



Kosovo Conflict: Serbia

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1 General Information

Located in the Western Balkans, the landlocked country of Serbia neighbours Romania at its Eastern border, while on the Western border the country is separated by the Danube and the Drina river from the fellow former Yugoslav republics Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, respectively. With a population ranging at 7 million (with Kosovo: 9 million), the country is home to a number of ethnicities, the largest of whom being Serbs, which make up 80% of the total population. While the fertile lands of the northern region of Vojvodina - a relic of the ancient Pannonian Sea - are home to a considerable number of Hungarians, Croats and the Bunjevci people, the Southern region of Kosovo is mainly inhabited by ethnic Albanians. The latter practice to a great extent the Sunni Islam faith. Nonetheless, 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.

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, along with 50 % of UN member states. However, Serbia is interested in normalising relations, with the assistance of both the EU 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.

2 Diplomatic Relations

Despite the strong diplomatic support and numerous investments in infrastructure by Russian and Chinese state-owned companies and Serbia not being a member of neither the EU nor of NATO, the main trading partners remain Germany, Italy and Romania as well as the former Yugoslav republics. During the tenure of Marshall Tito, Yugoslavia founded the Non-Aligned movement and had been hosting numerous times international conferences with countries neither affiliated with the USSR nor with the USA. After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, Serbia inherited its status there and maintains strong diplomatic relations with India, Algeria, Indonesia and many more countries on Asian and African soil. Most of these states do not recognise Kosovo as independent on the grounds of respecting Serbian territorial integrity.

On the other hand, the vast majority of EU member states recognise Kosovo as a sovereign country. Furthermore, the EU is actively involved in facilitating 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)

3 Economic Interest in Kosovo

Besides the aforementioned cultural aspect, the large reservoirs of natural resources make Kosovo an attractive hub for Serbian economic interests, first and foremost for its Energy industry. 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.

4 References

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