



## Study of Internal Conflict (SOIC) Case Studies

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### Kosovo 1998–99

#### Executive Summary

The conflict was fought between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). The population of Kosovo is majority ethnic Albanian. In 1998, it was about 83 percent Albanian, 10 percent Serbian, and 7 percent other groups.<sup>1</sup> As Yugoslavia began to break apart in 1991, Kosovar Albanians voted overwhelmingly for independence, but the Yugoslav government refused to recognize the results. Slobodan Milošević, the new president of Yugoslavia, revoked the autonomy of Kosovo, incorporated it into Serbia, and encouraged Serb settlement and Albanian emigration.<sup>2</sup> This encouragement included firing most ethnic Albanians from state-run enterprises, government institutions, and schools. These policies would lead to 70 percent unemployment among ethnic Albanians by 1998.<sup>3</sup>

Despite tensions, Kosovo remained at peace during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia. Ibrahim Rugova, leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo, encouraged passive resistance and created a shadow government that continued to provide services to the Kosovar Albanian population.<sup>4</sup> Those who disagreed with nonviolent resistance joined the KLA, and attacks on Serbian security personnel began in 1995. Serbia claimed Kosovo as a historical part of its territory and cited the need to protect its ethnic Serb minority. Kosovar Albanians, a majority in the province for centuries, argued for their right to self-determination in the face of repressive Serbian policies.<sup>5</sup>

In 1997, neighboring Albania collapsed into economic chaos and conflict. This situation allowed for large numbers of weapons from Albania to be acquired by the KLA.<sup>6</sup> By 1998, the KLA announced its goal of unifying all Albanian-inhabited lands.<sup>7</sup> The intensity of KLA and Yugoslav operations increased in 1998. In March, Serbian police attacked the home of KLA leader Adem Jashari, killing him and 57 others, including 28 women and children.<sup>8</sup> The attack led to a decline in support for Rugova's nonviolent resistance and swelled the ranks of the KLA. Kosovo gained international attention, which would increase with additional massacres throughout the conflict. The KLA was responsible for some of these massacres, killing ethnic Serbs and the Albanians it accused of collaborating.<sup>9</sup> The United States and the international community began involving themselves despite Serbia's pleas that it was an internal matter.

Continuing violence and reports of more than 200,000 Albanians displaced by government forces led NATO to push for introducing a military peacekeeping force under its command, as the UN Security Council would not authorize any action due to Russian and Chinese opposition. Months of peace talks resulted in failure, and on March 20, Yugoslav forces began a massive campaign of expulsions that led NATO to begin an aerial bombing campaign on March 24. These events continued until June, when Milošević finally accepted the terms of an international peace plan involving the withdrawal of Yugoslav and Serbian forces, NATO-led peacekeepers, and autonomy for Kosovo. Roughly 90 percent

of the Kosovar Albanian population had been displaced, and 13,548 civilians and fighters were killed during the war, including 8,676 Kosovar Albanians.<sup>10</sup>

## Assessing the Five Factors

### 1. Was the country at the time of the conflict a nation?

**No.** By 1998, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia consisted only of Serbia and Montenegro, with Kosovo being part of Serbia. Serbians have a strong sense of national identity, but when Kosovar Albanians and other minorities in Serbia are included, less than 85 percent of the population of Serbia was ethnically Serbian.<sup>11</sup>

### 2. Was the government perceived as legitimate by 85 percent of the population?

**No.** Kosovar Albanians did not consider the government legitimate; they made up slightly more than 15 percent of the total population in Serbia and created a parallel underground government.<sup>12</sup>

### 3. Did the government maintain or achieve security control over roughly 85 percent of the country's overall population?

**No.** Much of Kosovo during the war was insecure, and the KLA was able to control loosely up to 40 percent of Kosovo, ambush security forces, and move among the population, which largely supported them.<sup>13</sup> By the end of the conflict, almost all of Kosovo had been affected by violence. The population of Kosovo at the time was about 2.1 million, while Serbia itself was about 7.8 million.<sup>14</sup>

### 4. Did the rebel movement have persistent access to external sanctuary in a neighboring country to a militarily significant degree?

**Yes.** The KLA used Albania as a staging and training ground. The remote mountainous region was largely uncontrolled by the Albanian government and dominated by criminal gangs that sold weapons to the KLA. This arrangement and the shared ethnic ties made the border highly porous and a sanctuary.<sup>15</sup>

### 5. Was there a government army or armed constabulary force in existence at the start of the conflict?

**Yes.** Serbian security forces, the Yugoslav army, irregulars, and paramilitaries engaged in joint operations in close coordination under the direction of the government in Belgrade. A typical operation involved Serbian police raiding a village, with the Yugoslav army cordoning off the area and providing artillery support.<sup>16</sup>

## Outcome

Government loss. The integrity of the Yugoslavian government's boundaries was not intact, as government forces could no longer enter Kosovo. Kosovo became a de facto independent country administered by the UN, as talks to determine its autonomy failed. Kosovo unilaterally declared independence in 2008 but has not been universally recognized. With four of the five factors favoring the rebels, the case supports the Five Factors Model.

<b>KOSOVO 1998–99</b>	
<b>NATIONAL IDENTITY</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>GOVERNMENT LEGITIMACY</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>POPULATION SECURITY</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>EXTERNAL SANCTUARY</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>EXISTING SECURITY FORCES</b>	<b>YES</b>

## Endnotes

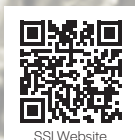
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