



Kosovo Conflict: Kosovo

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1 General Information

Located in the Western Balkans, the landlocked country of Kosovo is engulfed at its Northern and Eastern border by the Republic of Serbia. When it comes to its demographic structure, the Kosovar population ranges at 2 million is mainly constituted by ethnic Albanians. These practice to a great extent the Sunni Islam faith. Likewise, Kosovo is home to hundreds of Byzantine Serbian Orthodox monasteries, including the UNESCO-protected Gračanica monastery. A considerable number of sacral objects sustained severe damage during the Yugoslav Wars in the 1990s and the 2004 March Pogrom. Besides the Serbian minority, Janjevci (Kosovo Croats) and Gorani (Slavic Muslims) as well as Turks and Roma are found in the region.

2 Relations With Serbia

Since the unilateral declaration of Kosovar independence in 2008, Belgrade refuses to recognise its status as sovereign state and continues to claim Kosovo as an integral part of Serbia. However, Serbia is interested in normalising relations with the assistance of the EU, the USA and Serbia's traditional allies Russia and China. Relations between Serbia and Kosovo remain tense 20 years after the end of the Kosovo War, as Serbian state officials are prevented entry into Kosovo. For instance, politician Marko Đurić was declared persona non grata and arrested by the Kosovo Security Forces. Furthermore, Kosovo had imposed a 100 % tax on Serbian goods, which was lifted in April 2020.

3 Diplomatic Relations

Despite Kosovo accepting notes of recognition from 50 % UN member states and most of Western European powers (with the exception of Spain), China and Russia veto almost every attempt by the republic to join international organisations, including the UN, UNESCO as well as Interpol. Furthermore, Kosovo remains de jure and de facto heavily dependent from international players such as the EU, NATO and the USA. Besides the EU being the largest trading partner, the Kosovar population relies to a considerable extent on the remittances of its diaspora. In fact, almost one quarter of Kosovo's GDP can be accounted for the salaries sent by the workforce residing abroad to the families in their homeland. Moreover, together with the USA administrating the largest European NATO base outside of Germany, the UN-backed forces UNMIK and KFOR tower de facto over the region.

Both the USA and the EU are actively involved in orchestrating bilateral negotiations between Belgrade and Prishtina, the Kosovar capital. The peace talks paved the road for the 2013 Brussels Agreement. Although the latter still lack a long-lasting solution to the issue, the agreement signals a first step towards normalising relations, with the ultimate goal of integrating Serbia further into European structures - including the EU.



Fig. 1: The relative positions of Serbia and Kosovo (green)

4 Economic Importance

After the considerable remittances, the large reservoirs of natural resources make Kosovo an attractive hub for foreign investments in the Energy sector. The region is home to the Trepča Mines, a large industrial complex which happens to be the largest silver and lead-zinc mine in Europe.

5 References

- 1 Wikipedia: Kosovo-Serbia relations
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kosovo-Serbia-relations>