

APPENDIX A

History and Political Situation in Kosovo

THE FACTS:

The politics of Kosovo takes place in a framework of a multi-party parliamentary representative democratic republic, whereby the Prime Minister of Kosovo is the head of government, and the President of Kosovo is the head of state. Next to the EULEX, which plays more of a monitoring role, the EU is also able to directly influence politics in Kosovo. The EU deploys, in cooperation with the International Steering Group for Kosovo a special International Civilian Representative in Kosovo who has the "ability to annul decisions or laws adopted by Kosovo authorities and sanction and remove public officials whose actions he/she determines to be inconsistent" with the Ahtisaari Plan. The Ahtisaari Plan is a settlement proposal covering a wide range of issues related to the Kosovo status process. The aim of the representative is to ensure the full implementation of Kosovo's status settlement and to support Kosovo's European integration. The representative stops in September 2012, thus giving politics in Kosovo its full independence.

The Kosovo Assembly, which was constituted as part of the UNMIK regulations on the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government consists of 120 seats of which a maximum of 100 are distributed proportionally among the political parties based on the amount of votes. Twenty additional seats are reserved for non-Albanian communities, of whom the Serbs can claim 10. Kosovo is a single electoral district. The Assembly elects the country's President for a five-year term. However after the election of Behgjet Pacolli as president in 2011 was ruled unconstitutional and he was replaced by outsider Atifete Jahjaga, the Assembly decided to reform the electoral code to allow for the President to be elected by popular vote.

UNMIK

Kosovo held its first parliamentary elections since the forces of Slobodan Milosevic were driven from the province in 2001 after a NATO intervention. The executive rule of Kosovo has, until its call for independence in 2008, been under guidance of the United Nations, though officially being part of first Serbia and Montenegro and later Serbia. Kosovo was administered by United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG). The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 placed Kosovo under transitional UN administration pending a determination of Kosovo's future status. This Resolution entrusted UNMIK with sweeping powers to govern Kosovo, but also directed UNMIK to establish interim institutions of self-governance. Since 2001 UNMIK gradually transferred governing power to the local institutions.

UNMIK initially brought together four pillars under UN leadership: Humanitarian Affairs under the responsibility of the UNHCR, Civil Administration of the UN, Democratisation and Institution-building of the OSCE, and Economic Reconstruction, Recovery and Development of the European Union (EU). With the emergency stage over, pillar I (Humanitarian Affairs), led by the UNHCR, was phased out at the end of June 2000. In May 2001 a new pillar I was created to be responsible for Police and Justice under the UN. To establish and maintain security in Kosovo NATO-led international forces with a UN mandate were deployed (KFOR).

EULEX

With Kosovo's call for independence in 2008 ended UNMIK and a new European Union Rule of Law

Mission (EULEX) took over. EULEX aims at assisting and supporting the Kosovo authorities in the rule of law area, specifically in the police, judiciary and customs areas. EULEX is a technical mission which monitors, mentors and advises whilst retaining a number of limited executive powers. The EULEX mission has been hindered in its functioning by the fact that only 22 out of 27 EU member states have recognised Kosovo as independent, leading to internal division. While the US, who is also able to influence the state of affairs in Kosovo, speaks with one voice. The mission is therefore often criticized for being inefficient in establishing a fully functioning rule of law. The EU has stated to stay committed to its leading role in Kosovo and considers the establishment of the rule of law the top priority.

Kosovo war

Tensions between the Serbian and Albanian communities in Kosovo simmered throughout the 20th century and occasionally erupted into major violence, particularly during the First Balkan War, World War I, and World War II. The Socialist government of Josip Tito systematically repressed nationalist manifestations throughout Yugoslavia, seeking to ensure that no republic or nationality gained dominance over the others. After the death of Tito nationalist feelings became dominant again, especially among ethnic Albanians living in Kosovo, leading to an increasingly poisonous atmosphere between Albanians and Serbs.

Tensions further increased when the autonomy that was given to Kosovo in the 80's was revoked under the rule of Slobodan Milošević. In 1991 an unofficial referendum was held in Kosovo on the creation of an independent republic, 98% voted in favour with a 90% turnout. The denial of the independence of Kosovo by the Serb government led to an increase in violence between the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and the Serb authorities and finally to a situation of war in 1997. The international community demanded that the Serbs would end their offensives against the KLA whilst attempting to convince the KLA to drop their bid for independence. Moreover, attempts were made to persuade Milošević to permit NATO peacekeeping troops to enter Kosovo.

The failure of peace negotiations led to a NATO decision in 1999 to end the conflict with military means. Within ten weeks, NATO aircrafts flew over 38,000 combat missions with the following aim: "Serbs out, peacekeepers in, refugees back". On June 3, 1999, Milošević accepted the terms of an international peace plan to end the fighting, with the Serbian parliament adopting the proposal amid contentious debate with delegates coming close to fistfights at some points. According to the Kosovo Memory Book, based on the study of an NGO from both Kosovo and Serbia around 13,000 people were killed during the conflict.

Independence

In an extraordinary parliamentary session in Pristina on 17 February 2008, Kosovo unilaterally declared its independence from Serbia. Kosovo's Prime Minister Hashim Thaci read the declaration of independence, which stated that Kosovo is dedicated to peace and stability in the region, and is looking for a good relationship with its neighbours. The declaration furthermore states that Kosovo is created along the lines of the UN plan drawn up by special representative Martti Ahtisaari, and calls for Kosovo's supervised independence by an international presence. Serbia was, and remains, strongly opposed against an independent Kosovo. According to the Serbian government a solution for Kosovo must be found to which both Belgrade and Pristina agree upon. As of 1 July 2012, 91 UN states have recognised the independence of Kosovo and it has become a member country of the IMF and World Bank. 22 out of 27 EU member states recognise the independence; Spain, Cyprus, Greece, Slovakia and Romania have not done so, mainly due to issues with minorities and separatist movements in their own respective

countries.

Serbs in Kosovo

About 8 percent of the population of Kosovo is Serbian. The Serb population of Kosovo is concentrated in the northern area. Serbs generally live in enclaves that are separated from the Albanian territories by roadblocks and/or bridges. Depending on the situation they are easy to pass or be closed. Especially the divided town of Mitrovica experiences tensions, causing temporarily closure of the bridge between the Southern Albanian dominated area and the Northern Serb dominated area. About 18 percent of the Kosovo Serbs live north of the river Ibar in North Mitrovica. The place has a strong symbolic meaning to Serbs, as it is the only Serbian urban centre in Kosovo with a university and hospital. Kosovo in general holds many Serbian orthodox monasteries and churches, Serbia tends to claim Kosovo on the basis of historic meaning. In March 2004 interethnic violence, leaving 20 dead, further harmed the relation between Serbs and Kosovars. The outburst of violence became a point of reference for the vulnerability of the relations between the ethnic groups. At least 800 mainly Serbian homes and at least 17 Serbian religious buildings were destroyed or damaged. The call for independence in 2008 also led to riots in the north of Kosovo. Kosovo Serbs consider the declaration of independence by Pristina illegal, and a breach of international law.

During the past years, the Serbs in Serbia as well as in Kosovo have harshly criticised the failure of UNMIK and KFOR to protect the Serb population in Kosovo. Especially the removal of control posts has been a reason for fear. Personal security and freedom are the dominant concerns for the Serbian community in Kosovo. Improving the situation of the Serbian communities was one of the main points on the agenda during the status negotiations, and remains an important topic that is held under close scrutiny by the international community. The Serb community is mostly concentrated in the north of Kosovo, but there are also several enclaves in the centre and south of Kosovo with a Serb majority. Because the Serbs in these enclaves are more isolated from Serbia and therefore have more connections with the ethnic Albanians they show more willingness to integrate, whilst many problems and reluctance to accept Kosovo authorities remain.

Social Democracy in Kosovo

In Kosovo, social democracy has always been overshadowed by the nationalist struggle for autonomy and later for independence. In the recent years, a few social democratic political parties have emerged, such as Kosovo Social Democratic Party, Reformist Party ORA, and New Spirit (FER). However, due to the political situation, these parties do not have much popular support and have merged with stronger political parties which focus more on territorial integrity and independence of Kosovo. Politics in Kosovo is often more about personalities than policy, with ideology for the most part reserved to the national question, while social policy is mostly developed without serious political debate. The International Socialists and the Party of European Socialists have no partner party in Kosovo.

Tensions in North Kosovo

In July of 2011 tensions increased after Kosovo special police forces tried to take control of the two border crossings in Serb-dominated Kosovo north (north of the river Ibar). Prime Minister Thaci decided to send in the police after EULEX failed to impose Kosovo's government ban on import of Serbian goods and to establish Republic of Kosovo customs at the border. This was done without the consultation of either Serbia or KFOR/EULEX. One Kosovo police officer got killed and the police retreated from the border crossing after which local Serbs burned down the crossing and KFOR troops took over control of

the border. Serbs from the north of Kosovo decided to set up barricades on the main roads and constructed alternative gravel roads.

Though tensions between the two sides eased somewhat after the intervention of KFOR forces, they continued to remain high amid concern from the EU, who criticised Kosovo for the unilateral provocation. Throughout 2012 the security situation in the north remains problematic, the Kosovo government is not able to exercise control in the north. By investing money they tried to involve the Serb citizens in the Kosovo institutions. However, this has not resulted in increased willingness of Serbs in north Kosovo to accept the Kosovo institutions and, with that, an independent Kosovo. An unofficial referendum in February showed 99% of Serbs in north Kosovo reject the writ of the Kosovo's institutions. In April hundreds ethnic Albanians from especially the north of Kosovo demonstrated against the ineffectiveness of the institutions and international bodies to put a stop to the violence.

As a consequence of the ongoing tensions the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina has been put on hold by the Serbian government that argues that Pristina is trying to change the situation on the ground in order to strengthen their negotiating position. With the election of the nationalist Tomislav Nikolic in Serbia in May 2012, the relation between the two countries is unlikely to improve. Serbia, who hopes to start accession negotiations with the EU soon, feels pressured by the EU to choose between Kosovo and the EU. Even though the official policy of the European Commission is to separate the status of Kosovo from Serbia's EU integration process, several EU countries – among others Germany - have indicated that Serbia has to solve the Kosovo issue – meaning recognise an independent Kosovo – before the country can become an EU member. Even though the dialogue officially has been put on hold there have been some developments, pressured by the EU, in February 2012 negotiators from both sides reached an agreement in Brussels on Kosovo's representation at regional meetings and on the management of Kosovo's border with Serbia.

EU - Kosovo relation

Kosovo has expressed a desire to join the EU and welcomed a feasibility study in 2012 to look at the possibilities for joining, but their ties with Serbia and the divide in the EU on accepting Kosovo's independence continuously raise concerns. As unanimity among EU member states is demanded for the establishment of contractual relations with a country and not all member states recognise its independence, Kosovo is the only Balkan country without contractual relations with the EU. Citizens of Kosovo are the last people in the region that still need a visa to enter the EU. While the European Commission (EC) has aimed to give the region a real EU perspective through a Stabilization and Association Process, developments in the relation with Kosovo have remained problematic. The EU is still divided on accepting Kosovo's independence; five EU member states have not recognised its independence.

In October 2009 the EC proposed to start the visa liberalisation process with Kosovo. Kosovo did however not receive the roadmap towards liberalisation until June 2012, while critics say it is a far more demanding document than given to the rest of the region and blame the EU for adopting a different approach towards Kosovo. European Council president Herman Van Rompuy in a statement in July 2012 did however praise Kosovo's progress towards EU membership, but also stated that much work still needs to be done by the authorities of Kosovo, especially in the field of rule of law and in solving the crisis in the north of Kosovo.

Agreement reached between Kosovo and Serbia – April 2013

On the 19th of April 2013 Serbia and Kosovo signed an historic agreement. Fourteen years after the end of the war, it provided the first formal basis for normalised relations between the two neighbours, defining the conditions for large-scale devolution of northern Kosovo and its Serb population.

The 15-point agreement provided for the merger of the four Serb municipalities in the north (North Mitrovica, Zvečan, Zubin Potok and Leposavic) subject to Kosovo law. This urban district would have powers over economic development, education, healthcare and town planning. One of the stumbling blocks concerned security. The agreement stipulated that only the Kosovo police force will be deployed in the north, but the regional commander will be a Serb and the force will reflect the area's ethnic make-up. Regarding justice, a division of the Kosovo court of appeal would hold a permanent session at North Mitrovica, with mainly Serb judges. As for local councillors, elections will be held this year, also under Kosovo law. The Nato Kosovo Force currently deployed there would play a key role in maintaining law and order during the poll. The last crucial point was that both parties have agreed not to hinder the other's efforts to gain EU membership.

Although there was none of the autonomy that Serbia had demanded and there was certainly no recognition of Kosovo's independence by Belgrade, it was hoped that the agreement would normalise relations and enhance stability in the region and clear a path for both countries to join the European Union.

June 2014 Parliamentary elections

The latest parliamentary elections in Kosovo took place on 8 June 2014, due to an early dissolution of parliament on 7 May. Ethnic Serb lawmakers, who are in a minority, refused to vote on a new national army. Normally, elections would take place half a year later. Ruling Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) got the most votes: 30;72%. Despite this fact, three opposition parties announced an plan to topple a PDK government. The turnout was 43.2%. The CEC argued they had little time to prepare for the elections. During the day, 27.733 election observers were present, as well as 100 prosecutors, to "prevent a repeat of the fraud which also marred the last elections, BBC reporter Guy de Launey noted. These elections were the most democratic and freest ones since Kosovo's independence. Nevertheless, they have been followed by a political and institutional deadlock. Indeed, while outgoing Prime Minister Hashim Thaci's PDK (Democratic Party of Kosovo) received the greatest share of votes, the customary practice would have been for him to find allies in order to form a coalition within the 15 following days. Nevertheless, three other parties - the Liberal Democratic Party (LDK), Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) and the newly formed Initiative for Kosovo ("Nisma") – organized themselves into a coalition, without the PDK. In order to have enough seats to form a majority, these parties needed a fourth ally, the Vetevendosje movement, which asked for the end of EU-led talks with Serbia as a condition. The majority formation has since then been blocked, as Vetevendosje denounces the ever-escalating pressure of Belgrade on Kosovo.

President Atifete Jahjaga has used the Kosovo Constitutional Court twice in order to determine who would be designated Prime Minister.

Party	% of votes	Seats
Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK)	30.38	37

Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK)	25.24	30
Self-Determination	13.59	16
Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK)	9.54	11
New Kosovo Alliance (AKR)	4.67	0
Independent Liberal party (SLS)	14.35	8

December 2010 Parliamentary elections

On 12 December 2010 Kosovo held its first assembly elections since its unilateral declaration of independence in 2008. The early elections were sparked by the collapse of the government in October after the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) decided to quit the ruling coalition. LDK's relations with the PDK of Prime Minister Hashim Thaci, had worsened since LDK leader Fatmir Sejdiu resigned his position as President in September of 2010 following a court decision that he could not be both President and party leader.

Party	% of votes	Seats
Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK)	32.11	34
Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK)	24.69	27
Self-Determination	12.69	14
Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK)	11.04	12
New Kosovo Alliance (AKR)	7.29	8
Independent Liberal party (SLS)	14.35	8

The remaining seventeen seats were distributed among minority and fringe parties.
Turnout: 47%

PM Thaçi congratulated his supporters adding the "win" was a civic referendum on "the good governance of PDK" and its vision for the future. Referring to forming a coalition Thaçi said: "We should avoid divisions, we should work together". Both the PDK and the LDK say they back the reforms needed for eventual EU and NATO integration of Kosovo. "Today Kosovo votes for a European future, for a European Kosovo, for integration into the EU and the UN [...]", Thaçi said after voting. Fighting corruption and the unemployment rate of nearly 50% have been the main issues for voters during the election campaign.

The EU welcomed the first elections ever held in Kosovo as an independent republic. The EU's Foreign Policy Chief Catherine Ashton and Enlargement Commissioner Stefan Füle congratulated the Kosovar people and authorities for "the calm and orderly manner" in which the ballot was held." The participation of the Kosovo people of all communities is very welcome. An extensive monitoring mission, including 5,000 civil society representatives, a delegation of EU parliamentarians and other international officials, was on the ground to study the vote.

Albin Kurti of "Self-determination" (Vetevendosje) was the newcomer in Kosovo's politics. With his movement he advocates Kosovo's unification with Albania and opposes any talks with Serbia.

Irregularities

There have been several reports of irregularities, mainly consisting of multiple votes by the same person, family voting, and exerting pressure on monitors and members of election commissions (CEC). The most flagrant irregularities are believed to have happened in the municipalities of Skenderaj/Srbica and Drenas/Gllogovac where the CEC reported a turnout of 94 and 86% respectively. Parties and NGO observers noticed that such a high turnout was not possible in any municipality since one-fifth of Kosovar voters registered on the electoral lists live outside the country. In a statement on 13 December MEPs wrote: "Serious allegations of fraud in two municipalities have been brought to the attention of the delegation. "The delegation encourages the political parties to follow proper legal procedures". The turnout in the rest of Kosovo was 45%. According to European observers the turnout was "alarmingly low."

A re-run was held in 21 polling stations on 9 January 2011.

Serbian minority

Ahead of the election the government in Belgrade called on the 120,000-strong ethnic Serbian minority in Kosovo to boycott the vote, protesting against Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence. Because of the expected Serb boycott the election commission had set up mobile polling stations in the north. Turnout in the majority Serb areas of the north was around 1%. Police confirmed several incidents and two Serbs being arrested. Turnout among Serbs living in enclaves in central Kosovo was higher than in previous elections. Because of the more isolated position the Serbs living in the enclaves show more willingness to accept the Kosovo institutions.

Government coalition

A coalition was formed between the PDK, the AKR, the SLS, and several minor parties. In total, the coalition holds 65 of the 120 assembly seats. The PDK delivered the Prime Minister, Hashim Thaçi and AKR's leader Behgjet Pacolli's was elected president by the Assembly. However, a court ruled his election unconstitutional since he was still leader of the AKR and the constitution forbids the president to hold multiple political offices. Pacolli stepped down and the non-partisan deputy director of the Kosovo police Atifete Jahjaga was elected President. Jahjaga, the first female, first non-partisan and youngest President of Kosovo was new to the political scene and seen as a consensual candidate. The election led to an Assembly decision to have the future president by elected by popular vote under a new electoral code.

SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES

Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK)

Party leader: Hashim Thaçi

The PDK was formed by prominent members of the Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK), among them the current party leader and prime minister of Kosovo, Hashim Thaçi, and the current president of the assembly - former spokesperson of UCK - Jakup Krasniqi. The party stated it wants to adopt a social democratic ideology and contacts with social democratic foundations exist. But although PDK originally had socialist tendencies, its political tendencies have shifted to centre-right over the years.

Like many parties in former communist countries PDK wrestles with the bad image of left wing parties. Also it is obvious the party has to come to grips with their image of being a party of former guerrillas. Nowadays, the party is tolerant and accommodating towards local Serbs, offering them Serbian as an official language, special municipalities, special positions in institutions, right of veto for laws that deal with minority rights etc. Besides full independence for Kosovo, top priorities in the view of the party leadership are the fight against youth unemployment and corruption.

PDK draws its support especially from poor rural, Albanian dominated areas that suffered extremely from violence during the war. For example in the Drenica Valley, in which also a lot of UCK fighters were living, PDK gained 80% of the votes in the first three elections.

Both in the 2007 and in the 2010 parliamentary elections the PDK came out as the biggest party.

Website: <http://www.pdk-49.com/>

Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK)

Party leader: Isa Mustafa

The LDK was formed in 1989 by a group of intellectuals headed by Ibrahim Rugova and grew out to one of the main political parties of Kosovo. The immediate goal was to establish an independent Kosovo. The party won the 2001 and 2004 elections and has headed the governments to come out of these elections. In the 2007 elections, the party came in second after the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) and joined a coalition with the PDK. However, after the 2010 elections in which the party became second after the PDK again, the LDK choose to head the opposition.

The leader of the party, Ibrahim Rugova was Kosovo's president from 2002 to 2006, until he died of lung cancer. Rugova embodied for the Kosovars the struggle for independence and was much respected internationally for his moderate position and peaceful methods of resistance. The parliament elected Fatmir Sejdiu, who had been on the presidency of the LDK since it's foundation in 1991, as the new president. After the fall of the government in November 2010, Isa Mustafa won internal elections to become the new party leader.

LDK has a liberal orientation favouring a free market economy and privatization or public-private partnerships. Other priorities are European integration, education (in one's native language), authentic development of culture, fair social policy, accessible healthcare, and guaranteeing minority rights.

In 1991 the party organised a referendum on self-determination of Kosovo in which more than 90% of the Kosovar Albanians voted for independence. The independence declaration was only accepted by Albania. Afterwards Rugova formed an underground government in Kosovo, which was not recognised by Serbia. A number of LDK members have been killed over the past years, which are suspected to be politically motivated assassinations.

Website: <http://www.ldk-ks.eu/historiku/ldk/>

OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES

Self-determination

Party Leader: Albin Kurti

Self-determination (Vetevendosje) is the third party in the Kosovo, having won 14 seats in the Kosovar Assembly in the December 2010 elections, the first time it participated in elections. The movement was well known even before its formal establishment in 2005, especially for their graffiti slogans all around Kosovo, such as UNMIK Jashtë (UNMIK Out), and Jo Negociata, Vetëvendosje! (No Negotiation, Self Determination). The movement is known for its opposition towards UNMIK and international supervision in general. It stated that "UNMIK is an anti-thesis to self-determination."

The party enjoys wide appeal amongst the youth, mainly due to its anti-establishment and anti-corruption message. Before it entered the political arena, the party organized street-protests which often turned violent.

Site: <http://www.vetevendosje.org/>

Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK)

Party leader: Ramush Haradinaj

Like the PDK, former Albanian militants who fought against the Belgrade regime lead the AAK. The leader of the party, Ramush Haradinaj, is a former UCK commander. Originally the AAK was founded for the 2000 municipal elections as a coalition of five nationalist parties. By 2001 two of the parties had withdrawn from the coalition. The parties that withdrew were the more conservative and nationalist members. For the 2002 municipal elections, the remaining parties registered as an independent party under the same name.

AAK has been in government from 2001 until 2007 and has delivered a prime minister for the second governing period from 2004 on. Party leader Haradinaj took up this job, but handed it over to Kosumi as he was indicted for war crimes. In 2006 Kosumi resigned and LDK man and former guerrilla commander Agim Ceku was nominated to form a new government.

The AAK is now known as a more moderate, pro-European party in the centre of the political spectrum, which is in favour of ethnic co-operation. Economic priorities set by the party are the creation of new jobs, promotion of small and medium sized business, infrastructure, and privatisation. Support comes mainly from the Dukagini region in southwest Kosovo. International and local political observers credit the party with solid organisation and clear, effective and largely democratic internal procedures. In addition, women and youth are well represented in the party, which fits the party's priority to promote youth and a bigger role for women in society.

Site: <http://www.aak-ks.com/>

New Kosovo Alliance (AKR)

Party leader: Bahgjet Pacoli

The Alliance for a New Kosovo (AKR) was founded in March 2007 by Bahgjet Pacoli, a successful businessman and owner of general contracting and engineering company Mabetex. Pacoli is also the main financier of the AKR. The 2007 elections were the first in which the AKR competed, winning 12.3% of the votes, or 13 seats in the assembly. In the 2010 elections the party won 7.3% of the votes, or 8 of the 120 seats. Pacoli was elected President by the assembly on 22 February 2011, but stepped down amidst controversy over the legality of his appointment 4 April 2011. Ideologically, the party is liberal-oriented.

Site: <http://www.akr-ks.eu/>

Independent Liberal Party (SLS)

Party leader: Slobodan Petrović

The SLS is the biggest Serbian party in Kosovo winning, besides two seats in the main race, six of the ten seats reserved for Serbs in the 2010 elections. After the elections, the SLS entered into the governing coalition with Thaci. The party campaigns as a liberal, pro-European party. It is headed by Slobodan Petrović, who is also one of five Deputy Prime Ministers of Kosovo and minister for local self-governance.

Site: <http://www.sls-ks.org/>

BIOGRAPHIES



Atifete Jahjaga

President

Atifete Jahjaga assumed the office of President in April 2011. Before that, she worked for the police department of Kosovo, where she enjoyed a good reputation as deputy director. Her appointment to a political office came as a surprise to many, as she was selected as a non-partisan consensus candidate by the coalition government. Jahjaga is the first female and born in 1975 the youngest ever in Kosovo to assume the office of president. It is not likely that she will serve out her full five-year mandate, as the parties in parliament agreed to hold new presidential elections within 18 months after rewriting the constitution to make the post directly elected by the public.

(Photo: European Parliament)



Hashim Thaci

Prime Minister

Hashim Thaci's rise to prominence in Kosovar politics started during the war against Serbia, when he became the political leader of the Kosovar Liberation Army (UCK). After the war, he headed the PDK party, but the party came in second in the first two elections. In 2007, the PDK, led by Thaci, managed to secure the first position, and thus Thaci became Prime Minister of Kosovo. One of the promises with which Thaci had campaigned was that he would declare Kosovo independent, and he did so on 17 February 2008. The PDK won early elections in 2010, and Thaci remained as Prime Minister.

A 2010 report by the European Council implicated Thaci in an organ theft scheme during the war in the 1990s. The report, widely known as the Martyr report, states that over 300 organs were harvested from

Serbian prisoners of war and sold on the international black market in order to raise money for the war effort. The accusations were never conclusively proven.

More recently, prosecutor Clint Williamson issued a report declaring that "senior officials of the former Kosovo Liberation Army" were suspected of crimes against humanity. Thaci may be one of them, although his name was not mentioned.

Photo: Foreign and Commonwealth Office)



Edita Tahiri

Deputy Prime Minister

Edita Tahiri is Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo responsible for foreign policy and national security. Edita Tahiri has a distinguished political career as a leader, politician, diplomat and negotiator with an international reputation. She is one of the main protagonists in the political changes affecting Kosovo and South Eastern Europe, after the end of the Cold War. She was one of the founders and key leaders of the movement for Kosovo's independence, the Democratic League of Kosovo, in the years 1991-1999. She is known for internationalising the Kosovo and Albanian question. After the end of the Kosovo war, she was distinguished as a reformer, seeking democratic change in Kosovo and democratic reform in the Democratic League of Kosovo. Tahiri is also known for committing to the empowerment of women.

Last update: 11 September 2013

Author: -

Population: 1.824 million (World Bank 2013 est.)

Prime Minister: Hashim Thaci

President: Atifete Jahjaga

Governmental type: Republic

Ruling Coalition: Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), New Kosovo Alliance (AKR), Serbian Liberal Party (SLS), and several small minority parties.

Last Elections: Parliamentary 12 December 2010

Next Election: Parliamentary 2015

Sister Parties: None

OPINIONS ON MOTIVATION:

In one of the more bizarre foreign policy announcements of a bizarre Obama Administration, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has announced that Washington will “help” Kosovo to join NATO as well as the European Union. She made the pledge after a recent Washington meeting with Kosovan Prime Minister Hashim Thaci in Washington where she praised the progress of the Thaci government in its progress in “European integration and economic development.”



Her announcement no doubt caused serious gas pains among government and military officials in the various capitals of European NATO. Few people appreciate just how mad Clinton’s plan to push Kosovo into NATO and the EU is.

Basic Kosovo geopolitics

The controversial piece of real estate today called Kosovo was a part of Yugoslavia and tied to Serbia until the NATO bombing campaign in 1999 demolished what remained of Milosevic’s Serbia and opened the way for the United States, with the dubious assist of EU nations, above all Germany, to carve up the former Yugoslavia into tiny, dependent pseudo states. Kosovo became one, as did Macedonia. Slovenia and Croatia had earlier split off from Yugoslavia with a strong assist from the German Foreign Ministry.

Some brief review of the circumstances leading to the secession of Kosovo from Yugoslavia will help locate how risky a NATO membership or EU membership would be for the future of Europe. Hashim Thaci the current Kosovo Prime Minister, got his job, so to speak, through the US State Department and not via free democratic Kosovo elections. Kosovo is not recognized as a legitimate state by either Russia or Serbia or over one hundred other nations. However, it was immediately recognized when it declared independence in 2008 by the Bush Administration and by Berlin.

Membership into the EU for Kosovo would be welcoming another failed state, something which may not bother US Secretary Clinton, but which the EU at this juncture definitely can do without. Best estimates place unemployment in the country at as much as 60%. That is not just Third World level. The economy was always the poorest in Yugoslavia and today it is worse. Yet the real issue in terms of the future of EU peace and security is the nature of the Kosovo state that has been created by Washington since the late 1990’s.

Mafia State and Camp Bondsteel

Kosovo is a tiny parcel of land in one of the most strategic locations in all Europe from a geopolitical standpoint of the US military objective of controlling oil flows and political developments from the oil-rich Middle East to Russia and Western Europe. The current US-led recognition of the self-declared Republic of Kosovo is a continuation of US policy for the Balkans since the illegal 1999 US-led NATO bombing of Serbia—a NATO “out-of-area” deployment never approved by the UN Security Council, allegedly on the premise that Milosevic’s army was on the verge of carrying out a genocidal massacre of Kosovo Albanians.

Some months before the US-led bombing of Serbian targets, one of the heaviest bombings since World War II, a senior US intelligence official in private conversation told Croatian senior army officers in Zagreb about Washington’s strategy for former Yugoslavia. According to these reports, communicated

privately to this author, the Pentagon goal already in late 1998 was to take control of Kosovo in order to secure a military base to control the entire southeast European region down to the Middle East oil lands.

Since June 1999 when the NATO Kosovo Force (KFOR) occupied Kosovo, then an integral part of then-Yugoslavia, Kosovo was technically under a United Nations mandate, UN Security Council Resolution 1244. Russia and China also agreed to that mandate, which specifies the role of KFOR to ensure an end to inter-ethnic fighting and atrocities between the Serb minority population, others and the Kosovo Albanian Islamic majority. Under 1244 Kosovo would remain part of Serbia pending a peaceful resolution of its status. That UN Resolution was blatantly ignored by the US, German and other EU parties in 2008.

Germany's and Washington's prompt recognition of Kosovo's independence in February 2008, significantly, came days after elections for President in Serbia confirmed pro-Washington Boris Tadic had won a second four year term. With Tadic's post secured, Washington could count on a compliant Serbian reaction to its support for Kosovo.

Immediately after the bombing of Serbia in 1999 the Pentagon seized a 1000 acre large parcel of land in Kosovo at Uresevic near the border to Macedonia, and awarded a contract to Halliburton when Dick Cheney was CEO there, to build one of the largest US overseas military bases in the world, Camp Bondsteel, with more than 7000 troops today.



The Pentagon has already secured seven new military bases in Bulgaria and Romania on the Black Sea in the Northern Balkans, including the Graf Ignatievo and Bezmer airbases in Bulgaria and Mihail Kogalniceanu Air Base in Romania, which are used for “downrange” military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Romanian installation hosts the Pentagon’s Joint Task Force–East. The US’s colossal Camp Bondsteel in Kosovo and the use and upgrading of Croatian and Montenegrin Adriatic harbors for US Navy deployments complete the militarization of the Balkans.

The US strategic agenda for Kosovo is primarily military, secondarily, it seems, narcotics trafficking. Its prime focus is against Russia and for control of oil flows from the Caspian Sea to the Middle East into Western Europe. By declaring its independence, Washington gains a weak state which it can fully control. So long as it remained a part of Serbia, that NATO military control would be politically insecure. Today Kosovo is controlled as a military satrapy of NATO, whose KFOR has 16,000 troops there for a tiny population of 2 million. Its Camp Bondsteel is one of a string of so-called forward operating bases and “lily pads” as Donald Rumsfeld called them, for military action to the east and south. Now formally bringing Kosovo into the EU and to NATO will solidify that military base now that the Republic of Georgia under US protégé Saakashvili failed so miserably in 2008 to fill that NATO role.

Heroin Transport Corridor

US-NATO military control of Kosovo serves several purposes for Washington’s greater geo-strategic agenda. First it enables greater US control over potential oil and gas pipeline routes into the EU from the Caspian and Middle East as well as control of the transport corridors linking the EU to the Black Sea.

It also protects the multi-billion dollar heroin trade, which, significantly, has grown to record dimensions in Afghanistan according to UN narcotics officials, since the US occupation. Kosovo and Albania are major heroin transit routes into Europe. According to a 2008 US State Department annual report on international narcotics traffic, several key drug trafficking routes pass through the Balkans. Kosovo is mentioned as a key point for the transfer of heroin from Turkey and Afghanistan to Western Europe. Those drugs flow under the watchful eye of the Thaci government.

Since its dealings with the Meo tribesmen in Laos during the Vietnam era, the CIA has protected narcotics traffic in key locations in order partly to finance its covert operations. The scale of international narcotics traffic today is such that major US banks such as Citigroup are reported to derive a significant share of their profits from laundering the proceeds.

One of the notable features of the indecent rush by Washington and other states to immediately recognize the independence of Kosovo is the fact that they well knew its government and both major political parties were in fact run by Kosovo Albanian organized crime.

Hashim Thaci, Prime Minister of Kosovo and head of the Democratic Party of Kosovo, is the former leader of the terrorist organization which the US and NATO trained and called the Kosovo Liberation Army, KLA, or in Albanian, UCK. In Kosovo crime circles he is known as Hashim “The Snake” for his personal ruthlessness against opponents.

In 1997, President Clinton’s Special Balkans Envoy, Robert Gelbard described the KLA as, “without any question a terrorist group.” It was far more. It was a klan-based mafia, impossible therefore to infiltrate, which controlled the underground black economy of Kosovo. Today the Democratic Party of Thaci, according to European police sources, retains its links to organized crime.

A February 22, 2005 German BND report, labeled Top Secret, which has since been leaked, stated, “Über die Key-Player (wie z. B. Haliti, Thaci, Haradinaj) bestehen engste Verflechtungen zwischen Politik, Wirtschaft und international operierenden OK-Strukturen im Kosovo. Die dahinter stehenden kriminellen Netzwerke fördern dort die politische Instabilität. Sie haben kein Interesse am Aufbau einer funktionierenden staatlichen Ordnung, durch die ihre florierenden Geschäfte beeinträchtigt werden können.“ (OK=Organized Kriminalität). (Translation: “Through the key players—for example Thaci, Haliti, Haradinaj—there is the closest interlink between politics, the economy and international organized crime in Kosovo. The criminal organizations in the background there foster political instability. They have no interest at all in the building of a functioning orderly state that could be detrimental to their booming business.”

The KLA began action in 1996 with the bombing of refugee camps housing Serbian refugees from the wars in Bosnia and Croatia. The KLA repeatedly called for the “liberation” of areas of Montenegro, Macedonia and parts of Northern Greece. Thaci is hardly a figure of regional stability to put it mildly.

The 44 year old Thaci was a personal protégé of Clinton Secretary of State Madeleine Albright during the 1990s, when he was a mere 30-year old gangster. The KLA was supported from the outset by the CIA and the German BND. During the 1999 war the KLA was directly supported by NATO. At the time he was picked up by the USA in the mid-1990s, Thaci was founder of the Drenica Group, a criminal syndicate in Kosovo with ties to Albanian, Macedonian and Italian organized mafias. A classified January 2007 report prepared for the EU Commission, labeled “VS-Nur für den Dienstgebrauch” was leaked to the media. It detailed the organized criminal activity of KLA and its successor Democratic Party under Thaci.

A December 2010 Council of Europe report, released a day after Kosovo’s election commission said Mr Thaci’s party won the first post-independence election, accused Western powers of complicity in ignoring the activities of the crime ring headed by Thaci: “Thaci and these other ‘Drenica Group’ members are consistently named as ‘key players’ in intelligence reports on Kosovo’s mafia-like structures of organised crime,” the report said. “We found that the ‘Drenica Group’ had as its chief – or, to use the terminology of organised crime networks, its ‘boss’ – the renowned political operator ... Hashim Thaci.”

The report stated that Thaci exerted “violent control” over the heroin trade. Dick Marty, the European Union investigator, presented the report to European diplomats from all member states. The response was silence. Washington was behind Thaci.

The same Council of Europe report on Kosovo organized crime accused Thaci’s mafia organization of dealing in trade in human organs. Figures from Thaci’s inner circle were accused of taking captives across the border into Albania after the war, where a number of Serbs are said to have been murdered for their kidneys that were sold on the black market. In one case revealed in legal proceedings in a Pristina district court in 2008 organs were said to have been taken from impoverished victims at a clinic known as Medicus – linked to Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) organ harvesting in 2000.

The question then becomes, why are Washington, NATO, the EU and inclusive and importantly, the German Government, so eager to legitimize the breakaway Kosovo? A Kosovo run internally by organized criminal networks is easy for NATO to control. It insures a weak state which is far easier to bring under NATO domination. Combined with NATO control over Afghanistan where the Kosovo heroin controlled by Prime Minister Thaci originates, the Pentagon is building a web of encirclement around Russia that is anything but peaceful.

The Thaci dependence on US and NATO good graces insures Thaci's government will do what it is asked. That, in turn, assures the US a major military gain consolidating its permanent presence in the strategically vital southeast Europe. It is a major step in consolidating NATO control of Eurasia, and gives the US a large swing its way in the European balance of power. Little wonder Moscow has not welcomed the development, nor have numerous other states. The US is literally playing with dynamite, potentially as well with nuclear war in the Balkans.
