

KOSOVO

During the 19th Century part of modern Kosovo was reintegrated in to 'Old Serbia' following a Peace Accord of 1878 which brought the cities of Priština and Kosovska Mitrovica under Serbian control whilst leaving the remainder of Kosovo under Ottoman authority. An ethnic-Albanian Prizren League was formed which sought to unite all of the Albanian provinces of the Ottoman Empire, but which was ultimately defeated by Ottoman forces. During the [First Balkan War](#) of [1912](#) most of Kosovo was retaken by the [Kingdom of Serbia](#) while the region of Metohija (know as the Dukagjini Valley to ethnic-Albanians) was taken by the Kingdom of Montenegro. Populations of ethnic Serbs and Albanians tended to shift following territorial conquests.

During World War I, Kosovo was occupied by the Bulgarian and Austro-Hungarian forces following a serious defeat of Serbian and allied armies in 1914. Returning in 1918, the Serbian army pushed the central powers out of Kosovo as the war came to a close. Following WWI, the [Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes](#) was formed, bringing together Serbian Kosovo and Montenegrin Metohija within the new kingdom. The partition of Yugoslavia by the invading [Axis Powers](#) from 1941 and 1945 awarded most of the territory to the Italian-occupied [Greater Albania](#), and a smaller part of it to [German](#)-occupied Serbia and [Greater Bulgaria](#). Both wars were occasions for inter-ethnic violence and both voluntary and forced population shifts.

Following the end of the war and the establishment of [Tito's Communist](#) regime, Kosovo was granted the status of an autonomous region of Serbia in [1946](#) and became an autonomous province in [1963](#). With the passing of the [1974](#) Yugoslavia constitution, Kosovo gained virtual self-government. Throughout the [1980s](#) tensions between the Albanian and Serb communities in the province escalated.^{[4][5]} The Albanian community favoured greater autonomy for Kosovo, whilst Serbs favoured closer ties with the rest of Serbia. There was little appetite for unification with Albania itself, which was ruled by a [Stalinist](#) government and had considerably worse living standards than Kosovo. Beginning in March [1981](#), Kosovo Albanian students organized protests seeking that Kosovo become a republic within Yugoslavia. Those protests rapidly escalated into violent riots "involving 20,000 people in six cities"^[6] that were harshly contained by the Yugoslav government.

Serbs living in Kosovo complained at discrimination from the provincial Kosovo government (run by the ethnic-Albanian dominated Communist Party of Kosovo)^[7] and neglect from the Federal authorities in Belgrade.^[8] In August [1987](#), during the dying days of Yugoslavia's Communist regime, Kosovo was visited by [Slobodan Milošević](#), then a rising politician. Milošević capitalised on this discontent to consolidate his own position in Serbia. Having drawn huge crowds to a rally commemorating the Battle of Kosovo, he pledged to Kosovo Serbs that "No one should dare to beat you", and became an instant hero of Kosovo's Serbs.^[9]^[10] By the end of the year Milošević was in control of the Serbian government.

In [1989](#), the autonomy of both Kosovo and of [Vojvodina](#) were drastically reduced by a new Serbian constitution which allowed a [multi-party system](#), introduced [freedom of speech](#) and promoted [human rights](#). Though later subverted by [Milošević's](#) abuses, the new constitution was a significant step forward from the previous Communist constitution. However, the new constitution also significantly reduced the rights of the two previously autonomous provinces, giving control of many areas directly to the Government of Serbia, including control of the police, the court system, the economy, the education system and language policies. Differing

viewpoints see either an attempt to gain control of a crisis-ridden province or a cynical exploitation of nationalist politics^[11]. When called to ratify the new constitution in March 1989, the assemblies of the provinces were met with tanks and armoured cars, effectively forcing the delegates to accept the amendments. Kosovo Albanians boycotted state institutions and elections and established separate Albanian schools and political institutions. On July 2, 1990, an unofficial Kosovo parliament declared Kosovo independent, though this move was recognised only by Albania. In 1992, the parliament organised an unofficial referendum, observed by international organizations^[citation needed] not recognized internationally, which saw a 98% vote of the Kosovo Albanian majority for independence.

Kosovo War

After the Dayton Agreement of 1995, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) was formed as a means of violent resistance to Milosevic's regime and employing guerilla-style tactics against Serbian police forces and civilians. Violence escalated in a series of KLA attacks and Serbian reprisals into the year 1999, with increasing numbers of civilian victims. In 1998 western interest increased and the Serbian authorities were forced to sign a unilateral cease-fire and partial retreat. Under an agreement led by Richard Holbrooke, OSCE observers moved into Kosovo to monitor the ceasefire, while Yugoslav military forces partly pulled out of Kosovo; neither side kept the ceasefire fully. An incident at the town of Racak in January 1999^{[12][13]} increased international concern at Milosevic's actions. The subsequent Rambouillet conference fell apart after Milosevic refused to sign an agreement which would give Kosovo equal status as a Republic and which purportedly would give NATO forces access rights to all of Yugoslavia.

This triggered a 78-day NATO campaign in 1999. At first limited to military targets in Kosovo itself, the bombing campaign was soon extended to cover targets all over Yugoslavia, including bridges, power stations, factories, broadcasting stations, post offices, hospitals, civil buildings, trains, and various government buildings. During the conflict roughly a million ethnic Albanians fled or were forcefully driven from Kosovo, several thousand were killed (the numbers and the ethnic distribution of the casualties are uncertain and highly disputed). An estimated 6,000 ethnic Albanians and 3,000 Serbs are believed to have been killed during the conflict. Some 3,000 people are still missing, of which 2,500 are Albanian, 400 Serbs and 100 Roma.^[14]

Kosovo after the war

The conflict ended with an agreement^[2] signed by both Yugoslavia and NATO at Kumanovo in Macedonia on 9 June 1999 and with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 which, whilst recognising Serbian sovereignty, authorised an international civil and military presence in Kosovo, placing it under interim UN administration with a NATO-led peacekeeping force (KFOR). With the withdrawal of Serb forces, ethnic-Albanian refugees began returning from Albania and the Republic of Macedonia, along with Kosovo Liberation Army forces. In fear of their safety, perhaps up to 250,000 Serbs and other ethnic minorities fled their homes north^[15]. Many displaced Serbs fear to return and around 120,000-150,000 Serbs remain in Kosovo, but remain in a difficult security and economic situation.

In 2001, UNMIK promulgated a Constitutional Framework for Kosovo which established the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG), including an elected Kosovo Assembly, Presidency and office of Prime Minister. Kosovo held its first free, Kosovo-wide elections in

late 2001 (municipal elections had been held the previous year). UNMIK oversaw the establishment of a professional, multi-ethnic Kosovo Police Service.

In March 2004, Kosovo experienced its worst inter-ethnic violence since the Kosovo War. The [unrest in 2004](#) was sparked by a series of minor events that soon cascaded into large-scale riots. Kosovo Albanians mobs burned hundreds of Serbian houses, Serbian Orthodox Church sites (including some medieval churches and monasteries) and UN facilities. Kosovo Police established a special investigation team to handle cases related to the 2004 unrest and according to Kosovo Judicial Council by the end of 2006 the 326 charges filed by municipal and district prosecutors for criminal offenses in connection with the unrest had resulted in 200 indictments: convictions in 134 cases, and courts acquitted eight and dismissed 28; 30 cases were pending. International prosecutors and judges handled the most sensitive cases.^[16]

Politics and governance

UN Security Council Resolution 1244 placed Kosovo under transitional UN administration pending a determination of Kosovo's future status. This Resolution entrusted the [United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo](#) (UNMIK) with sweeping powers to govern Kosovo, but also directed UNMIK to establish interim institutions of self-governance. Resolution 1244 permits Serbia no role in governing Kosovo and since 1999 Serbian laws and institutions have not been valid in Kosovo. NATO has a separate mandate to provide for a safe and secure environment.

In May 2001, UNMIK promulgated the Constitutional Framework, which established Kosovo's [Provisional Institutions of Self-Government](#) (PISG). Since 2001, UNMIK has been gradually transferring increased governing competencies to the PISG, while reserving some powers that are normally carried out by sovereign states, such as foreign affairs. Kosovo has also established municipal government and an internationally-supervised Kosovo Police Service.

According to the Constitutional Framework, Kosovo shall have a 120-member Kosovo Assembly. The Assembly includes twenty reserved seats: ten for Kosovo Serbs and ten for non-Serb minorities (Bosniaks, Roma, etc.). The Kosovo Assembly is responsible for electing a President and Prime Minister of Kosovo.

The largest political party in Kosovo, the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), has its origins in the 1990s non-violent resistance movement to Milosevic's rule. The party was led by Ibrahim Rugova until his death in 2006. The two next largest parties have their roots in the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA): the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) led by former KLA leader Hashim Thaci and the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) led by former KLA commander Ramush Haradinaj. Kosovo publisher Veton Surroi formed his own political party in 2004 named "Ora." Kosovo Serbs formed the Serb List for Kosovo and Metohija (SLKM) in 2004, but have boycotted Kosovo's institutions and never taken their seats in the Kosovo Assembly.

In November 2001, the [OSCE](#) supervised the first elections for the Kosovo Assembly. After that election, Kosovo's political parties formed an all-party unity coalition and elected [Ibrahim Rugova](#) as President and Bajram Rexhepi (PDK) as Prime Minister.

After Kosovo-wide elections in October 2004, the LDK and AAK formed a new governing coalition that did not include PDK and Ora. This coalition agreement resulted in [Ramush Haradinaj](#) (AAK) becoming Prime Minister, while Ibrahim Rugova retained the position of President. PDK and Ora were critical of the coalition agreement and have since frequently accused the current government of corruption.

Ramush Haradinaj resigned the post of Prime Minister after he was indicted for war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in March 2005. He was replaced by Bajram Kosumi (AAK). But in a political shake-up after the death of President Rugova in January 2006, Kosumi himself was replaced by former Kosovo Protection Corps commander [Agim Ceku](#). Ceku has won recognition for his outreach to minorities, but Serbia has been critical of his wartime past as military leader of the KLA and claims he is still not doing enough for Kosovo Serbs. The Kosovo Assembly elected [Fatmir Sejdiu](#), a former LDK parliamentarian, president after Rugova's death. Slaviša Petkovic, Minister for Communities and Returns, was previously the only ethnic Serb in the government, but resigned in November 2006 amid allegations that he misused ministry funds.^{[17][18]} Today two of the total thirteen ministries in Kosovo's Government have ministers from the minorities. Branislav Grbic, ethnic Serb, leads Minister of Returns and Sadik Idriz, ethnic Bosnjak, leads Ministry of Health^[19]

Kosovo status process

International negotiations began in 2006 to determine the final status of Kosovo, as envisaged under [UN Security Council Resolution 1244](#) which ended the [Kosovo conflict](#) of 1999. Whilst Serbia's continued sovereignty over Kosovo is recognised by the international community, a clear majority of the province's population would prefer independence.

The [UN](#)-backed talks, lead by UN Special Envoy [Martti Ahtisaari](#), began in February 2006. Whilst progress was made on technical matters, both parties remained diametrically opposed on the question of status itself.^[20] In February 2007, Ahtisaari delivered a draft status settlement proposal to leaders in Belgrade and Pristina, the basis for a draft UN Security Council Resolution which proposes 'supervised independence' for the province. As of early July 2007 a draft resolution, backed by the [United States](#), the [United Kingdom](#) and other European members of the [Security Council](#), had been rewritten four times to try to accommodate Russian concerns that such a resolution would undermine the principle of state sovereignty.^[21] Russia, which holds a veto in the Security Council as one of five permanent members, had stated that it would not support any resolution which was not acceptable to both Belgrade and Kosovo Albanians.^[22] Whilst most observers had, at the beginning of the talks, anticipated independence as the most likely outcome, others have suggested that a rapid resolution might not be preferable.^[23]

After many weeks of discussions at the UN, the [United States](#), [United Kingdom](#) and other European members of the Security Council formally 'discarded' a draft resolution backing Ahtisaari's proposal on [20 July 2007](#), having failed to secure Russian backing. Kosovo Albanian leaders have reacted by proposing unilateral independence for [28 November 2007](#), though the UN would be required to overrule any such action.^[24] Violence is feared in Kosovo should Kosovo Albanian demands for independence not be met.