

# Kosovo under Autonomy

This report is the outcome of two years of research and writing. Primary author Momčilo Pavlović submitted an initial, 26,500-word draft to team members in March 2004. An abridged English-language text was evaluated by members of both Kosovo teams (1 & 8: Kosovo under Milosević) in a 1½-day workshop held at Ohio State University on 15-16 October with the generous support of SI participant Jason Vuic's Center for Slavic & East European Studies. Thanks to a supplementary grant from the U.S. Institute of Peace, a third draft was the subject of another 1½-day workshop of Albanian and Serbian members of both Kosovo teams on 15-16 December at Skopje's Center for Interethnic Tolerance & Refugees.

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The Albanian Political Agenda. Although the 1974 constitution virtually gave Kosovo de facto republican status

- As a result ethnic-Albanians participated fully at all levels of government
  - Nonetheless, most ethnic-Albanians wanted the full *de jure* status of a republic
  - Serbs interpreted these aspirations as a desire to secede from Yugoslavia
- Although these fears were genuine, the bulk of Kosovo Albanians sought republican status, rather than independences, and least of all union with Albania

The Demographic Debate. The steady increase in Albanian – and corresponding decrease in Serbian – population in Kosovo after World War was principally caused by (1) a disparity in birth rates, and (2) greater migration of Serbs.

### 1. Birth Rates

- There is no evidence of an Albanian plot to overwhelm the Serbian minority through higher reproduction.
- High birthrates in rural Albanian communities were consistent with fertility in other rural areas, while urban Albanian birthrates were nearly identical with those of other groups.
- A higher percentage of Kosovo Serbs lived in urban areas, with correspondingly smaller fertility rates.

### 2. Emigration

- There was an absolute decline in the number of Serbs, with 85,000 already having left Kosovo during the two decades before 1981. The two principal causes for their leaving Kosovo were:
  - (a) the search for greater economic opportunity elsewhere Serbs (as well as Albanians).
  - (b) patterns of discrimination and harassment by the growing Albanian majority, which fed fear of violence

Causes of Serb Migration. It is much easier to measure the perceptions of the Serbian population than the degrees of oppression they experienced under autonomy or the extent to which it influenced those who left the province.

- Despite significant increases in Albanian government and managerial employment after 1981, Serbs retained a disproportionate share (20%), particularly in the highest positions (52%).
- Continued employment did not, however, shield them from growing fear of “Albanization” and various forms of discrimination and harassment.
- Most forms of discrimination were non-violent, but there were also threats to personal safety or property and occasional acts of violence, which was sometimes sensationalized by media.
- It is difficult to assess the accuracy of the SANU survey, which shows that 75% Serbians emigrated from Kosovo as the result of non-economic pull-factors. The 75% is likely too high and may include some economic motives.
- Nonetheless, it is undeniable that fear inspired by the steady growth of the Albanian population, and various forms of discrimination, exacerbated by media sensationalism, constitutes a major cause of Serb emigration.

The Milosević Factor. The Milosević regime and Serbian nationalist intellectuals did not cause the mobilization of Serbian nationalism within the Kosovo community.

- Rather, the mobilization of Serbian nationalism in Kosovo was a preexisting, grass-roots movement.
- Serbian activism in Kosovo was primarily for greater legal protection against what they feared were attempts by ethnic-Albanians to ethnically-cleanse Kosovo.
- Whereas Serbian officials and intellectuals did not initiate this movement, the activists were encouraged to continue their agitation, particularly by the new young group of politicians who exploited it to boost their own popularity.
- Lacking support from their own local “weekend” politicians, Kosovo Serbs turned to Serbia for guidance and Milosević emerged as a popular figure who appeared to sympathize with their plight.