

**DRAFT**

Kosovo: The Odd One Out

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## **Introduction**

In the context of the Yugoslavian Wars (1991-2001), Kosovo is exceptional, as religion is not among the factors that prompted conflict. Whilst religion was not the main ingredient in all the other wars, it remained an essential piece. This is not to say that all parties involved were irreligious or religiously homogenous. Despite finite religious distinctions between the parties concerned, it was ethnic distinctions that were the principle cause for tensions. Unlike the other wars in Yugoslavia, conflation of the two identifiers in an analysis of the war in Kosovo would lead to a complete misunderstanding of the root causes, contributing factors and effects of the conflict.

A greater understanding of the conflict in Kosovo can be developed through the lens of Classical Realism. The application of the Classical Realism in International Relations theory developed by Hans Morgenthau in 1948 will help to prove that religion had a minimal role in the conflict by examining the historical context in which the conflict occurred, and how states took actions that served their own ends whilst still acknowledging the ethical ramifications of those actions. The treatment of Kosovo and Serbia as two individual states in international conflict, rather than treating Kosovo as a rogue region locked in an intranational struggle, is incumbent in an analysis of this conflict.

First, an explanation of the people and institutions vital to the Kosovan story will provide necessary knowledge of those involved in the events later described. Next, a comprehensive explanation of the events between 1912 and 1999 that greatly affect Kosovo today, and a study of the history surrounding the Kosovo War will enable more thorough understanding and analysis of the conflict. This will all set up an examination of the state of Kosovo today, and what the future may hold for them. The coming analysis will rely on a wide variety of sources, including books written by experts in a number of fields and Newspaper articles written at the time, will used to provide context. Also considered are articles written for and published in venerated journals, and other assorted sources.

## **Actors**

During the course of the last century, many actors have emerged in Kosovo that have had great effect on its development and current state. These are both individual people, as well as organizations, some of them large international institutions. By examining each in

detail, a better understanding can be built around how Kosovo came to be what it is today, and where it may go in the future.

### Institutions

The Movement for the National Liberation of Kosovo was a political party in Kosovo until 1993. The party was founded by in 1978 Prishtina by Kosovan Jusuf Gërvalla. Gërvalla was gunned down in Stuttgart along with his brother Bardhosh and another activist named Kadri Zeka. Gërvalla established the MNLK as a Marxist organization. Following both his death and the fall of communism, many in the party thought it best to not include that in their objectives at all. This disagreement caused a split that climaxed in 1993, with the MNLK splitting into the Marxist LKCK, and the non-Marxist LPK. They both supported Kosovan independence, although they disagreed on how to best achieve this goal. The LKCK favored an intifada, a Palestinian style popular uprising, whilst the LPK favored a guerrilla war. Both parties, which provided much of the early support of the KLA, and are now defunct.<sup>1</sup>

Founded in 1989, the Democratic League of Kosovo, or LDK, was Kosovo's first major political party after its independence declaration in 1991. Headed by Ibrahim Rugova, the LDK took control of Kosovo in the 1992 elections, and remained in power until 2008.<sup>2</sup> The LDK, like Rugova, favored a peaceful resolution to the question of Kosovan independence.<sup>3</sup> The LDK remains at the top of Kosovan politics.

The Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) arose after the war as the political wing of a demilitarized KLA. President Hashim Thaçi who, like the PDK itself, rose from a demilitarized KLA, led the party for much of its existence. For many years, the PDK stood as the sole major opposition to the LDK. Between 2010 and 2014, a new party named VV came about which now joins PDK and LDK to create the triumvirate of major parties present today.

The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), or Ushtria Clirimtare e Kosove (UCK), founded in 1993 in direct opposition to the newly elected President of Kosovo Ibrahim Rugova who ran on a platform of nonviolent resistance.<sup>4</sup> As the name would suggest, the KLA was an army whose chief belief was that only through violence could Kosovan independence be

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<sup>1</sup> Judah, *Kosovo: What*, 76.

<sup>2</sup> Judah, 70.

<sup>3</sup> Judah, Will, n.p.

<sup>4</sup> Judah, *Kosovo: What*, 77; Özerdem, "From a 'Terrorist,'" 79.

secured.<sup>5</sup> Although they regularly issued manifestos and statements, the KLA was mainly passive until 1996, when attacks on Serbs began with increasing frequency. As the Albanian state collapsed in 1997, many weapons depots were looted. The market became flooded with hundreds of thousands of weapons, and a large portion of them made their way across the border and into KLA hands. These arms were purchased with revenues brought in from Albanians abroad, which funded much of the KLA.<sup>6</sup>

The United Nations Interim Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is the interim government set up and run by the United Nations following the war in order to provide “a peaceful and normal life for all inhabitants of Kosovo.”<sup>7</sup> Though a majority of United Nations members recognize Kosovo, UNMIK operates as an officially neutral source in the region as there are two notable holdouts: Russia, whose veto power on the Security Council singlehandedly keeps Kosovo out of the UN, and Serbia. UNMIK devolves as much power as it legally can while still remaining neutral to local entities and tends to play a less active role.

#### Individuals

Josep Broz Tito, who, like Stalin, was born poor to Croatian parents, was the President of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from 1943 until his 1980 death.<sup>8</sup> Unlike the other Communist dictators that arose after the Second World War, Tito did not allow himself to be kept under Stalin’s thumb. In *The Balkans*, Misha Glenny explains that “no communist country enjoyed such warm relations with the West while being recognized as a full, yet independent member of ‘the socialist camp.’”<sup>9</sup> In spite of that, life in Yugoslavia under Tito was challenging for those not in the upper echelons. Security, especially in Kosovo, was incredibly tight, and dominated by Serbs.<sup>10</sup> Tito’s regime was particularly harsh on peasants, implementing the widespread collectivization of farming, and in general treating them as only a means to provide sustenance for the growing masses of industrial workers.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Özerdem, "From a 'Terrorist,'" 79.

<sup>6</sup> Özerdem, 80.

<sup>7</sup> "Mandate," United Nations Mission in Kosovo.

<sup>8</sup> Glenny, *The Balkans*, 471; 622; Conquest, *Stalin*, 1.

<sup>9</sup> Glenny, 470.

<sup>10</sup> Judah, 51.

<sup>11</sup> Glenny, 546-547.

“Independent” Kosovo’s first president, Ibrahim Rugova, was elected in 1992.<sup>12</sup> Rugova led the Democratic League of Kosovo party until his death in 2006. When he came to power in 1992, Rugova believed strongly that the only way to achieve their goal of total independence was through nonviolent resistance.<sup>13</sup> In April of 1992, just before the first elections were held, Rugova stated that “we would have no chance of successfully resisting the army. In fact the Serbs only wait for a pretext to attack the Albanian population and wipe it out. We believe it is better to do nothing and to stay alive than be massacred.”<sup>14</sup> This technique depended heavily on international support, and the fact that Serbia was preoccupied by conflicts elsewhere in Bosnia and Croatia.<sup>15</sup> This strategy of nonviolence would hold until 1996 when the first vestiges of organized violence began.<sup>16</sup> Rugova denounced this violence and denied any organization involved for as long as he could.<sup>17</sup>

One of the most important figures in Kosovo today is Hashim Thaçi. Having joined the KLA in 1993, he quickly rose up the ranks to become the KLA’s political director, and was instrumental in winning Kosovo Albanian support for the KLA within Kosovo that had hard to come by due to the KLA’s Marxist roots.<sup>18</sup> In retaliation for his involvement with the KLA, Thaçi was given a 10 year prison sentence in absentia in 1997, not a day of which he would ever serve. In his role in the KLA, he was able to win legitimacy and international recognition for the KLA in 1999.<sup>19</sup> Thaçi served as Prime Minister of Kosovo between 2008 and 2014, and has been President since 2016.

Slobodan Milošević rose to power in 1986, first as leader of the Serbian Communist Party, then in 1989 as President of Serbia. In 1991, then-President of Yugoslavia Dobra Ćosić described Milošević as “devoting himself bravely to the renewal of the Serbian state and for

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<sup>12</sup> Mulaj, *Resisting*, 1107.

<sup>13</sup> Pond, 102.

<sup>14</sup> Judah, *Will*, n.p.

<sup>15</sup> Mulaj, 1107; Judah, *Kosovo: What*, 70.

<sup>16</sup> Glenny, 652-653.

<sup>17</sup> Judah, 126.

<sup>18</sup> Mulaj, 1110; Özerdem, "From a 'Terrorist,'" 80.

<sup>19</sup> Özerdem, "From a 'Terrorist,'" 80.

the salvation of the Serbian people from new slavery and annihilation”<sup>20</sup> The renewed Serbian state that Milošević was striving for included a Kosovo under total Belgradian control. “By stirring a dormant but incendiary nationalism, he succeeded in rallying support for himself in the late 1980’s [...] Exercising carefully calculated control of the media and operating ruthlessly behind the scenes, Mr. Milošević established a cult of personality that struck fear into non-Serbs in Yugoslavia.”<sup>21</sup> Milošević was charged in 1999 by the *International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia* (ICTY) for war crimes during the Bosnian War, and later for crimes against humanity, genocide, and more war crimes in Croatia and Kosovo. He was never convicted as he died in 2006 whilst still on trial at the Hague.<sup>22</sup>

There are also five Westerners central to the events that brought the Kosovo War to an end. The first, Richard Holbrooke, was an American diplomat in Germany, Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Pakistan who was chief in the negotiations in Rambouillet.<sup>23</sup> William Jefferson Clinton was the US President during the Kosovo War, and Madeleine Albright was his Secretary of State.<sup>24</sup> Jacques Chirac was President of France at the time, and Tony Blair was the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.<sup>25</sup>

### **Historical Background**

To properly comprehend the current state of Kosovo, it would behoove one to understand in what historical context the current state of Kosovo exist. Kosovo has, for hundreds of years, been subjected to the rule of much larger entities culturally, ethnically, and religiously different from their own. The last century has featured almost constantly shifting circumstances all across the world, but was especially unstable for the citizens of Kosovo. This 96 year period from 1912 to 2008 can be separated into six distinct periods: Serbian rule 1912-1918, Yugoslavian rule 1918-1941, Nazi rule 1941-1945, Tito rule 1945-1969, Tito rule

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<sup>20</sup> Simons and Smale, “Slobodan Milosevic”; Judah, Kosovo: War, 59.

<sup>21</sup> Simons and Smale

<sup>22</sup> Simons and Smale

<sup>23</sup> McFadden, “Strong American,”.

<sup>24</sup> “Bill Clinton,” Wikipedia; “Madeleine Albright,” Wikipedia.

<sup>25</sup> Kettle and Boltanski, “The Odd Couple”.

1969-1980, post-Tito Yugoslav rule 1980-1989, Milošević rule 1989-1999, and Provisional Government and UN Administration 1999-2008.

Ottoman rule over Kosovo was finally brought to an end in 1912 when Serbia took control of much of Kosovo, as well as much of northern regions of Albania and Macedonia during the Balkan wars.<sup>26</sup> Following the First World War in 1918, Kosovo, and in fact the Balkans at large, were left in tatters.<sup>27</sup> It was at this time that the first vestiges of the then future Yugoslavia took shape in the Balkans. On December 1st, 1918, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was established enveloping the of modern-day Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Macedonia. As Yugoslavia would be for the next 72 years, the new kingdom was dominated by Serbia.<sup>28</sup> Their king, Alexander I, had after all been King of Serbia, and led from Belgrade.<sup>29</sup> As Tim Judah explains in *Kosovo: What Everyone Needs To Know*, during the early years of the Kingdom the authorities, who were “keen to diminish old regional cum ethnic loyalties a bid to create loyalty to something higher ... Yugoslavia itself,”<sup>30</sup> began a colonization of sorts in Kosovo. This colonization began by confiscating large swaths of land from Albanian families and giving it to families mostly from Serbia and Montenegro. Though there is no exact count, as many as 70,000 “colonists” lived in Kosovo during the interwar period. A more reliable 1939 estimate put the number around 59,300, 9.3% of the population. At this same time, tens of thousands of Muslims left Kosovo and other regions of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.<sup>31</sup> This swappage of Muslims for Serbs served to strengthen the legitimacy of Serbian claims to Kosovo.

This colonization process continued until it was halted by the Nazi invasion of Yugoslavia in April of 1941.<sup>32</sup> During the course of the Second World War, Kosovo was split into three and in turn occupied by three powers: Bulgaria in the East, Germany in the North, and the Italian puppet state in Albania in the West. Many of the Serbian colonists were either

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<sup>26</sup> Judah, *Kosovo: What*, 28.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*, 39.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid*, 41.

<sup>29</sup> Glenny, 405.

<sup>30</sup> Judah, 45.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid*, 45-46.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid*, 46.

fled to Belgrade, or were either killed or used for labor in Albania or in the German mines.<sup>33</sup> When Italian rule in Albania fell in 1943, the Germans swept in to take over, as they had to all around Afro-Eurasia.<sup>34</sup> As the Germans retreated northward during 1944, Albanian fighters chose not to pursue the Germans or occupy Kosovo. They instead returned to Albania to fight Serbian nationalist groups. Their return to Albania left the door open for Serbia to formally annex Kosovo in September of 1945.<sup>35</sup>

Following the war, Yugoslavia reunited. This time not as a kingdom, but rather as the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia under the dictatorial rule of Josip Broz Tito, who would lead the nation until his death more than thirty years later in 1980. The next 20 years would not be the most pleasant for the citizens of Kosovo, especially the Kosovo Albanians. Despite only representing 27.5% of the population according to the 1948 census, Serbs and Montenegrins dominated security forces and other relevant governmental organizations. Across Yugoslavia, peasant farmers, which made  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the population, were overlooked and abandoned by Tito and his regime. “Instead, the new communist leadership diverted political and economic resources into ambitious industrial projects while neglecting rural investment. (...) [The farmers’] job was to produce enough food to satisfy the needs of the growing proletariat.”<sup>36</sup> Villages and towns of Kosovo Albanians were repeatedly ransacked by security forces throughout the 1950’s.<sup>37</sup>

This time span did see some reforms in Kosovo’s favor however. In 1963, Kosovo was upgrade to an “autonomous province”. Repression of Albanianism within Kosovo decreased during the ’60’s, and as a result culture began to thrive, as much as culture can in a authoritarian communist society like Tito’s Yugoslavia. Student protests in 1969 managed to make Kosovo’s university, mainly for Albanians, independent from Belgrade’s university.<sup>38</sup> Kosovars, along with all Yugoslavs, were able to truly flourish during the 1970’s. The most important factor in this boom was the widespread availability of education.

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<sup>33</sup> Judah, 47.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid*, 48.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid*, 49.

<sup>36</sup> Glenny, 546.

<sup>37</sup> Judah, *Kosovo; What*, 51.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid*, 53.



Literacy in Kosovo rose 41.5% between 1948 and 1979. The availability of healthcare and vaccines skyrocketed, and the population boomed, for Albanians and Serbs alike.<sup>39</sup> Kosovan freedom within Yugoslavia peaked in 1974 with the new Yugoslav constitution. Under that new constitution, Kosovo became its own entity in all but name (it was still legally considered part of Serbia). Kosovo received their own government complete with police, parliament, and bank. They had their own vote on federal matters separate from Serbia, and had seats in the Serbian parliament. The whole system began to collapse upon Tito's death in May of 1980.<sup>40</sup> In March of the next year, a student protest at the university about long lunch lines devolved into one demanding Kosovan independence.<sup>41</sup> Police intervened, and in the ensuing violence the official death count reached 57. These protests precipitated the fall of civil liberties in Kosovo throughout the 1980's. Between March of '81 and November of '88, 584,373, one in every two, adults in Kosovo were arrested, interrogated, interned, or reprimanded.<sup>42</sup> During the late 1980's, and much to the chagrin of the Kosovars already having their rights slowly taken away, a new leader arose in Serbia: Slobodan Milošević.<sup>43</sup>

From the moment he took power in 1989, Milošević began stripping Kosovo of its autonomy. Whilst Belgrade took complete control Kosovo, it remained an autonomous province. Kosovo therefore retained its vote on the Yugoslavian Presidential Council, except now under the control of Serbia. After also locking down the Council vote of Montenegro and the other autonomous Serbian province Vojvodina, Milošević controlled four of the eight votes on the council. This near dominance of the Serbian Milošević within Yugoslavia caused great concern within the other four republics, and would be a contributing factor of their declarations of independence in 1991 and '92.<sup>44</sup>

The subsequent Yugoslav Wars contained many battles, massacres, and events, but none would effect Kosovo more than the 1995 Srebrenica Massacre during the Bosnian war. Srebrenica was a supposed UN safe area, one of several around Bosnia. In July of 1995

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<sup>39</sup> Judah, 55.

<sup>40</sup> Judah, 57; Glenny, 623.

<sup>41</sup> Glenny, 624; Pond, 101

<sup>42</sup> Mulaj, "Resisting an Oppressive," 1106; Glenny, 624.

<sup>43</sup> Glenny, 628.

<sup>44</sup> Judah, *Kosovo: What*, 67.

however, the UN troops stationed there were unable to hold the city against the Serbian army. After the city fell to the Serbs, 8372 Bosnian men and boys were massacred in the eleven days between the 11th and 22nd of July 1995.<sup>45</sup> The memory of Srebrenica was still fresh in the minds of NATO leaders four years later in 1999. Fearing a repeat of Srebrenica, NATO would not be as hesitant to commit forces to the defense of Kosovo as they had been in Bosnia.<sup>46</sup>

Kosovo's first independence declaration occurred on 21 September 1991. The declaration was of course deemed illegal by Milošević and the Serbian Government and despite their "independence" Kosovo was still strongly in Serbian control. Elections were held the next May, and the Serbs did nothing to prevent these elections. Balkan history expert Tim Judah explains the two reasons why in his book *Kosovo: What Everyone Needs to Know*: "The first was that Ibrahim Rugova and the LDK had embraced a philosophy of nonviolence. The second was that, simultaneous to these events, the siege of Sarajevo was beginning. Milošević had no reason to provoke conflict in Kosovo."<sup>47</sup> Following the elections, Rugova went on to establish a shadow government which functioned much like a real one, collecting taxes, reestablishing the Kosovo education curriculum, and providing healthcare and food assistance.<sup>48</sup> Over the course of the next few years, while Rugova was "in power" preaching nonviolent resistance and Serbia was occupied by other conflicts, there arose an organization that would change the nature of the conflict away from nonviolence: the KLA.

The KLA was not founded until 1993, but the seeds of radical nationalism among Kosovo Albanians had been planted for years. The student protests of 1981, the assassination of Kosovo Albanian activists in 1982 by the Yugoslav Secret Service, and Milošević' stripping of Kosovan autonomy and general crackdown in the late 1980's all served to harden the resolve of Kosovan nationalists. Kosovo against Serbian rule. Until 1997 the KLA remained fairly passive, only committing "the odd murder of Serbian officials and people considered to be collaborators of the Serbs."<sup>49</sup> The KLA was able to build much of their

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<sup>45</sup> Biserko, "The Srebrenica," 2; Pond, *Endgame*, 103.

<sup>46</sup> Judah, 68.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid*, 70.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid*, 72-74.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid*, 78.

armory in 1997, fueled by a sudden influx of weapons from arms depots raided during the collapse of Albania into anarchy.<sup>50</sup> Over the course of 1997, the KLA, under the political stewardship of now President Hashim Thaçi, began winning over the support of the Kosovo Albanian populous away from the nonviolent resistance preached by then President Ibrahim Rugova.

The first “battle” of the war occurred on the 5th of March 1998 when Serbian forces began an offensive into the Drenica Valley, the stronghold of the KLA, resulting in the deaths of 22 Albanians. Following this offensive, support for the KLA skyrocketed, with thousands joining the organization.<sup>51</sup> It bears mentioning that at this point NATO viewed the KLA as a terrorist organization, and was against Kosovan independence, fearing that Kosovan independence would inspire a similar movement among ethnic Albanians in nearby Macedonia. A war in Macedonia, right on the doorstep of NATO in Greece and Turkey, was seen by NATO powers as to be avoided at all costs.<sup>52</sup> The skirmishes continued until a ceasefire of sorts was organized in the fall of 1998 by American diplomat Richard Holbrooke. It broke in mid December, but it lasted long enough to allow the KLA, who had suffered large losses of the summer of '98 to rearm and recompose themselves, and win back some of the public support that had been lost.<sup>53</sup>

NATO powers made one last push for peace following a massacre in Rečak in which 45 people, including a woman and a child, were killed. All sides met in Rambouillet, France to try and agree to a deal.<sup>54</sup> The deal that was eventually worked out was headlined by Kosovo remaining an autonomous region of Serbia with Serbian troops stationed in the border areas, and a disarmed KLA, but NATO troops would be stationed there to guarantee this autonomy. This deal would last three years, at which time a “final settlement for Kosovo”

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<sup>50</sup> Judah, 80; Glenny, 654.

<sup>51</sup> Glenny, 655.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid*, 655-657.

<sup>53</sup> Judah, 83-84

<sup>54</sup> *ibid*, 84.

would be determined.<sup>55</sup> The Kosovars returned two weeks later headed by Thaçi, and agreed to sign the Rambouillet deal. Milošević however called NATO's bluff and refused.<sup>56</sup>

Clinton, Blair, and Chirac now had a decision to make. Blair took the most hardline stance, advocating for a full ground invasion. Chirac objected to this plan, and Clinton took a cautious position in between the two.<sup>57</sup> Not wanting to lose the credibility of NATO threats, and with the memory of Srebrenica fresh in their minds, the bombing began on March 24, 1999, with the admission that ground troops would not be used.<sup>58</sup> In a surprise to the NATO leaders, Milošević did not yield after a few days as they had expected. Instead, he had hundreds of thousands of people moved around the region to use them almost as human shields. The Serbian people rallied behind Milošević, who continued to commit atrocities during the bombing including massacres, as well as the forced deportation of 800,000 Albanians from Kosovo.<sup>59</sup> The bombing and NATO take over all but eliminated the need for the KLA, so they reduced to almost nothing.<sup>60</sup> After 78 days of bombing, Milošević finally succumbed on the 3rd of June 1999. The deal that Milošević was forced into included everything from Rambouillet, except Serbia would not be allowed any troops within the borders of Kosovo, only at key border crossings. Serbia was even unable to get a Russian contingent in Kosovo: all security would be provided by NATO.<sup>61</sup>

### **Current Situation**

The first NATO boots on the ground in Kosovo were British troops that moved in on June 12th 1999 to take over security as Serbian police forces. Whilst no organized conflict remained, NATO forces struggled to keep the peace as hundreds of thousands of people fled from, returned to and moved around Kosovo. Hundreds of people were murdered and houses burnt down by ordinary citizens during the Serbian Exodus and the return of Kosovo Albanians that had been forcibly removed during the bombing. Slowly, things began to

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<sup>55</sup> Glenny, 657; Judah, 85.

<sup>56</sup> Kuisel, *The French*, 257; Judah, 86.

<sup>57</sup> Kuisel, 258.

<sup>58</sup> Glenny, 657; Orenstein, *The Lands*, 15; Judah, 87; Pond, 103.

<sup>59</sup> Glenny, 658.

<sup>60</sup> Judah, 88.

<sup>61</sup> Sakwa, Hale, and White, *Developments in Russian*, 183; Judah, 90-91.

stabilize as the United Nations Interim Mission in Kosovo established itself and began governing. Beside physical security for residents, the UNMIK had to establish systems to accomplish mundane everyday things, like license plates for cars and secure Kosovo's customs area.<sup>62</sup>

Apart from a brief period of unrest in 2004, the UN backed by NATO has been relatively able to keep the peace. Lasting two days between 17-18 March 2004, the unrest was prompted by reports that several Albanian children had been drowned in a river.<sup>63</sup> In the end 27 were left dead, and hundreds wounded.<sup>64</sup> On 17 February 2008, Kosovo officially declared their independence from Serbia with Thaçi saying "We, the leaders of our people, democratically elected, through this declaration proclaim Kosovo an independent and sovereign state."<sup>65</sup>

Of the roughly 1,800,000 people currently residing in Kosovo, 88.8% of them identify themselves as Muslim, with 6.8% and 1.7% identifying as Orthodox Christian and Catholic respectively with the remaining 2.7% being "other".<sup>66</sup> Despite having an overwhelmingly Muslim populous, Kosovo does not act like the world's muslim majority nations. In fact, Kosovo tends to view the Arab world as backward and authoritarian. In his 2008 article "The (Really) Moderate Muslims of Kosovo", Michael J. Totten explains that the relatively stable situation in Kosovo, complete secularity in the government, and their distancing themselves from other Muslim nations together means that "Kosovars today stand as a rebuttal to the notion that Muslims will be forever shackled to authoritarian rule and wedded to war."<sup>67</sup> During the Kosovo War, Kosovo Albanians went so far to distance themselves from the Arab world that when Islamists from the Middle East offered aid, one resident said in an interview that "we rejected them. . . . This is not jihad. We are not fighting for religion here. We are fighting for our freedom, for ourselves, and for our families."<sup>68</sup> Aside from politics, Kosovo

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<sup>62</sup> Judah, *Kosovo: War*, 297-298.

<sup>63</sup> Judah, *Kosovo: What*, 110.

<sup>64</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe The Representative on Freedom of the Media, *The Role*.

<sup>65</sup> Bilefsky, "Kosovo Declares."

<sup>66</sup> "Europe: Kosovo.": "Dataset Comparison."

<sup>67</sup> Totten, n.p.

<sup>68</sup> Totten, n.p.

also differs from the worlds Muslim nations in its particular brand of Islam. Later in that same piece, Totten declares that

Kosovo's brand of Islam may be the most liberal in the world. I saw no more women there wearing conservative Islamic clothing—one or two per day at most—than I've seen in Manhattan. There is no gender apartheid even in Kosovo's villages. Alcohol flows freely in restaurants, cafés, and bars, where you'll see as many young women in sexy outfits as you'd find in any Western European country. Aside from the minarets on the skyline, there is no visible evidence that Kosovo is a Muslim-majority country at all. (...) Religion in Kosovo is a private matter, not a public one.<sup>69</sup>

Kosovo's differentiation from Arab nations does not stop with religion differences, but also in its relationship with other nations, most notably its relationship with Israel. Mostly spurred by Serbian support for the Palestinian state, Kosovo does not recognize Palestine, and Kosovan politicians rarely broach the topic. Ethnic Albanians in the region have historically been close with Jewish populations. During the second world war, "Albanians, Christian and Muslim alike, refused to surrender Jews to the Nazi authorities, and Jews were safer among Albanians than they were anywhere else in Nazi-controlled Europe."<sup>70</sup> This relationship continues to this day, though Israel has yet to recognize Kosovo's Independence.

In addition to a deep affinity for Israel, Kosovo is also staunchly pro-American. Much of this is rooted in the American (NATO) support of Kosovo during the war. America also had a hand in shaping the development of Kosovo postwar. Their love of America is so deep, that when, in 2004 at the height of the Iraq war, and only 10 countries had a positive view of American policy, Kosovo was at the top of the list with 88%. Even in the age of Trump, a 2018 poll had support for America at 75%. Some support even goes as far as, when someone mentioned that Kosovo was a European Country, a Kosovo woman replied "We aren't European. ... We're American."<sup>71</sup> Kosovo litters itself with American imagery. Kosovars fly the American Flag all around Kosovo, and its capital, Priština, has the second largest Statue of Liberty replica in the world.<sup>72</sup> Along Bill Clinton Boulevard in Priština is a 10ft high statue

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<sup>69</sup> Totten, n.p.

<sup>70</sup> Totten, n.p.

<sup>71</sup> Totten, n.p.

<sup>72</sup> Dezfuli, "51st State", n.p.

of the former president, as well as a clothing shop named for former Secretary of State, and Bill's wife, Hillary Rodham Clinton. Next to Bill Clinton Blvd.'s intersection with George Bush Boulevard is a square with a statue to another former Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright. Elsewhere in Kosovo is a national road named for former Delaware Attorney General and son of former Vice President, Joe Biden.

### **Conclusion**

Kosovo is unique among European countries, former Yugoslavian states, and other Muslim nations. This uniqueness has been developed through a repetitive cycle of conflict, temporary resolution, and more conflict.

The Kosovo conflict...

Over the past 100 years, there has been little-to-no fighting or violence in Kosovo along religious lines, but rather it was ethnic distinctions divided the country. Whilst it is true that the KLA and other Kosovo Albanians burned Orthodox Churches over the course of the Kosovo War, it was not because they were Christian, or even Orthodox Churches. It was because they were **Serbian** Churches. Likewise, Serbs burned down Mosques not because they were Mosques, but because they were **Albanian** Mosques. Religious institutions suffered not because of their religious affiliations, but rather their ethnic ones. In fact, Albanian Muslims in Kosovo have great relations with the nation's small minority of Albanian Catholics. In Albania proper, the Muslim majority even get along well with the 20% of Albanians who are Orthodox Christian. Religion plays such a minuscule role in the animosity throughout the region and in the everyday lives of Kosovars that "Many Kosovars are starting to convert "back" to Christianity,"<sup>73</sup> as they do not wish to be Muslim, but also do not wish for the connotation that is perceived to come with the label of atheist Muslim.<sup>74</sup>

As far as Kosovo's future is concerned, the young nation cannot make any meaningful progress on the world stage without widespread recognition. Since its declaration of independence in 2008, the international community has been split over whether to recognize Kosovan sovereignty. Belgrade and its allies in Moscow and Beijing have successfully kept Kosovo out of NATO, the EU, Interpol, the UN, and several other international organizations.

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<sup>73</sup> Totten, n.p.

<sup>74</sup> Totten, n.p.

Although the situation has been relatively stable as of late, ethnic tensions run high, and violence is ready to break out at any moment.



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