



This journal provides immediate open access to its content under the [Creative Commons BY 4.0 license](#).
Authors who publish with this journal retain all copyrights and agree to the terms of the above-mentioned CC BY 4.0 license

DOI: 10.2478/seeur-2025-0056

INTERCULTURALISM AND COSMOPOLITAN NATIONALISM OF THE ALBANIAN NATIONAL UPHEAVAL

Teuta Arifi
Department of Albanian Language and Literature
Faculty of Philology, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University
Skopje, North Macedonia
teutarifi@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the intellectual and political ideas of the Albanian National Movement within the broader framework of intercultural communication, with particular attention to education, language practices, and human rights. The analysis situates this dialogue in relation to contemporary theories of interculturalism and the challenges posed by today's super-diverse and rapidly shifting global context of demographic and social transformation. In this light, the nineteenth-century Albanian National Movement—while functioning as the intellectual nucleus of Albanian ethno-national identity formation, in parallel with analogous processes across Europe—displays a distinctive feature: its conception of nationhood resisted the logic of cultural exclusivity. Instead, in envisioning a future Albanian polity, the Movement anticipated institutional mechanisms for the recognition and integration of other cultures and languages within its educational and cultural systems. This inclusive orientation positioned the Movement as a counterpoint to the exclusionary ethnic nationalisms that dominated the Balkan political landscape of the era.

Yet the emergent ethnic identities of the nineteenth century did not remain confined to the realm of ideas. They unfolded through the arduous and often violent processes of state formation, which in the Balkans proved exceptionally complex and were frequently accompanied by ethnic conflict and war. The geopolitical reconfiguration of the region at the turn of the twentieth century—marked by the creation of new states and their territorial expansions through aggression and coercion—produced profound ethno-political and cultural fissures.

Within this context, the paradigm of interculturalism as developed in current theoretical debates aspires not merely to acknowledge or juxtapose cultures, but to foster mutuality, co-presence, and the creation of shared cultural spaces. From this perspective, the cosmopolitan and forward-looking ideas articulated by the Albanian National Movement—despite their nineteenth-century origins—retain a striking contemporary resonance. Revisiting these concepts from the turbulent yet visionary Balkans of the long nineteenth century offers valuable insight into the global search for intercultural understanding today.

Keywords: interculture, Albanian National Movement, identity, language, nation-state.

OPENING REMARKS: INTERCULTURALITY AND CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL CHALLENGES

In an era characterized by profound and interrelated global challenges—where violent conflicts between diverse identities are amplified through the immediacy of viral communication, where the principles guiding the enlargement of the European Union are undergoing critical reassessment, and where migration constitutes not merely an economic pressure on the West but, more significantly, a complex cultural dilemma—the very act of speaking, writing, or contextualizing interculturality as an approach, a mode of thought, or a sphere of practice becomes, to say the least, an intellectually demanding undertaking.

Starting from the premise that the paradigm of interculturality has emerged as a successor to the now largely superseded concept of multiculturalism, and defining it as a normative framework for managing cultural diversity within the context of liberal-democratic societies (Joppke, 2018), the contemporary debate on diversity—arguably one of the most salient concerns of modern social formations—necessarily draws upon these recent theoretical formulations. Interculturality, in this sense, aspires to provide not merely a descriptive but also an analytical and explanatory framework through which the complex relationships and reciprocal interactions among cultures can be interpreted, negotiated, and critically assessed. Building on theoretical perspectives that prioritize the connections among diverse cultures within the complex interplay of global and local conditions—and that situate their analyses within a post-multicultural framework, characterizing the earlier multicultural approach as restrictive, particularly in its tendency to privilege obligations over rights—the debate has become increasingly pronounced between a multicultural paradigm, often viewed as conservative and limiting, and a less group-centered concept identified as the intercultural paradigm (Meer & Modood, 2011).

In this perspective, the intercultural concept is understood as being more strongly oriented toward wholeness rather than fragmentation and more committed to social cohesion rather than social division. Following this line of thought, which is formed by the recognition that contemporary developments unfold within a world and environment of super-diversity, the decline of the multicultural paradigm, among other factors, appears to open space for the narrative of interculturality. This narrative functions as a mediator between the diverse and the unitary, creating the possibility of coexistence between these two discourses (Zapata-Barrero, 2017). Amid this ongoing and intense debate between competing paradigms on the dynamics of intercultural relations, the intercultural conception of relationship-building underscores that engagement with diversity remains a profound theoretical and historical challenge. Simply recognizing or acknowledging the existence of cultural, ethnic, or linguistic diversity is not enough. What is essential, rather, is the articulation of a robust theoretical framework that can

be effectively translated into institutional practice, thereby enabling the accommodation of diversity within the lived experience of a cohesive and tolerant society.

A central challenge of this study lies in determining how to incorporate the temporal parameter and, more specifically, whether a nineteenth-century historical period can be examined and interpreted through the lens of contemporary theories of interculturality and diversity. To what extent can present-day theoretical frameworks addressing ethno-cultural and identity issues be extended backward in time in order to generate insights into the present and to project possibilities for the future? This analytical concept of tri-temporality—the interplay of past, present, and future—posed a significant challenge to philosophical and political thought more than a century ago and continues to shape the scope of analytical reasoning today.

INTERCULTURALITY AND THE LONG NINETEENTH CENTURY IN THE BALKANS

Viewed from the vantage point of today's globalized, post-postmodern era—an age defined by unprecedented speed of virtual communication and the fluid circulation of ideas—the nineteenth century may appear distant, even resistant to interpretation through the dynamic contemporary theories of interculturality. Yet such a perspective risks obscuring the formative role this period played in shaping the very conditions that these theories now seek to address.

Indeed, the nineteenth century stands as a decisive epoch in the historical construction of ethnic identities across the European continent. These identities did not remain confined to the cultural or ethnic sphere; rather, they expanded into complex ethno-political and geo-strategic formations that structured, and often destabilized, the intricate web of interrelations among emerging nations. It is precisely this transformation—from cultural markers to politically charged entities—that provides fertile ground for re-examining the nineteenth century through the analytical lens of interculturality, allowing contemporary theory to engage critically with the deep historical roots of present-day diversity.

The formation of Balkan identities unfolded against the backdrop of the gradual weakening and eventual dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, a geopolitical shift that set in motion the political and cultural reconfiguration of the region into the contours it largely maintains today. This transformative process, however, has remained only partially consummated, as the ethno-political and state-building relationships within the Balkan peninsula continue to exhibit unresolved tensions and enduring patterns of renegotiation. What warrants particular attention, moreover, is the understanding of the Balkans as a concept that is simultaneously geopolitical and identitarian—a space historically constructed and repeatedly represented as Europe's *exotic periphery*, and, in many instances, as the cultural and civilizational *other* within European discourse.

The construction of Balkan identities during the nineteenth century unfolded through the national-liberation movements of populations formerly subjected to Ottoman rule and was swiftly followed by inter-state wars and the hegemonistic aspirations of several newly established polities. The recurrent wars and ethnically driven conflicts that ensued have effectively inscribed a defining historical and political imprint on the Balkans, shaping their identity for nearly two consecutive centuries. This identity-formation process—characterized by conflict, the cultural negation of the *Other*, and persistent attempts to construct hierarchies of *primary* and *secondary* cultures and nations—gradually stratified into a centuries-long evolution of what can be understood as a distinctive Balkan identity (Todorova, 1997:7).

This evolution, encompassing both national and class revolutions within its temporal boundaries, extends from the French democratic-bourgeois Revolution and culminates with the end of the Second World War in 1945. These chronological markers define the concept of the Long Nineteenth Century, a period framed by two pivotal historical events that decisively shaped Europe's political destiny: the French Revolution, which inaugurated the construction of republican ideals within a predominantly monarchical Europe, and the defeat of Nazi-fascism, which marked the collapse of an extreme and totalitarian ideology born on European soil (Meadwell, 2001:27).

One may contend, however, that the conceptual arc of the Long Nineteenth Century extends beyond 1945. While the defeat of Nazi-fascism undoubtedly marked the termination of institutionalized totalitarianism in Europe, the subsequent bifurcation of the continent into Western and Eastern spheres inaugurated nearly half a century of confrontation with a new totalitarian configuration—this time communist. Simultaneously, this geopolitical division imposed a prolonged suspension of numerous unresolved or insufficiently addressed ethnic questions in Eastern and Southeastern Europe, effectively placing them in a state of latent contestation that would only re-emerge with the collapse of the Cold War order.

The collapse of communism and the concomitant disintegration of the multiethnic socialist federations at the end of the twentieth century may thus be understood as the deferred terminus of the Long Nineteenth Century in its ethno-political dimension. This geopolitical rupture not only dismantled the ideological and institutional frameworks that had suppressed nationalist aspirations but also reactivated dormant ethnic tensions across the Balkans. The ensuing conflicts, marked by episodes of extreme violence evocative of the Balkan Wars and the First World War, unfolded within a newly globalized media environment that amplified their visibility and transformed them into spectacles of real-time international concern.

During the final decade of the twentieth century, as the war-ravaged Balkans confronted the overriding imperative of restoring peace, intellectual and political discourse devoted far less attention to the cultural frameworks necessary for rebuilding interethnic and intercultural relations in the aftermath of armed conflict. The primacy of peacebuilding and the negotiation of international agreements—whether through territorial settlements, as exemplified by the Dayton Peace Agreement of 1995, or through non-territorial arrangements, as embodied in the Ohrid Framework Agreement of 2001—nonetheless made the renewal of ethno-cultural communication an unavoidable precondition for the viability of these newly independent yet internally fragmented states, whose stability and democratic institutions remained structurally fragile.

If the Long Nineteenth Century is understood as an unfinished historical formation—given the continued salience of ethno-political questions in the configuration of states and regions—then the intercultural paradigm acquires particular analytical significance. By resisting the reduction of diversity to a binary majority–minority relationship and insisting on the cultural interrogation of an increasingly super-diverse social reality, interculturalism confronts the formidable task of conceptualizing and explaining a phenomenology of complexity that remains deeply embedded in Europe's historical and political structures (Zapata-Barrero, 2017:15).

ALBANIAN IDENTITY AND THE LONG NINETEENTH CENTURY

The construction of Albanian ethnic identity unfolded within a complex nexus of cultural and geo-strategic forces. Emerging during the long decline of the Ottoman Empire, it progressively disentangled itself from imperial structures and from a century-long, imposed

coexistence—further complicated by episodes of religious conversion—while consciously orienting toward the Western European cultural and political sphere. This westward orientation represented not merely a geopolitical repositioning but also a deliberately articulated act of cultural, social, and strategic self-definition (Clayer, 2014; Gawrych, 2006; Skendi, 1967). Albanian intellectuals of the *Rilindja Kombëtare* (National Awakening) framed this orientation as a civilizational choice, placing the Albanian nation within the broader European republican and secular traditions (Clayer & Bougarel, 2017).

Although articulated as a distinct ethnic formation, this identity avoided any philosophy of exclusivity or intolerance toward other cultures. The *Rilindja*'s assertion of national autonomy was not conceived as isolation; rather, it remained open to cultural exchange and linguistic interaction with neighboring peoples (Clayer, 2014; Skendi, 1967). From its earliest stages, the movement thus balanced the quest for national self-determination with an ethos of intercultural engagement.

Initially, this intercultural orientation was expressed politically through the *Rilindja*'s search for Western allies and culturally through the multilingual character of its literary production. Many works were published not only in Albanian but also in Italian, French, Greek, Persian, and Ottoman Turkish, a practice designed to communicate the movement's national ideals to European audiences and to neighboring publics (Qosja, 1984). This multilingualism endowed the Albanian National Awakening with the attributes of a national revolution possessing both a broad cultural horizon and a cosmopolitan dimension, bridging the historically divided worlds of East and West (Clayer, 2014; Elsie, 2010; Gawrych, 2006; Skendi, 1967).

The *Rilindja* anchored its national project in a romantic rediscovery of the distant past. Antiquity—understood as Illyrian, Thesprotian, and Molossian rather than Greek—was mobilized to establish a pre-Ottoman, pre-medieval, and fundamentally European lineage (Frashëri, 2000). Through this framework, Albanian intellectuals affirmed a European belonging that transcended the medieval and Ottoman interruptions of their history. The medieval Arbëresh heritage and the heroic figure of Skanderbeg were re-inscribed as direct continuations of this ancient identity, with Skanderbeg cast as the legitimate successor to Alexander the Great (*nomen est omen*), while his wars of liberation were valorized above the imperial conquests of classical antiquity (Frashëri, 2000; Skendi, 1967). This revival of a venerable past exemplified the Romantic paradigm of nineteenth-century European nationalism, in which the reanimation of antiquity served both to legitimize political claims and to inspire modern nationhood.

The intellectual world of the Arbëresh communities of southern Italy played a decisive role in this process. More than mere custodians of a medieval memory, the Arbëresh functioned as active participants in both the Albanian national movement and the Italian Risorgimento. Living for centuries on indisputably European soil, they preserved the Albanian language and ideals of liberation while engaging in the republican and social-revolutionary ideals of Garibaldi's Italy (Fracchia, 2010; Clayer, 2014; Skendi, 1967; Zoto, 2010). Their dual participation endowed the *Rilindja* with a trans-Adriatic perspective and reinforced the European orientation of Albanian nationalism.

While the *Rilindja* acknowledged the philosophical and spiritual traditions of the East, it drew a sharp social and political distinction between East and West. Politically, the Ottoman Empire was depicted as an archaic and declining order, incapable of scientific progress or institutional reform, in contrast to European monarchies that were gradually

constitutionalizing. The failure of Ottoman reform precipitated the Balkan Wars and underscored the need for self-determination (Vlora, 1999). Conversely, the West symbolized scientific and technological advancement, Enlightenment rationality, and republican statehood grounded in institutions elected by free citizens.

Albanian intellectuals thus found an ideo-philosophical affinity with the deist and rationalist currents of the European Enlightenment. Influenced by Voltaire, Rousseau, and the radical Enlightenment (Israel, 2001), they valued religious belief as an element of personal moral development while sharply distinguishing individual faith from clerical institutions, which they viewed as serving contingent political interests rather than genuine spirituality (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1989; Taylor, 2007). From this orientation emerged the principle of laicism (*laïcité*), which became a cornerstone of the Albanian nation-building project, ensuring that ethnic and linguistic solidarity, rather than religious affiliation, served as the primary axis of national cohesion (Clayer, 2014; Skendi, 1967).

The multi-religious composition of the Albanian population—Catholic, Orthodox, and Muslim—was both a historical legacy and a structural challenge. Albanians successively embraced Christianity, participated in the schism between Orthodoxy and Catholicism, and later adopted Islam during Ottoman rule. By the nineteenth century this tri-confessional reality had produced a striking literary pluralism, reflected in the simultaneous use of the Latin, Greek, and Arabic scripts in Albanian letters. Yet because the modern concept of the nation had not yet emerged, these intellectual circles remained like isolated “islands,” united by language but separated by geography and confession. Religion, though pervasive, could not become the central axis of national identity, as it often did among neighboring Balkan peoples. Instead, the Albanian language gradually assumed the role of the principal unifying force across regional, tribal, and religious divisions (Clayer, 2014; Skendi, 1967).

The publication of works in Albanian at a time when no formal institutions existed for its cultivation represented a decisive achievement of the *Rilindja*, affirming language as the backbone of national identity. The nation-building process ultimately reached conceptual closure with the introduction of the political principle of territoriality. Through the program of the League of Prizren, which demanded Albanian autonomy and defined the borders of the national homeland, a territorial framework was established that provided the spatial foundation for political sovereignty and fixed the national perspective as the guiding horizon of collective identity (Shpuza, 2013).

THE INTERCULTURAL CONCEPT OF THE RILINDJA OR COSMOPOLITAN NATIONALISM

Viewed from the vantage point of contemporary scholarship, the nineteenth century appears not only as a distant and romantically inflected epoch but also as a formative period in which ethnocentric doctrines and exclusionary nationalisms were elaborated against the cultural, linguistic, and religious *other*. The Albanian *Rilindja*, while firmly committed to the creation of a distinct national identity, simultaneously formulated a remarkably inclusive vision of statehood. It projected a future Albanian nation-state that would not merely affirm ethnic selfhood but would also institutionalize the coexistence of diverse cultures as integral and enduring components of the new polity (Clayer, 2014; Skendi, 1967).

This intercultural horizon is evident in several key domains of the *Rilindja* program. The most revolutionary was education. Sami Frashëri’s treatise *Shqipëria çka qënë, çështë e çdo të bëhetë* (1899), (*Albania: What It Was, What It Is, and What It Will Become*) envisioned a secular, compulsory system of primary schooling for both boys and girls, with legally binding

obligations on families to ensure attendance irrespective of gender (Frashëri, 1978). His plan extended gender equality into advanced and university-level education, presenting education as the primary instrument of social transformation and intellectual emancipation. Anticipating the cosmopolitan ideals of twentieth-century thinkers such as Edgar Morin, who would later speak of a *Europe in the Mind* (Moren, 2001), Frashëri imagined an *Albania in the Mind*: An Enlightenment-inspired national project grounded in rational knowledge, equality, and mutual respect.

Equally striking was the commitment to **linguistic pluralism**. Beyond the universal teaching of Albanian, Frashëri proposed that in regions inhabited by ethnic minorities—where Bulgarian, Aromanian (Vlach), or Greek were spoken—primary schools should provide instruction in both Albanian and the local language, while secondary education would be conducted in Albanian, with the option of establishing higher schools in minority languages (Frashëri, 1978). This policy elevated multilingualism to a principle of civic pedagogy, framing the acquisition of multiple languages as an enrichment of knowledge and culture rather than a threat to national cohesion.

The *Rilindja*'s interculturalism also extended to **religious freedoms**. Frashëri called for the strict separation of religious and state institutions, the creation of official representative bodies for each faith community, and even a ministry dedicated to interfaith relations. He further guaranteed special protections for smaller confessions, including Jewish and Protestant groups (Frashëri, 1978). In his vision,

the highest clerical leaders—Grand Mufti, Exarch, and Archbishop—would be honored but confined to religious affairs, while all clergy, including ulema, dervishes, and priests, would be excluded from public education and state administration (Frashëri, 1978, p. 95).

Such provisions anticipated principles of secular governance and minority rights that would not become widespread in Europe much later.

Following this line of thinking *the Rilindja* succeeded in reconciling two seemingly opposing concepts—nationalism and cosmopolitanism. In the published treatises of *Rilindja* these concepts are not contradictory but rather mutually complementary, forming the intellectual foundation of a vision in which the affirmation of national identity coexists with a commitment to universal human solidarity.

Taken together, these proposals reveal a **secular and civic conception of nationhood** that decisively rejected the fusion of ethnicity, religion, and state power. The *Rilindja* defined secularism as a non-negotiable principle for the organization of public life in the future Albanian state. Ethnic identity served as the symbolic core of national belonging, but it was never imagined as an exclusive possession of a single group. Instead, the movement articulated a civic vision in which cultural, linguistic, and confessional differences were protected through legally codified rights, ensuring their survival, cultivation, and further development. In this way, the Albanian National Awakening reconciled the Romantic quest for national self-determination with a normative commitment to pluralism, anticipating later European models of multicultural citizenship and constitutional democracy (Clayer, 2014; Skendi, 1967).

INTERCULTURAL ASPIRATIONS AND THE LIMITS OF POWER

History has repeatedly demonstrated that the mere formulation of progressive, equitable, and intellectually advanced ideas or concepts does not, in itself, guarantee their

realization. Without the requisite political agency and a constellation of favorable geopolitical conditions, even the most enlightened visions remain aspirational rather than transformative (Poincaré, 2009:33; Todorova, 2009:45).

The trajectory from the idealized project of a modern and secular Albanian state—conceived as tolerant toward linguistic and cultural plurality—to the concrete reality of the 1912 declaration of independence unfolded along an arduous and contested path. This journey was constrained not only by internal complexities but also by the violent inter-state conflicts among the nascent Balkan polities and by the simultaneous reconfiguration of strategic international alignments across Europe and the Balkans (Akhund, 2012: 13; Vickers, 1995: 42).

The designation “Balkans in flames” aptly encapsulates the turbulent opening decades of the twentieth century (Poincaré, 2009:33). Far from mere metaphor, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and ethnocide constituted the structural realities of the period. Albanian-inhabited territories, in particular, emerged as recurrent targets of these campaigns of violence, while the strategic suppression of public information facilitated the agendas of those states and political elites whose territorial expansion was predicated upon acts of conquest and systematic criminality (Llape, 2013:370; Vickers, 2006:66; Veremis, 2014:23; Glenny, 1999:147–150).

Among the few contemporaneous accounts of this period are the reports of Lev Trotsky, who not only provides extensive documentation of the actions undertaken by Serbian and Montenegrin forces against Albanian settlements but also denounces the Moscow press and broader public opinion for the selective publication—or tacit approval—of information concerning these crimes (Todorova, 2013:13). Even more substantial evidence is supplied by the investigations of the Carnegie Commission, whose missions to the Balkans sought both to document atrocities and to propose potential frameworks for peaceful resolution. The Commission’s report details the ethnocentric and exclusionary foundations of these intertwined conflicts and underscores a critical observation: the principal architects of a prospective Yugoslav federation operated within a Serbian nationalist doctrine, increasingly reinforced by the growing power of the Serbian state (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1914: 25; Mazower, 2000:103).

Further evidence of Albania’s fragile position is provided in a subsequent report by the same institution, issued in 1921. This document observes that Albania—having declared independence in 1912 but subsequently occupied and partitioned during the Balkan wars—emerged from the post-war context merely as a *survivor* rather than a consolidated polity (Akhund, 2012: 13). Yet this second report received considerably less public attention than the 1913 publication, as it focused primarily on the Albanian question at a time when organized political centers in the Balkans actively sought to suppress or restrict the dissemination of objective information regarding the ongoing realities of ethnic cleansing (Fischer, 1999: 58). This report, initiated by d’Estournelles de Constant—who evocatively described Albania as *Cinderella of the Balkans*—and authored by Justine Godard, not only provides a meticulous account of conditions on the ground but also delivers a trenchant critique of the political stances and territorial ambitions articulated by Belgrade and Athens toward the Albanian state and its settlements (Akhund, 2012: 25).

The Balkan Wars revealed the extreme limits of violence and aggression that could be unleashed upon civilian populations. They demonstrated that the mere possession of a distinct linguistic or national identity was deemed a sufficient pretext for physical eradication. Above all, these conflicts exposed how ethnic cleansing and ethnically motivated hatred could be

instrumentalized as tools of state formation—provided that such practices were legitimized, or at least tolerated, by international institutions (Banac, 1984: 67–69). Equally as terrifying as the acts of violence themselves was the ideological principle that inspired them: a doctrine that sought to rationalize the destruction of an entire people through ostensibly cultural—or anti-cultural—arguments (Arendt, 1994: 21).

Violence was framed as an acceptable instrument for uprooting a population deemed to lack legitimate belonging on the grounds that its origins were allegedly external to the Balkans. Within this logic, the denial of Albanian existence evolved into a pseudo-scientific and pseudo-cultural program advanced by the newly established Serbian Academy of Sciences. According to this doctrine, Albanians were portrayed as late arrivals to the Balkans alongside the Ottoman Turks, a people without their own language, historical continuity, or Christian heritage. Even emblematic figures such as Skanderbeg were stripped of their Albanian identity, while Albanians were reduced to loosely organized “tribes” rather than a coherent nation—claims further reinforced by collectively offensive insinuations of physical and cultural inferiority (Georgevitch, 1913: 35; Malcolm, 1998: 59–60).

This exclusionary concept was challenged by progressive circles, who argued that the retaliatory policies advocated by Serbia’s ruling elites were both unjustifiable and certain to produce long-term consequences for the Balkans (Tucović, 1968: 9). World history has repeatedly demonstrated that ethnic cleansing, the Holocaust, and similar atrocities were often preceded by carefully articulated ideas disseminated by intellectual elites who inspired state and military apparatuses of violence with anti-cultural arguments. These arguments framed targeted populations as culturally *inferior* and therefore destined to be violently eliminated by supposedly more *civilized* nations (Arendt, 1994: 21; Mann, 2005: 15–18). Such doctrines, in their brutal logic, underscored the necessity of new guarantees of human dignity—mechanisms capable of constraining the power of states and preventing the recurrence of totalitarian violence.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

It is fitting to return to the paradigm of interculturalism as articulated in contemporary theoretical debates. If one follows this paradigm, the ideas of the Albanian National Awakening *Rilindja Kombëtare*—though formulated in a different historical epoch, when the emergence of new identities generated concepts of denial, exclusion, subordination, and the instrumentalization of the *other’s* cultural values—nonetheless demonstrate that progressive ideals can emerge in any historical period and, by virtue of their intrinsic humanism, withstand the test of time (Todorova, 2009; Mazower, 2000).

The cultural concepts of the Albanian National Awakening constructed national identity in tandem with the ideas of the nation-state by calling for the awakening, renewal, and reform of the national spirit—yet without grounding this nation-building project in hostility toward the *other*. Even the calls for liberation or defensive warfare were not directed against entire peoples but rather against the state structures and political regimes that generated violence, injustice, and occupation (Skendi, 1967; Clayer, 2007).

Contemporary global society—one that has advanced far beyond the nineteenth century in both technological development and intellectual discourse—continues to grapple with the challenge of accommodating a super-diverse reality shaped by intensive population movements and cultural exchanges. The persistent question is how to design models capable of transcending the conflicts and prejudices that such transformations inevitably generate, and how to cultivate effective forms of communication in contexts of hyper-segregation among

specific social or ethnic groups (Vertovec, 2007:1026). These dynamics cannot be adequately understood from a static perspective; rather, they require an analytical framework that simultaneously considers the past, present, and future of collective identity (Zapata-Barrero, 2017: 3).

As a result, the innovative and forward-thinking concepts from the past still hold significance today and offer important direction for shaping effective frameworks in the Balkans, a region that, in several respects, still reflects characteristics of an incomplete nineteenth century. If contemporary theories of interculturalism seek to construct their paradigm as an intellectual and political response to racism, homophobia, and religious or ethnic exclusivism, then the concepts articulated more than a century ago—at a time when the institutional frameworks for such debates scarcely existed—speak eloquently to the foresight of an era whose vision remains both modern and, in many respects, post-modern in the present day (Vertovec, 2007; Zapata-Barrero, 2017).

REFERENCES

1. Akhund, N. (2012). The League of Nations and the Albanian question. *International Journal of History*, 14, 13–25.
2. Akhund, N. (2012). The two Carnegie reports: From the Balkan expedition of 1913 to the Albanian trip of 1921. *Balkanologie*, 14(1–2).
3. Arendt, H. (1994). *The origins of totalitarianism*. Harcourt.
4. Banac, I. (1984). *The national question in Yugoslavia: Origins, history, politics*. Cornell University Press.
5. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. (1914). *Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars*.
6. Clayer, N. (2014). *Aux origines du nationalisme albanais: La naissance d'une nation majoritairement musulmane en Europe*. Karthala.
7. Clayer, N., & Bougarel, X. (2017). *Europe's Balkan Muslims: A new history*. Hurst & Company.
8. Dayton Peace Agreement. (1995). *General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. United Nations. <https://www.osce.org>
9. Elsie, R. (2010). *Historical dictionary of Albania* (2nd ed.). Scarecrow Press.
10. Fischer, B. J. (1999). *Albania at war, 1939–1945*. Purdue University Press.
11. Fracchia, J. (2010). “Hora”: Social conflicts and collective memories in Pianna degli Albanesi. *Past & Present*, 209, 167–199. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtq001>
12. Frashëri, K. (2000). *Historia e popullit shqiptar në katër vëllime* [History of the Albanian people in four volumes]. Akademia e Shkencave e Shqipërisë.
13. Frashëri, N. (2000). *Dëshira e vërtetë e shqipëtarëve* [The true desire of the Albanians]. Botimet Toena.
14. Frashëri, S. (1978). *Shqipëria ç'ka qenë, ç'është e ç'do të bëhet* [Albania: What it was, what it is, and what it will become]. Rilindja. (Original work published 1899)
15. Frashëri, S. (2008). *Albania: What it was, what it is, and what it will become* (R. Elsie, Trans.). 55. (Original work published 1899)
16. Gawrych, G. W. (2006). *The Crescent and the Eagle: Ottoman rule, Islam and the Albanians, 1874–1913*. I.B. Tauris.
17. Georgevitch, V. (1913). *Die Albanesen und die Großmächte*. S. Hirzel.
18. Glenny, M. (1999). *The Balkans: Nationalism, war, and the great powers, 1804–1999*. Viking.
19. Horkheimer, M., & Adorno, T. W. (1989). *Dialectic of enlightenment* (J. Cumming, Trans.). Continuum. (Original work published 1944)
20. Israel, J. (2001). *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the making of modernity 1650–1750*. Oxford University Press.
21. Joppke, C. (2018). War of words: Interculturalism vs. multiculturalism. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 6, Article 4. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-018-0078-2>
22. Llapë, S. (2013). Ethnic cleansing in the Balkans. *Balkan Studies Review*, 5, 365–380.
23. Malcolm, N. (1998). *Kosovo: A short history*. Macmillan.
24. Malcolm, N. (2020). *Rebelët, besimtarët, të mbijetuarit: Studime mbi historinë e shqiptarëve* [Rebels, believers, survivors: Studies on Albanian history]. Botime Artini.
25. Mann, M. (2005). *The dark side of democracy: Explaining ethnic cleansing*. Cambridge University Press.
26. Mazower, M. (2000). *The Balkans: A short history*. Modern Library.
27. Meadwell, H. (2001). The long nineteenth century: European political development, 1789–1945. *European Journal of Sociology*, 42(1), 23–60. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003975601001024>

28. Meer, N., & Modood, T. (2011). How does interculturalism contrast with multiculturalism? *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 32(2), 175–196. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2011.547176>
29. Morin, E. (2001). *Europa në mendje* [Europe in mind]. Libra për Shoqëri të Hapur.
30. Ohrid Framework Agreement. (2001). Framework Agreement. Government of the Republic of Macedonia. <https://www.osce.org>
31. Poincaré, R. (2009). *Carnets de guerre* [War notebooks] (p. 33). Tallandier.
32. Qosja, R. (1984). *Historia e letërsisë shqiptare: Romantizmi I* [History of Albanian literature: Romanticism I]. Rilindja.
33. Shpuza, G. (2013). Kuvendi themelues i Lidhjes Shqiptare të Prizrenit (15–17 Qershor 1787). *Gjurmime Albanologjike*, 43, 45–67.
34. Skendi, S. (1967). *The Albanian national awakening, 1878–1912*. Princeton University Press.
35. Stavileci, M. (2000). *Iluminizmi shqiptar* [The Albanian Enlightenment]. Botime Toena.
36. Taylor, C. (2007). *A secular age*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
37. Todorova, M. (1997). *Imagining the Balkans*. Oxford University Press.
38. Todorova, M. (2013). War and memory: Trotsky's war correspondence from the Balkan Wars. *Perceptions*, 18(2), 37–60.
39. Tucović, D. (1968). *Serbia and Albania: A critical study of the causes of the Balkan wars* (p. 9). Prosveta.
40. Vasa, P. (1989). *E vërteta për Shqipërinë dhe shqiptarët* [The truth about Albania and the Albanians]. Rilindja.
41. Veremis, T. (2014). *The Balkans: Nationalism and conflict*. Hurst.
42. Vertovec, S. (2007). Super-diversity and its implications. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30(6), 1024–1054. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870701599465>
43. Vickers, M. (1995). *The Albanians: A modern history*. I.B. Tauris.
44. Vickers, M. (2006). *Between Serb and Albanian: A history of Kosovo*. Columbia University Press.
45. Vlora, E. (1999). *Kujtime: Nga fundi i sundimit osman deri në luftën e dytë botërore* [Memoirs: From the end of Ottoman rule to the Second World War]. Shtëpia Botuese 55.
46. Zapata-Barrero, R. (2017). Interculturalism in the post-multicultural debate: A defence. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 5(1), Article 4. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-017-0057-z>