Kosovo after the 1998-1999 war

History of Group Relations Leading up to the 1998-1999 War

A Conflict of National Identities

The Ethnic Breakdown of Kosovo

Kosovo, a now small partially recognized independent country in the Balkans, has experienced an immensely difficult history, especially in the 20th century. Bordered by Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, and Macedonia, Kosovo is a landlocked region of only about 4,000 square miles, or roughly a third larger than Delaware. Being sandwiched between Albania and Serbia, Kosovo has struggled with its ethnic breakup.

Early in Kosovo’s history, mainly Serbs populated the region. However, this began to change when Turkey invaded the area and Ottoman Rule was put into place. The Ottoman Empire brought Islam with their political rule, forcing its conquered citizens to convert. For one to have the same rights as the Ottoman, one had to follow Islamic laws and beliefs. As author Daskalovski notes, a large quantity of Serbs began migrating out of Kosovo, while Albanians began to immigrate in. The Albanians were mostly Muslim and were afforded protection by the Ottomans. Consequently, by the 1800s, Kosovo began to lose its Serbian numerical majority, as the Albanian population became larger.

The two major groups competing for political power are the Serbians and the Albanians. Albanians have been the majority group for the region’s history, as evidenced by Census results from the Statistical Office of Kosovo and the CRISE (2005) sampled below. Since the 1940s, the percentage of Albanians has increased steadily, coupled with the decline in the Serbian population share. But despite the clear Albanian supermajority, the Serbian population in Kosovo and elsewhere oppressed and excluded the Albanians.
TheNatureofInclusionandExclusioninKosovo

TheEarly20thCentury
During the end of Ottoman rule, Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Montenegro formed the Balkan league in 1912, directed at the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans retaliated, resulting in the First Balkan War in 1912. During the war, Serbia conquered most of Kosovo and drove out the Ottoman forces. After the war finished, the Albanians declared their independence, a move recognized by the major powers in 1913. Despite this new Albanian independence, around half a million Albanians were living in surrounding areas. Serbian authorities wanted to consolidate the mix of Croats, Serbs, and Albanians into one single nationality. In 1945, after the end of World War II, Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia, and Slovenia all formed the 5 states of the new Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Kosovo, and Vojvodina were two sub-states controlled by Serbia.

TheTitoYears

In 1953, after serving as Prime Minister for several years, Josip Broz Tito became the first official President of the Yugoslavia. Under his rule, he relaxed many of the restrictions on private property and freedom of speech, though he still ruled under a one-party state. Though he worked towards strengthening Yugoslavia as a whole, many Albanians felt Kosovo was being ignored. Even though Kosovo had significant autonomy, the Albanian population was not satisfied. They made claims of being ignored by the federal government of Yugoslavia. As Frances Stewart notes

“From the Second World War until the late 1960s, Kosovo was, in development terms, virtually ignored by the national elite. During this period, Kosovo had the highest illiteracy rate in the country and a cyclical history of political and ethnic violence between Albanians, Serbs and Montenegrins.” (Stewart, 2005, pp 21).
Wanting to keep his position, Tito focused on appeasing Albanians in Kosovo. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Tito focused on reforming education and increasing Albanian attendance in primary and secondary institutions. Again as Stewart notes, "As a result of positive discrimination policies, Albanians increase their employment levels. Educational advances saw the literacy rate improve significantly in the early 1970s, although it remained below the national average. In 1969, the University of Pristina was opened in Kosovo, allowing education in the Albanian language and expression of Albanian identity (Stewart, 2005, pp 21)

The table below, sourced from the CRISE, shows the ratio of ethnic groups’ share in education compared to their share in the population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: Kosovo - Educational enrolment rates by major ethnic group, 1970-1990 (ratio to national average)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRIMARY ENROLMENT</td>
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<td>Albanians</td>
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<td>Serbs</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<td>SECONDARY ENROLMENT</td>
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<td>Albanian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Serb</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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</tbody>
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Note: Figures for each group give proportion of enrolment divided by proportion of population. These figures may underestimate Albanian under-representation in the education system, as the high growth rates among Albanians would result in them forming a larger proportion of the relevant age-cohort. Source: Calculated from SOX and UNDP (2002).

According to author Roger Petersen (2002), Tito also assuaged growing Albanian distress by promoting them to social sector positions in Kosovo and greatly increasing their employment, though at the cost of the Serbian constituents, which had the backing from nationals in Serbia. In Kosovo, Albanian social sector employment rose from 58.2% in 1974 to 83% in 1978 to finally 92% in 1980. On the contrary, Serbian social sector employment fell from 31% to 9.3% to 5% in the same years. Other major reforms included economic investment packages to the region. The CRISE notes that in the early 1970s, 70% of Kosovo’s budget came from federal funding.

In 1974, towards the end of Tito’s long rule, a new constitution was passed. This called for more autonomy to Kosovo in a final attempt to appease the Albanians. They had representation in the Yugoslavian government. Though appreciated, the Albanians wanted full independence, like their neighboring Albania. This unrest continued, and with Tito’s death in 1980. As author Albrecht Schnabel (2000) notes, “the liberalization of the political system gave new impetus to nationalist movements.”

Upon his death, bloody student riots broke out in Kosovo’s main city Pristina.

The Milosevic Years

While the succeeded Presidents never seemed have as much influence as Tito, a new ruler began climbing the political ladder. Slobodan Milosevic, the President of Serbia, wanted to end the special treatment of Kosovo and reincorporate it fully into Serbia, rather than have it as a special sub-state. With the rise of Milosevic, funding to Kosovo gradually fell, while money for Serbian elites living in the region increased. In 1987 Milosevic said in a speech to the Serbians in Kosovo, “no one would be allowed to beat them.” According to Stewart,
“As tensions worsened, Belgrade reacted to the situation in Kosovo by imposing martial law, incarcerating academics, dismissing professors, reducing student enrolment, eliminating specified university courses, and discouraging educational contacts with Albania. By March 1989, Serbia had ended the existing autonomy of the provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina, and increased its power at the expense of the other Yugoslav republics,” (Stewart, 2005, 22).

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The 1998-1999 Conflict

The Road to War

According to Daskalovski, the conflict between the Serbs and the Albanians gained momentum beginning in 1981. The Albanians wanted their own, independent republic, while the Serbs increasingly wanted more power and say in the government. These tensions contributed to the election of Milosevic, whose pro-Serbia views helped put him into power at a time where Serbia was getting increasingly more anxious about Kosovo. Adding to the tension, Serbs were leaving Kosovo in substantial numbers. For Serbians and their supporters, this was served as moral permission to oppress the Albanians and refuse their right to self-rule or become their own nation. Daskalosvksi adds that the "factual majority in Kosovo felt as the functional minority, while the factual minority sought the position of functional majority".

In the years leading up to the war, the negative treatment and persecution of Albanians got progressively worse. It is estimated that over 85,000 Albanians were fired from their jobs or left with little choice other than to resign, due to their ethnicity. Albanians who worked in the Criminal Justice field as police officers, lawyers, and judges suffered the most discrimination. Furthermore, many were arrested due unclear reasons and convicted in trials that did not conform to international standards of legal justice. By 1988, the intense situation had reached a boiling point, with the troubles between the KLA and FRY forces (along with the Serb police and paramilitary groups) reaching the status of an armed conflict. The conflict increasingly drew more international attention. Amnesty International released an official statement criticizing the FRY forces and other paramilitary groups for violating human rights. In 1998, the US Department of State said the following:

“The United States is deeply concerned about the safety of the civilian population in Kosovo, both Albanian and Serb. We are concerned about attacks against Serbian civilians in Kosovo by Albanian extremist groups, including the KLA. In recent weeks a number of Serb civilians have reportedly been kidnapped by armed Albanian groups” (Spokesman, James Rubin).

According to Daskalovski, both sides suffered human rights abuses such as abductions, beating, and executions. However, numerically speaking, the Albanians endured the worst of it. Nevertheless, Serbs were also targeted and abused or killed by the KLA and other pro-Albanian forces. From January to August of 1998, 1,126 terrorist attacks linked to the KLA were carried out in Kosovo.

War

![Image of soldiers in conflict]

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The conflict continued to deteriorate and pressure was exerted on the international community to intervene. In late March of 1999, plans for a NATO bombing of Kosovo were finalized. In support for this plan, President Bill Clinton said that the air strikes would be necessary due to the Serbian armies deplorable actions of “moving from village to village, shelling civilians, and torching their houses”.

The NATO attacks began on the twenty-fourth of March. Instead of appeasing the violence, it can be said that the international response did the opposite. After the NATO operation began, Serbian forces augmented their violence towards the KLA and the Albanian population in general. As the situation continued to deteriorate, the violence and discrimination that the Albanians were facing, progressed into what would be considered ethnic cleansing. Daskalovski reiterates that the ethnic cleansing of Albanians and the NATO bombings were occurring simultaneously. He adds that “although Serb (para) military forces burned Albanian houses, it was NATO that destroyed the infrastructure. It can be argued that NATO’s action provoked a humanitarian disaster”. Albanians continue to leave Kosovo in large quantities, either by expulsion or just trying to flee the bombings and overall violence. The possibility that military action by NATO would deteriorate the situation by drawing out more violence on behalf of the Serbs was predicted by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and other military analysts. However it was not taken seriously or as very likely to happen by the international community.

In addition, the NATO bombing did not meet the expected results of the international community. They were not able to keep up with the pace of Milosevic’s forces and their ethnic cleansing. Statements from the White House and NATO attempted to defend the mission, but also often showed discouragement with how the situation was progressing.

"Publicly, Nato insisted that the blame for the refugee flight lay solely with Milosevic, not Western bombs. But privately, officials offered a line that made more sense alongside the awful images. Military planners lamented that bad weather, clever Serb tactics, White House worries about collateral damage-- and a reluctance to risk pilot's loves--kept them from hitting at Milosevic as hard as they wished". (Time Magazine, 04/12/99).

Kevin Bacon, the Pentagon spokesman at the time did not attempt to defend the situation. He said, "It is difficult to say, that we have prevented one act of brutality".

The war officially ended after seventy-eight days, with President Bill Clinton pronouncing "victory" on live television. However, the extent of the humanitarian damage was surmountable. Thousands of lives perished, most of the Albanian. Months after the end of the war, NATO continued to find mass graves. Some had over one hundred bodies in them.
International Significance of the Conflict
The conflict in Kosovo has had numerous international implications and has generated lots of discussion. The biggest factor was whether NATO should have intervened, a discussion augmented by their questionable success. If so, at what point does a humanitarian crisis become international responsibility?

Addressing Exclusion in Post-War Kosovo
Expanding the Rights of Women

After the NATO Bombings bought along Milosevic's acceptance of NATO's terms for withdrawing from Kosovo, the United Nations Security Council established UN Resolution 1244. This resolution established the UN's presence as the interim government in Kosovo. The resolution also provided Kosovo with a more formalized constitution, with the major goals of being able to represent all minorities in the government.

Under the United Nation's Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Kosovo began incorporating women into politics, a move facilitated by international pressures. So, in the November 2000 elections, not long after the NATO air strikes, the first gender quota elections laws were enacted on the local level. The UNMIK put in place a quota requiring 33% of candidates be women. As Dahelrup notes in *Women, Quotas, and Politics*, while good in theory, the idea backfired. Because parties needed to quickly mobilize large groups of women in order to be eligible to win elections, leaders assembled groups of women with little to no political knowledge just to fill quotas. The resulting actions led to women resigning from their offices immediately after elections. Thus, only 8% of locally elected councilors were women.

However, in 2001, during the first elections for Kosovo's region-wide Assembly, the UNMIK strengthened the rigidity of the quotas. Out of the first 67% of candidates on each party's closed list, half had to be women, with one or two females out of every three candidates. If, after the election, each party did not have 33% of its winners be women, then the last male on the list would be replaced with the following female. This would proceed until the quota was met. In the 2001 elections, a record 29% of all members of parliament were female, the highest total in the Balkans. With the success of the quotas, the UNMIK enforced the same rules in the 2002 local elections. In 2004, the UNMIK codified the electoral procedures as the following: "Under UNMIK Resolution 2004.12 Section 21.1, "Of the first sixty-seven (67) percent of candidates on a candidate list, at least thirty-three (33) percent shall be male and at least thirty-three (33) percent shall be female, with one candidate from each gender included at least once in each group of three candidates, counting from the first candidate in the list."

After Kosovo's declaration of independence, the electoral procedures were finalized as follows, according to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance:

### At a glance

**Structure of Parliament**: Unicameral

**Are there legislated quotas...**
- for the Single/Lower House? Yes
- at the Sub-national level? Yes

**Are there voluntary quotas...**
- adopted by political parties? No
SINGLE/LOWER HOUSE

Kuvendi

| Total seats: | 120 |
| Total women: | 40 |
| % women: | 33% |
| Election year: | 2010 |
| Electoral system: | List PR |
| Quota type: | Reserved seats |
| Election details: | IDEA Voter Turnout |

List Proportional Representation (List PR)

Under a List Proportional Representation (List PR) system, each party or grouping presents a list of candidates for a multi-member electoral district. The voters vote for a party, and parties receive seats in proportion to their overall share of the vote. In some (closed list) systems, the winning candidates are taken from the lists in order of their position on the lists. If the lists are ‘open’ or ‘free’ the voters can influence the order of the candidates by marking individual preferences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quota type: Reserved seats</th>
<th>Legal source</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constitution</td>
<td>“The composition of the Assembly of Kosovo shall respect internationally recognized principles of gender equality.” (Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Article 71.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Electoral law</td>
<td>In each Political Entity’s candidate list, at least thirty (30%) percent shall be female. (General Elections Law, Article 27.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal sanctions for non-compliance</td>
<td>Electoral law</td>
<td>If, after the allocation of seats, the candidates of the minority gender within a Political Entity have not been allocated at least 30% of the total seats for that Political Entity, the last elected candidate of the majority gender will be replaced by the next candidate of the opposite gender on the reordered candidate list until the total number of seats allocated to the minority gender is at least 30%. (General Elections Law, Article 111.6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Rank order/placement rules: | Electoral law | “In each Political Entity’s candidate list, at least thirty (30%) percent shall be male and at least thirty (30%) percent shall be female, with one candidate from each gender included at least once in each group of three candidates, counting from the first candidate in the list.” (General Elections Law, Article 27.1) |

(Electoral information for the Kuvendi)
### Inclusion of Ethnic Minorities Within Government

#### 2001 Elections

In 2001, under UN authority, Kosovo held its first parliamentary elections. According to the UNMIK Regulation 2001.9 Section 9.1.3, Kosovo shall, for the purposes of election of the Assembly, be considered a single, multi-member electoral district.

(a) One hundred (100) of 120 seats of the Assembly shall be distributed amongst all parties, coalitions, citizens’ initiatives, and independent candidates in proportion to the number of valid votes received by them in the election to the Assembly.

(b) Twenty (20) of the 120 seats shall be reserved for the additional representation of non-Albanian Kosovo Communities as follows:

- Ten (10) seats shall be allocated to parties, coalitions, citizens’ initiatives and independent candidates having declared themselves representing the Kosovo Serb Community. These seats shall be distributed to such parties, coalitions, citizens’ initiatives and independent candidates in proportion to the number of valid votes received by them in the election to the Assembly; and

- Ten (10) seats shall be allocated to other Communities as follows: the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities four (4), the Bosniak Community three (3), the Turkish Community two (2) and the Gorani Community one (1). The seats for each such Community or group of Communities shall be distributed to parties, coalitions, citizens’ initiatives and independent candidates having declared themselves representing each such Community in proportion to the number of valid votes received by them in the election to the Assembly.

With the new rules in place, Kosovo’s 2001 elections gave the Albanian conservative Democratic League of Kosovo party (the LDK) 47 seats out of the 120 total. The Democratic Party of Kosovo (the PDK), the LDK’s main leftist opposition party garnered 26 seats in the Assembly. The major surprise, however, came from the coalition of Serbian parties known as the Povratak (which means return) which won 22 seats in the Assembly, largely benefited from the 10 bonus seats given through reservations. Bajram Rexhepi became Kosovo’s first post-war Prime Minister, representing the LDK.

#### 2007 Elections
In 2007, after discontent with rightist policies, the PDK won 37 seats, while the LDK won only 25 seats. Serb parties, however, only received 14 seats after the 10 added reservations, leading to, as the SET Times describes, "a near total boycott" by the Kosovo Serbs. The PDK's party leader, Hashim Thaci, became the Prime Minister in 2007. Though this election seemed insignificant, it would turn out to be pivotal in Kosovo's history. In February 2008, when the Assembly declared Kosovo's independence from Serbia, Thaci became the first Prime Minister for Independent Kosovo.

2008 Declaration of Independence

The assembly of Kosovo declared its independence on February 17, 2008. Albanians, in Kosovo and throughout the world celebrated, while others questioned the legality of the declaration. However, most international powers, including the United States recognized the move. In 2010 the International Court of Justice release a statement saying that Kosovo's declaration of independence is legal and valid. Serbia still has not formally recognized Kosovo's independence.

2010 Elections

Though the 2007 elections set the tone for Kosovo's independence, the 2010 elections remain the first elections post-independence. As the Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development notes, "In September, 2010, The Constitutional Court of the Republic of Kosovo ruled that the President of Kosovo, Fatmir Sejdiu had breached the Constitution of Kosovo by holding both the post of president and party leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK)." After the courts ruled, Sejdiu resigned from the presidency in order to remain leader of the LDK. After a successful vote of no confidence by the Alliance for New Kosovo (AKR), the LDK began to distance themselves from the PDK in order to win back the government. However, when the December 2010 elections came, the PDK once again found themselves in a winning coalition, and Thaci became the first post-independence Prime Minister, a spot he occupies today.
Impact of Ethnic Inclusion

The ethnic quota system definitely helps provide a more accurate representation of Kosovo's population. With about 80% Albanians, 10% Serbs, and 10% other ethnicities, Kosovo manages to employ a seat-reservation system that achieves roughly the same representation in its Assembly. Because of Kosovo’s sheer number of parties, a coalition will almost always need to be formed in order to have a stable government. Though minority parties carry few seats as a whole (25 in total, with 13 going to Serbs), their influence is still crucial. The Serbian Liberal Party (SLS) is the key component to minority parties, holding 8 seats in the Assembly. Because of this, their compliance is crucial when forming coalitions.

The 2010 elections perfectly demonstrate the power given to the minority parties. After the election, the PDK had only 34 out of 120 seats, well under the 60-seat majority needed. PDK leader Thaci formed an agreement with the AKR, giving the AKR the office of the President. Still, this only gave the coalition 42 seats. So, as Serbian news service B92 reports,

"Thaci also signed an agreement with Independent Liberal Party (SLS) leader Slobodan Petrovic. "Petrovic will be deputy prime minister in the new government and the SLS will run three ministries – Local Self-Government Ministry, Communities and Return Ministry and Labor and Social Welfare Ministry. "The PDK leader also signed the agreement with representatives of the minorities' communities, Turks, Ashkali and Egyptians, who will run the Environment and Spatial Planning Ministry."

These minority parties proved key in providing the narrow margin needed to hold a majority in government, with the coalition receiving 65 seats in the Assembly. Without the SLS, the PDK could have easily been out of government. Overall, these quotas definitely help incorporate minorities and women into government. With a 5% threshold needed, Serbs would only have 3 seats in the Assembly, and other minorities would have a grand total of 2. Instituting reservations allows for a more representative Assembly and requires majority parties to form coalitions with the Serbs and other ethnic minorities.

But where does Kosovo go from here? Secretary of State Clinton has urged formalized relations between Kosovo and Serbia to accept Kosovo’s formal boundaries, though this appears unlikely. As far as economics, despite Kosovo being the poorest economy in Europe, it has experienced some of the highest growth rates over the past few years. Kosovo has a relatively young population, with a median age at around 20. Youth development programs have begun improving the state of education in primary and secondary schools. As the World Bank reports:

"Around 5,000 young people benefited directly from the programs offered by the youth centers supported by the Kosovo Youth Development Project, which include courses in English and other foreign languages, IT skills and knowledge, peace and conflict..."
management workshops, and livelihood and life skills (including hygiene skills, dance classes, arts, and sports). More than 15 percent of the beneficiaries are from minority communities, around 35 percent are from rural communities, and about 45 percent are females.”


**Resources**

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