are worse than others but that other factors such as the level of ethnocentric interpretations, propaganda, level of manipulation by elites and more importantly the power or ability to create conflict with the belief that it will benefit their group is greater.

Hopefully we have avoided (to the extent possible) the pitfalls of using process tracing as a method as well as other limitations which are natural in social science research. Either way it should be noted that this type of research faces unavoidable controversiality and in the end it is the reader which has to assess if the research has managed to avoid the pitfalls indicated.

By no coincidence we chose social identity theory as a more specific guiding tool. SIT indeed explains this natural tendency of ours to identify or categorize ourselves and others in social groups. More importantly it shows that we do attribute virtues and vices in rather simplistic and biased manners. Simply put, people have the tendency to view members of their own group in a better light and be prejudicial vis-à-vis others and this has behavioral consequences on intergroup relations. In fact our three cases fit perfectly with explanations given by SIT, since analysis showed that all ethno-national groups studied are prone to these biases.

However, different identity perceptions are no problem in itself instead, they are quite normal, largely present and more importantly inevitable. It is only when they are negative to the extent that group members are willing to do harm that security becomes a concern. For example there is nothing wrong with a Swedish person perceiving oneself as such but it becomes a problem if more members than not think of others as a threat based solely on simplistic and prejudicial differences that security problems may arise. Similarly, the cases chosen suggest that is not the differences per se that threaten security but rather the negative perceptions of other groups and the desire to dominate over that group that have led to conflict. Unfortunately, in these cases people disregard all other shared similarities and focus on differences and
stereotypes. Our analysis shows that disregard or misconceptions of identity perceptions by other actors such as the IC (remember Bosnia) is not only deemed unwise but it can indeed lead to a great deal of human suffering.

This thesis has pointed to the need for more attention towards identities perceptions role on security. We simply must take into account identity perceptions role on security when crafting policies for long term security solutions. Although it appears that no easy or universal solution exists we can identify somewhat of a paradigm. This paradigm suggests that in the long term we can relax security threats based on negative identity perceptions if we place the emphasis on shared similarities; objective, unbiased and proper teaching of history; explain the construction of social identities; avoid media stereotypes and propaganda; political nationalistic rhetoric and so on and so forth. However these changes require a rather considerable amount of time, perhaps even generations while some security issues are more pressing than others. Also it may be somewhat naive to think that people will refrain themselves from all mentioned above especially when profits are in sight.

Hence, to solve security problems in a rather short amount of time we should take specific steps for specific cases and eliminate the immediate causes which induce negative identity perceptions. The solutions presented for each case throughout this thesis explore exactly this option. Indeed, specific solutions must be strongly correlated to identity perceptions and whatever the solution the aim should be to improve identity perceptions as the means to avert security problems. By finding the immediate and major causes of negative identity perceptions and by fixing them we can hopefully improve security in the short term and gain time in order to devise better policies in the future. Identity perceptions will improve in the long run if we constantly try to emphasize the abstractness and relativity of identities, or the fact that they are subject to change and have always done so. The improvement of negative identity perceptions will ultimately improve security.

**Word count:** 25,550*

*From introduction to conclusions, excluding footnotes.
AHRENS, GEERT-HINRICH, Diplomaci mbi Tehun e Thikes, (Tiranë: Toena, 2010).


