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**Kosovo. The path towards...?
(Part I)**

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Kosovo. The path towards...? (Part I)

Abstract:

Kosovo, or Kosovo-Metohija according to Serbian terminology, represents an area of great significance for both Serbs and Albanians. For centuries, this area has found itself in the context of empires and powers that have fought for it well into the 20th century.

Established as a Serbian province within Yugoslavia, and always maintaining an ethnically motivated connection to Albania—but a great difference in living standards—during the Tito era, it acquired progressively more competences and higher levels of autonomy.

After the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, which did not see its expectations fulfilled, abandoned the path of peaceful segregation. This ended up generating a war from which Kosovo emerged de facto separated from Serbia and under the tutelage of the international community.

Keywords:

Kosovo, Albania, Yugoslavia, Tito, Rugova, KLA, NATO, Rambouillet.

Introduction

Different media have recently spread a phenomenon that, although new, is significant and important: the exodus of thousands of people from Kosovo, of citizens from that area of the world that have decided to leave their homeland in order to look for better opportunities or simply to secure their livelihood.

All of this is happening a few years after the wave of euphoria and expectations generated after the 2008 declaration of independence, after a series of events, facts and perceptions—NATO military action against Serbia, armed conflict, Albanian shadow government, interethnic conflicts, termination of autonomy, conflicts... that date or can date back in time to at least the 14th century—, and which have resulted nowadays in the creation of a new space in Europe.

The present document provides a succinct analysis of this journey and wonders about the path that this former autonomous Serbian province is walking towards. It will be followed by a second document that will address the action of the international community in the area, the unilateral declaration of independence and the subsequent situation in which Kosovo finds itself.

Kosovo, its importance in history

Kosovo¹, Kosovo and Metohija for the Serbs (sometimes named Kosmet), is an essential part of Serbia's history and soul. Metohija refers to the Western part of Kosovo and its meaning is related to the "land possessed and governed by monasteries" or the "land of the Church", since it is where the main Serbian orthodox monasteries have been located for centuries. In fact, the first autocephalous patriarchy of the Serbian Orthodox Church (14th century) was the Patriarchate of Péc, the Serbian spiritual seat. Moreover, its buildings form, together with the monasteries of Visoki Dečani and Gračanica and the Church of Our Lady of Ljeviš,² an ensemble called "Medieval Monuments in Kosovo" which has been declared a World Heritage Site.³

¹ In order to show the real complexity of the Balkans, it is important to note that Kosovo has an extension and a shape very similar to those of the Madrid Autonomous Community, and a population of around 1.8 million people. Depending on the sources, in the 90s, between 80% and 90% of this population was of Albanian ethnicity. This was due to the long and slow process of Serbian depopulation that materialized during all of the 20th century. Nevertheless, this matter is a subject of many controversies that reflect the "I was here first" argument.

² It was looted and burned by Albanians during the 2004 riots.

³ UNESCO, World Heritage List, *Medieval Monuments in Kosovo*, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/724>; the classification started in 2004, and since 2006 the UNESCO has included these monuments in the List of World Heritage Sites in Danger, given the situation of the region. UNESCO, List of World Heritage in Danger, *Medieval Monuments in Kosovo 2006*. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/danger/>. All of the internet links in this article are active as of 26 March 2015.

Apart from this historic and religious benchmark (it is necessary to consider the significance of the Orthodox Church in the life and transformation of Slavic societies), in the succession of incursions, battles, territorial advancements and retreats that occurred in these lands for centuries, it is important to note the date of 28 June 1389, when the Battle of the Field of Blackbirds (Kosovo Polje) took place in the territories of present-day Kosovo. The Serbian prince Lazar confronted the powerful Ottoman army commanded by the sultan Murad I, both leaders dying in the battle.

This battle connects directly with Serbian myths⁴ and is one major element in the configuration of the spirit of this people. No wonder that, some centuries later, on 28 June 1914, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian crown, was assassinated in Sarajevo by Gavrilo Princip, a Bosnian Serb. This historic event triggered the First World War and, on the 600th anniversary of the Kosovo Polje battle, Milosevic rescinded the autonomy of the province of Kosovo,⁵ also on 28 June, St. Vitus Day, Serbia's national holiday.

Similarly, Kosovo is also important for Albanians. In the context of the fight against the Ottoman Empire in those lands, and in the widespread emergence of nationalism during the 19th century, the Albanian National Awakening was born, linked and related to Pan-Albanism, the idea of the unification of all ethnic Albanians in a sole territorial entity in the search for an imaginary "Greater Albania." In that framework—and remembering the successive territorial changes of the Balkans made by the powers struggling to obtain from the waning Ottoman Empire zones of influence favorable to their interests and/or disturbing for their opponents,⁶ either directly or through allies in the area—the League for the Defense of the Rights of the Albanian Nation (League of Prizren) emerged. It was founded on 10 June 1878 in the city of Prizren (nowadays part of Kosovo), which back then was part of one of the Ottoman administrative divisions.

Kosovo, located in a contested area

⁴ The significance of this issue is greatly covered in one of the works that describe the soul of the Serbian people, Milos Cernianski, *Migraciones*, Tusquets editores, Barcelona 1990, page 231. "...the Serbs are a strange people... If they feel that they are being fooled, that they are being lied to or that the promises made to them are not being honored, they remember the offense for centuries. Three hundred and sixty years ago, Engelshoffen wrote that the Serbs were at war with the Turks because of Kosovo. ¡The Serbs do not have bad memory! They are a very unruly and wild people."

⁵ In front of an audience of 1 million people, in the same place where the battle had taken place, Milosevic delivered a commemorative speech. The text of the speech is available at <http://emperors-clothes.com/milo/milosaid.html#2>. Some years later, in 1995, in the midst of the peace negotiating process in Bosnia, he would deny that his intention had been to inflame Serbian nationalism, and he would say that all had been a farce of Zimmermann, the US Ambassador, to turn international public opinion against him, as it is told in Richard Holbrooke, *Para acabar una guerra*, Biblioteca Nueva, Madrid 1999, page 166 [The reference is available in English in Richard Holbrooke, *To end a war*, Random House, New York 1998].

⁶ Suffice it to recall that in this area converge the interests of the Ottoman Empire, the Russian Empire, the British Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, France, the newborn Germany and other middle regional powers.

In the framework of the successive wars that took place in the Balkans during the first part of the 20th century (Balkan wars of 1912 and 1913, First and Second World Wars), the area was subject, once again, to the vicissitudes of conflicts in which geopolitical interests mix with ethnic differences, unresolved vengeance, expansionist ambitions..., resorting to balkanization⁷ as the usual solution to the existing problems.

A significant event, for being a recurrent element until today, was the relation of Kosovo with Albania. This nation emerged as a state in 1913 even though it had been declared independent a few months before that date, in 1912, in the framework of the Balkan wars of 1912-1913 which implied the loss of nearly all of the European territories of the Ottoman Empire and their breakdown between the Balkan nations, with the acquiescence of the great powers of the time. Therefore, in the Treaty of London⁸ (30 May 1913) and in the Treaty of Bucharest⁹ (13 August 1913), among other issues, the independent Albania was accepted and consolidated—its territory, with more or less blurred and changing borders, had always been part of other empires or nations—as a way of denying Serbia the outlet to the sea, an ancient Austro-Hungarian aspiration, and also of nurturing the hopes of a greater influence in the area of an Italy in the midst of “Risorgimento” and with aspirations over the “irredentas” of great part of the east Adriatic coast, coast under the venetian auspices in past historical periods, thus generating, in full use of classic geopolitical engineering, a new buffer state.

In the early stages of the Second World War, and following the steps of Nazi Germany—which in 1938 annexed Austria and in 1939 Czechoslovakia—Italy invaded Albania in April 1939. Mussolini created the idea of the “Greater Albania”, claiming the right to govern all territories occupied by Albanians. After Germany’s invasion of Yugoslavia in 1941, Hitler ceded to Mussolini the control over the Albanian-majority areas of Montenegro, Kosovo and Macedonia, thus materializing the fascist idea of the hitherto inexistent “Greater Albania” or “Italian Albania.”

This geographical entity ended its short lifetime when, after the overthrow of Mussolini on 25 July 1943, the Italian government signed in September of that same year an armistice with the Allies, which entailed the reoccupation of the area by Nazi forces until their definitive expulsion in 1944 and the establishment of the borders with which the Second World War would end. These borders matched, to a great extent, the borders previous to the outbreak of the conflagration because, contrary to the First World War, there were relatively few territorial adjustments after the end of

⁷ Real Academia Española, *Diccionario de la lengua española*, 22ª edición online. Balcanización: 1.f. Desmembración de un país en territorios o comunidades enfrentados <http://lema.rae.es/drae/?val=balcanizaci%C3%B3n> [Definition of the word “balkanization” as provided in the Spanish language dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy, 22nd online edition: dismemberment of a country in confronted territories or communities].

⁸ Text available at <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/boshtml/bos145.htm>

⁹ Text available at <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/boshtml/bos149.htm>

the war. The most evident exceptions were the reduction of German territory, the modification of the Polish border and the increase of USSR's territories.¹⁰

Therefore, and despite the different conflicts that occurred in the area, Kosovo continued to be part of Yugoslavia.

Kosovo, in the framework of a federation

After the end of the Second World War, Tito's Yugoslavia, unified around his person and the attempt to forget the horrors of a cruel civil war that developed simultaneously to the world struggle—pro-Nazi Croats, Serbian supporters of the legitimate Yugoslavian government, communist partisans... in an exercise of all against all that would leave most part of the country devastated and physically and morally damaged—, continued its course, with the Kosovar territory being part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, because the 1946 constitution¹¹ based on the 1936 Soviet constitution established, among other aspects, the articulation of Yugoslavia in federated republics (Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Bosnia Herzegovina) and the existence of two autonomous provinces within Serbia, Vojvodina and Kosovo-Metohija (Article 2).

In order to have a clear understanding of this structure and, despite the fact that Yugoslavia—an absolutely fascinating subject—is not the subject of the present analysis, it is necessary to take into account the approach presented by Tito in order to articulate a viable country, a country with a very brief common history—only a few decades—, recently emerged from a brutal civil war and from centuries of confrontations, and made up of a patchwork of ethnicities, languages, cultures, religions... with a specific weight (population, territory...) different for each one in the Yugoslavian ensemble. Thus, seeking to maintain a certain degree of equilibrium, and as a “counterweight” to the more powerful Serbia, and to a lesser extent, to Croatia, he structured a Bosnia-Herzegovina in which, apart from Muslim Bosnians, there were big groups of Serbs and Croats, that remained integrated in a republic different from Serbia and Croatia, respectively. Slovenes and Montenegrins, with a lesser weight, were basically left integrated in their own republic. And the ever complex Macedonia, with great historical international differences—nowadays, many of these differences persist, starting with the disquisition with Greece relative to the name of the present independent country—, integrated Macedonians together with other minority groups, especially significant because of the number of Albanians, but where Turkish, Roma, Vlach... also had a substantial presence.

In this way, Tito faced the Yugoslavian patchwork using the paradigm of building

¹⁰ A good summary of these modifications is available at <http://www.historiasiglo20.org/IIGM/tratados.htm>

¹¹ *Constitution of the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia (1946)*. Available at http://www.worldstatesmen.org/Yugoslavia_1946.txt.

“national homes” for the groups that did not have a state outside Yugoslavia (Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians, Montenegrins), and the Bosnian “counterweight.” According to this approach, the existence of Albania and Hungary limited the existence of Kosovo as a federal republic (despite having a population of Albanian ethnicity of about 60%¹²) in the same way as in Vojvodina. However, this fact, the existence of ethnic pockets of significant size within the Serbian Republic, was explicitly recognized in the designation of these areas as autonomous provinces. Indeed, a second reading of this fact, depending on the point of view from which it is analyzed, indicates that it merely aimed to weaken Serbia even more, decreasing somehow its competences through the “segregation” from its territory, at least in certain areas, of two provinces by giving them a status of special autonomy.

The special economic Yugoslavian system (often referred to as the “third way,” an alternative between the capitalist and the communist systems) enabled a high living standard for all of its citizens, based on a high level of internal consumption, with an industrial productive system whose commodities came mainly from the south of the country—Kosovo, among other areas—and industries located mainly in the north, which generated an income difference between both areas, a difference that was compensated by the Federal Development Fund. Similarly, the condition of non-aligned country—group of which it was a founding member in 1956—in the framework of the Cold War enabled it to obtain advantages from one or the other side. And the opening of its frontiers and of its political and economic system made it possible for nearly a million emigrants that worked in the rest of Europe to contribute substantially with their remittances to maintain that high standard of living and social assistance which constituted, without any doubt, a guarantee of stability.

From the point of view of the structure of the country, the federal system was kept, and during the successive Yugoslavian constitutions¹³—apart from the already mentioned 1946 constitution, the constitutional law of 1953, the constitution of 1963 (and its three amendments in 1967, 1968 and 1971), and the last and more decentralized constitution, that of 1974, were written—the structure in republics and autonomous provinces persisted. However, gradually, at the pace of internal and

¹² Any statistical data in this respect must be verified and assessed depending on the sources where they are taken, because these are arguments often used as a weapon in order to justify real or imaginary rights by the opposing parties. Nevertheless, it is a fact that, in the dates considered, the majority of the population in Kosovo was Albanian, although in a much smaller proportion than today. This is because decades of emigration of the Serbian population, either voluntarily or due to the harassment by the Albanian population, together with the high birth rates of Albanians, have enabled a fast modification of the population distribution.

¹³ An excellent analysis of federalism, different points of view for the Yugoslavian case, and the interpretation of its constitutions can be found in Boris T. Blagojevic, *Problemas actuales del federalismo en Yugoslavia*, in *Federalismo Europeo. Regímenes socialistas (URSS, Checoslovaquia y Yugoslavia)*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México, 1979, pages 157 -172. <http://biblio.juridicas.unam.mx/libros/2/822/9.pdf>

external circumstances, more competences were transferred to the republics and the provinces of the Federation. At the same time, the provinces saw the differences in transfers reduced with respect to the republics, until that with the 1974 constitution the basic difference was the no right to secession of the provinces.

Kosovo, a constant reivindication

With this general scheme as a benchmark, Kosovo gradually acquired greater concessions, although to a lesser extent than the ones desired by the Kosovar Albanians, given its status of an autonomous province and not of a republic in the framework of Serbia. It should be pointed out that, just after the end of the Second World War, Albania was in many respects very close to Yugoslavia and that, at certain moments, it seemed feasible for this nation to become the seventh Yugoslavian republic or for a sort of confederation to be created between both nations. However, the differences between Tito and Stalin—and with Enver Hoxha, the Albanian leader—between Yugoslavian and Soviet communism ended up with this possibility,¹⁴ leaving Albania with its back to Yugoslavia, and repeatedly resorting to the argument of Kosovo as a permanent weapon against Yugoslavia, even though the living standards of Kosovar Albanians improved at the pace of the increase in the economic level of the Federation, surpassing by far the one in Albania, which continued to be the poorest country in Europe. The quality of infrastructures, the employment possibilities, the social assistance, and the living standards that the Yugoslavian Federation provided—in Kosovo—were never reached by Albania, not even at the end of the 20th century. This situation, perfectly known by every party, by the Albanians in Albania and the Albanians in the Yugoslavian province, generated a discourse with two variants, the realist one, more private and less famous, and the “official” or “informal” one, that excessively used resources taken more out of the imaginary than out of reality.

Despite this more or less constant reasoning, the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 brought once again Albania closer to Yugoslavia,¹⁵ in the fear that both nations would be the next Soviet potential objectives. This reasoning, added to the effects of the fall in 1966 of Ranković¹⁶—who had harshly governed Kosovo—caused at the end of that same year violent revolts in Kosovo and in the regions of

¹⁴ In that regard, Sergei Khrushchev, *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev, Volume 3 Statesman (1953-1964)*, The Pennsylvania State University, Pennsylvania, 2007, page 509.

¹⁵ Donald F. Busky, *Communism in History and Theory: the European experience*, Praeger Publishers, Westport, 2002, page 30. Likewise, a great account of Albania's communist era can be found in pages 28-32.

¹⁶ Aleksandar Rankovic (1909-1983), a Yugoslavian politician of Serbian origin. He was against the decentralization of the state. This ended up causing confrontations with Tito as well as his dismissal (despite having been part of his closer collaborators and despite having been member during the Second World War of his Military Staff). A brief review of this politician is available at <http://www.ovguide.com/aleksandar-rankovi-9202a8c04000641f800000000059fc88>

Macedonia that were populated mainly by Albanians. Tito applied again his carrot and stick policy, repressing the riots but granting broad concessions to Albanian demands, including educational issues such as the foundation of the University of Pristina,¹⁷ where the teaching in Albanian was encouraged. He fostered the economic development of Kosovo and allowed the use of the Albanian flag. However, these measures led to a result very different from the one expected and, instead of generating a climate of social calm, Serbs and Montenegrins increased the pace at which they were leaving the area—an area that at the start of the 1970s was already completely in the hands of Kosovar Albanians—, so that at the end of 1974 the province was, de facto, a province in every aspect but the name.¹⁸

In that situation, the role played by the educational and cultural field was of great significance—this would also be true for the decomposition of Yugoslavia—because after that improvement in the relations between Albania and Yugoslavia there was an increase in the exchanges, especially in the academic field. In fact, the nascent University of Pristina became full of texts and ideas from Albania—nation also in the middle of a dissemination campaign on a new educational curriculum since 1969—that made up an imaginary related to the “homeland” of Albania and the recurring Balkan myths—ethnic purity, glorious past...—, ideas that penetrated in Pristina and attracted Albanians from every part of Yugoslavia.

This Albanian cultural development was simultaneously accompanied by an increase in the degree of control of Kosovar institutions by Albania, and by an exponential increase in the political emancipation efforts, which coincided with a degradation of the economic situation—the impact of the 1973 oil crisis affected all Europe to a considerable extent; this spurred, apart from a loss of wealth in Yugoslavia, the progressive return of emigrants that, instead of supporting the Yugoslavian economy, became a “new weight” for the system of federal social assistance—, an economic degradation that affected Kosovo more than other regions. This situation led to a prolongation and to an increase of students in the University of Pristina—as a way to try to decrease the impact of youth unemployment—, a fact that resulted in a wide range of people with a good level of education, with a great degree of commitment with the Albanian “cause” and the “imaginary” and, in the majority of cases—except for the people that started occupying positions in the political-administrative apparatus—, with low job prospects.¹⁹ This generated an increasing uneasiness within most part of the population, and gave the people in political and administrative

¹⁷ An interesting site about this University is available at [http://es.knowledger.de/0411935/UniversidadDePristina\(19691999\)](http://es.knowledger.de/0411935/UniversidadDePristina(19691999))

¹⁸ Marina Casanova, *La Yugoslavia de Tito, el fracaso de un estado multinacional*, UNED, Espacio, Tiempo y Forma. Serie V, Hª contemporánea, t.16, 2004, page 346. <http://revistas.uned.es/index.php/ETFEV/article/viewFile/3090/2950>

¹⁹ The Albanian cultural “revival” can be found in Howard Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, Pluto Press, London, 2000, pages 40-41.

positions capacity of influence.

This situation translated into a permanent demand of claims, of concessions, of negatives that generated riots and malaise and, ultimately, translated into a situation of a more or less open rivalry and confrontation that was further complicated by the emergence of nationalisms in other parts of Yugoslavia, in unison with both the country's own dynamic and the perception that started spreading relative to the fact that the demands to the federal system always ended up getting something in return, forgetting that they led to a dangerous “zero-sum game” dynamic.

Therefore, the deterioration that Kosovo's constant demands entailed for the federal structure and for the vision of a unique space increased. Coexistence started to get complicated with the point of no return that came with each concession made, and with the difficulty of integrating in the constitutional framework demands that ranged from the improvement of living conditions, to the rise in status from province to republic, or to the pure and simple independence.

Kosovo, its divisive power

In 1981, only a year after Tito's death, a university protest—that started when a student found a cockroach in his meal at the university cafeteria, and that grew in intensity and extensity as it coincided with a crowd that came from seeing a football match—became a riot in all of the province and required the federal army and policemen from various republics to come to suffocate it. All of it happened in an environment of increasing demands and in the framework of a weakening Yugoslavia.

That riot occurred in a complex international scenario, since the world was in the middle of the so-called Cold War, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the process of rearmament carried out by Ronald Reagan after his rise to power in the United States. In that global environment, and remembering the position of Yugoslavia as a non-aligned country, the relation between Yugoslavia and Albania started narrowing, especially after Mao's death in 1976 and Enver Hoxha's start of a new phase in Albania,²⁰ more distanced from its defender, China—to whom it had moved closer when it broke off its relations with the USSR after the end of the Stalinist phase in Moscow—; an approximation that started materializing with the increase in trade relations, the project of a railroad between Shkodër—an important city in the north of Albania—and Titograd—the capital of Montenegro—,and the projects of mutual defense against the Soviets. Given this situation of mutual rapprochement, that could progressively integrate Albania—which was distanced from the great communication routes of the Balkans—, into the Yugoslavian orbit, the

²⁰ An interesting vision of Albania can be found in Sergei Khrushchev, *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev, Volume 3 Statesman (1953- 1964)*, The Pennsylvania State University, Pennsylvania, 2007, pages 509-527.

position of Albanians in Kosovo was not entirely favorable to this idea, since they perceived it could be harmful to their interests. As a result, Belgrade understood that the Albanians in Kosovo wanted to block this rapprochement.²¹

The constant altercations and the harshness of the repression²² caused the province to oscillate between secession and open revolt.²³ However, Kosovo was more than just a foretaste of what would happen or a wear and tear process for a Yugoslavia that was ceasing to be a single area, a common project. The harshness of the actions executed in this Serbian province and the recent condemnation of those actions in international media led the rest of the federation to wish to stop withstanding the drain of resources and prestige that implied Kosovo,²⁴ in an attempt to “release the burden” in the midst of the different republics’ process of rapprochement to the international community.²⁵ Moreover, given this situation, communist Serbs tried to take over the Communist League of Yugoslavia, starting the process of political disintegration, and, ultimately, the excessive reaction of Serbian ultra-nationalism, mobilized around Kosovo,²⁶ which provoked the counter-reaction of Croatian populist nationals united around Tudjman.

The emergence of a new flashpoint in the unstable Yugoslavian equilibrium “*would create an ulcer that would hopelessly worsen until it became one of the roots of the process that would lead to the destruction of Yugoslavia.*”²⁷ This same vision is the one that points out that the cycle of disputes that led to the destruction of Yugoslavia in the 1980s started in a place too predictable, in reference to Kosovo, and in two unpredictable places, such as Slovenia and Serbia, given that none of them had previous precedents of separatism.²⁸

²¹ As suggests Francisco Veiga, *La Trampa Balcánica*, Random House Mondadori, Barcelona, 2002, page 308.

²² This repression is excellently fictionalized, although from a particular perspective, by Ismail Kadare, in his book *El Cortejo Nupcial Helado en la Nieve*, Alianza Editorial, Madrid, 2007.

²³ Richard Holbrooke, *Para Acabar una Guerra*, Biblioteca Nueva, Madrid 1999, page 51. [Richard Holbrooke, *To end a war*, Random House, New York 1998].

²⁴ Bogdan Denitch, *Nacionalismo y Etnicidad. La Trágica Muerte de Yugoslavia*, Siglo XXI editores, Madrid, 1995, page 133.

²⁵ In international talking-shops, this is the ultimate reason that explains the favorable result—although by a few tenths— of the referendum that in 2006 led to the separation of Montenegro from the Confederation formed with a demonized Serbia, as a result of the horrors of the war in Bosnia, because the perception of the possibility of access to international forums was seen as easier without the “obstacle” posed by Serbia.

²⁶ After the riots, there was an increase in the exodus of Serbs from Kosovo, exodus that was partially caused by the living conditions in the province, which were worse than the living conditions in the rest of Serbia, and by the increasing influx of Albanian culture in the area. If until the 1981 riots this flux of Serbs had not been in the news, it constantly appeared in the news from this moment on, and sometimes, directly blaming Albanians for forcing the exodus by harassing the Serbs. A description of this situation can be found in *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse: Causes, Course and Consequences*, C. Hurst & Co. Ltd. London, 1995, page 89.

²⁷ Francisco Veiga, *La Trampa Balcánica*, Random House Mondadori, Barcelona, 2002, page 306.

²⁸ Bogdan Denitch, *Nacionalismo y Etnicidad. La Trágica Muerte de Yugoslavia*, Siglo XXI editores, Madrid, 1995, page 120.

Had or had not Kosovo that relative high weight in the decomposition of Yugoslavia or, was it, replicating its role of a recurring Balkan myth—and in that case, for both Serbs and Albanians—, a simple catalyst of the events that would crystalize during a decade in Yugoslavia, the truth is that, “Yugoslavia started to bleed to death, and the hemorrhage would be unstoppable.”²⁹

Kosovo, a path apart from Serbia

Milosevic, embracing Serbian nationalism and in the midst of the Yugoslavian Federation’s decomposition process, annulled in 1989—600 years after the Battle of the Field of Blackbirds—, as has been mentioned before, the status of autonomous province, which induced Kosovar Albanians to break away from Serbia. The 1990 Yugoslavian elections were boycotted and it was decided to boycott the state authority, creating a system of parallel institutions. On 7 September 1990, the delegates of the Kosovar Albanian parliament declared in Kaçanik independence from Serbia and a constitution for Kosovo.

Things continued in the same vein and in 1992, while Yugoslavia was decomposing, an illegal pro-autonomy referendum was held in Kosovo. It produced a yes vote majority in favor of independence. Ibrahim Rugova, the so-called “Albanian Gandhi,” would be chosen president of the so-called “government in the shadow,” taking into account that neither the result nor the referendum itself was recognized by Serbia.

Life in Kosovo was articulated around a parallel society,³⁰ outside the non-recognized central Yugoslavian government. Kosovo created its own network of schools³¹—a special attention was given to this subject, key for the future of a society—, health, social support..., generating an authentic set of parallel institutions to the “official” ones. This system was partially financed by the contributions of the powerful—at least numerically powerful—Albanian diaspora and through a perfectly ruled and orchestrated system of tax and voluntary contribution collection in Kosovo.³²

The Albanian diaspora did not only have an important role in the creation of parallel institutions in Kosovo. In fact, since the 1980s, it had been very active in showing to

²⁹ Romualdo Bermejo y Cesáreo Gutiérrez, *La disolución de Yugoslavia*, EUNSA, Barañain, 2007, page 13. Most analyst devote a special paragraph to Kosovo in the section about the process of Yugoslavian disintegration. A few examples of this are Christopher Bennett, *Yugoslavia’s Bloody Collapse: Causes, Course and Consequences*, C. Hurst & Co. Ltd. London, 1995, pages 85-90, Aleksandar Pavkovic, *The Fragmentation of Yugoslavia, Nationalism and War in the Balkans*, second edition, Palgrave Macmillan, 2000, pages 80-84.

³⁰ An excellent description of the “parallel structures” can be found in Howard Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, Pluto Press, London, 2000 pages 95-121.

³¹ An analysis of the significance given to education and its instrumentalization in the conformation of independence can be found in Denisa Kostovicova, “*Skolla Shqipe*” and *Nationhood: Albanians in pursuit of education in the native language in interwar (1918-41) and post-autonomy (1989-98) Kosovo*, pages 157-171 in Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers et al., *Albanian Identities, Myth and History*, C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd, 2002.

³² Howard Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, Pluto Press, London, 2000 pages 103-104.

the world the situation of Albanians in Kosovo, and even in determining the political agenda of the latter.³³ In the same way, the actions of the diasporas were essential in the development of the war both in the province and in the rest of Yugoslavia.³⁴ Simultaneously to the violent clashes that in 1991 started to burn and break down Yugoslavia, the diaspora even contributed to the birth of the UCK (Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës, the Kosovo Liberation Army), a terrorist movement that sought the independence of Kosovo. It was mainly rooted in the Albanian diaspora in Switzerland and in the United States, it had sanctuaries in Albania, it was fueled by international volunteers, and it was financed by drug trafficking and the contribution of emigrants.³⁵

Given these circumstances, and until the signing of the Dayton Agreement in 1995³⁶—which put an end to the war in Bosnia—, Serbia, subject to harsh economic sanctions and bogged down in the Bosnian conflict, observed how Kosovo gradually started depopulating of the Serbian minority; how the rest of Serbia was flooded by Serbian refugees coming from Bosnia and, especially, from Croatia, after the massive expulsions of people from Serbian origin from Slavonia and Krajina; and how it progressively lost control of the Kosovar province, which continued under martial law.

However, after the signature of the Dayton Agreement, many of the Kosovar hopes³⁷ relative to the achievement of independence ended, because Kosovo not only was not part of the negotiation, but also stayed implicitly within the borders of Yugoslavia (in that moment, materialized by Serbia and Montenegro) as a Serbian province, without any changes with respect to its previous situation. The pacific position proposed by Rugova—obtaining from the international community the

³³ Julie Mertus, *Kosovo: How Myths and Truths Started a War*, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1999, page 96.

³⁴ Mention might be made of the support given by the Croat community in the United States for the organization of the congress of the Croatian nationalist party in February 1990, Mary Kaldor, *Las Nuevas Guerras Violencia Organizada en la Era Global*, Tusquets Editores, Barcelona, 2001, page 60, Laura Silber y Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, Penguin Books, Nueva York, 1996, page 91; Bogdan Denitch, *Nacionalismo y Etnicidad. La Trágica Muerte de Yugoslavia*, Siglo XXI editores, Madrid, 1995, page 54.

³⁵ More information about the UCK from unclassified sources can be found in James Pettifer, *Kosovo Express: a Journey in Wartime*, C. Hurst & Co, London 2005; *Croatian Forces Internacional Volunteers Association*, <http://www.cfiva.org/cfiva/home/index.cfm>.

For more information about the networks created on the basis of the diasporas and their intervention in the conflict, we must highlight Paul Hockenos, *Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism & the Balkan Wars*, Cornell University, New York, 2003, specially part III *Kosovo: Made in Yugoslavia*, pages 177-261.

³⁶ Text of the agreement available at http://www.ohr.int/dpa/default.asp?content_id=380

³⁷ "...declaring Dayton the end of the illusion that 'the international community' would heed Kosovo's call for Independence" Howard Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, Pluto Press, Londres, 2000 page 123; "...did not 'reward' Kosovo's non-violence" as states Howard Clark, *The Limits of Prudence: Civil Resistance in Kosovo 1990-98*, pages 277-294. Also in the same vein, Adam Roberts, Timothy Garton Ash, *Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Non-Violent Action from Gandhi to the Present*, Oxford University Press, 2009, page 282.

recognition of Kosovo as an independent state—lost points against the harder line, that started to be seen as the appropriate way, leading the flux of the diaspora towards the more radical options.³⁸ Meanwhile, the development strategy tried by Serbian authorities in an attempt to relaunch the economic resources of the area failed, especially due to the lack of international investments.

Kosovo, the path to war

In 1996 there was a serious attempt in Serbia, that suggested the need for changes in the radical policies, of overthrowing Milosevic, while the UCK³⁹ started, from its bastion in Drenica—central area of Kosovo located west of Pristina—a campaign of attacks against Serbian and “collaborationist” police stations. This generated an escalation of violence, given that the aim sought by the terrorist actions was to provoke a disproportionate Serbian response⁴⁰ in order to win support for the Albanian cause (again, and as a recurring Balkan myth, the resort to victimization⁴¹). In 1997, this violence, due to the three quarter million arms proceeding from the looting of Albanian headquarters during the 1997 crisis,⁴² reached the level of open war between Serbian security forces and the UCK, which already dominated a large part of the territory and had a core of armed elements in each Kosovar Albanian village to prevent the freedom of movement of the Serbian police.

The Serbian counteroffensive in 1998 was forceful, and there was fear that the violence would activate again the conflict in Bosnia—which had been so difficult to suppress—, and even expand it to Macedonia, which had 21% of Albanian population. The Security Council issued the resolution 1160 (1998) of 31 March, in which, with regards to Chapter VII, it urged the parties to cease all violence and to grant a greater degree of autonomy and self-administration to Kosovo, based on the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia and on the rules laid down in the Helsinki Final Act.

³⁸ Francisco Veiga, *La Trampa Balcánica*, Random House Mondadori, Barcelona, 2002, page 521.

³⁹ The emergence of the UCK and its significance in Kosovo, from a micro point of view, can be found in James Pettifer, *Kosovo Express: a Journey in Wartime*, C. Hurst & Co, London 2005.

⁴⁰ In this regard, Mira Milosevic, *Nacionalismo y Violencia en Kosovo*, Espasa Calpe, Madrid, 2001, pages 154-158.

⁴¹ “The most dangerous identity is that of victim. Once we see ourselves as victims, we can clearly identify an enemy. Steeped in our victimhood, we no longer feel bound by moral considerations in becoming perpetrators.” Julie Mertus, *Kosovo: How Myths and Truths Started a War*, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1999, page 1.

⁴² Albania, back then already the poorest country in Europe, exploded due to a pyramidal scam at national level that impoverished Albanians even further. Albanians, angered, accusing the government of complicity, assailed and looted all public institutions and organisms, including headquarters. This situation led to the launching of a mission, authorized by the Security Council (resolutions 1101 y 1114) and backed by the OSCE—Operación Alba o Amanecer [Dawn or Sunrise Operation]—from April to July 1997, to stabilize the situation which was about to lead to civil war. More information about the mission in Ejército de Tierra, Misiones Internacionales, *Operación Alba* [Spanish Army, International Missions, Dawn Operation],

<http://www.ejercito.mde.es/misiones/europa/albania/OPERACIONALBA.html>.

The situation got complicated, there was an increase in the flow of refugees that left Kosovo and there was fear of a “humanitarian catastrophe”. Therefore, a new resolution, resolution 1199 (1998) of 23 September stated that the situation in Kosovo constituted a threat to regional peace and security and, under Chapter VII, among other issues, it demanded⁴³ that Yugoslavia met a number of conditions “towards achieving a political solution to the situation in Kosovo,” and in paragraph 6 “...emphasize[d] [highlighted in the original] that all elements in the Kosovo Albanian community should pursue their goals by peaceful means only.”

The refusal to comply with the provisions of the resolutions, and the opposition of Russia and China for the adoption of coercive measures by the Security Council, encouraged NATO to issue an ultimatum to Yugoslavia so that it complied with the provisions of the Security Council. There was a break in the escalation of violence and a partial withdrawal of armed forces, while the UCK exfiltrated to the mountains, went to Albania and reorganized itself. On 15 and 16 October, Yugoslavia signed agreements with NATO and OSCE, respectively, agreements that were supported and backed by the United Nations (resolution 1203 (1998) of 24 October).

The media impact generated by the so-called Račak massacre⁴⁴ on 15 January 1999—the death of 45 Albanians at the hands of police and armed forces—triggered once more alarms, and on 30 January NATO cautioned about acting forcefully, including air strikes over Yugoslavia.⁴⁵ The attempt to reach an ultimate negotiated solution, the so-called Rambouillet Accords,⁴⁶ failed—certain clauses were said to be unacceptable, since they fully violated Serbia’s sovereignty⁴⁷—, and on 24 March, NATO airstrikes began, airstrikes not authorized by the United Nations.

There was an increase in the flux of Kosovar Albanian refugees to Albania and Macedonia, and there were fears of the conflict spreading to the whole region. In response to the allegations that the flux of refugees was due to NATO’s air campaign, the German Ministry of Defense informed in April 1999 of the existence of

⁴³ United Nations, Security Council, *Resolution 1199 (1998)*, document S/RES/1199 (1998) of 23 September 1998.

⁴⁴ It is enough to see the following article of a Spanish newspaper El País, *Racak, la matanza que desencadenó una guerra*, reportaje postguerras balcánicas, 05 August 2002 http://elpais.com/diario/2002/08/05/opinion/1028498409_850215.html

⁴⁵ NATO Press Release, document (99) 12, *Statement by the North Atlantic Council on Kosovo*, 30 January 1999. <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-012e.htm>.

⁴⁶ The texts can be found in United Nations, Security Council, document S/1999/648 of 7 June 1999, Letter dated 4 June 1999 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, *Rambouillet Accords, Interim Agreement for Peace and Self-Government in Kosovo*

http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/990123_RambouilletAccord%28esp%29.pdf

[Text in English available at <http://peacemaker.un.org/kosovo-rambouilletagreement99>]

⁴⁷ In this regard, it is interesting to draw a sort of parallel between some of the terms reflected in the proposal made in Rambouillet and in Austro-Hungarian ultimatum to on July 23, 1914, whose non-acceptance led to the First World War. The text of this last document is available at

[http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/The_Austro-Hungarian_Ultimatum_to_Serbia_\(English_translation\)](http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/The_Austro-Hungarian_Ultimatum_to_Serbia_(English_translation))

the so-called “Operation Horseshoe,”⁴⁸ by which Milosevic planned the systematic expulsion of Albanians from Kosovo.

The air campaign continued, extending to both civilian and military targets in Serbia, while splits started to emerge in the alliance due to the duration and extension of the campaign. Finally, the combination of the punishment applied to Serbia, the actions of the UCK in Kosovo’s territory with the air support of NATO planes—the actions of elements of the Albanian North American diaspora within the so-called Atlantic Brigade were outstanding for their media impact⁴⁹—, as well as the threat of a ground intervention by the Alliance accomplished Milosevic’s consent to withdraw Serbian armed forces from Kosovo, and the ending of the bombing on June 10, 1993.

Serbia lost control of one of its autonomous provinces, Kosovo, which started its own path, under the tutelage of the international community, towards?

Conclusion

In an area full of myths, Kosovo appears as a very powerful myth, as a small geographic space that, located in an area of great geopolitical interests, contributes to generate disputes about this territory.

Beyond historical arguments, the world view of peoples, the strength of myths, an adequate narrative and a permanent reasoning contribute to generate in the lands of Kosovo-Metohija, rightly or wrongly, the feeling that part of its population—Kosovar Albanian— needs to follow a path different from the one followed by the rest of the population. And for that, to that end, the means and modes to achieve it are gradually plotted.

And if to that end it is necessary to have powerful external support, to instrumentalize all necessary questions and even, after a clear analysis of the vulnerabilities of the adversary and being able to condition its response, to resort to war, these elements are but myths in a path that Kosovo must be willing to take in order to arrive at...?

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⁴⁸ With respect to this Plan and to the possible failure in the interpretation of Milosevic’s response to NATO’s bombing, it is very interesting to look at the document of the British Parliament dated 7 June 2000 *Kosovo The Military Campaign*

<http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm199900/cmselect/cmfaaff/28/2809.htm#a18>

⁴⁹ The Christian Science Monitor, *From USA to a KLA boot camp*, 18 May 1999 <http://www.csmonitor.com/1999/0518/p1s2.html>; New York Post, *Fight vs. odds local soldiers’ proudest hour*, 24 June 1999, <http://nypost.com/1999/06/24/fight-vs-odds-local-soldiers-proudest-hour/>; Paul Hockenos, *Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism & the Balkan Wars*, Cornell University Press, 2003, especially the chapter *Frankie goes to Kosovo*, pages 238-261.