

# INTRODUCTION

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Currently in its twelfth year of independence, and despite significant steps forward in many policy areas, Kosovo continues to struggle with a number of policy challenges, both domestic and international. This book offers in depth analyses on a number of these policy challenges, attempting to make a contribution to both scholarly analysis and policy thinking on the domestic and external influences and determinants to Kosovo's statehood. The book is divided in three parts or pillars of analysis, each corresponding to one of the key policy areas and sources of challenges to Kosovo's statehood. Part I tackles issues of civil society and civic mobilization. As a response to social phenomena and political problems, and in juxtaposition with top down perspectives and elite level solutions, the three chapters in this part dissect grassroot agency and its role in some of the important political developments and policy areas in Kosovo in the last thirty years. Part II turns attention to issues of identity and otherness. The chapters in this part investigate instances and situations whereby Kosovar identity, whether in more formal and institutionalised forms or as a lived experience, encounters the ethnic and national other. The chapters in this part offer in depth and nuanced analyses that challenge conventional, and at times stereotypical, understandings of these encounters and their implications and consequences for Kosovo's statehood and national identity-building. Finally, Part III focuses more on the external challenges of Kosovo's statehood by analysing various aspects of Pristina's relations with the EU and European non-recognisers. Here again the policy challenges for Kosovo are significant and tend to become even more complicated due to the institutional and political realities of the EU as well as the non-recognisers' own domestic problems and dilemmas. In what follows, we present briefly the conceptual and analyt-

ical issues of the three parts of the book as well as offer a brief introduction to each of the chapters in this volume.

## Part I: Social Actors and Social Movements – Bottom-up Mobilizations

Participation and inclusion of the citizenry in the governing processes is often seen as the panacea to the many problems plaguing new states and democracies. From organizing against authoritarian tendencies, to offering policy solutions and to promoting new alternatives, the organized citizenry plays a crucial role in fermenting political and institutional change. The organized civil society, by scrutinizing the work of their institutions and elected representatives, also helps to disclose problems of governance and hold their power holders to task for their deeds. Hence, an active civil society helps to further democratic processes, safeguard institutions and improve trends of governance while linking formal institutions and social interests that make modern societies.

Whether shaking up institutional status quo, enabling vertical accountability or bridging governance and society, civil society is a necessary element of democratic politics. Its role is all the more important in hybrid regimes which suffer from weak institutions, hierarchical political organizations, patronage style of governance and widespread corruption. Yet, the input of civil society in the socio-political processes is neither automatic nor certain. In order to perform its functions, organized citizenry requires necessary conditions to mobilize, capacities to provide alternatives and lobby for change and a certain independence from specific politics and interests. Therefore, when, how and to what extent civil society may become a force to reckon with remains an open question in need of empirical investigation.

Kosovo has been the scene of various forms of social mobilization during its eventful transformation from an Autonomous Province in the context of the

Socialist Yugoslavia, and through Milošević's authoritarianism and war, to an international-run entity and later an independent state. As such, it offers a rich laboratory for investigating the role of civil mobilization under different political regimes and through various moments of transition. The cluster of chapters in Part I explores the conditions under which, but also the extent to which, civil society has become a transformative power in the specific Kosovar context.

Nedim Hogić's chapter explores the input of social mobilization in the battle against corruption by focusing on the adoption of the whistleblower legislation during the period 2011-18. The analysis juxtaposes the role of top-down institutional incentives and bottom-up policy impulses in order to highlight whether and how civil mobilization makes a change in the quality of relevant legislation and the prospects of its implementation. Accordingly, the first whistleblower legislation adopted hastily by the Kosovo legislature back in 2011 had many inconsistencies and vague provisions to be applicable. It was the activity of few NGOs focused on the issue of whistleblowers protection that highlighted the weakness of the 2011 legislative framework and demonstrated that nothing was being done to protect emerging cases of whistleblowers. Additionally, organized NGOs progressively lobbied for legislative changes and prepared their own proposal. Finally, it was the alliance between local NGOs and international structures, particularly EU and the Council of Europe, that helped to place the legal amendments in the political agenda. The amendments that provide for civil society participation in the legislative process have helped to improve the law but also embody the new legislation in a net of social safeguards necessary to trace the future implementation of the law.

Ervjola Selenica's chapter investigates evolving policies to stem threats of radicalisation and violent extremism, with a focus on mechanisms that target youth, education and the local communities. The author suggests that in the Kosovo context, one can notice Islamization of those lacking identity, a process which between marginalization and nihilism leads to radicalization. Hence, law enforcement measures are increasingly complemented with so-

cietal measures aimed at addressing broader issues of social integration, polarisation and cohesion. Most policy measures are outlined, led, sponsored and managed by the international community but target the empowerment of civil society able to offer expertise, suggest policy solutions and deliver services. The author finds that the broader side-effects of those international-led efforts is the promotion of donor-dependent project-focused and benefit-seeking civil society that has little to do with the society or the functions of truly independent social actors. To paraphrase one of the local researchers working on the topic, the field has been transformed into ‘business’ driven by ‘profit’. Those findings call for further research on the role and limits of a donor-dependent and profit-oriented civil society, a new and still unexplored trend across the Balkans and other similar cases of international intervention.

Finally, Shkëlzen Gashi’s chapter provides a nuanced empirical account of the rise of a wide social and political movement that later morphed into a parallel governing system defying the oppressive state apparatus of the Milošević era. The chapter shows that increasing political repression provided the glue that merged separate cases of social protest and dissidence into a powerful movement including citizens from different walks of life. Finally, it was the leadership of Ibrahim Rugova and his ideas of peaceful resistance that provided a set of common goals, a framework of mobilization and the infrastructure of an organized formal political structure. Rugova’s ideals and political organization, however, proved insufficient to reach the goal of independence. It was the competing movement, the Kosovo Liberation Army, and its use of the armed struggle, that drew the attention of the international community and achieved the final goal of independence. Still, one can also argue that the international popularity of Kosovo’s cause and the ample international support it received in the path of independence derives to a large extent from the model of civil disobedience that Rugova propagated.

## Part II: Experiences, Performances and Representations of Self and Other

Who, or what, are the drivers and spoilers of societal reform and change? In liberal peace- and state-building projects, the aspired change is towards democratic and inclusive societies. In the case of post-conflict Kosovo and its people, as in the wider Western Balkans, bridging interethnic divisions at social and political levels has remained at the top of the international agenda, arguably sometimes overlooking factors that can underpin societal divisions and structures of exclusion, other than the ethnic. While this section remains in the field of studying social agency, as introduced in the preceding section, it shifts the focus away from organised civil society actors and their mobilisation and towards the interplay between wider systems, on the one hand, and individual actors on the other. The former would include formal institutions, social and cultural forms of organisation, legal and policy frameworks at local, national or geo-political level and the latter politicians and ordinary citizens.

The question of whether individual people, by their actions and behaviour, can drive structural change or, alternatively, whether external, pre-existing structures such as wider institutional, social or cultural (including political-cultural) frameworks shape people's behaviour, has a long history in the social sciences. Prominently subsumed under the 'structure and agency debate', this theoretical paradigm has been criticised, repeatedly, for its dichotomous presumptions. In political science, for example, 'structure' has sometimes been equated with 'top-down' and, conversely, 'agency' with 'bottom-up', perspectives. However, the individual agency of leading political representatives of a system might have just as important an impact on chances for reform and socio-political changes as entrenched structures at grass-roots' level, e.g. cultural belief systems, might have on stagnation.

Equally, a dichotomous approach can lend itself to political positioning and reductionist views of wider social and political realities. For example, analysts who emphasise individual 'agency' as a catalyst for change might overlook

structural constraints deriving, typically, from social inequality in terms of power, resources, class or prejudice in ways that can profoundly impede any individual's scope for autonomy and choice (whether a hierarchical social order applies or not). If, then, such individuals are held responsible for a fate over which they have little control, such tendencies easily align with neo-liberal political agendas. Conversely, if pre-existing 'structures' of such a kind are seen as paramount in their impact on people's scope for improving their lives, a theoretical perspective usually associated with Marxist sociology, individuals' capacities for unsettling an unsatisfactory status quo via their actions, might be overlooked. Last, but not least, exclusively structuralist approaches risk essentialising cultures and societies, for their emphasis on supposed static frameworks as shaping people's attitudes and behaviour. In the case of the Western Balkans, for example, this has been notoriously evident in writings that evoke 'ancient hatred theories' as an ahistorical framework which would seem to forfeit any chances of peaceful coexistence between groups of different ethnic heritage.

Sociologist Anthony Giddens, when introducing 'structuration theory' in the mid-1980s, highlighted the need for a dialectic focus on the interplay between 'structure' and 'agency' in seeking to identify the factors that enable or hinder social and cultural change. For the contributors to this section, implicit questions remain as to the location and relation of 'structure' and 'agency' in the case studies under scrutiny. Their studies respond to the following questions, more or less explicitly: what is the scope for Serb citizens at grassroots level in Kosovo to resist and subvert pervasive structural constraints experienced through both horizontal (social) encounters and hierarchical (political) structures of dividing the citizenry, as experienced in everyday life? (Trupia) What factors allow a liberal-benevolent process of reform - driven by powerful international actors - to mutate into one that effectively consolidates the (cultural, social and political) structures it set out to transform? (Picciano) How do individual actors negotiate transnationally competing structures of loyalty, identification and prejudice? (Drosopoulos) And, what happens if subversive agency arises from within the 'structures' of power themselves, such as when

the highest powerholders suspend, manipulate or abuse pre-existing national and international, institutional structures according to their partisan interests ?(Tadić)

Trupia's chapter leads us directly into the micro-perspectives of ordinary Serb villagers, their everyday experiences and their agency in dealing with two mutually competing and incompatible, ethnicised citizenship regimes, respectively imposed by both Belgrade and Prishtina. Epistemologically aware of the power of the prevailing discourse, he deliberately undercuts any ethnicised categorisations by asking the villagers for their concept of 'good personhood' in social interactions. The stories thus elicited allow Trupia to explore their strategies of navigating their local identity in response to the conflicting, hegemonic structuring of citizenship in Kosovo ('structure', here, as embodied in discourse, ideology, state administration and institutions). The villagers' responses are refreshingly pragmatic and, on occasions, outright brave. However, they reveal not only much human potential in resisting dividing forces and building unexpected social bridges, but also the power of (sometimes very localised) socio-economic dependencies in perpetuating segregation and divisions. Interestingly, the dividing lines that emerge are internal to Kosovo Serbs as either fostering or rejecting, in either benefiting or losing out from, ethno-nationalist agitations. There might be limits to the representativeness of these villagers' specific experiences, practices and attitudes for the Serb population in Kosovo at large, given the (anonymised) Village's distinct topographical situatedness and its partial embeddedness with an Albanian-dominated economy surrounding it. Yet, the original method employed and the resulting findings - such as regarding contingencies of attitudes and the heterogeneity of people who are usually viewed through an ethnicised, homogenising lens only - offers the potential for wider methodological, empirical and theoretical applications.

Picciano's chapter contributes to challenging the structure/agency dichotomy if imagined only as a 'top-down' versus 'bottom-up' process. She focusses on the agency of powerful foreign and local actors in Kosovo's educational reform

process and its unexpected outcomes of consolidating pre-existing structures of segregation, which she locates at grassroots level. Her study traces how the internationally-driven endeavours of liberal education-building in post-conflict Kosovo, explicitly aimed at inclusivity and integration, de facto ended up in a parallel, ethnic system of education at all levels. Furthermore, the partial privatisation of the sector, in particular, allowed corruption to flourish, a side effect further distorting any Kosovo student's chances for a quality education. Picciano's analysis of the unsuccessful reform process reveals some unexpected complicities between actors, from the most local to international levels, in reproducing pre-existing, religious and, hence, cultural structures of ethnic affiliation. Her documentation of the post-conflict process of reform negotiations emerges as ridden by conflict as much as by rational and pragmatic compromise at the interface between foreign and local aims and concerns, forfeiting any chances for a true structural change of the educational system. While the involved domestic actors, at all levels, are shown to have successfully instrumentalised their reference groups' historical and cultural identifications and loyalties in this process, international actors are shown to have helped to effectively institutionalise segregation in an attempt to rescue multi-ethnicity, albeit less than meaningful in social reality. The resulting consolidation of educational segregation and the creation of, de facto, exclusionary, hybrid institutions, emerges as much as an outcome of agency (or the lack of agency) as of structure in terms of power, policy frameworks, and prevailing culture at all levels.

Drosopulos's chapter shifts our attention again to the level of individual agency at a micro-level, here of young people vis-à-vis conflicting cultural structures of perceptions, values, norms and expectations in transnational situations. Torn between expectations from home and opportunities abroad, Kosovo students of various ethnic backgrounds, who study at university in Thessaloniki, often find themselves identified with outdated stereotypes in either nationalist or ethnicist terms. This study not only reveals the everyday nationalism and, frequently, ignorance hidden in such expectations and assumptions which these students are exposed to, both from home and abroad



(including upon their return to Kosovo). This contribution's micro-sociological view on the numerous interviewed actors' presentation of Self, their everyday negotiation of stereotypes and constructions of identity, reveal a range of adaptive performances and strategies as well as, in fact, these students' potential for building better relations between the two countries as 'cultural ambassadors'. Strategies and presentations of Self documented in this Greek location include, on the one hand, students either distancing themselves from a history of war and violence alone (if associated with Kosovo) or from a stereotypical association with crime (if identified via their Albanian ethnicity) as well as a diplomatic shifting of emphases on identity features suggesting commonality, where opportune and to avoid misplaced distrust (e.g. because of different religious background). On the other, there can be withdrawal into one's own group or avoidance or disruption of cross-national contacts, including of love relationships, where these various pressures defeat alternative choices. As Drosopulos suggests, the hold of these structures of perceptions over a respondent's freedom of choice, respectively, correlates with the individual respondent's specific socio-economic (including family) and geographic background in Kosovo and his or her dependency on these. Overall, her study concludes in a call for more intercultural exchange, as only sufficient opportunities to get to know each other can break the perpetuation of stereotypes and associated nationalist attitudes and fears.

Finally, Tadić's chapter follows a presidentially-initiated process of public consultations in Serbia since summer 2017, known as 'internal dialogue', which set out to achieve national consensus at societal level over the contested question of normalising relations with Kosovo. Arguably these consultations could have served as an example of how political and societal agency, by circumventing existing structures, might reveal creative potentials that could lead to innovative solutions. Even though initiated from the top down, they were deliberately set outside the EU-facilitated 'normalisation' talks at the bilateral level as well as outside any national, institutional frameworks such as, for example, the parliament. However, Tadić's study reveals that exactly the opposite was the case. It offers a paradigmatic case study of the need to differentiate the na-

ture of structural constraints when analysing potentials for change, and how it is often those constraints that are not immediately visible, which can have the most detrimental impact on progress. For example, she documents how participants perceived the discussion culture created as an autocratic performance of power which forfeited open and critical debate, rather than facilitating inclusivity and participation. She also describes the general lack of clarity regarding the dialogue's purpose and accountability and the ambiguous forms of documentations which lend themselves to contradictory interpretations of supposed agreements, making them impossible to implement; as well as the deliberate ignoring of the EU's policy framework for integration. 'Structure', here as a form of autocratic culture resulting from political agency at top national level, is selectively constructed, ignored or used and put to the service of governmental power which invokes, tightens or loosens its constraints according to political partisan interests. Not surprisingly, the resulting lack of any structural predictability - such as through agreed participatory procedures and rules of both debate and aspired outcomes - in the end simply reproduced and reaffirmed the political deadlock over the normalisation of bilateral relations between Serbia and Kosovo, rather than generating any new avenues towards a solution.

The contributions to this section thus take very different perspectives when analysed through the theoretical lens of the structure/agency debate; yet they all delve into the interplay between both perspectives at stake. They inspire fresh thinking as to the definition of this theoretical couple, and where 'structure' and 'agency' might be located, substantiated or emerge, sometimes unexpectedly, in opening up or hindering opportunities for change on a general, theoretical level. They also arrive at some unexpected, specific insights into the, often-overlooked, drivers and spoilers of societal, political, and attitudinal changes in both Kosovo and the wider region.

## Part III: Complex Relations with the EU and the Role of Non-Recognisers

This part of the book brings together four papers that analyse the complex relations between Kosovo and the EU, with special focus on the role of non-recognisers in these relations. The role of EU institutions has been very important during the first phases of the international civil administration since the Union was in charge of the pillar IV for reconstruction and Economic Development under the auspices of the international administration. Actually, since the end of the Kosovo war in 1999, the EU has been one of the leading international actors in Kosovo, involved in “almost all aspects of governance in the country” (Papadimitriou, Petrov and Greiçevci 2007, 220). However, Kosovo’s relations with the EU have been quite complex and complicated since unilateral declaration of independence in 2008. The European Council has one day after Kosovo declared independence stated that member states would decide in accordance with national practice and international law on the issue of Kosovo and their relations with the new country. As a result, five out of 28 EU member states have still not recognized Kosovo’s statehood, which in addition to putting a strain on the common foreign policy of the EU, has from the outset convoluted Kosovo’s relations with the Union. Currently, Kosovo is considerably lagging behind the rest of the region, as the last country to sign the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, and the only one in the Western Balkans without visa liberalisation. Despite the various EU and member states’ actors present in Kosovo, the issue of recognition/non-recognition among the EU member remains as one of the major obstacles to ensure the coherence of the EU’s foreign policy regarding Kosovo (Mutluer 2018, 161). Due to the lack of consensus among member states regarding Kosovo’s independence, the EU decided to take a status-neutral position that has seriously hampered the EU integration process of the country (Rrahmani 2018). The EU’s inability to deal with Kosovo as an independent state has seriously undermined the standing of its state-building policies. Kosovo’s Stabilisation and Association Process has been arduous and complicated, reinforcing the sense that Kosovo is being treated differently to other EU aspirants (Mutluer 2018, 200).

The EU has also been criticized for ignoring the Western Balkans' slide towards authoritarianism by prioritizing stability over democracy (Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group 2017). The EU's internal problems, the mixed migration crisis of 2015 and the growing influence of Russia have led to the EU significantly limiting its criticism of the Balkan ruling elites' undemocratic practices, and continuing its cooperation with them in order to limit migration and maintain those countries within the Euro-Atlantic sphere of influence (Szpala 2018). By offering external support for the sake of the false promise of stability, the EU has contributed to creation of so-called 'stabilitocracies' across the region: regimes that have considerable shortcomings in terms of democratic governance, yet enjoy external legitimacy for offering some supposed stability.

In Kosovo, the EU and other external actors greatly ignored domestic shortcomings in the domain of the rule of law and the fight against corruption in exchange for cooperation in the dialogue with Belgrade (Bieber 2018). Such EU-facilitated dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia has also highlighted various problems stemming from the EU internal disunity regarding Kosovo's status. The persistence of the non-recognizers has undoubtedly undermined the EU's ability to act more decisively vis-à-vis both Belgrade and Pristina by forcing it to speak with a more muffled voice (Mutluer 2018, 159). The dialogue has continuously suffered from ambiguities and inconsistencies, both in terms of its overall aim as well as in terms of implementation of already signed agreements. Moreover, one could argue that the dialogue has damaged the process of the recognition of Kosovo's independence since it has given an excuse to five EU and other non-recognising countries to postpone such decision until the dialogue is concluded (Demjaha 2018).

Due to the disagreement over Kosovo's status, Pristina's European integration is basically blocked since the Council cannot authorise further progress of the county towards EU regardless of the fulfilment of the accession criteria. Thus, currently visa liberalisation is the only 'carrot' the EU can offer to Kosovo authorities as an incentive to stay on a constructive path (Juzová 2019). In July 2018, the European Commission announced that Pristina has fulfilled the re-

maintaining two conditions - its Parliament ratified the border demarcation with Montenegro and the country worked on improving its track record of organized crime and corruption cases - and recommended once again to the European Parliament and the Council to introduce the visa-free regime for Kosovo (European Commission 2018). The EU's failure to deliver on its promise even after Kosovo had fulfilled the extensive list of conditions has further eroded its credibility among Kosovo citizens and political elites. This was clearly demonstrated in November 2018 when Kosovo introduced 100% trade tariffs on goods from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina despite strong criticism from the EU and US officials. The EU and its leaders were suddenly rendered powerless due to their primary leverage - visa liberalisation - losing credibility as a realistic prospect for Kosovo (Juzová 2019). The fact that months after their introduction, the tariffs are still in place, despite recommendations and even pressure from Brussels to revoke them, is a warning signal in this direction.

The first two chapters of this part of the book deal specifically with Kosovo's cumbersome visa liberalisation process. They bring together comprehensive and objective analysis of Kosovo's path towards visa-free regime by providing additional and important insights on the topic. Manu's chapter seeks to examine how the inter-institutional architecture and division of competences between EU institutions influence the EU's decision-making process in relation to Kosovo's visa liberalisation. The chapter points out that since five EU member states have not yet recognized Kosovo as an independent state, the EU Council discussion on Kosovo is characterized by the so-called 'constructive ambiguity', meaning that the EU deliberately uses an ambiguous language on a sensitive issue in order to advance political purposes. However, Manu concludes that in terms of the visa liberalisation, the five non-recognizers were not the only obstacle. She asserts that the visa-free regime for Kosovo was delayed mainly due to the intricacies of EU decision- and policy-making, and its direct connection to migration and asylum-related concerns of the EU member states. The current political climate in the EU, with numerous concerns related to migration, has prompted scepticism among other EU member states towards further EU enlargement, thus hindering the advancement

of the Western Balkans countries towards full integration. By the same logic, such concerns of member states regarding the state of anti-corruption reforms and the large number of asylum applications have blocked Kosovo's visa liberalisation, despite the European Commission's confirmation that Kosovo has fulfilled the technical criteria enshrined in the visa liberalisation Roadmap.

The chapter by Nechev and Nikolovski examines the application of the EU conditionality policy regarding the visa liberalisation process with Kosovo. The chapter also explores the similarities and differences in the EU approach as well as the policy instruments and tools applied in the process in comparison to the other Western Balkan countries. The analysis shown that while the policy conditionality applied and the mechanisms used in the case of Kosovo have followed a pattern of visa liberalisation similar to other countries of the region, in order to take into account the specificities of the country the EU needed to introduce a tailor-made Roadmap for Kosovo. Due to this complex reality related to the status of Kosovo vis-à-vis the European Union, Kosovo was able to fulfil the visa liberalisation criteria only after six years, while other countries in the region needed approximately 2-3 years. Moreover, the chapter shows that due to the increased level of precision and detailness of the documents, the number of criteria given to Kosovo exceeds by double the number of requirements provided to the other Western Balkan countries. While in terms of content, Kosovo is required to implement the same reforms as other countries, the chapter concludes that the possibility to amend the criteria in the Roadmap provided to Kosovo directly influences the determinacy and credibility of the EU approach related to the visa liberalisation process for Kosovo.

To complete the picture on complex relations between Kosovo and the EU, the two other chapters in this section bring interesting insights about perspectives on Kosovo from the two non-recognizing countries - Spain and Romania. Vila Sarriá's chapter explores the reasons behind the non-recognition of Kosovo by Spain, and at the same time examines the role that the case of Kosovo has played in Catalonia's quest for self-determination. Instead of addressing differences between Catalonia and Kosovo's path for self-determination, and ar-

guing whether Catalonia does or does not have a right to secede, the chapter tries to explain the role that Kosovo played in legitimising the Catalan quest for independence. The empirical analysis identifies the internal power struggle of Spain as the most important reason for the non-recognition of Kosovo, although other reasons, such as the adherence to international law and the fear that recognition of Kosovo might potentially create a precedent for the Basque Country and Catalonia, also played a decisive role. The author suggests that Kosovo played a significant role in the Catalan process of self-determination due to Catalan elites' increased interest in the process that led to Pristina's independence. The chapter concludes that two major events have shaped the Catalan interest in Kosovo. Firstly, the declaration of independence since it left the door open for the potential creation of new states in Europe. Secondly, the ICJ Decision, as it signalled to Catalan separatists that declarations of independence were no longer considered a breach of international law, and therefore, could potentially be replicated elsewhere.

Damian's chapter attempts to answer the question: what is the current position of Romanian political parties and which narratives are dominant when it comes to the Romania-Kosovo relations? In doing so, the author contributes to filling a gap in understanding the attitudes of the Romanian political parties concerning Kosovo and also to assessing how recently-established parties position themselves with regard to this topic. The analysis shows that the entire political spectrum in Romania, be those the mainstream parties or the new political parties, shares a common view regarding the policy of non-recognition towards Kosovo. While such position embraces a legalist approach according to which independence of Kosovo represents a breach of international law, meanwhile alternative narratives have been promoted, portraying Kosovo as a presumably dangerous precedent. Namely, a parallel was drawn between Kosovo's independence and the fear of secession of Székely Land in Romania, the status of the breakaway region of Transnistria in Moldova, and, after 2014, the illegal annexation of Crimea. In addition, the almost mythologized relationship between Romania and Serbia has created an environment with very few opportunities for any in-depth debates on Kosovo. The chapter concludes

that for Romanian political parties an agreement between Belgrade and Pristina must precede any change of the policy of non-recognition towards Kosovo. In this way, the political parties are able to maintain a predictable behaviour, which is deemed important in the international arena, and are not required to create new narratives that would explain to the public their change of position towards recognition.



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