



Kosovo Conflict: Spain

Igor Podjanin

E-mail: igorpo@ethz.ch

1 General Information

The Serbian Foreign Minister Ivica Dačić suggests Spain to be "one of the best international friends of Serbia", with the country neither acknowledging an independent Kosovo nor supporting its membership in international organisations including UNESCO and Interpol. Hence, Spain shares the same stance regarding Kosovo's international status with another four EU countries - Greece, Cyprus, Slovakia and Romania.

Together with the rest of the EU, Spain exerts pressure on the Kosovar parliament to extradite war criminals to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). This situation has revealed itself particularly problematic for the Kosovar President Hashim Thaçi and former Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj, both of which are suspected of having committed war crimes during the Kosovo War in 1999.

Critical voices of Spain's stance draw parallels between the Kosovo issue and the separatist movements in Catalonia and the Basque Country. Indeed, Madrid has been facing for the last few decades armed resistance and the proclamation of the separatist ETA paramilitary forces. The terrorist attacks intensified with the consolidation of Franco's power and his authoritarian position and continued until the end of the last century.

2 Involvement in 1999 NATO Bombings

Despite the supportive stance for Serbian territorial integrity, Spain comes under fire from Belgrade for providing support to the Kosovar Liberation Army (KLA) during the NATO Bombings in 1999. Spanish F/A-18 fighter jets were called into action under the leadership of Javier Solana, which had been serving as the NATO General Secretary during the military intervention.

3 European Integration of Serbia

In spite of Spain being supportive of Serbia's territorial integrity and knowing that the European Union does not accept new member states with open border questions, Spain facilitated Serbia to obtain full candidate status in 2013. Furthermore, the EU - including Spain - 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.

4 Economic Interests

The large reservoirs of natural resources make both Serbia and Kosovo an attractive hub for economic investments, first and foremost for its Energy industry. Indeed, Kosovo is home to the Trepča Mines, a large industrial complex which happens to be the largest silver and lead-zinc mine in Europe.

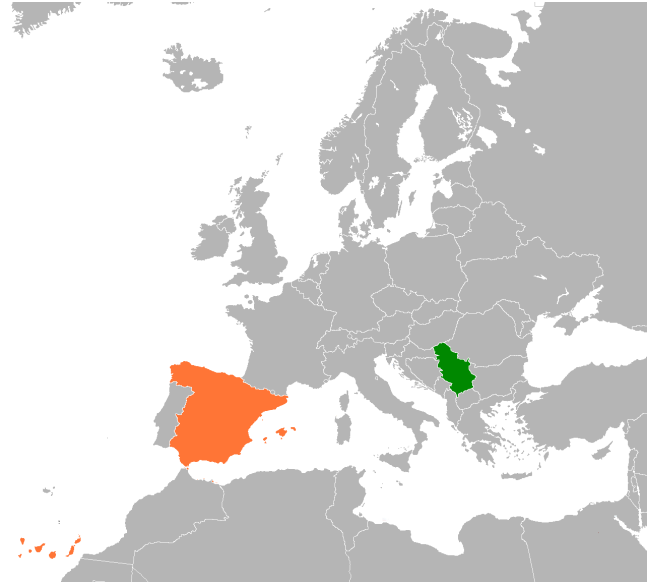


Fig. 1: The relative positions of Spain and Serbia (green)

Despite numerous investments in Serbia carried out by Spanish stakeholders and a considerable Serbian diaspora present within Western European countries including Germany, Austria or Sweden, the Spanish National Statistics Institute registers only 7000 Serbian citizens to reside in Spain.

5 References

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