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Kosovo: At the Door of Europe

'We are all others, and we are all ourselves.' (Bauman)

All we agree that the notion of an 'other', particularly an opponent or an enemy, creates identity.

According to the Slovenian philosopher Tomaz Mastnak 'the other' for Europe at first was Byzantium. But after the Battle of Poitiers, in 732 (the last Muslim invasion to penetrate to the north of the Pyrenees), the second "other" for western Europeans was people known in the West as the Saracens. According to Tomaz Mastnak, Saracens were Muslim people and from this moment 'the roots of Europe lie in hatred and fear of Muslims.'¹ This fear and hate against Muslims, considers Mastnak, have continue and its rudder variant was seen in the Bosnia war, where the Christian West allowed the massacre and ethnic cleaning of Bosnia Muslims. Mastnak also emphasize that Europe has built its identity by 'exclusion' and argue that Europe is 'community of exclusion which is created based in the territorial cleaning and 'blood purity' (Tomaz Mastnak, 2007, *Evropa: Istorija politickog pojma*, Beogradski Krug & Centar za Medija i Komunikacije, Beograd, p.13).

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, many Eastern and Southeastern Europe nations and countries, were enthusiastic and hopeful for the end of communist dictatorship and totalitarian regimes. After this, they thought they could live freely, with democracy, equality, and all the values that come with democracy, as other nations of Western Europe. However, something that nobody expected to happened: Integration of Europe, which in reality brought differences between the 'old' nations of Europe and the 'new' nations that arose from totalitarian systems. The 'new' nations that are waiting for this integration are Albania, Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia, Kosovo, Moldavia, Macedonia, Ukraine, Byelorussia and Turkey. Two hundred million future Europeans are waiting to define their 'fate' in the new European Union. For many countries there are conditions named 'standards' that they have to fulfil before they become equal members of the EU. Numerous philosophers argue that those standards are not fulfilled in the states that are known as founders of the European Union. According to this argument, it is logical to think that those states want to be sure of who they will admitt into this Union. It is no coincidence that Andrej Stasiuk, wrote that 'the East will completely shake up Europe'. This is because the people of Eastern Europe are considered 'wild, cunning, exotic'. In his article Stasiuk argues:

'Moldavians whose main source of income comes from selling their own organs (as a certain newspaper in Germany has reported) will metamorphose as an entire people into clinking coins and ruin the world market of transplants. And what the Albanians will do exceeds any human powers of imagination. (Andrzej Stasiuk, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, in *Old Europe, New Europe, Core Europe*, edited by Daniel Levy, Max Pensky and John Torpey, 2005, Verso, London – New York, p. 38)

¹ For more: Jacques Le Goff, 2005, *The birth of Europe*, Blackwell Publishing, London & Tomaz Mastnak, *Evropa: Istorija politickog pojma*, Beogradski Krug & Centar za medije i komunikacije, Beograd, 2007.

This is exactly the essence as to why still East and Southeast Europe are not considered nations worthy of becoming a part of 'European civilization'. The people of Western Europe are essentially (see Stasiuk extract above) afraid of those from Eastern and Southeastern Europe.

The European Union and Kosovo

For a hundred years, the people of the Balkans (including Kosovo Albanians) aspired towards Europe and everything called 'European value'. Since the Albanian National Renaissance, the main program of Albanians was not only to throw out the Ottoman Empire, which was recently in wane, but also 'integration with 'civilized' people of Europe'² Since the Albanian National Renaissance, Europe was an ideal and still is. Many Albanian historians and politicians wrote and declared that all the battles fought by the Albanian National Hero (Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeu), were 'in the name of Christianity' to defend Europe. This origin, since the fighter of Christendom, for Europe, against the Ottoman Empire, was part of Albanian national pride, it was and still is the main 'alibi' that they 'deserve' to be part of Europe, that they are worthy of European civilization and Western civilization.

In the period when Yugoslavia was still unified, there were no concerns or doubts about the 'European future of the region'. Therefore, there was no reason to construct or build European belonging, because there was no feeling of exclusion of "Yugoslavians" from that Union. The disintegration of Yugoslavia created a new situation and new conditions for all the different nations that were part of that federation. Since, the 90's Kosovo Albanians hoped and believed that the process of European integration would bring Kosovo integration into the union of European nations. Moreover, during the ten years of Ibrahim Rugova's leadership, Kosovan politicians argued that in this period when Europe is realizing its dream of integration as a political structure, Kosovo will also become a part of this union. Radical movements in Kosovo called for equal membership of Europe and declared war against the Serbian occupation. In the New European Union there is place only for independent states and nations, was the argument used by these radical movements. Kosovans believed for more than ten years in this political and national 'dream'. During 1999 NATO began its bombing campaign against Serbia and NATO troops entered Kosovo, replacing Serbian troops. Kosovo for eight years now, is under the UN Administration, known as UNMIK, who will soon be replaced with EULEX. Since the beginning of UNMIK administration, most of the people in the Kosova began thinking that now Kosovo is a free country and will soon be developed and enter the road to integration into the European Union.

For Kosovo citizens Europe is not only a geographic notion. Europe is also the political structure in which all aspires and hopes of Kosovan people are based. The majority of them aim for Europe and it does not matter if they are right or left, communists or capitalists, socialists or democrats, poor or rich. Under the word 'Europe' stop and disappear all differences. The majority of citizens in Kosovo want 'to become part of Europe'; they only think differently when it comes to the way they hope to make this dream come true. However, everybody now knows that this road is not constructed by Kosovans.

² From Sami Frasheri, Faik Konica to today's authors. All political philosophy of ex president of Kosovo Ibrahim Rugova is based on the idea of Integration in Europe (Sami Frashëri, *Shqipëria, ç'ka qenë, ç'eshtë dhe ç'do të bëhet*, Rilindja, Prishtinë, 1980, & Faik Konica, *Shqipëria, kopshti shkëmbor i Evropës Juglindore*, Toena, Tiranë, 1992.)

Although it seems a paradoxical, Europe is a 'value' and 'Europeanism' is a belief. If someone is called 'European' that person has 'civilized values'. Everything that comes from Europe and for Europe is uncontested; it is the value of the future. It's the same for USA. Those are two 'values', which are unchallenged by Kosovans. Furthermore, 'American democracy' is identified with 'European democracy'. Kosovans believed in USA that has done so much to liberate Kosovo, but Kosovans know that America is far away beyond the Atlantic Ocean. Maybe Kosovo is the place where Europe and US still coexist together.

Historically the people of Kosovo, as 'part of the Albanian Nation' considered Europe a political structure, which always played games on the back of small nations, and small people. Kosovan Albanians are part of those small nations that after the downfall of the Ottoman Empire in 1912 were annexed to Serbia and Montenegro by the great European Powers.

Eight years after the war in Kosovo, many intellectuals and politicians are afraid that Europe is 'again' playing its old 'games' with Kosovo. If until yesterday Kosovans believed in the European future, now they feel only exclusion from that future of this structure, which seems to be presented as 'Europe'. I say 'seems' because Europe is something else of what it pretends to look like. ... Kosovans has seen Europe as final destination, as Promised Land, but Europeans are seeing Europe as an adventure, without end (Zigmund Bauman, *Europe – an unfinished adventure*, Polity Press, London, 2004.)

Paradoxically, construction of European ideology is still continuing as in other East European countries, because 'to be with Europe' today means 'to be with the future'.

'European values' have spread not only in institutional life, but also in private life and in all sectors the same discourse is found: discourse of the new ideology, discourse of as Tomaz Mastnak said, 'European ideology'. This 'European' one-mindedness has spread all over Kosovo. But Kosovo has one more paradocs: In the time when USA and EU are pointing out their differences, Kosovans see USA and EU as the guaranty of freedom, democracy and prosperity. Kosovans consider America the friendliest state. This fact does not make Kosovans mistrust 'European values', even though Europeans have started to show signs of un-convincingness against America. On the contrary the aspiration of Kosovans is integration into Europe. No one contests Europe, but as much they seek for it, that much Europe is like a dream and out of reach.

In Kosovo there is not too much debate about the future European Union and Kosovo in it. Although there were small discussions, they were not polarized, because as the Slovenian philosopher Tomaz Mastnak said 'European ideology can not be challenged with arguments', (Mastnak, 2007, p.23)³ because 'indifference to rational argumentation can be institutionalized as the freedom of press and speech' (Mastnak, 2007,p.11)⁴

It can not be said that in Kosovo exist pro-European movements but you can also not deny that, because of what Mastnak named 'One-mindedness of European ideology', that can be found everywhere. All differences disappear in the front of the idea of 'Europe". Such "One-mindedness" is

³ Tomaz Mastnak, in original: 'Evropskoj ideologiji ne mozes se podupreti argumentima' (Tomaz Mastnak, *Evropa: Istorija politickog pojma*, Beogradski Krug & Centar za medije i komunikacije, Beograd, 2007, p.23.)

⁴ Tomaz Mastnak in original: 'Indiferentnost prema racionalnoj argumentaciji institucionalizuje se kao i sloboda stampe i govora' (Tomaz Mastnak, *Evropa: Istorija politickog pojma*, Beogradski Krug & Centar za medije i komunikacije, Beograd, 2007, p.11.)

spreading in all new states of East and Southeast Europe. In Kosovo, leftists, rightists, radicals and liberals, all at once declare the necessity of Kosovo's integration into the new European Union. There is no doubt, as in other countries, about the 'goodness' of entry into the EU. Kosovans speak only about 'positive consequences' of entry into the EU. For many Kosovans, the only doubt is if the EU is ready to include Kosovo in its membership. There is a well-known discussion between the Albanian writer Ismail Kadare and Kosovan literature critic Rexhep Qosja (Rexhep Qosja, 2005, in www.rexhepqosja.com).

In his book *'From one December to another'* Kadare writes:

Inclination of Albania would be to the Christianity, because it is linked with culture, memory, and nostalgia of the time before Ottomans. But after years, the last Islam religion, comes with Ottomans, starts to wane (in beginning in Albania, after that in Kosovo also), replacing it for Christianity, or more exactly for Christian culture. At last from one bad thing (the abolition of religion at 1967), has come one's good. Albanian nation has done a big historic correction, which will rush now the integration with mother continent: Europe. (My translation) (Ismail Kadare, *Nga nje dhjetor ne tjetrin*, Toena, Tirane, 2006, p.31)⁵

While Qosja argues that Europe hesitates to accept Albanians (in Albania and Kosovo) into its breast exactly because the majority of them are Muslims. (Qosja, 2005)

Kosovan Albanians are calling themselves the oldest nation in the Balkans and one of the oldest nations in Europe. This fact is enough for most of them to feel 'European'. Many authors in Kosovo do not accept to speak about the 'idea' of European Identity. According to them, there is no crisis of this identity; this 'identity' is defined. Kosovar writer Mehdi Hyseni argues that the debate about European identity, between the Albanian writer Ismail Kadare and Kosovan literary critic Rexhep Qosja, is 'old as Albanians and Europe and it is neither discussible, nor actual, because Europe since Roman Empire knows about European identity of Albanians' (My translation) (Hyseni in Qosja, 2005)⁶

Speaking about Kosovan identity, the Albanian and Kosovan politicians proclaimed that today, western democracy, more than ever, has opened for Albanians the doors in the road of integration with true values of civilization (Vladimir Prela, 2005, *Identiteti eshte i mundshem ne globalizem*, in *Kush asht Kosovari*, Java, Prishtine, 2005, p.54)⁷

⁵ Ismail Kadare, in original: "Prirja e Shqipërisë do të ishte drejt fesë së krishterë, ngaqë ajo lidhej me kulturën, kujtimet e vjetra, dhe nostalgjinë e kohës paraturke. Me kalimin e viteve, feja e vonë islamike, e ardhur bashkë me otomanët, do të zbehej (së pari në Shqipëri e më pas në Kosovë), derisa t'ia linte vendin fesë së krishterë, ose më saktë kulturës së krishterë. Kështu që së paku nga një e keqe (ndalimi i fesë më 1967) do të vinte një e mirë. Kombi shqiptar do të bënte një korrigjim të madh historik, çka do të shpejtonte bashkimin e tij me kontinentin mëmë: Evropën". (Ismail Kadare, *Nga një dhjetor në tjetrin*, Toena, Tiranë, 2006, p. 31.)

⁶ Mehdi Hyseni in original: "Kjo "temë" e vjetër sa vetë shqiptarët dhe Evropa, nuk është e diskutueshme, as aktuale, sepse Evropa qysh nga koha Perandorisë Romake, është në dijeni për identitetin evropian të shqiptarëve. Gjithashtu, edhe shqiptarët e kanë të qartë se i përkasin identitetit të Evropës. Në këtë kuptim, nuk ekziston asnjë mosmarrëveshje përbrenda shqiptare, as me Evropën e vjetër, as me Evropën e re." in: (<http://www.rexhepqosja.com/>)

⁷ Vladimir Prela in original: Veçimi ideologjik apo pushtues na nxori ne shqiptarëve në brigjet e Europës demokratike, pra në Perëndimin e ndërtuar sinjë bashkësi që mbështetet në një sistem vlerash universale: - në një shoqëri të organizuar mbi bazën e ekonomisë racionale dhe në parimet e tregut; - në një shoqëri ku të drejtat enjeriut vëzhgohen dhe mbrohen; - në një shoqëri që me ligj, institucione dhe mentalitet, nuk pranon

The majority of citizens in Kosovo believe not only in the European future, but also consider they 'deserve' European membership. Arguing about the idealization of 'identity' among Kosovans, philosopher Shkelzen Maliqi wrote:

Albanians are one of the nations historically retarded and idealization of their pure identity inspires mostly by the elements of their traditional life Para modern type of life, which has no similarity with other nations in the region. It is idealized institution of 'oda', who is named as democratic original institution, considering it as fact that democracy were in the Albanian genes, as the gift from the God, but only accidentally the 'historical conditions' and occupations doesn't leave Albanians to develop their talent of first and autochthon democrats. (Shkelzen Maliqi, Identiteti shqiptar, in *Kush asht Kosovari*, Java, Prishtine, 2005, p.51)⁸

What does it mean to be European? Does this have its consequences? Why is it 'good' for the people of the Balkans to be European? In general the Balkans is identified with 'bad' and 'wild', whereas Europe is identified with values such as 'civilizing, democracy and liberating'. But people in the Balkans are not attracted by fictive Europe, Democracy, Civilization, but they are attracted by pragmatic, practical and real Europe. They are attracted by welfare of nations who are members of the EU, by their social policy. They think Europe is 'the dream', and the promised future. How can they reach this promised 'land and future'? They started to construct the idea of belonging and of merits. The 'Balkan people deserve to live as other parts of Europe, because they are geographically in Europe.' In the Balkans this is the main construction of being European.

Regardless of the fact that in this construction lies the feeling of inferiority, because deep inside, one person from the Balkans knows that he is different from another person from Western Europe.

Jenkins agrees that 'identifying ourselves or others is a matter of meaning, and meaning always involves interaction: agreement and disagreement, convention and innovation, communication and negotiation.' (Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity*, Rutledge, Taylor & Francis Group, London and New York, 2004, p.4) Can you be European if you only live in the places called Europe? Not, asks Bauman:

You are not necessarily a European just because you happen to be born or to live in a city marked on the political map of Europe. But you may be European even if you've never been to any of those cities. (Zigmund Bauman, 2004, *Europe – an unfinished adventure*, Polity Press, UK, p. 22)

dallime racore apo fetare; -në një system ku zgjedhjet e lira parlamentare dhe ndarja e pushteteve është e shenjtë; Në një rajon ku respektohet sovraniteti, ku ekziston dhe respektohet patriotizmi, por edhe ku kufijtë janë të hapur me njëti – tjetrin. Sot, më shumë se kurrë, demokracia perëndimore i ka hapur rrugën shiptarëve drejt integritimit në vlerat e mirëfillta të qytetërimit. (Vladimir Prela, 'Identiteti është i mundshëm edhe në Globalizem', in *Kush asht Kosovari*, Java, Prishtine, 2005, p.54.)

⁸ Shkelzen Maliqi, in original: 'Shqiptarët janë një prej kombeve historikisht të vonuar në zhvillim dhe idealizimi I puro identitetit të tyre shumë shpesh inspirohet me ato elemente të traditës së jetës fisnore dhe të organizimit të jetës së tipit paramodern, që në dukje nuk kanë paralele me kombet fqinje. Është idealizuar psh. institucioni I rendit të odes, duke u quajtur institucion burimor demokratik, madje edhe duke u konsideruar si dëshmi se demokracia paskësh qenë e shënuar në gjenet shqiptare, si dhunti e falur nga Zoti (mbase e tipit të 'popullit të zgjedhur'), vetëm se fatkeqësisht 'rrethanat historike' dhe pushtimet e shpeshta të huaja nuk u paskan mundësuar shqiptarëve zhvillimin në plotëni të këtij talenti të tyre prej demokratëve të pare e autokton. (Shkelzen Maliqi, 'Identiteti shqiptar', në *Kush asht Kosovari*, Java, Prishtinë, 2005, p.51.)

How someone in the Balkans could understand this statement?

Representation of Europe in Public Sphere in Kosovo

Like other Eastern European Countries, in Kosovo there are many organizations, which promote the idea of 'Europe'. These organizations are working in different fields: politics, economics, culture, social issues, human rights, environmental⁹ etc. There are three types of international organizations in Kosovo: more than 100 registered international NGO-s, UNMIK structure (including EU and OSCE components) and the KFOR Multinational Brigade.

In general, international staff is always considered superior to local staff. In the hierarchy of International Organizations, you cannot find any superior local employees.

This "One-mindedness" also occurs in economy, health, and small businesses, in the entire public sphere. To have a good job, you have to speak English. Even in small shops and small businesses, the owners are looking for employees who speak the English language. (Daily *Koha Ditore*, 3 Jun 2007, p.21). Even when English is not a necessity, it is preferred.

However, this 'One-mindedness' is not only present in international organizations and institutions. Most of the political parties in Kosovo, present as their main goal, the commitment and aspiration for European membership. All promise the 'paradise' called 'Europe'.

'Now that we have finished the creation of our national state, now we start building towards becoming a state member of EU', is one of the sentences used by the Ex-Prime Minister of Kosovo, Agim Ceku. (Daily *Koha Ditore*, 13 Jun 2007, p.15)¹⁰

Also these days, neither Prime Minister Thaçi nor President Fatmir Sejdiu refused to represent Kosovo at The Islamic Conference, because of fear of identification with Islam world. Kosovo was represented there with the politicians of very low level.

Kosovo politicians, from the President to the lowest ranking politician, always have appreciative words for 'the western friends'. Unconsciously or otherwise, they avoid speaking about Europe as a clumsy political structure, which acts very slowly or in most case cannot even act.

Kosovan politicians and politicians from Albania are using the same discourse of being part of 'Europe' as an idea and a value, perceiving it as a 'supreme good'. They have the ideal: Europe; and they think that all every day problems will be solved with entry into Europe, that this Union will help 'poor' people in the Balkans.

⁹ Not only organizations and institutions are proclaiming idea of 'Europe', but in this 'game' are more consistent political parties, for which one of the biggest result is if they are 'being or becoming' the members of Unions of those parties in Europe. President of Liberal Party in Kosovo, Gjergj Dedaj, in every speech in the media, doesn't forget to say how his party is member of Union of Liberal Parties in the Europe. For him, and for many them, this fact is enough to win the election. All heads of political parties in Kosovo declares that their aim and aspire is to 'Europe', as a supreme good. Ex president of Kosovo is well known as 'biggest friend' of Western ally (America and Europe)

¹⁰ Ex-Prime Minister of Kosove, Agim Ceku, in original: 'Përfundon procesi i shtetit kombëtar, nis ai i shtetit anëtar të BE-së.' (Daily *Koha Ditore*, 13 Jun 2007, p.15.)

To show their European commitment and to prove that Kosovo's people are not anti Christian, but on the contrary: that in their roots lay Europeanism and Christianity; the Prishtina Municipality started building a Catholic Cathedral in the town centre.

Furthermore, in a lecture held for students of the Faculty of Islamic Studies at the University of Prishtina, ex Prime Minister Agim Ceku, said that in this period of time Kosovan diplomacy has not been focused on Islamic countries, because of fear that this could be a negative message for Western countries. (Daily *Koha Ditore*, 3 maj 2007, p.2)¹¹

Why is Kosovo still, after many years of aspirations and commitments excluded from this 'promised' Union? Kosovans mostly blame themselves, and their 'enemies': Serbia and Russia, but many of them think that for many years Kosovo will be knocking in the door of Europe, as Turkey, because of their Muslim religion.

Albanians in Kosovo are largely Muslims. However religion has never been the common kinship. In this way Albanian language and culture linked with it, become the crucial element of construction of common national identity between Albanians in Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia.

However this fact does not mean that religion hasn't any role in Albanian society. In Albania Communism destroyed much more Islamic culture than Christian and today, in so-called post-communist Albania Christians enjoy a higher status than Muslims (In Albania 70 percent are Muslim, 20 percent Orthodox and 10 percent Catholic). In Kosovo after the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Albanians hoped to establish an independent Kosovo under protection of western countries and organizations. In other hand Serbian nationalists try to prove that Albanian movement should be suppressed in order to stop Islamic penetration in Europe. Representing Kosovars as Islamists, Serbian hoped to win the support of the Europeans. Why both sides: Albanians and Serbians tried to show their commitment to Western and Christian Europe?

There are also Catholic Albanians living in Kosovo and relations with Muslims are described always as good. For many years the services of Catholic Church have been attended by thousand of Muslims and Catholic Albanians. But the low number of marriages between this two religious groups shows that religion still plays a certain role under Albanians in Kosovo. (Ger Duijzings, religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo, London: Hurst & Company, 2000, p.165)

Today there are two trends among Albanian intellectuals concerning the role of Islam in the construction of national identity: Occidentalism, which reject Islam as part of European culture; and Multiconfessionalism, which favors subordination of religious to national identity. This second 'trends' is largely accepted by intellectuals (as Albanian writer Ismail Kadare), who declares that Albanians are from birth European, because of their Christian origine.

We are always talking about about secular society of Europe. But this secular Europe today is unable to answer the question whether European unity should be defined by the common heritage of Christianity and Western civilization or by its modern secular values: liberalism, human rights,

¹¹ In original: 'Kryeministri Agim Ceku, u ka thënë studentëve të FSI se ka munguar fokusi diplomatic i Kosovës në botën islame nga frika se mos po jepet mesazh negativ tek vendet perëndimore.'(Daily *Koha Ditore*, 3 May 2007, p.2.)

democracy and tolerant and inclusive multiculturalism (Jose Casanova, an article in www.eurozine.com)

What will be with these secular values in the overcoming post-secular Europe?

There are three main projects of a future Europe: The first one wants Europe to be a super-power in the world; the second is social Europe, that respects human rights and democracy; and third attempts to defend existing European countries and strengthen them (Dirk Jacobs and Robert Maier, *European Identity: construct, fact and fiction*, p.6, in: www.arena.uio.no/publications/)

Many philosophers agree that current members of the European Union intend to strengthen existing states, and not the inclusion of other nations and states in this union. Europe and its identity have exclusionary characteristics and do not proclaim post-national citizenship on a territorial basis. This seems very doubtful for the future of a 'new Europe' and for the creation of a multicultural society of Europe. In the same time, one of the standards that Kosovo has to fulfil for entry in Europe is creation of multicultural society!

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