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STUDY GUIDE

Agenda Item:

Agenda Item :

The Kosovo War



Model United Nations Bilkent University 2026

MUNBU

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1. Letters

Letter from the Secretary-General

Esteemed Participants and Honored Guests,

It is a profound honor to extend my most formal welcome to you as we convene for the 13th edition of the Bilkent University Model United Nations Conference, MUNBU'26. My name is Zehra Yıldırım, and I'm a senior year law student at İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University. As the Secretary-General of MUNBU 2026, I welcome you not only to a forum of debate but to a tradition of academic and diplomatic excellence that has defined our institution for over a decade.

The art of diplomacy is one of patience, precision, and profound responsibility. My own commitment to this discipline has been forged over nine years of active engagement within the international circuit—a journey that has evolved alongside my formal education in the Faculty of Law. These years have instilled in me a steadfast belief that the resolution of global conflict lies in the mastery of legal frameworks and the cultivation of refined statesmanship. It is this standard of rigor and intellectual integrity that I am committed to upholding throughout our deliberations.

Bilkent University stands as a bastion of higher learning, dedicated to the pursuit of truth and the development of future leaders. It is our distinct privilege to host you within an environment that reflects the visionary principles of the founder of our Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who declared: *"Peace at Home, Peace in the World."* Guided by this transcendent ideal, we are committed to providing you with the highest level of hospitality, ensuring that your experience is marked by the grace, professionalism, and mutual respect that our University and the Republic of Türkiye represent on the international stage. MUNBU Conferences remain a premier platform where the complexities of the global order are met with the sharpest minds of our generation. As we embark on this 13th session, I invite you to embrace the gravity of your roles. Let us ensure that our discourse remains as sophisticated as the challenges we face, and that our hospitality remains as enduring as our commitment to justice.

I wish you all fruitful debates and a joyful conference. Should you have any inquiries, please do not hesitate to contact me via my email, zehray@ug.bilkent.edu.tr

Best Regards,

Zehra YILDIRIM

Secretary General of MUNBU'26

Letter from the Co-Under-Secretary-General

Acclaimed members of the Kosovo and Yugoslav Cabinet,

I am Akın Kızıltepe, a second-year Mechanical Engineering student at METU. In this year's rendition of MUNBU, we will be simulating the Kosovo War, wherein you will step into the shoes of higher figures of the time. You will be responsible for resolving the conflict, be it in favour of one side or the other. The setting may be hard to grasp at first glance, though we hope that the following contents of the document and your personal research will be more than enough for you to handle it. On one side, we have the Yugoslav leadership tasked with preserving national sovereignty and security, whereas the Kosovo Liberation Army/Democratic League of Kosovo would navigate through means of self-determination, whilst preserving their legitimacy in the eyes of the international community.

I would additionally like to show my gratitude for the people responsible for this very committee and the conference itself. Starting off with Berkay Akpınar, I have to show my utmost appreciation for his support in the creation of this committee, even after a year has passed, during which we also held the privilege of forming the Crisis Committee of MUNBU'25. Moving on, I'd like to thank Özgür Efe Eroğlu; without his contributions and support for the committee, Berkay and I would have undoubtedly had an immensely more difficult time. Next, my sincere thanks go to Zehra Yıldırım and her deputy, Oğuz Efe Arı, for their unwavering work in the academic aspect of this conference, and Aslı Erdoğan and her deputy, Ali İnceyavuz for their significant efforts in managing the organisation aspect of this conference.

Lastly, if you have further inquiries regarding the committee, be it the procedure, structure or even how crisis committees function, feel free to email me at akinkiziltepe46@gmail.com. I would much rather lend my support to you beforehand, instead of you going through the conference in a confused and distressed state.

Sincerely,

Akın Kızıltepe

Under-Secretary-General

Joint Crisis Committee - Kosovo War

Letter from the Co-Under-Secretary-General

Acclaimed members of the Kosovo and Yugoslav Cabinet,

I am Berkay Akpınar, a junior History student at Middle East Technical University. In this year's rendition of MUNBU, we will be simulating the Kosovo War. As the delegates, you will be placing yourself into the perspective of the Serbian and Albanian officials as the 20th century closes, and as bloodshed will determine the fate of the lands known to man as Kosovo, or will it?

The Kosovo issue emerges from the last remaining remnant of the Eastern Bloc in the European continent, Yugoslavia. Right after the conflicts in its Northern half ended after a series of massacres and killings from every side, the Kosovar Albanians also rebelled against their former overlords for the last 85 years, the Serbians. Through following both diplomatic and military means, the Republic of Kosova and the Kosova Liberation Army clashed with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as Belgrade tried to recollect the pieces of its lost empire and national pride, both lost in the Balkan wars.

I have a few thanks before ending, starting off with Akın Kızıltepe, I have to show my utmost appreciation for his support in the creation of this committee, even after a year has passed, during which we also held the privilege of forming the Crisis Committee of MUNBU'25. Moving on, I'd like to thank Özgür Efe Eroğlu; without his contributions and support for the committee, Akın and I would have undoubtedly had an immensely more difficult time. Next, my sincere thanks go to Zehra Yıldırım and her deputy, Oğuz Efe Arı, for their unwavering work in the academic aspect of this conference, and Aslı Erdoğan and her deputy, Ali İnceyavuz for their significant efforts in managing the organisation aspect of this conference.

If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact me at anytime at berkayakpinar136@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Berkay Akpınar

Under-Secretary-General

Joint Crisis Committee - Kosovo War

Letter from the Academic Assistant

Acclaimed members of the Kosovo and Yugoslav Cabinet,

I am Özgür Efe Eroğlu, your acting academic assistant. I am a first-year management student at İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University. For the duration of the committee, you will be expected to be the actors of one of the most bloody conflicts of our modern times. I, your acting crisis team members and your USGs will be helping you along the way in any way we can, as the primary objective for everyone here is to learn from it. If you have any questions regarding the committee, you may contact me at erogluefe10@gmail.com.

As of writing this, I have many to thank for both this conference and this committee. I would like to thank Akın Kızıltepe and Berkay Akpınar for both including me in this effort to present an excellent experience and an agenda item, as I have previously held this issue close to my heart, considering it was a topic I had personal inquiry in. I would like to thank the acting Secretary General Zehra Yıldırım and the acting Deputy Secretary General Oğuz Efe Arı for their works regarding the conference as they have prepared an incredible conference for all of us to enjoy along with the acting Directory General Aslı Erdoğan and her acting Deputy Directory General Ali İnceyavuz.

In these simulatory sessions, it will be up to you to decide the fate of an entire nation and its people as you will be the executive members of these said nations. The course for you will not be clear, and you will have to navigate it with help from other delegates and act as a cabinet. May you have an exciting and fun conference.

Sincerely,

Özgür Efe Eroğlu

Honorary Academic Assistant

Joint Crisis Committee - Kosovo War

2. Historical Background

From Kingdom to Socialist Federation (1918–1963)

2.1.1. Brief History of Yugoslavia before 1943

The roots of the lands which fell upon the area that had belonged to Yugoslavia during the 1918-2003 period were shared by a variety of different people from diverse ethnic backgrounds that included Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Bosniaks, and many other peoples. Throughout history, after the Ottoman Empire's expansion into the Balkans and the conquest of the Austro-Hungarian Empire of these lands, these lands and their imperial patrons made sure that their national identities were assimilated or ditched by the people themselves for benefits during trade or everyday life, as is the case with the Bosnian people, who resided in the Ottoman-controlled region. These instances and their respective variants for the other ethnic groups had major roles in their religious identities being formed over the course of history.

The collapse of the Austro-Hungarian empire after the first world war has presented an opportunity to these ethnic groups who were already not very content with their subjugated way of life as they now understood the importance of nationalism and witnessed to the rising nations after this ideology was brought into the world stage by the French Revolution in 1789 as its effects were still very clearly present within the memory of the Great powers of Europe, Namely those of Germany, Italy and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This great power vacuum gave rise to a new nation by the name of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in many sources. This diverse Kingdom was led by a Serbian dynasty that had the name Serbian Karađorđević dynasty. (The Royal Family of Serbia, 2012)

Undoubtedly, there were many problems right off the bat, such as that of extreme economic struggle, inward violence, cultural differences, and disagreements over the way of governance. This was mainly because the Croat and Slovene peoples were quite opposed to the power that had centralised in Belgrade, which the Serbian populi were not against. This was all because the Constitution had regarded the Serbs as above the other ethnic groups with a minor difference. The Kingdom of Yugoslavia came into being after the events that occurred in 1929. King Alexander I abolished the constitution, dissolved parliament, and later on renamed the state to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in an effort to strengthen the nationalistic unity of the country that was initially in mind when this nation was founded. However,

against the authoritarian measures taken by the government, this wind of nationalism had started to create mass division between the different groups. The contents of these measures fell short as political factioning and an overall dissatisfaction with the monarchy and the status quo were rapidly rising amongst all of these groups due to the mismanagement of the nation during the 1930's.

The events that had taken the world by storm of violence during the 1940's dramatically altered the course of this nation. World War 2 had reached the country in 1941, and it was quickly dismantled by the powerful armies of Nazi Germany, fascist Italy and their allies. The country was divided amongst these powers, and collaborative puppet regimes were installed to be able to control the peoples of these lands. It was under these collaborative puppet regimes that the area witnessed widespread resistance, especially from leftist groups, arguably due to the right-leaning ideals of the oppressive government. Measures were most notably taken by the communist-led Partisans and the royalist Chetniks, which resulted in an extremely brutal and violent civil war. When calendars turned, the fighting had turned in favour of the communist partisans led by a notable figure named Josip Broz Tito. After this series of events, Yugoslavia The former subjugated peoples, the later kingdom and now the new and reformed Yugoslav Federation was built upon the nationalistic identity that was first introduced to this region by the former king Alexander I.



Map of the provinces of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (1920-1922)

2.1.2. Partisan Victory and the AVNOJ Decisions (1941-1945)

In 1941 The rising tensions gave birth to many dissident groups, such as that of the Communist partisans under the guidance of Tito, which, by now, were occupying massive landmasses and creating parallel political institutions to upend the situation the government was in. However, the ideas of this group had never been seen before in the history of this region, as they were united through their differences and were not fully integrated. The partisans pushed a multinational and anti-fascist ideology that later allowed them to gain traction in their efforts and the support of the people. These moves allowed the state to seemingly experience a cultural and economic boom. However, unlike how things were seemingly going for the Yugoslavian state, in reality, all of this was a time bomb, considering most of the economy was government subsidised and borrowed money from foreign powers. Although this facade would continue until the 80s, the end of these times would bring about some of the worst events humanity has borne witness to in the near past. It would be this economic condition itself that would give rise to nationalism and the rise of a particular name after the death of Tito, Slobodan Milosevic.



Josip Broz Tito smoking a cigarette.

The most iconic and arguably the most important organisation during this time period was the AVNOJ, the Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia. The aim of the institution was to act as a legislative and representative body of this anti-fascist and multinational movement. This institution's moment to shine was undoubtedly when the second AVNOJ session in Jajce in November 1943 took place. It was during this session that the AVNOJ declared itself the supreme governing body of the nation and also remarked that

the past government, which was led by King Peter II, was no longer recognised. The AVNOJ declared that the state would follow a federal structure, thus granting every federal unit the same rights and regulations in an effort to resolve long-standing national tensions.

In the following years (1944-1945), the Allied powers were slowly regaining their footholds in key areas and clearly making notable progress in the liberation of Europe from the hands of fascist and nazi occupations. These revelations were allowing the regional governments to regain control, just as it was the case with the Yugoslav state. When the war ended, the AVNOJ was free to implement these drastic changes into its federation. These immense changes and relief from their oppressors outlined a challenging but clearer future for the brand-new Yugoslav state. These transformations have now granted the state the foundations of new ideologies and policies.

The new federative state now consisted of 6 different regions, those being Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Macedonia. However, it would be impossible to ignore the border friction between the said regions, as, regardless of the idea to create a unified socialist state that would balance the diverse ethnic and national groups within its borders, tensions between parties were undeniably causing trouble for the nation. In the meanwhile the governing body in Belgrade was attempting to keep these 6 states as equals and not favour one over the other during the partitioning of the land between them.

The internal politics of the federation were shaped by this particular conflict that continued to brew throughout 1945 to 1948. The federal structure was continually refined, and the central government worked to strengthen the unity of the republics, even as ethnic and regional differences led to friction many times between many groups.



The salon, this session was held in (modernised)

2.1.3. Establishment of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia and Tensions of Internal Borders (1945-1948)

In the troublesome structure of Yugoslavia, the Constitution of 1946 states that Kosovo was granted a limited form of autonomy. However, this was under the rules that it remained strictly subordinate to the Serbian republican authorities and, as a result, to the central authorities in Belgrade. This said, autonomy was largely administrative and far from political liberty. The region had no independence in matters of policymaking, nor a say in legal matters outside its borders. Key elements like security, economic planning, education policy, and judicial authority were controlled by Serbia or the federal state. This resulted in a dichotomy where the region had a unique problem within its hands. On one side, the area was technically free and had autonomy. Though, on the other hand, the region was fully dependent on the Serbian federal unit and the federation itself to function. At times, the governance of this region was particularly troublesome as a consensus needed to be reached when the decisions called for the Yugoslav state to make the call, and the bureaucratic steps were sometimes simply too many. To combat this, local institutions were established, and these institutions were closely regulated and governed by the communist party.

This communist party, which was later renamed as the communist league of Yugoslavia, had immense influence upon the region as all of the decisions were made through them, and the organs of the government, which they had to get approval from, were also, just like how the entire country was, under their verdict. Party structures in the region were dominated by Serbian and Montenegrin individuals in the following years of the war, partly due to concerns about loyalty and political reliability among the mainly Albanian population, many of whom had been politically radicalised and polarised before and during the war due to extreme conditions and instability. This immense political and racial tension persisted throughout the 1940s and 50s and it was due to this instability and tension that the federative units were slowly growing dissatisfied with the ongoing proceedings of the state and how it was all managed.

2.1.4. Kosovo as an Autonomous Region in the Republic of Serbia (1945-1953)

The area was the least economically developed compared to the rest of the federation,

and it was due to this that it required much more care. The region consisted mostly of rural areas with minimal industry and could not benefit the rest of the nation. The attempts made at bringing the economy up to date were mostly deemed insufficient and could be classified as lacking adequate proportions. These economic structures were mainly opposed by the locals, who were primarily made up of Albanian peasants. The development that was observed in the region was ultimately far too little, far too late, and the rural area now had no relief effect. The economic disparities were intensified as times turned more dire and development was still lacking. This added to the list of problems that were causing division between the federal states.

By the early 1950s, Yugoslavia began to reassess its internal structures in response to domestic challenges and its break with the Soviet bloc. The 1953 constitutional reforms marked the beginning of a gradual shift toward greater decentralisation and workers' self-management. Although Kosovo's status did not change immediately, these reforms laid the groundwork for later developments, including its eventual elevation to an autonomous province with expanded rights in the decades that followed.

Immediately after the Second World War, Kosovo presented an intricate problem regarding its demographic composition. The majority of these Serbian subjugated peoples were of Albanian descent, with strong Serbian and Montenegrin minorities present as well as smaller communities of Turks, Roma and others. This said Albanian population was predominantly occupied with economic means that were related to their lifestyle that revolved around living in the rural areas of Kosovo. The Albanian people had high birth rates and extremely rigid social structures that were backwards compared to the rest of the federation. In contrast, the Serbian and Montenegrin populations were easier to come across in the government's institutes and offices. This divergence created a mismatch between the ethnic ratio of the population and the representation of each group. This was slowly leading the way onto a path that would soon become destructive, as the Albanian populace was showing extreme discontent with the current situation, while also not taking part in education, although the socialist government had made efforts to better the situation with literacy rates. Formally, there were efforts across the nation to boost this rate; however, in Kosovo, the real picture painted a much different reality than what the state painted. Kosovo was, although minimal efforts were made, the least developed part of the Yugoslav federation and the situation had barely changed. This was all due to a shortage of teachers, textbooks in Albanian and inadequate state investment as Kosovo was struggling to develop. All of this resulted in the

right to education being left out of the equation, as the people had no access to it, nor did the state have the means to supply it. As a result, education became a central grievance and a key factor in later demands for expanded autonomy and cultural rights.

The region Kosovo resides in has been home to many cultures and peoples over the ages and witnessed the rise and fall of many great nations and empires, reflecting centuries of religious, ethnic, and historical interaction. This also included the Orthodox Serbs and many other minorities within the area that were causing tensions. Although this all held great historical, mystical and spiritual importance, it was now all but a handicap for the new and extremely diverse Yugoslav state. This culture had now constricted the Albanian population to live under strict social rules and made them insistent on their unmodernized ways of life.

It could be argued that all of these aspects combined show a picture of unsettling friction between nationalities which were presumed brothers under the same flag by the communist dictator Tito. These qualities compiled together present a picture that clearly shows that during the 1945-50s, the region was highly volatile, although relatively civil for the time being. The political trajectory of these peoples were slowly being revealed to the whole state and through it to the world. Persistent inequalities in education and political representation, combined with the sensitive handling of cultural heritage, reinforced feelings of exclusion among large segments of the population, meaning that the rest of the nation was developing faster, industrialising faster, growing richer than Kosovo and was getting more representation.

2.1.5. Conflict with Stalin and Problems of Internal Security under Ranković (1948-1963)

The soviet block was almost always under paranoia, considering that every state present was either puppeted or economically dependent on the soviet union, and this alone caused many nations to resort to inefficient ways of development. Yugoslavia did not want to be a part of this bunch because the communism that Tito was moulding for the country did not require the level of obedience that had to be ensured from the workers. One of the most important areas where this division was present is that of the roles of the workers within the workplace. The Titoist communism argued that the workers should have a say in matters such as production, exports and even salary. This minor ideological difference was seen as distrust

and betrayal by the Stalin led soviet union, as it was expected that their allies listened to all of their orders word for word and did not deviate from them. All of this. It was this anticipation of blind trust that the soviets could not find in The Tito led Yugoslav state. The conflict with Stalin created a climate of political insecurity. The Yugoslav Communist Party viewed any opposition, real or perceived, as a potential threat to state survival. This perception justified the expansion of state repression and surveillance, particularly against those suspected of pro-Soviet sympathies. It was anticipated in the Yugoslav nation that the Soviet Union had implanted spies and was preparing for an uprising to topple the current government and replace it with a Stalinist one, which could be easily puppeted and steered into more acceptable ideological areas. This fear of espionage leads to many individuals losing their jobs and sometimes even their lives. For these instances, torture was a common practice, and instances like these scared both the public into submission and built up resentment towards the state and in the meanwhile negatively affected the already tense government. This diversion with Stalin created major political insecurity for both parties.

An important figure of the state was the close associate of Tito, Aleksandar Ranković, who had the crucial role of being the head of state security services (UDBA) during this period. Aleksandar Ranković had immense political control. He advocated a highly centralised and compulsory way of ensuring internal security, much to the dismay of the citizens. This way, the state would be able to monitor and know every person and their potential affiliations. This much surveillance had upset the population, which, by now, was already weary of the wrongdoings of the state. The most notorious symbol of this repression was the prison camp on Goli Otok, which had become this symbol due to the extremely harsh conditions of the camp. The camp went on to become a symbol of oppression and fear.

The internal security policies put into place by the state contributed to the already diminishing decentralisation efforts while also putting repression first rather than political accommodation. This was quite damaging to regions like Kosovo, where there was a bouquet of national and social issues that were internally damaging the region. Although the actions of Ranković were meaningful for the consolidation of Tito's authority and the continued existence of the Yugoslav state, the slowly deteriorating trust in the state had proven to harm internal relations.

Kosovo was effected from these policies due to its unique ethnic composition, border location and its accessibility from the perspective of foreign powers. This is why the region

was often accused of Albanian nationalism, soviet symphatism and due to both these accusations, separatism. The heavy presence of security forces and the dominance of Serbian officials in the administrative spots of the offices had worsened this distrust that was growing. The policies later grew and led to more major restrictions like that of expression, movement or participation in politics and all of these were done in the name of achieving a unified Kosovo, which was seen briefly because all opposition has now subdued. The larger implications that were observed due to the enactment of these policies were the delay of meaningful decentralisation that Tito wanted to achieve.



Political Map of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

Decentralisation Efforts and the Constitution of 74' (1963-1974)

2.1.6. Reforms on the Constitution and Enlargement of Autonomy (1963-1969)

From the early years of the 1960s, Yugoslavia started to go through a slow but very admirable process that overturned the country's political and economic standing towards a decentralised one, which has been the goal of Tito since the beginning. All of these changes

later on resulted in the adoption of the 1974 constitution. This period saw the slow rise of this brand new decentralised economy that had started to depart from its earlier roots, which were built on ideological reforms rather than sound economic policies.

This process saw 2 constitutions that were newly written and adopted. The 1963 constitution of the SFRY was a start towards a new era of reform and redefinition from a centralised state to a socialist self-managing federation. This transition was strictly economic, educational and at times cultural, allowing the authoritarian parts of the government to still exist within areas such as local authorities, foreign policy and defence. This was accomplished to a great extent, considering how the United States, which was leading the capitalist bloc, would later go on to describe Yugoslavia as the ideal social state. An important event was when the constitution acknowledged the growing effect of the republics and autonomous provinces, but this event later on went on to not hold any meaning as the question was left unanswered, and the balance of federal unity and authoritative republican beliefs clashed, and the debates would not end.

2.1.7. Kosovo's Status as an Autonomous Socialist Province (1963-1974)

During the year 1965, there were many economic reforms that were put into place. All of this was to accelerate the rate at which the state was decentralising, and to achieve this, the state started to reduce their control over the policies put into place by the individual constituent states. It was also due to this that states like Slovenia and Croatia, which were better off compared to the other minor bodies of the federation, started to benefit massively from these decentralising changes. These changes and this benefit were what slowly tore the country apart. The initially minor differences were starting to show how deeply they have seeped into the economic aspects of the country and how inherent these differences have become. The state overall was doing marginally better compared to its past and was now experiencing an economic uprising.

A major turning point occurred in 1966 with the removal of Aleksandar Ranković from power. Accused of abuses of authority and excessive centralism, Ranković's dismissal signalled a shift away from repression and toward political liberalisation. This development had significant implications for Kosovo, where security policies were relaxed, and demands for greater cultural and political rights gained momentum.

Following Ranković's fall, Kosovo experienced expanded use of the Albanian language, growth in educational institutions, and increased representation of Albanians in local governance. These changes reflected the broader decentralising trend and heightened expectations for autonomy.

2.1.8. State of Demography, Education and Cultural Properties in Kosovo

Various Crises and Rise of Nationalism (1980-1989)

The 9-year period between 1980 and 1989 was a period of a decisive turning point in the nation's history and its socialist standing. The era following that of relative stability under the rule of Tito, the federation has now entered a phase marked by political fragmentation, economic issues and an incredible amount of rising nationalism that is slowly shredding the country apart. The structural weaknesses embedded in the system, which were mostly put into place from the constitution established in 1974, were showing their effect on the local population. The tensions rising in Kosovo due to a desire for separation from the Serbian state were also a focal point of unrest politically and gave rise to a new bout of ethnic conflict within the region.

2.1.9. Death of Tito and the Decline of the Economy (1980-1987)

The death of Broz Tito in May of 1980 was a key factor in the nation's overall decline; it was the existence of a central figure of the state that had a unifying role for Yugoslavia. In his absence, the leadership transformed into a collective presidency, which had no legitimacy and decisiveness that was required to shorten the red tape and to deal with the enormous crises.

While Yugoslavia suffered through losing this unifying figure, it was also facing an immense economic downturn as well as rising foreign debt, which was causing inflation and affecting the standards of living and employment levels. These downturns affected all republics but were especially harsh on underdeveloped regions of the state, such as Kosovo. Wealthier republics increasingly resisted financial transfers, while poorer areas demanded greater federal support. The decline of the country's economy of the country gave way to a new wave of nationalism, as it was an ideology that the people could unite under during the

harsh conditions. The result of these conditions was that the regions were now at risk of separation as the wealthier regions were hesitant to help out with the work of the less developed nations. The result of this was a rise in nationalist and separatist narratives, as it was used as a political tool and was used to blame the other states.

2.1.10. The 81' Protests for Kosovo and Albanian-Serbian Frictions (1981-1984)

In March of 1981, protests erupted in Kosovo, which initially were led by university students. This was a large-scale outcry due to the worsening living conditions and the unemployment crisis. What started as a specific event for a specific issue later on spread over to other troubling topics as the protest slowly started to include calls for the issue of Kosovo's independence and broader political demands. The leadership saw these demands as an uprising and a threat to constitutional order. It was due to this that the response was organised brutally to crush this so-called uprising, and a state of emergency was declared. Students and locals who were protesting or simply happened to be in the area were arrested or fired from their jobs. The protests were given the label of a counter-revolutionary, extreme nationalist and sometimes even fascist uprising. These events further deepened the bleeding wound that was the Serbian-Albanian tensions within the country. Many Albanians saw these arrests and firings as a warning sign to the sovereignty and autonomy of their region. Although many Serbs perceived these events as threats to their national unity and a sign of separatism therefore started to regard Albanians worse and worse. The media coverage and the politicians were also framing these incidents and the question of Kosovo as a national problem, which inevitably led to the polarisation of the population.

2.1.11. The Anti-Bureaucratic Revolution and Rise of Milošević in Serbia (1987-1989)

By the mid-1980s, the dissatisfaction within Serbia regarding the federal system and Kosovo had been intensified, and this discontent was where Slobodan Milošević could base his ideology and propaganda on and rise as the dominant political figurehead within the League of Communists of Serbia. The rallies and political manoeuvres led by him were regarded as the Anti-bureaucratic Revolution and capitalised on the corruption and

inefficiency of the system. The decentralised structure of the nation was also not in good nature to the people as it gave them grounds to blame the core of this federation, which was the constitution and its inner workings. The angered public started to blame the federal system and Yugoslavia as a whole, and were starting to think that nationalism could present a solution to this conundrum.

What Milošević was arguing in his rallies was that the Republic of Serbia was disadvantaged in the present structure, and its authority over its autonomous provinces was underutilised and at times blocked because of this. These rallies gave grounds to his nationalistic ideals and created discourse, particularly on the protection of the minority of Serbs within the borders of Kosovo. It was through this that he gained widespread support from the Serbians everywhere in the Federation. These attempts resulted in his ability to consolidate power within Serbian lands and replace the leadership that was present in Montenegro, Kosovo and Vojvodina with some of his known allies.

2.1.12. Revocation of Kosovo's Autonomy (1988-1989)

All of these events up until the year 1988 had led to the consideration of the federation revoking Kosovo's autonomy. The constitution had not allowed such an act at the time, so the cabinet came up with many amendments which initially reduced Kosovo's self-governing capacity, transferring these powers to the Serbian republican government instead. Some powers that were handed over include, but are not limited to: security, judiciary, economic policy and educational materials. This process came along with immense political pressure from both the local Serbs and those who were within the republican government's borders. There were many arrest warrants issued and put into place regarding many Albanian leaders of Kosovo, and soon afterwards, the region saw security forces deployed for concerns over Serbian security. Despite many strikes, like that of the Trepča miners' strike, the new amendments were adopted. From the Albanian perspective, this was the lobotomization of the autonomy that was guaranteed by the constitution of 1974. This revocation was grounds for the final form of altered relations between Kosovo, Serbia and the Yugoslav state. The erosion of constitutional rights and the possibility of these relations being fixed were now near zero, and the states were nearing war. The next point in their relations was precisely that: war.

Disintegration and the Question of Kosovo (1990-1995)

The period between 1990 and 1995 for the region was one of the disintegration of the socialist Yugoslav state and marked by new nations that were separated from it, rising to take its place. The rise of the said states was not smooth, nor were they peaceful. Especially the rise of the Slovenian, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatian states was particularly more violent compared to all the other nations within the region. Kosovo, however, remained central to this unresolved tension within the Yugoslav state as its future was still a question that was unanswered. During this period, Kosovo went through systematic political exclusion and the development of the new Albanian institutions parallel to its neighbouring states. These events laid the groundwork for the armed conflict that would soon follow and would cause many to lose their lives and quality of life.

2.1.13. Evolution of Multi-Party Politics in Serbia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1990-1992)

During the years 1990 to 1992, the Yugoslav state saw the one-party systems fall and the introduction of multi-party elections. The Serbs chose Slobodan Milošević and his party SPS due to their incredible rhetoric that appealed to the nationalistic demands of the region. The constitution has been changed to accommodate a new central authority in Serbia that formalised the reduction of autonomy for regions such as Kosovo and Vojvodina.

Following the separation of most countries in the federative state, Serbia and Montenegro proclaimed that the new state of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia would be formed in 1992. The FRY was the claimed continuation of the former Yugoslav state; it was not recognised by international bodies or other countries as the real successor state. This was because the electoral process was mainly controlled and allegedly even tampered with by the new Serbian central government, and the regions were not fully politically pluralised. This also resulted in Kosovo's representation.

In 1991, Kosovo Albanians organised an unofficial referendum declaring Kosovo a sovereign republic, followed by the proclamation of the so-called Republic of Kosovo. This new RoK was not recognised by almost any state, nor was it recognised by any international institutions. This ultimately served as a symbolic gesture of the fact that they had a claim to their self-rule and the rejection of Serbian authority.



Political Map of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

2.1.14. Existence of Kosovo and Albanian Parallel Administrations and Rugova's Republic (1990-1995)

As a result of the revocations that occurred during these years and the immense political repression, The Albanians in Kosovo started to create institutions in parallel throughout the early 1990s under the guidance of Ibrahim Rugova and his Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK). What ensued on the Albanian front was that of a strategy based on non-violent resistance that was aimed towards international support and preserving social cohesion. The declaration of a new republic of Kosovo was a part of this plan. The institutions established were based on education, healthcare, taxation and political representation that operated outside and independently from Serbian institutions. Language schools were a polarising action performed by the Kosovo Albanians that also functioned as private housing units. These institutions were all made in an effort to create ethnic cohesion and to create a collective identity while presenting a case of resistance towards the international institutions. (International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia [ICTY], n.d.)

2.1.15. Wars in the Balkans (Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina) and Impact on Kosovo (1991-1995)

During these times, the Kosovians and Serbs were not alone in their troubles, and the

Balkans were going through bloody times as there was war in the states of Slovenia (1991), Croatia (1991-95) and Bosnia-Herzegovina (1992-95). These wars were the main interest of the international institutions that the Kosovo Albanian resistance was trying to capture the attention of, and the same events were also consuming the political and military resources of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Although Kosovo had no conflict within their borders, it was massively affected by these occurrences, as it was reinforcing the security concerns of Serbs and their interest in internal stability under a nationalistic shade. Kosovo was slowly becoming a bigger problem for the Serbs as their goals for an ethnically united Serbia were also in danger as the Serbs in Kosovo were seemingly in danger according to their nationalistic ideas. The non-violent rule put into place by Rugova was also eroding as belief in a peaceful solution was now experiencing an all-time high scepticism. This was the direct result of the new FRY intervening in the war in Bosnia, which was frustrating to both parties involved.

Economically, Kosovo was immensely affected by the new sanctions put into place by the Serbian authorities, resulting in a further rise in unemployment, exacerbating the present poverty and social isolation. These sanctions that were issued were resulting in the further radicalisation of the Albanian population, as now the younger generations no longer saw the peaceful option to these problems as viable.

2.1.16. Influence of International Actors and Monitoring of Human Rights

Throughout the early 1990s, the international actors were slowly showing signs of interest in Kosovo and increased their involvement in the events. There were many attempts to monitor the situation. The monitoring of human rights in the region was important as organisations such as the UN, OSCE, Council of Europe, and many other NGOs were now documenting systematic violations, including many cases of racism, arrests with no clear incentive and a suppression of education along with political restrictions. In contrast to all of the extensive amounts of reports filed, Kosovo was largely excluded from the topics discussed at the diplomatic rings, as is the case with the Dayton Peace Accords, which took place in 1995, ending the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina with no mention of the Kosovan problem.

The governments of Western nations were now invested in the ongoing issues with the

region, but it was prioritised that the broader issue, which was the Bosnian regional conflict, be solved first. As a result of this uneasy silence performed by the Western nations, the region was now, for the lack of a better description, a ticking time bomb.

The Road to Armed Conflict (1995-1998)

Until the mid-1990s, Ibrahim Rugova was the unchallenged leader of the ethnic Albanians' peaceful resistance to Serbia. There seemed to be a widespread determination among the existing political parties of Kosovo Albanians not to let party-political differences come in the way of a joint political agenda. Initially, this aimed at a restoration of the *status quo ante plus*, that is, the return to the 1974 constitutional regulations with a simultaneous upgrading of Kosovo to a republic and of ethnic Albanians to one of the constituent peoples of the Yugoslav state. Subsequently, however, continued Serbian repression made Rugova and his party demand independence. Two presidential and parliamentary elections administered by the Kosovo Albanians confirmed his claim to the presidency of the self-proclaimed Republic of Kosova. While Rugova thus possessed a certain degree of democratic legitimacy, even though the elections were organised under very difficult conditions, he had hardly any real power. At an internal level, this became apparent by the rejection of his authority by the KLA. Externally, in his relations with Serbia and the FRY, Rugova was not able to secure any substantial concessions from Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević apart from a March 1998 agreement to reopen Albanian language schools. Another severe blow to his strategy of non-violent resistance and of engaging the international community for the cause of an independent Kosovo was dealt by the European Union's official recognition of the FRY in 1996, before any resolution of the already obvious conflict in Kosovo. However, to some extent, blame also rested with Rugova himself. Insisting on the necessity and possibility of achieving Kosovo's independence from Serbia, he raised the hopes of ethnic Albanians even at a time when the international community had long made it clear that it did not support a unilateral change of borders. The four main political rivals of Rugova's LDK were the Independent Union of Albanian Students, which was the first political organization to defy Rugova openly in 1997; Adem Demaçi's Parliamentary Party of Kosovo, who for some time also represented the KLA; the Social Democratic Party of Kosovo, which joined the former two in the boycott of the March 1998 Kosovo elections, and the Albanian Democratic Movement, which was formed at the end of June 1998. Yet, while Rugova could claim some

democratic legitimacy in relation to these political organisations, the major challenge to his leadership came from the KLA, which became increasingly popular among Kosovo's Albanian population and was well funded by the Albanian diaspora in western Europe and the United States and by proceeds from drugs and weapons trafficking. To prevent Kosovo's independence at all costs was the foremost objective of a large majority of the ethnic Serb population in the province. In this effort, they had the overall backing of the Serbian government in Belgrade and the protection of the Serbian security forces. However, despite this active endorsement by the central government, ethnic Serbs in Kosovo were not in a particularly easy position. Their numbers shrank from just under one-third in 1961 to less than one-tenth in the 1990s. This decrease was partly due to emigration, motivated by the much lower standard of living in Kosovo compared with any other part of Yugoslavia, during the years before the breakup of the state. In addition, the Serbian perception of the post-1974 period in Kosovo had also been shaped by the experience of the 'national key'—a system that ensured proportional representation of ethnic groups in the public sector, which, as Yugoslavia had a more or less completely nationalised economy, included almost all sectors of the job market as well. Consequently, Serbs saw themselves (and indeed occasionally they were) at a disadvantage in Kosovo in a variety of ways, especially in comparison with their pre-1974 position, and chose to emigrate in significant numbers. From the mid-1980s onwards, ethnic Serbs in Kosovo began to organise themselves to lobby the central government in Belgrade. In January 1986, prominent Belgrade intellectuals sent a petition to Serbian and Yugoslav authorities claiming an anti-Serb genocide in Kosovo and demanding decisive constitutional and other steps be taken to reverse the fate of the Slav population in the province. The Serb Resistance Movement, a political party of Kosovo Serbs, however, began to recognise that the main obstacle to a solution of the conflict was the lack of a democratic political process in Serbia, but its efforts to remedy this situation and promote dialogue between Serbs and Albanians were not very successful, mostly because of the lack of trust between these two groups. In addition, it must be noted that the Serb population of Kosovo was far from homogeneous, and this affected political developments quite strongly. Several thousand Serbs who had been forced out of Croatia were resettled in Kosovo, many of them against their will. When, in addition to the traditionally desperate economic conditions in the area, the security situation worsened as well (resulting in some 2,000 registered Serb and Montenegrin refugees by mid-July 1998), this section of the Serb population in Kosovo became particularly radicalised, providing an electoral stronghold for the Serbian Radical Party and its leader Vojislav Šešelj. The increased KLA targeting of Serbs

and the continued instrumentalisation of Kosovo in Serbian and Yugoslav politics diminished the chances of moderate forces among Serbs in Kosovo. Serb armament, 'retaliation', and cooperation with the security forces, in turn, contributed to the hardening of positions on the Albanian side, thus diminishing the already slim chances of an inter-ethnic accord as part of an agreement on the future of Kosovo.

2.1.17. Radicalisation of the Sides and the Debut of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) (1981-1997)

The roots of the KLA can be traced to Kosovo's years of political upheaval in the early 1980s, which centred on Pristina University. These were, of course, the years of substantial Albanian political autonomy in Kosovo, which was dominated by the ethnic Albanian majority of 80 per cent of a population of up to two million. According to the Yugoslav constitution of 1974, Kosovo, like Serbia's northern province of Vojvodina, had real autonomy within Serbia, which itself was one of the six republics of the old Yugoslavia. Kosovo had always been recognised as a special case in post-1945 Yugoslavia and had always had, officially at least, an autonomous status, albeit one which was, in the early years, more declaratory than real. The reason for this, apart from the previously centralising tendencies of communism, was that the issue of Kosovo was particularly sensitive in Yugoslavia. It was sacred in terms of Serbian history, full of rich churches and monasteries, but now overwhelmingly populated by Albanians who resented their incorporation into, as its name suggested, the state of the South Slavs.

Throughout the post-1945 period, there were two streams of thought amongst Kosovo Albanians. Dominant, however, was the Titoist stream, which recognised the political reality of Kosovo's situation within Yugoslavia and reckoned it was better to work within the state recreated by Josip Broz Tito during the Second World War. A minority, however, looked to Albania, run in the post-war years by the Stalinist dictator Enver Hoxha. They dreamed of the day when Albania and Kosovo would one day be united in one country. Of course, they recognised that this was something for the future, but they, like many others, felt that Kosovo's Albanian leadership in the post-1974 years should not rest content with Kosovo's status as an autonomous province. Specifically, they wanted republican status for the province, because, at least in theory, Yugoslav republics, as opposed to Serbia's two autonomous provinces, had the right to secede. Amongst those who agitated for republican

status during the 1980s were the so-called Marxist-Leninist groups, also known as the Enverists, after Enver Hoxha. Daut Dauti, the former London correspondent for the Pristina magazine, *Zeri*, sums up the Enverists succinctly: "The Marxist-Leninists were for an armed uprising in the 1980s. They had no idea what Enverism was - they just wanted to get rid of the Serbs."

The university-centred demonstrations of 1981 were put down, and many of its Enverist organisers were jailed. In the years that followed, as they were gradually released, many of them went abroad. Bardhyl Mahmuti, who was jailed for seven years for telling Macedonian television that he wanted a Kosovo Republic and subsequently went into exile in Switzerland, says of Enverism: "It was not a question of ideology, rather Leninist theory on clandestine organisations." Not to mention the fact that making the right revolutionary noises secured at least a little help and money from Tirana. Most Kosovo Albanians sympathised with calls for a republic. During the eighties, the idea of an armed uprising seemed ridiculous, especially as the Serbs were not even running the autonomous province. Still, on the fringe of Kosovo Albanian politics, some plotted and conspired, and even a handful who went to the hills to train for war. On 17 January 1982, three of Kosovo's militant activists were assassinated in Germany. They were the brothers Jusuf and Bardhosh Gervalla and the journalist Kadri Zeka. For the tiny group that espoused the armed uprising, it was the defining moment of their lives, especially as they assumed that the killings had been ordered by the Yugoslav secret services. Following the assassinations, those who had been close to the Gervallas and to Zeka founded their own party. It was called the LPRK, or Popular Movement for the Republic of Kosovo. Inside the province, it operated with a secret cell structure, members being called upon to help produce and distribute radical leaflets.

Throughout the 1980s, the LPRK remained a marginal, extremist and underground organisation. In terms of the history of the KLA, however, a turning point came in 1989 when Slobodan Milosevic, then president of Serbia, using the sensitive issue of the Kosovo Serbs, who felt persecuted by the province's Albanians, abolished Kosovo's autonomy. Demonstrations again shook the province and, just as 1981 had been the formative moment for one generation, the renewed unrest forged the political outlook of a new crop of young activists, including the then 19-year-old Hashim Thaci. Despite the unrest, the majority of Kosovo Albanians continued to regard the LPRK and its calls for a violent uprising against Serbia and the Yugoslav state as ridiculous. This was certainly the case when, following the end of communist one-party rule in Serbia in 1989, Kosovo's political vacuum was filled by

the new Democratic League of Kosovo, the LDK. It was led by Ibrahim Rugova, an academic who preached non-violence and wore a trademark silk scarf. Believing that the tide of history was turning their way, many members of the LPRK and other underground groups loosely known as 'the movement' left their secret organisations to join Rugova. So, only the hardest of the hard remained; men who said it was beneath their dignity to be members of a party legal in the eyes of the Serbian state.

As Yugoslavia crumbled, Rugova restrained his people. War would bring disaster, he argued. "We would have no chance of successfully resisting the army," he said in 1992. "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 stay alive than be massacred." In 1990, the deputies of the by-then-abolished Kosovo assembly declared Kosovo a republic and, in 1991, an independent state. Under police repression, these remained mostly declarations of intent rather than statements of fact. Mostly, that is, because some institutions were set up. Parallel education and health systems were formed. A government in exile headed by Bujar Bukoshi, a former surgeon, was also dispatched to live abroad. These acts seemed to hold the promise that, one day soon, independence really would come. Kosovo Albanians were now told to contribute 3 per cent of their income to Rugova's republican coffers. Even more importantly, though, the Gastarbeiters in Germany, Switzerland, Sweden and elsewhere gave money too. The tax was not compulsory, but in this close-knit society, anyone who did not contribute risked being ostracised and, even worse, there were vague threats about who would be 'called to account' once independence became a reality.

As Yugoslavia slid ever further into war, most Kosovo Albanians continued to regard the LPRK as a fringe organisation that did not deserve to be taken seriously. However, what was taking place on this fringe of Kosovo Albanian politics was eventually to transform the southern Balkans. In exile, people like Bardhyl Mahmuti and Jashar Salihu, another Swiss-based exile, began to solicit money for their campaign amongst the gastarbeiters and to prepare for war. From 1990, small numbers of men were also sent for training in Albania, many at a camp in Labinot. The exiles were also now linking up with the new generation of radicals inside Kosovo, such as Hashim Thaci. Secret meetings were held in Macedonia, and in Kosovo itself, the most important being in August 1993 in the Drenica region, which had seen rebellions against Serbian and Yugoslav rule after both world wars. At the Drenica meeting, two things happened: the LPRK split into two organisations, the National Movement for the Liberation of Kosovo (LKCK) and the Popular Movement for Kosovo (LPK). The

LPK now set up a 'Special Branch' of four men, including Hashim Thaci, whose job it was to prepare for a guerrilla war. At a further meeting in December 1993, the name of the KLA was decided upon, but it was only in 1996 that anyone within the LPK, who was not directly involved, began to be aware of what was being prepared. In Kosovo itself, organising the KLA consisted of recruiting a network of sleepers, secret sympathisers ready to fight and take command of their village or town when the time came. Arms were an enormous problem. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, the Serbian police, bolstered by a network of informers, were constantly raiding houses and surrounding villages in search of weapons. Secondly, being landlocked, there was no way to import significant quantities of guns into the province.

From 1993 to 1995, the odd policeman began to be shot down, and the KLA claimed responsibility, as did, at various times and legitimately, the LKCK. Still, hardly anyone knew who these people were, and, besides, Rugova was telling anyone who would listen that not only did these gunmen not exist but that these attacks were in fact being mounted by the Serbian secret police in a bid to discredit his campaign of peaceful resistance. By November 1996, though, it was clear that local Serbian officials did not share this view. Then, in January 1997, the KLA took its first casualties when the police gunned down three men. Showing its more ruthless side, the KLA also now took to killing Albanians whom it deemed to be collaborators, although many of them held the humblest of civil service positions. By now, the war in Bosnia was over. In November 1995, following a NATO bombing campaign against the Bosnian Serbs, they had caved in and signed up to a peace agreement at a US Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. In Kosovo, though, despite the slowly increasing numbers of KLA attacks, what was not yet clear to outsiders was that Kosovo Albanian society, both at home and abroad, had gone into deep shock. Dayton had dealt with Bosnia, and the great powers had stated unequivocally that since Kosovo had not been a Yugoslav republic, but a mere province, it had to remain part of Serbia, or at least part of Yugoslavia.

The answer to the arms question would come in the most bizarre way imaginable. In the spring of 1997, out of the blue, Albania, as a state and country, simply imploded. Hundreds of thousands of people had invested their savings in fraudulent pyramid banking schemes, which the government failed to stop. Inevitably, they collapsed. Outraged, Albanians took to the streets and rose in anger against their president, Sali Berisha. Arms depots were broken open, the army dissolved, the police ran away, and suddenly Albania was awash with hundreds of thousands of Kalashnikovs. The significance of this could hardly be

lost on the Kosovo Albanians: Hundreds of thousands of guns going for \$10 each, and no more central government in Albania. Abroad, the LPK began stepping up its campaign. Slowly but surely, money began flowing into the Homeland Calling fund, managed by Jashar Salihu, and Kosovo Albanians began buying up guns from their impoverished Albanian brothers. Disillusion with Rugova and the notion that the armed struggle was, for the first time, a real possibility meant that recruitment at home and abroad proceeded, but still, slowly, because of lingering respect for Rugova and, of course, the fear of the consequences of war. At the end of November 1997, the whole of Kosovo was electrified when masked KLA men turned up at a funeral. Still, even at this point, the number of active KLA members on the ground is reckoned to have been small, perhaps no more than a couple of hundred. By January 1998, the revolt was maturing. In the Drenica region, famous for its *kacak* brigand freedom fighter uprisings, the most recent having been against the Serbs after the two world wars, police cars began to be ambushed, and so-called collaborators were shot dead. Abroad, contacts were being made with ethnic Albanian former Yugoslav Army officers, in a bid to get them join the KLA. All that was needed now was the spark to light the fire. The KLA men thought they had things under control, but the first lesson of the Balkans is to expect the unexpected. Foreigners always forget this. This time, even the Kosovo Albanians were taken by surprise (Judah, 2000, pp. 62–69).

2.1.18. Early KLA Battles and Yugoslav Response (1996-1998)

By February 1998, the police had been forced to withdraw from much of Drenica. In one village, Donji Prekaz, lived a local tough called Adem Jashari. Several years before, he had killed a Serbian policeman and been convicted, but the Serbs were frightened to get him because he would shoot at them from his house. They had tried in January but were forced to retreat. Jashari was a maverick. He hated the Serbs, and although he was one of the KLA's early recruits, he was no ideological guerrilla. In the words of one source: "He liked to get drunk and go out and shoot Serbs." In this sense, he was a true, dyed-in-the-wool Drenica *kacak*. Maverick though he was and associated with the KLA, the police decided they had had enough. Foreign journalists had been hunting for him, and policemen were still being killed. On 28 February 1998, after a firefight with the KLA, they took their revenge on some other Drenica families who, they believed, were involved in killing twenty-six people. Then, on 4 March, they moved on to the Jashari compound. Jashari resisted fiercely, so they shelled his

and other Jashari family houses, killing fifty-eight people, mostly members of his extended family.

Kosovo Albanians were seething, and so the KLA, which had only anticipated beginning major action in 1999, began to move. Rapidly, they began to dispatch arms and uniforms over the border from Albania. The sleepers 'awoke', village militias began to form, and clan elders, especially those in Drenica, decreed that now was the time to fight the Serbs. Whether they were KLA or not, they soon began to call themselves KLA. In this way, a small guerrilla movement that was preparing for war suddenly found itself welded to a far older tradition of Kosovo Albanian *kacak* uprisings. The KLA made a series of lightning advances: it punched through a supply corridor from the Albanian border, close to Tropoja, in northern Albania. The Kosovo Albanians were shocked by how easy everything seemed. The Serbs hardly fought back, so the Albanians proclaimed more and more 'liberated territory'. Milosevic seemed uncertain what to do, and so the uprising, which had begun in Drenica, spread like a brushfire. But the KLA was hardly prepared. Things were moving too fast for them, their military structures were not complete, and they had not laid in stocks of anything other than Kalashnikovs, grenades and other light weaponry. In fact, they were winning territory because the Serbs were barely fighting back.

Hearing that the KLA had set up rear bases around Tropoja, young men began to trek across the countryside, up over the mountains and into Albania to collect arms. It was chaotic. Some had to buy their own guns, while others were given supplies for their villages. By July 1998, though, Milosevic's period of indecision was over. Orders went out to the police to roll up the rebellion. The police swept through Drenica and other areas held by the KLA, burning the villages as they went. But, chaotic as its command structures were, the KLA made the eminently sensible decision not to fight. In this way, the Serbs fell into a trap. The KLA's fighters withdrew to the hills, ready to fight another day, while the Serb offensive created some 200,000 displaced people. Their plight, played out nightly on television across the world, galvanised the international community into action (Judah, 2000, pp. 69–71).

The Albanian and Serbian Claims Regarding Kosovo's Sovereignty (1941-1998)

2.1.19. The Kosovo Issue from an Albanian Perspective (1945-1998)

After the end of the Second World War, the Albanians of Kosovo and other parts of Yugoslavia were prevented from uniting with Albania. The Serbian regime continuously implemented the pre-war policies, and the Kosovar Albanians felt the annexation of Kosovo to Serbia as a betrayal of the partisan leadership to them. Due to the persecutions, terror, violence and genocide inflicted on them, many Albanians, between 3,000 and 4,000 people, were forced to flee abroad, particularly the members of political and democratic organisations and groups with a Western orientation that did not accept the new slavery in Kosovo. At the end of January 1953, the President of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito, and the Turkish Foreign Minister, Fuat Köprülü, bowed for a gentlemen's agreement between Yugoslavia and Turkey in Split. The agreement provided for the expulsion of Kosovar Albanians to Turkey; indeed, more than 400,000 Albanians were forced to leave their homes and emigrate to Turkey in the period between 1953 and 1963. The treatment of ethnic Albanians within Kosovo took an especially brutal turn with the reign of Alexander Ranković as the head of the secret police between 1953 and 1963. Ranković's regime carried out acts of violence, terror and harassment against Kosovo Albanians. Serbian domination of the province continued after 1963, despite Yugoslav constitutional changes in 1974 that upgraded the status of Kosovo to autonomy. Meanwhile, the economy stagnated, and as a result, in the period between 1971 and 1981, more than 45,000 Albanians left the province. Albanian historians estimate that out of a population of 1.5 million, only 178,000 had jobs in all forms of state-run enterprises such as civil service, schools, hospitals, factories and so on. A significant ethnic imbalance was still in place, with the Serbs and Montenegrins, who formed 15 per cent of the population, holding 30 per cent of these jobs. Dissatisfied with their position of being subjugated to Serbian power, Albanian students and youth organised demonstrations in March of 1981 with the main mobilising slogan "Republic of Kosova". Although the whole Albanian population supported them, the Yugoslav leadership decided that the demonstrations threatened the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Yugoslavia. Subsequently, a state of emergency was declared in the province, and large numbers of security forces occupied the region.

Under Milošević, Serbia wished to change its constitution and abolish Kosovo autonomy. Not only did the Albanians of Kosovo not accept the proposals for the abolishment

of their autonomy, but they also advocated its upgrading. At the time of voting for changes to the Serbian Constitution, the building of the Assembly of Kosovo was surrounded by tanks, military and police, and members of the secret police were present in the hall. In conditions of a state of emergency' without the required quorum, without numbering the votes and by voting of persons that were found in the hall but were not delegates, the President of the Assembly of Kosova, who was a Serb, proclaimed on 23 March 1989 the approval of the constitutional amendments, and in addition to them some amendments that had not been in public discussion. Therefore, the decision of the assembly of Serbia passed on 28 March 1989, to approve amendments 9–49 of the Constitution of Serbia was illegal. Meanwhile, the Albanian delegates of the Assembly of Kosovo approved a Declaration of the Independence of Kosovo on 2 July 1990, which preceded the Constitution of the Republic of Kosova, approved on 7 September 1990.

Despite the repressive regime in the 1990s, the peaceful struggle against the Serbian occupation continued. After the Dayton Agreement in 1995, radical Kosovo Albanians started advocating a military solution to their demands. Disappointed with the slow pace of their community's struggle for independence in early 1997, they started an armed rebellion against the institutions of the Serbian state. The conflict took some 2,000 lives, created thousands of refugees and caused enormous material damage. In addition, during the war in 1999, Kosovo saw an unprecedented level of material destruction, while thousands of refugees poured into Albania and Macedonia (Bieber & Zidas Daskalovski, 2004, pp. 14–23).

2.1.20. The Kosovo Issue from the Serbian Perspective (1941-1945)

During the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the policy of moving the Albanian population out, they were seen as the remnants of Ottoman occupation, was never approached systematically. By this time, it had become absurd to consider the Kosovar Albanians as strangers on Serbian land, people who should, in due time, be expelled from it. The developments during and after the Second World War firmly established them as a native population of Kosovo, and they came to think of Kosovo as their land, which was unjustly not a part of a "Greater" Albanian state. During the Second World War, Kosovo became a part of Greater Albania, created by Italy in 1941, and huge numbers of Albanians flooded into the region from Albania proper. This period is marked by a reign of terror for the Serbian people; there were mass and single killings of Serbs in Kosovo, and a campaign of expulsion and

extermination, an outright genocide was conducted against the Serbians in the Independent State of Croatia. The outcome of all this was the incorporation of Kosovo not into Albania, but into socialist Yugoslavia. Kosovo, or Kosovo-Metohija, was only an autonomous region of Serbia until 1963, then its position was elevated to an autonomous province. In 1974, Kosovo gained a constitution separate from Serbia, the status of the Socialist Autonomous Province with rights equal to those of the nations of Yugoslavia.

After Tito died in 1980, Albanian nationalism became more frequent among the Albanian majority in Kosovo. Many private assaults against persons and their property were reported, as well as various other cases of rapes, beatings, destruction of graves and murders against the Serbian minority of Kosovo. Some monasteries and churches had also been damaged, all for reasons of ethnic hatred between Kosovar Albanians and Serbians. The pattern was emerging, that of the systematic pressure on the Serbs and Montenegrins for them to sell everything they had and leave Kosovo. The percentage of the Serbian population in Kosovo fell from 23.6 per cent in 1961 to 13.2 per cent in 1981. In 1981, the secessionist tendencies of the Albanian population culminated in the so-called March riots. The central message of these mass protests was the demand for Kosovo to become a republic of Yugoslavia, and the final aim of the protesters was union with their mother-state, Albania. A state of emergency was declared, and the Yugoslav People's Army had to intervene and crush the revolt and restore order in Kosovo.

Even after these events, the Albanian Kosovar pressure and abuse of the Serbs and the Montenegrins continued. In 1990, Serbian historians alleged that in the previous two decades, some 400,000 Serbs were forced to leave Kosovo. They were ignored by Kosovo and the federal government. Resentment for the state that could not and did not want to protect its own citizens was rising. That, together with the coming six-hundredth anniversary of the famous Battle of Kosovo, created an atmosphere conducive to the rise of Serbian nationalism. Slobodan Milošević, an emerging figure on the political scene, used the emotions of the Serbian people and their dissatisfaction to gain political power. Milošević promised what most of the Serbian people wished for: the centralisation of the Serbian Republic. His first step was the abolishment of the autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina (Bieber & Zidas Daskalovski, 2004, pp. 78–82).

3. The Current State of Yugoslavia and Kosovo in 1998

Federal and Serbian Ambitions on Political Grounds (1997-1998)

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's political goals in the late 1990s were heavily directed by principles of sovereignty, legitimacy and an overarching aim of stronger centralised control. The Belgrade administration viewed the majority Albanian-influenced province of Kosovo's efforts as a non-negotiable attack against their national integrity. The administration would work toward framing the armed resistance as a terrorist entity in the eyes of the international community, instead of an authentic political struggle. In practice, this meant putting further governmental strain on the region by use of state entities such as law enforcement, military or even in terms of economic and social capabilities. Government operations showcased a broader strategy to restore regional dominance, not all at once, but by employing tactics to diminish the spirit of the movement and remove it bit by bit. For instance, regular operations were conducted to disrupt the supply and information networks of rebels, and communities that were suspected of housing resilient forces were punished severely. So the main operations were aimed at the support systems of the Kosovo Liberation Army; the fragmented nature of such a resistance made it difficult to dismantle it all at once. The Interior Ministry assisted the Serbian army in many ways during these operations, often working in tandem with them to conclude operations most efficiently. The Serbian Special Police (MUP) was the most notable factor in this regard; their actions, though sometimes controversial, no doubt assisted the Yugoslav Army in many ways. To sum it up, the Belgrade government blended a mix of aspirations of a more central nation and the need to resolve the problem at hand before it escalates into full-blown independence (House of Commons Library, 1998, pp. 7-10).

Aims of Kosovo and Its Leadership

In the late 1990s, there were two primary Kosovo Albanian political objectives: end Serbian rule altogether and achieve international political status through the means of self-determination. In addition, their efforts coincided with garnering more and more attention from international media as a force advocating for its independence rather than enhanced autonomy. The question of leadership, however, was quite mixed in its makeup. On one hand, Ibrahim Rugova and the Democratic League of Kosovo had underlined that non-violence was

to be a key principle to seek international support so that Kosovo could be viewed as a majority that had its political rights removed by an oppressive figure. A paramount component of this strategy was to facilitate a parallel governmental structure in terms of the social and political life of the people residing in the region. Sectors like education and other basic governmental services were seen as a priority to demonstrate fully that Kosovo could handle itself without Serbian interference. So Ibrahim Rugova needed to guarantee Kosovan legitimacy over time to allow external actors to step into the situation. On the other hand, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA/UÇK) gained substantial backing during a time when public perception of achieving independence through peaceful means was regressing. KLA emerged as a notion that, without armed struggle, Serbian control could not be erased. So even though the broad mission of the two organisations was the same, they were not entirely on the same page in certain aspects. This two-headed structure obviously had its drawbacks and advantages during these times, and it was needless to say that cooperation to a high degree would be necessary for their ambitions to be fulfilled. To sum it up, although the desired final destination of the two had been the same, they differed significantly as well, which created a complex dynamic (International Crisis Group, 1998, pp. 11-15).

Role of International Actors

3.1.1. The Contact Group and European Union

During the late 1990s, two close international groups formulated international discourse regarding Kosovo, those being the Contact Group and the European Union. The Contact Group, made up of the United States, Russia, France, the United Kingdom and Italy, was a sort of forum dedicated to preventing the destabilisation of the Balkans and instead forcing an agreeable settlement for the opposing forces. The Group supported a heightened status of Kosovo within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as an autonomous region, which would have had its own administration, and the Group would explicitly reject independence altogether. Their decisions could have a potential effect of forcing economic embargoes, blocking visas and potentially movement of people in the region or even bringing the issue to the UN Security Council for it to be considered. The Group could additionally set major grounds for negotiations to occur between Yugoslavia and the KLA/Democratic League of Kosovo (International Crisis Group, 1998, pp 43-44).

When it came to the EU, their strategy with the Common Foreign and Security Policy was to remain cautious of the situation and only intervene in any capacity if it were to escalate. Even before the late 1990s EU had reduced most of its trade relations with Yugoslavia, opting to choose alternative nations for various goods. They also emphasised a greater level of autonomy for Kosovo rather than an all-out independence, often supporting decisions and the demeanour of the Contact Group on the issue. In addition, there is no doubt that the EU's overall message of underlining human rights in wartimes will have a large impact for Balkans, which is often seen as fragile in this subject. To put it bluntly, the Contact Group and the EU's opinion and involvement regarding Kosovo must be considered for both sides and their respective endeavours (Council of the European Union, 1998, p. 1).

3.1.2. NATO and United States Policy

NATO and the United States' early efforts on the matter were focused on de-escalating the conflict instead of focusing on an end plan for the area. A ceasefire was the number one objective to elevate the humanitarian conditions and then facilitate arbitration with the parties. Another aspect the US and NATO considered was the effect of NATO in a post-Cold War environment and whether it could handle upcoming crises. Furthermore, although NATO's first response was not to partake in the zone in a militaristic manner, there is no doubt that under the right circumstances, NATO would not hesitate to utilise its arsenal as it has previously. United States policy backed NATO's influence whilst promoting foreign relations and dialogue to a high degree, US leaders and foreign personnel would communicate with both sides extensively. Moreover, a close eye was kept on Kosovo and Yugoslavia in terms of reconnaissance and information of both sides. Finally, NATO and US policy undoubtedly aimed to force both sides to result in compliance to the status quo (Kim, 1999, p. 2).

3.1.3. Russia, Bordering Nations and Risks of Spillover

Russia's general approach to the Kosovo Crisis was a mix of their outlook on political rivalries and domestic politics. Moscow would consistently emphasise the sovereignty of Serbia and strongly opposed NATO involvement without clearance from the United Nations Security Council. They would repeatedly signal to the UN that any sort of

Security Council armed role would get an immediate veto from Russia. Russia would also highlight that an outside militaristic activity could potentially lead to a bigger war with unseen consequences. The mentioned opinion of Russia complicated the UN's point of view on the crisis; NATO members would most likely be more inclined to resort to NATO rather than the UN for collective action as well. Another aspect which needed to be considered was that Kosovo provided an opportunity for Moscow to present itself as resisting Western pressure (House of Commons Library, 1998, pp. 14-15).

There were also clear risks of spillover for some of the neighbouring countries, not only in terms of a war but also for border security and migration. For instance, the Yugoslav Army was initially placed along the border with Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which created tension not only for Kosovo but also for other foreign nations. It should also be noted that thousands had already been displaced around the region in the previous years after the first fragmentation of Yugoslavia and the most recent wars in the Balkans, so concerns of migration were warranted. Additionally, the position of Balkan nations on Kosovo differed significantly from one another, which increased the risks of an even larger divide for the escalation of the conflict. Especially in the former Yugoslav Republics, their views of Kosovo even signified their relations with the remaining members (House of Commons Library, 1998, pp. 5-7).

4. Visual Materials

→  How Yugoslavia Practically Liberated Itself in WW2 | Animated History

→  The Endgame: How Yugoslavia Fell Apart | Full Documentary

→  How to Destroy a State

→  When a Genocide Was Broadcast Live on TV

→  The Soviet Seven | Backbone of the Red Army

→ <https://www.loc.gov/resource/g6865.ct000376/?r=-0.284,-0.022,1.518,0.744,0>

(regional map)

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