

**Prof. Ass. Dr. Ngadhnjim BROVINA**

*Professor at University for Business and Technology – UBT*

*Faculty of Political Science, Prishtina, Kosovo*

E-mail: ngadhnjim.brovina@ubt-uni.net

**Prof. Ass. Dr. Bahri GASHI**

*Professor at University for Business and Technology – UBT*

*Faculty of Security Studies, Prishtina, Kosovo*

E-mail: bahri.gashi@ubt-uni.net

**1.02 Pregledni naučni rad/Review scientific article**

UDK/UDC: 94:32:34(497.115)"1989/1991" (091)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52259/historijskipogledi.2024.7.11.258>

## **THE YEARS OF UNCERTAINTY AND INSECURITY: THE LEGAL AND POLITICAL STATUS OF KOSOVO BETWEEN 1989-1991**

**Abstract:** *This research holds great significance not only for the Albanians of Kosovo in the former Yugoslavia but also for the entire Balkan region during a highly important historical period between 1989 and 1991. It gives a succinct history of Kosovo, detailing Serbia's legal persecution and the nonviolent protests of the Albanians. This research combines a variety of official documents, local and worldwide literature, as well as international actions and judgments, using an analytical approach to the sources to create a thorough comprehension of the events and their causes. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Serbian state undertook a series of constitutional and legal changes that resulted in the limitation of Kosovo's autonomy. These restrictive changes caused a series of peaceful civil and political reactions from the Albanian population in Kosovo. Conscious of their position, the Albanians of Kosovo strive to assert their rights and preserve their cultural identity. This research aims to describe the constitutional and legal acts of the Serbian state as well as the political and civic responses of the Albanians in Kosovo. The study examines the cause-and-effect link between the oppressive acts of the Serbian government (cause) and the responses of the Albanian community (effect), illuminating the intricate dynamics that molded the course of the area. The research attempts to provide a nuanced and comprehensive view of the period of political and legal uncertainty by evaluating these changes within the specified timeframe. The methodology used in this research is based on material analysis, employing descriptive, historical, and analytical methods. The expected results of this research emphasize the challenges that Kosovo faces in the context of political and legal insecurity. The research highlights human rights violations, socio-*

*political struggles, and efforts to preserve the identity of the Albanian community. The study also shows the reactions of the international community to these events and the impact of external actors on the situation in Kosovo. In conclusion, this research presents the answers to the research questions or hypotheses. It also explains why the years between 1989-1991 were a period that led to the beginning of an end for the system of the former Yugoslavia. It is evident that these years marked a critical and significant turning point in the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia. The legal repressions and political turmoil experienced by Kosovo during this period were decisive in the dissolution of the so-called Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). Understanding the events between the years 1989 and 1991 is crucial from a future analytical standpoint to comprehend the larger historical framework of Kosovo and the Balkans since these events had an impact on the neighboring nations as well. By concentrating on this significant time period, which had a significant influence on Kosovo's history and its road to liberation and independence, this research seeks to add to scholarly discourse. Recognizing the struggles and resiliency of the Albanian community over these years might provide important lessons for tackling problems and boosting stability in the area as Kosovo develops and moves forward.*

**Key words:** *Kosovo, province, former Yugoslavia, 1989-1991, insecurity, legal-political status.*

## **PERIOD NEIZVJESNOSTI I NESIGURNOSTI: PRAVNI I POLITIČKI STATUS KOSOVA U PERIODU OD 1989. DO 1991. GODINE**

**Apstrakt:** *Ovo istraživanje ima veliki značaj ne samo za Albance Kosova u bivšoj Jugoslaviji, već i za cijeli balkanski region u vrlo važnom historijskom periodu između 1989. i 1991. godine. Ono pruža sažetu historiju Kosova, detaljno opisujući pravno progonstvo Srbije i nenasilne proteste Albanaca. Ovo istraživanje kombinuje različite službene dokumente, lokalnu i svjetsku literaturu, kao i međunarodne akcije i presude, koristeći analitički pristup izvorima kako bi se stvorilo temeljno razumijevanje događaja i njihovih uzroka. Tokom kasnih 1980-ih i ranih 1990-ih godina, država Srbija je preduzela seriju ustavnih i pravnih promjena koje su rezultirale ograničenjem autonomije Kosova. Ove restriktivne promjene izazvale su niz mirnih civilnih i političkih reakcija albanske populacije na Kosovu. Svjesni svoje pozicije, Albanci Kosova nastojali su da ostvare svoja prava i sačuvaju svoj kulturni identitet. Ovo istraživanje ima za cilj opisati ustavne i pravne akte države Srbije, kao i političke i građanske odgovore Albanaca na Kosovu. Studija ispituje uzročno-posljedičnu vezu između represivnih akata srpske vlade (uzrok) i odgovora albanske zajednice (efekat), osvjetljavajući složene dinamike koje su oblikovale tok područja. Istraživanje pokušava pružiti nijansirani i sveobuhvatni pogled na*

*period političke i pravne neizvjesnosti ocjenjujući ove promjene unutar određenog vremenskog okvira. Metodologija korištena u ovom istraživanju bazira se na analizi materijala, koristeći deskriptivne, historijske i analitičke metode. Očekivani rezultati ovog istraživanja naglašavaju izazove s kojima se Kosovo suočava u kontekstu političke i pravne nesigurnosti. Istraživanje ističe kršenja ljudskih prava, sociopolitičke borbe i napore za očuvanje identiteta albanske zajednice. Studija takođe prikazuje reakcije međunarodne zajednice na ove događaje i uticaj spoljnih aktera na situaciju na Kosovu. Zaključno, ovo istraživanje pruža odgovore na istraživačka pitanja ili hipoteze. Takođe objašnjava zašto su godine između 1989. i 1991. bile period koji je doveo do početka kraja sistema bivše Jugoslavije. Očigledno je da su ove godine označile kritičnu i značajnu prekretnicu u raspadu bivše Jugoslavije. Pravne represije i politička previranja koja je Kosovo doživljavalo tokom ovog perioda bile su odlučujuće u raspadu tzv. Socijalističke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije (SFRJ). Razumijevanje događaja između 1989. i 1991. godine je ključno iz buduće analitičke perspektive kako bi se shvatio širi historijski okvir Kosova i Balkana, budući da su ovi događaji imali uticaj i na susjedne nacije. Koncentrirajući se na ovaj značajan period, koji je imao veliki uticaj na historiju Kosova i njen put do oslobođenja i nezavisnosti, ovo istraživanje nastoji doprinijeti naučnoj diskusiji. Prepoznavanje borbi i otpornosti albanske zajednice tokom ovih godina može pružiti važne lekcije za rješavanje problema i unapređivanje stabilnosti u regionu dok Kosovo razvija i napreduje.*

**Ključne riječi:** *Kosovo, pokrajina, bivša Jugoslavija, 1989-1991, nesigurnost, pravno-politički status.*

## **Introduction**

The issue that will be presented and analyzed within this paper has to do with a serious problem based on ethnic grounds. That issue is Kosovo and its treatment within the former Yugoslavia. Throughout the period of time for as long as the former Yugoslavia existed, Kosovo Albanians were not treated equally with other constituent ethnicities of the federation. The unequal treatment of Kosovo Albanians prompted them to demand their rights because they were the third most populous people in the former Yugoslavia. Every request made by the Albanians was rejected and suppressed by the Serbian state.

What the Albanians in Kosovo wanted was nothing more than for Kosovo to be recognized as a republic and not as a province within the former Yugoslavia. Only in 1974, Kosovo was offered a more extended autonomy with greater rights for the Albanians living there, but these did not last long. Especially during the period that is being discussed here (1989-1991), Albanians were being even more oppressed. These oppressions began with the abolition of the extended autonomy, and continued with the banning of Albanian schools, the weakening

of the economy in Kosovo, and many other actions. The main goal of these measures was to make life more difficult for Albanians in Kosovo, which would force them to flee their country. The reactions of the Albanians to these actions of the Serbian state were instantaneous, but in a peaceful and democratic manner.

The purpose and reason of this study was to explain the authors' approach in relation to the cause-and-effect relationship that existed during that period. The objective of this study is to analyze the effect of the continuous repression by Serbian institutions or/and state towards the ethnic Albanian population of Kosovo.

Two possible mechanisms to explain the rapport or cause-and-effect relationship have been examined, based on the legal response from the Serbian state and the political-civic response of Kosovo Albanians, in the period 1989-1991. This cause-and-effect relationship is also explained by the author Sabine Rutar where he sees the period after 1991 and the wars in the Balkans as “a powder keg”.<sup>1</sup>

The essential questions, given in this paper also in the form of hypotheses, are related to the cause-and-effect outcome. In the following points of the paper these questions will be answered:

- *RQ1: Why did the discontent occur within the Kosovo Albanian population?*
- *RQ2: What were their main demands?*
- *RQ3: What did the whole battle for the positioning of the Albanians in the former Yugoslavia produce?*

An explanation will be given about what happened to Kosovo's legal and political status after Slobodan Milosevic's Serbia revoked all rights, violated Kosovo's constitution, fired all the Albanians working in the public service, closed schools and damaged the economy.

## Methodology

An attempt has been made to explain the given problem by using the analytical, descriptive as well as historical methods by analyzing the period 1989-1991, and the relations between the Serbian state and the Kosovo Albanians, through the cause-and-effect relations.

Through qualitative data collected by various authors such as: Noel Malcolm, Simon Duke, Ukshin Hoti, but also through the official pages and documents of organizations for human rights and freedom such as: Human Rights Watch, UNHCR, etc, facts and evidence have been exposed, showing the cause-and-effect relationship between the Serbian state and the oppression of the rights

---

<sup>1</sup> Sabine Rutar, Beyond the powder keg? Representations of the former Yugoslav countries in Italian history textbooks of the 1990s, *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, 2004, 203.

of Albanians through legal means, which arouse great discontent, political and civic reaction of Kosovo Albanians towards these oppressions.

The data has been interpreted in quite a simple manner and the paper has been sectioned in two parts. The first one is the one related to the legal status of Kosovo during the years 1989-1991. In this section we describe and analyze the data based on actions taken by the Serbian state, suppressing to the maximum the fundamental rights of Kosovo Albanians, through the mechanisms possessed by Serbia. Whereas, in the second part of the paper are presented and analyzed the political and civic reactions in Kosovo during the years 1989-1991, towards the actions of the Serbian state and the legal status of Kosovo.

It is known that from a theoretical point of view, there is a lack of theory and methodology in the field of history, but this problem has been analyzed by well-known historians.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, through the cause-effect relationship it has been attempted to have an analysis of this historical time period, seeing that the cause-effect relationship best suits the ethnic problem treated in this research.

### **Legal status of Kosovo during the years 1989-1991**

During the period of time which this paper is addressing and discussing, many events have occurred, but at this point, only the aspect of legal status, and that in terms of direct connection with the status of Kosovo and the rights of Albanians, will be treated. These legal provisions and laws helped in the increase of the level of discontent among the population to a great extent and that would be reflected in the steps taken by the Albanian politics of Kosovo at that time, but also by the citizens themselves who demanded equal treatment within the former Yugoslavia.

Kosovo's legal status was continuously discussed within the former Yugoslavia. Of course, Albanians had their constant demand that the legal status of Kosovo should be a republic and not a province. Throughout the period when Kosovo was part of the former Yugoslavia, it was treated as a province and this provoked dissatisfaction on the Albanian side. However, the period of 1989-1991, seen from the legal as well as the political point of view, was the period in which many events took place and some of them, considered as the most important ones, with all their peculiarities, have been treated here.

Simon Duke emphasizes that the Kosovo crisis is not a new phenomenon and that the problems around Kosovo's autonomy date back earlier than 1989 and Albanians were forced to resist the constant oppression that was exercised over them in various forms.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Srđan Mladenov Jovanović, *Confronting Recent History: Media in Serbia During Aleksandar Vučić's Ministry of Information in the Milošević Era (1998–1999)*, *Hiperboreea*, 2019, 63.

<sup>3</sup> Simon Duke, *The Trouble with Kosovo*, *European Institute of Public Administration*, 1998.

Among the main steps taken by the Serbian side in 1989 was the direct control over security, the judiciary, the financial aspect and that of social planning throughout the territory of Kosovo. Serbia's main goal was ethnic change in Kosovo, to the detriment of Albanians. This was accomplished by restricting Albanians in their family planning and stimulating Serbs and Montenegrins to buy properties and move to live in Kosovo.<sup>4</sup> This took place in July 1989, when the Serbian parliament approved the so-called law "the restriction of property transactions". This law preceded a series of laws that strictly discriminated against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo. The purpose of the law was to ban Albanians from selling their real estate without the approval of a special commission led by the Ministry of Finance in Serbia.<sup>5</sup>

Noel Malcolm also mentions this fact and adds further that after this law, in March 1990 follows the enactment of new additional measures named "Program for the realization of peace and prosperity in Kosovo" (absurd labeling given their content). The main and only goal of these measures was certainly to advance the positions of Serbs by offering them the creation of new municipalities, building their houses, investing more in areas where the focus was on the Serb population, etc. Furthermore, in 199, through an adopted law, Serbs and Montenegrins who had returned to Kosovo were given five hectares of land each, without any compensation, land which was owned by the municipalities. In June 1990, several official decrees were announced, so-called "temporary measures", aimed at closing the Albanian daily newspaper "Rilindja", then closing the Kosovo Academy of Sciences and Arts, and with all these closures, the dismissal of many Albanians from work.<sup>6</sup>

The table below shows the situation of the population in Kosovo, from 1981-1991, as well as the difference between the majority Albanian and Serb population, but also a percentage of other ethnicities in Kosovo. The fact that there was an increase in the Albanian population during this 10-year period was evidence of why the Serbian state wanted to relocate Albanians, to have an impact on their family planning, and also move Serbian and Montenegrin families to Kosovo in order to somewhat balance the population on an ethnic basis. Of course, this increase was quite sharp and noticeable. During that decade, the Albanian population increased by more than 350.000 inhabitants or around 5%, while on the other hand, the Serbian population in Kosovo had decreased to less than 200.000 inhabitants or less than 10% of the total population. During that period, all the other ethnicities had an increase in the number of inhabitants, and that was why Serbia was concerned. Out of all ethnicities living in Kosovo, the Serbian one was the only one that was shrinking in size.

<sup>4</sup> The Kosovo Report, *Conflict - International response - Lessons learned - The independent international commission on Kosovo*, Oxford University Press, New York 2000.

<sup>5</sup> Human Right Watch, *Nën pushtetin e urdhërave: Krimet e luftës në Kosovë*, New York, Washington, London, Brussels, 2002.

<sup>6</sup> Noel Malcolm, *Kosova-Një histori e shkurtër*: KOHA & Shtëpia e Librit, Prishtina & Tiranë 2001.

Year	Albanians	Serbs	Others	Total
<b>1981</b>	1.226.736 (77.4%)	209.798 (13.2%)	147.906 (9.4%)	1.584.440 (100%)
<b>1991</b>	1.596.072 (81.6%)	194.190 (9.9%)	165.934 (8.4%)	1.956.196 (100%)
<b>Difference</b>	+369.336 (+26%)	-15.608 (-7.4%)	+22.164	+371.756

Table 1. Population during the years 1981-1991, by Albanian and Serbian ethnicity (The percentage and the difference during this 10-year period).<sup>7</sup>

It should be noted that until 1989, according to the Yugoslav constitution, Kosovo was not recognized as a republic within the Yugoslav federation, but it was recognized as an autonomous province with broad powers to some extent, de facto, powers that other republics had.<sup>8</sup>

Since this part of the paper includes the legal aspect or status of Kosovo during the years 1989-1991<sup>9</sup>, it has been attempted to present in chronological order the legal developments during these 2 years, and through them, can be clearly seen the continuous discrimination against Albanians and direct oppression of their fundamental rights, from which discontent and revolt certainly emerged with actions against the Serbian state. The political aspect or reaction of Albanians has been treated in the second part of this paper.

The constitutional suppression, abrogation and constitutional degradation of Kosovo's authorities in its provincial status occurred as a result of several constitutional changes made by Serbia that gave Serbia itself full control over the security organs (police and civil defense control) as well as the judiciary. In addition, to control the security organs and the judiciary, these changes enabled Serbia to control Kosovo's relations with other countries.<sup>10</sup> It is clear that the constitutional changes had an impact both internally and externally.

<sup>7</sup> Statistical Office of Kosovo, *Ndryshimet demografike të popullsisë së Kosovës në periudhën 1948-2006*, 2008, 18. <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/1834/ndryshimet-demografike-te-popullsisese-kosoves-ne-periudhen-1948-2006.pdf> (Accessed: 4/15/2023).

<sup>8</sup> Novitet Nezak, Novitet, *The development of Kosovo and its relationship with the EU*, *Institute for European Integration*, 2015, 4-8.

<sup>9</sup> For more see: Richard Nelsson, *How Milosevic stripped Kosovo's autonomy* – archive, 1989, *The Guardian*, March 20, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*.

All these legal changes will be presented in chronological form in order to better and more precisely understand how, when and why the constitutional-legal changes were made to the detriment of Kosovo and its people, and where as a result of these changes, there were peaceful political as well as civic reactions by the Kosovo Albanian population, who wanted nothing less and nothing more than an equal treatment of Kosovo, not as a province but as a republic within former Yugoslavia.

*Military Law in Kosovo (1989)* - Constitutional changes were initiated in 1987 and then completed in 1988 to the detriment of Albanians, thus severely curtailing the autonomy they had gained in 1974.<sup>11</sup>

*Law on "Special Circumstances" in Kosovo (1990)* - Once the state of emergency in Kosovo was lifted, it was restored on June 26, 1990. This act was a direct violation of the constitution and was reached when the "Law on the Activities of Republican Authorities in Special Circumstances" was approved by the Serbian Parliament. By this law, Serbia took under its full control all the institutions of Kosovo. This happened shortly before the Kosovo Assembly adopted the Constitutional Declaration and proclaimed Kosovo as an equal entity in the Yugoslav Federation (July 2, 1990).<sup>12</sup> All these initiatives, unfortunate for Albanians, were undertaken by President Slobodan Milošević, who consistently abolished the rights of Albanians gained with the autonomy of the 1974 constitution.<sup>13</sup>

*Law on the Annulment or Dissolution of the Assembly of Kosovo (1990)* - On July 5, 1990, the Serbian parliament adopted the "Law on the Annulment of the Assembly of Kosovo and its Executive Council".<sup>14</sup> As can be seen, the actions of the Serbian side were immediate and in complete contradiction with the demands of the Albanian side. This law completely annulled the Assembly of Kosovo and the Constitutional Declaration of the Assembly of Kosovo, which required for equal treatment of Albanians as all the other nations were treated in the former Yugoslavia.

*Serbian Constitution of September 1990* - The Serbian Parliament approved the new constitution. This constitution was in conflict with the constitution of the former SFRY. The main purpose of the new constitution was to deprive the provinces of the right to a federal unit status, as well as their right to a constitution. Thus, autonomy was substantially reduced.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Implementation of the Helsinki accords, *Human rights in Kosovo, Sandzak, and Vojvodina*, Hearing before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, on hundred third Congress, second session. Government Printing Office, Washington, May 5, 1995.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>13</sup> BBC, *Kosovo profile - Timeline*, [bbc.com/news/world-europe-18331273](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-18331273) (Accessed: 5/15/2023).

<sup>14</sup> Implementation of the Helsinki accords, *Human rights in Kosovo, Sandzak, and Vojvodina*, Hearing before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, on hundred third Congress, second session. Government Printing Office, Washington, May 5, 1995.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.



Hereby, through issuing some discriminatory laws, the Serbian state's intention was to make life difficult for Albanians as much as possible, and at the same time it was leading towards what is known as the "planned famine".<sup>16</sup> Thousands of Albanians lost their jobs in government institutions, but also in state-owned enterprises. In August 1990, the Serbian parliament abolished the independence of Kosovo's education system and declared a centralized administration from Belgrade. Within the framework of these educational changes, there are also practical changes where:<sup>17</sup>

- Albanian teachers were forced to sign a loyalty oath. Those who rejected this statement were fired.
- During 1990, the Serbian government closed the majority of Albanian speaking schools.
- In early 1991, it stopped paying salaries to the majority of Albanian high school teachers.
- By the end of 1991, all Albanian teachers were fired.

### **Political and civic reactions in Kosovo during the years 1989-1991**

It is believed that ethnic conflicts go way back for hundreds of years. Their antiquity is based on migrations that have occurred in certain periods of history, various wars and battles, etc. The case of Kosovo is no exception because the treatment of Albanians within the former SFRY had an ethnic character and basis.<sup>18</sup>

Ukshin Hoti, in his book *The political philosophy of Albanian question, emphasizes that: The title Authentic Democracy does not imply questioning the provisions and basic principles of democracy (multi-party system, free elections, the parliament, political freedoms, suffrage, and so on) but on the contrary, starting from their acceptance, aims to determine what would be authentic, both in their practical implementation and in their acceptance by society. The title does not question the content of democracy that will be determined jointly by the federal / confederal constitution, and other agreements within it, but, on the contrary, by the commitment to determine what would be authentic, specific to Kosovo, would aim to emphasize what is possible, fair and necessary in the given situation... In other words, the title Authentic Democracy implies the fact that the fight for equal status of the Republic of Kosovo does not only mean the fight for the admission and equal treatment of Albanians in Yugoslavia and beyond it, but also the effort and fight to build its identity (political, etc) based on its self-*

---

<sup>16</sup> Enika Abazi, Çështja e Kosovës dhe Diplomacia Ndërkombëtare (1991-1999): Një konflikt i parashikueshëm: *Human and Social Sciences*, (2012), 199-200.

<sup>17</sup> Human Right Watch, *Nën pushtetin e urdhërave: Krimet e luftës në Kosovë*, New York, Washington, London, Brussels, 2002.

<sup>18</sup> The Kosovo Report, *Conflict - International response - Lessons learned - The independent international commission on Kosovo*, Oxford University Press, New York 2000.

*existence*.<sup>19</sup> This shows that Albanians could function as a society within the former SFRY, if they were treated like other republics, which means equally with all the rights that should have belonged to an ethnic society separate from other ethnicities, an integral part of the former SFRY. This did not happen, on the contrary, the intention of the Serbian state was to occupy Kosovo and to treat it as an internal problem of Serbia and not as a problem within the former SFRY. Another intention was to get the impression that in Kosovo were being violated only the human rights and not the national ones, and that Albanians should be seen only as a minority and not as the third nation in terms of population size in the former SFRY.<sup>20</sup> In this case, we had ethnocentrism but also chauvinism. This is because ethnocentrism is defined as “the attitude of a group as superior” and chauvinism as “belief that your country and race is better than any other race or country”.<sup>21</sup>

The laws undertaken directly by the politics of Serbia, evoked revolt and discontent within the Albanian population in Kosovo. Perhaps the abolition of Kosovo's autonomy as a province of Yugoslavia (March 23, 1989) was the key moment that sparked political resistance but also sparked inter-ethnic clashes that were followed by the armed wars of the 1990s.<sup>22</sup> An immediate reaction of Kosovar politics was necessary, and the population joined in this reaction, openly expressing their demands in a democratic way, because the tendency of the Serbian state to shrink Kosovo's goals was obvious.

The issuance of discriminatory laws against Albanians forced them to take steps and react towards these actions. Their actions were completely peaceful. Thus began the secret organization of schools and universities, which functioned and taught in private homes, etc. Teachers, students and school administrators were detained and mistreated by Serbian police and security forces.<sup>23</sup> In 1989, two organizations were established, the Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms (CDHRF), and the Mother Teresa Charitable Society. Non-governmental organizations were also set up to oppose the regime.<sup>24</sup>

After the Serbian state closed Albanian schools, it was time to weaken the economy among Albanians to the maximum. The main purpose of all these actions was to aggravate the economic and educational conditions, which forced the Albanians to leave their homes/lands or their place.

---

<sup>19</sup> Ukshin Hoti, *Filozofia politike e çështjes shqiptare*: Rozafa 1998.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>21</sup> Hamid Bouyahi, Nationalism as an essentially contested concept, *Journal of Liberty and International Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2018, 51.

<sup>22</sup> Serbeze Haxhiaj, Milica Stojanovic, *Autonomy Abolished: How Milosevic Launched Kosovo's Descent into War*, March 23, 2020.

<sup>23</sup> Human Right Watch, *Nën pushtetin e urdhërave: Krimet e luftës në Kosovë*, New York, Washington, London, Brussels, 2002.

<sup>24</sup> Bashkim Rrahmani, Civil Society and Democracy development in Kosovo, *Journal of Liberty and International Affairs*, 2018, 104.

All leadership and professional positions in the economy of Kosovo held previously by Albanians, were replaced by Serbs and Montenegrins. This fact shows that the economy in Kosovo was now in the hands of Serbs and Montenegrins and Albanians had no role in this regard. This was followed by the sale of economic enterprises in Kosovo and the proceeds from their sale went to the Serbian budget.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the Albanians were impoverished to the maximum, not only in the educational aspect but also in the economic one, which made their survival difficult.

This fact is evidenced by the following table which shows that Kosovo within the former Yugoslavia in 1989 had the lowest GDP of all other countries which were part of the former Yugoslavia. If all countries had five-digit figures, Kosovo had four-digit figures. If Kosovo is to be analyzed and compared with the other countries within the former Yugoslavia, in a 10 year time-frame, a significant difference is obvious. Compared to Slovenia, in 1980, Kosovo's GDP was seven times lower, while in 1989 it was eight times lower. In comparison to Croatia, Kosovo's GDP was more than 4 times lower in 1980, while in 1989 it was five times lower. Likewise, compared to Bosnia and Herzegovina, in 1980, Kosovo's GDP was almost three times lower, while in 1989 it was almost 4 times lower. Compared to Montenegro, in 1980 the GDP was almost 3 times lower, and in 1989 it was 3 times lower. Also, compared to Serbia, Kosovo's GDP in 1980 was a little over three times lower, while in 1989 it was more than 4 times lower. Kosovo and Vojvodina were the only two provinces within the former Yugoslavia, but even in comparison to Vojvodina, Kosovo's GDP was four times lower in 1980, and five times lower in 1989. Compared to Macedonia, Kosovo's GDP was more than twice lower, and the same in 1989, was just over twice lower. This analysis of the periods 1980 and 1989, shows that when Kosovo's GDP is compared to that of all the republics and to the other provinces of former Yugoslavia, at any given time it was two to five times lower. This means that the 10 year period from 1980 to 1989, was economically a very dark period for Kosovo, and if the other places (excluding Montenegro) had a shrinkage in GDP in single digits, Kosovo was hit the worst, going to minus 13.9%.

---

<sup>25</sup> Implementation of the Helsinki accords, *Human rights in Kosovo, Sandzak, and Vojvodina*, Hearing before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, on hundred third Congress, second session. Government Printing Office, Washington, May 5, 1995.

All Yugoslavia	1980	1989	Change
	17.764	16.820	-5.3%
Slovenia	35.320	33.103	-6.0%
Croatia	22.505	21.238	-5.6%
Bosnia	11.722	11.424	-2.5%
Montenegro	14.034	12.398	-11.7%
Serbia	17.453	17.429	0.0%
-Vojvodina	20.029	20.063	+0.0%
-Kosovo	5.013	4.317	-13.9%
Macedonia	11.945	10.891	-8.8%

Table 2. *GDP per capita in Yugoslavia: 1980 – 1989.*<sup>26</sup>

In addition to the educational and economic aspect, the Serbian state also violated the basic human rights of Albanians. From 1981-1993, there were more than 3,200 Albanians convicted by Serbian courts for the mere reason that they had resorted to taking political actions. Their sentences ranged from 1-20 years custodial sentence. Many of these convicts were under the age of 18. Furthermore, for violations also of a political nature, more than 30,000 Albanians were sentenced to up to 60 days in prison and more than 800,000 people were detained and mistreated by Serbian police.<sup>27</sup>

*March 27, 1989* – in order to stop the riots and demonstrations, Serbian and federal authorities imposed a police curfew in Kosovo. In total, the demonstrations in February and March resulted in 29 people killed, 200 injured and 254 arrested. On March 28, the Serbian Parliament ratified the constitutional changes, giving Serbia greater control over Kosovo.<sup>28</sup>

*Constitutional Declaration of the Assembly of Kosovo (July 2, 1990)* – the reaction of the Albanian side was for two reasons: the first was the demand against the abolition of autonomy for Kosovo and the second was the demand to

<sup>26</sup> Mills Kelly, *GDP in Yugoslavia: 1980-1989, Making the History of 1989*, Item #671, <https://chnm.gmu.edu/1989/items/show/671> (Accessed: 5/3/2023)

<sup>27</sup> Implementation of the Helsinki accords, *Human rights in Kosovo, Sandzak, and Vojvodina*, Hearing before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, on hundred third Congress, second session. Government Printing Office, Washington, May 5, 1995.

<sup>28</sup> UNHCR, *Chronology for Kosovo Albanians in Yugoslavia*, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/469f38f51e.html> (Accessed: 4/23/2023).

declare Kosovo as an equal Republic to other republics in the former Yugoslavia.<sup>29</sup>

*August 29, 1990* - Demonstrations against the Serbian police regime took place, but they were dispersed violently (the demonstrations took place during the visit of a US Senate delegation, led by Senator Robert Dole).<sup>30</sup> Outside the delegation's hotel, over 5,000 Albanians protested against the rule and oppression of the Serbian state. The protest was suppressed by police units using tear gas, batons and water cannons.<sup>31</sup>

*September 7, 1990* - Delegates of the formerly dissolved Kosovo Assembly met in secret in the town of Kacanik and adopted a new constitution for Kosovo, continuing with the same demand: "Kosovo's status as a sovereign republic within Yugoslavia".<sup>32</sup>

*September 17, 1990* - One hundred and eleven (111) delegates of the Assembly of Kosovo and six members of the Government of Kosovo were charged with "counter-revolutionary activity" for their activities undertaken on July 2 (the proclamation of the status of the Republic of Kosovo) and on September 7 (the constitution). These delegates were stripped of their immunity and almost all were convicted.<sup>33</sup>

*September 28, 1990* - The Serbian Parliament adopts a new constitution for all of Serbia, including Kosovo and Vojvodina. The autonomous status of both provinces was immediately revoked and with this Belgrade controlled the entire system in Kosovo as well as in Vojvodina and after that, these two provinces had no longer powers, neither executive nor legislative or judicial.<sup>34</sup> If Kosovo had previously been given some kind of autonomy, on this date even the few rights they had were taken away and now everything was controlled by Serbia. On this occasion, it is shown that the demonstrations, protests and complaints displayed by Albanians in various forms, about their human rights violations, were not taken into account at all.

*September 26-30, 1991* - Kosovo Albanians held a referendum on Kosovo's independence.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Implementation of the Helsinki accords, *Human rights in Kosovo, Sandzak, and Vojvodina*, Hearing before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, on hundred third Congress, second session. Government Printing Office, Washington, May 5, 1995.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>31</sup> UNHCR, *Chronology for Kosovo Albanians in Yugoslavia*, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/469f38f51e.html> (Accessed: 4/23/2023).

<sup>32</sup> Implementation of the Helsinki accords, *Human rights in Kosovo, Sandzak, and Vojvodina*, Hearing before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, on hundred third Congress, second session. Government Printing Office, Washington, May 5, 1995.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*.

## Summary

The findings from this paper show that the ethnic problems, specifically the tense relationship between the Serbian state and the Kosovo Albanians, date back a long time ago, but their peak of dissatisfaction was in the period 1989-1991. This fact is evidenced by every action taken against the Albanian population by the Serbian state, which caused a counter-effect and reaction by the Albanian side by using peaceful means, and then also every reaction of the Albanian side, created an immediate counter-reaction of the Serbian state. All the dissatisfaction caused a chain reaction of actions and reactions.

What we have found in this paper, is the fact that the essence of these bad relations between the Serbian state and the Kosovo Albanians, dates back a long time ago, but the Albanian reaction was prompted by the abolition of autonomy in 1974, which created political and legal insecurity and all these uncertainties and discontent culminated in the years 1989-1991.

This autonomy abolishment became the cause of mutual reactions. The Serbian state oppressed Albanians by closing schools, imprisoning and mistreating them, damaging the economy, thus these actions compelled Albanians to demand equal rights as other ethnicities had in the former Yugoslavia, through their politics and civic demonstrations.

The period that has been dealt in this paper, as stated before, was a very dark and immensely tense period. An attempt has been made to answer the questions posed above and it has been shown that the non-provision of equal conditions for Kosovo Albanians compared to other ethnicities and the treatment of Kosovo itself as a province in the former Yugoslavia, school closures, economic damage and the lack of basic freedoms and rights, were what led to the increase of anger and dissatisfaction among the Albanian population.

The demands of Kosovo Albanians in the period we have analyzed were at the level that the population in Kosovo should be treated neither less nor more than on an equal footing with other states, part of the system of the former Yugoslavia, that is Albanians demanded the right to education, economic development and employment growth in the country, as well as to be treated as a republic and not as a province. As it was shown in the previous table for the GDP of each country of former Yugoslavia in the period 1980-1989, even though Kosovo was considered a province, same as Vojvodina, it was not treated equally because economically it was way behind the other province (Vojvodina), let alone the other republics.

The ethnic battle between the Kosovo Albanians and the Serbian state in the period 1989-1991 produced a confrontation of the Albanians themselves with oppression and denial of basic rights and a reaction in peaceful means to demand these rights. It is interesting because every request from the Albanians towards the system of that time, received a negative response and punishment in terms of legal, economic, educational and other aspects. Needless to say, this battle produced a growing dissatisfaction among the Albanian population in Kosovo.

Finally, through the analysis of the events of that time, answers have been given to the questions posed and it was made possible to show and clarify the cause-and-effect relationship of Albanians with the Serbian state in creating the effects of political and legal insecurity in the context of constitutional aggression undertaken by Serbia, namely the former Yugoslavia.

The conclusions of this research cannot be optimistic, given that after the period treated in this paper, in the Balkans, more specifically in the former Yugoslavia, three states and one province (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo) were involved in wars for secession from the former Yugoslavia, which also brought the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia and the creation of independent states.

## **Zaključak**

Rezultati iz ovog rada pokazuju da etnički problemi, posebno napeti odnos između srpske države i kosovskih Albanaca, datiraju odavno, ali njihov vrhunac nezadovoljstva bio je u periodu od 1989. do 1991. godine. Ovaj fakt se potvrđuje svakom akcijom preduzetom protiv albanske populacije od strane srpske države, što je izazivalo kontraefekat i reakciju sa albanske strane korištenjem mirnih sredstava, te svaka reakcija albanske strane izazivala je odmah kontrareakciju srpske države. Sve to nezadovoljstvo izazvalo je lančanu reakciju akcija i reakcija.

Ono što smo pronašli u ovom radu jeste činjenica da su korijeni ovih loših odnosa između srpske države i kosovskih Albanaca, daleko u prošlosti, ali albanska reakcija je bila potaknuta ukidanjem autonomije 1974. godine, što je stvorilo političku i pravnu nesigurnost, a sve te neizvjesnosti i nezadovoljstvo kulminirali su u godinama 1989-1991.

Ovo ukidanje autonomije postalo je uzrok međusobnih reakcija. Srpska država je ugušila Albance zatvaranjem škola, zatvaranjem i zlostavljanjem, narušavajući ekonomiju, te su ove akcije natjerale Albance da zahtijevaju jednaka prava kao i druge etničke grupe u bivšoj Jugoslaviji, putem svoje politike i građanskih demonstracija.

Period koji je obrađen u ovom radu, kako je već rečeno, bio je veoma mračan i izuzetno napet period. Pokušaj je bio da se odgovori na postavljena pitanja i pokazalo se da nedostatak jednakih uslova za kosovske Albance u poređenju s drugim etničkim grupama i tretiranje Kosova kao pokrajine u bivšoj Jugoslaviji, zatvaranje škola, ekonomska šteta i nedostatak osnovnih sloboda i prava, bili su ono što je dovelo do povećanja bijesa i nezadovoljstva među albanskom populacijom.

Zahtjevi kosovskih Albanaca u periodu koji smo analizirali bili su na nivou da populacija na Kosovu treba biti tretirana ni manje ni više nego na jednak način kao i ostale države, dio sistema bivše Jugoslavije, odnosno Albanci su zahtijevali pravo na obrazovanje, ekonomski razvoj i rast zapošljavanja u zemlji,

kao i da budu tretirani kao republika, a ne kao pokrajina. Kako je prikazano u tabelema za BDP svake države bivše Jugoslavije u periodu od 1980. do 1989. godine, iako je Kosovo smatrano pokrajinom, kao i Vojvodina, nije bilo tretirano jednako jer je ekonomski bilo daleko iza druge pokrajine (Vojvodina), a kamoli drugih republika.

Etnička borba između kosovskih Albanaca i srpske države u periodu od 1989. do 1991. godine rezultirala je suočavanjem samih Albanaca s represijom i uskraćivanjem osnovnih prava i reakcijom na miran način kako bi zahtijevali ta prava. Zanimljivo je jer je svaki zahtjev Albanaca prema tadašnjem sistemu dobio negativan odgovor i kažnjavanje u smislu pravnih, ekonomskih, obrazovnih i drugih aspekata. Nepotrebno je reći da je ova borba izazvala rastuće nezadovoljstvo među albanskom populacijom na Kosovu.

Konačno, kroz analizu događaja tog vremena, dati su odgovori na postavljena pitanja i omogućeno je pokazivanje i razjašnjenje uzročno-posljedičnog odnosa Albanaca sa srpskom državom u stvaranju efekata političke i pravne nesigurnosti u kontekstu ustavnih agresija koje je preduzela Srbija, odnosno bivša Jugoslavija.

Zaključci ovog istraživanja ne mogu biti optimistični, s obzirom na to da su nakon perioda koji je obrađen u ovom radu, na Balkanu, tačnije u bivšoj Jugoslaviji, tri države i jedna pokrajina (Slovenija, Hrvatska, Bosna i Hercegovina i Kosovo) bile uključene u ratove za secesiju od bivše Jugoslavije, što je dovelo i do raspada bivše Jugoslavije i stvaranja nezavisnih država.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY/BIBLIOGRAFIJA

1. Abazi Enika, Çështja e Kosovës dhe Diplomacia Ndërkombëtare (1991-1999): Një konflikt i parashikueshëm: *Human and Social Sciences*, 2012.
2. BBC, Kosovo profile - Timeline, [bbc.com/news/world-europe-18331273](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-18331273) (Accessed: 5/15/2023).
3. Bouyahi Hamid, Nationalism as an essentially contested concept, *Journal of Liberty and International Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2018.
4. Duke Simon, The Trouble with Kosovo, *European Institute of Public Administration*, 1998.
5. Haxhiaj Serbeze, Milica Stojanovic, *Autonomy Abolished: How Milosevic Launched Kosovo's Descent into War*, March 23, 2020.
6. Hoti Ukshin, *Filozofia politike e çështjes shqiptare*: Rozafa 1998.
7. Human Right Watch, *Nën pushtetin e urdhërave: Krimet e luftës në Kosovë*, New York, Washington, London, Brussels, 2002.
8. Implementation of the Helsinki accords, *Human rights in Kosovo, Sandzak, and Vojvodina, Hearing before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, on hundred third Congress, second session*. Government Printing Office, Washington, May 5, 1995.
9. Jovanović Srđan Mladenov, Confronting Recent History: Media in Serbia During Aleksandar Vučić's Ministry of Information in the Milošević Era (1998–1999), *Hiperboreea*, 2019.
10. Kelly Mills, GDP in Yugoslavia: 1980-1989, *Making the History of 1989*, Item #671, <https://chnm.gmu.edu/1989/items/show/671> (Accessed: 5/3/2023)



11. Malcolm Noel, *Kosova-Një histori e shkurtër*: KOHA & Shtëpia e Librit, Prishtina & Tiranë 2001.
12. Nelsson Richard, How Milosevic stripped Kosovo's autonomy – archive, 1989, *The Guardian*, March 20, 2019.
13. Nezaq Novitet, The development of Kosovo and its relationship with the EU, *Institute for European Integration*, 2015.
14. Rrahmani Bashkim, Civil Society and Democracy development in Kosovo, *Journal of Liberty and International Affairs*, 2018.
15. Rutar Sabine, Beyond the powder keg? Representations of the former Yugoslav countries in Italian history textbooks of the 1990s, *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, 2004.
16. Statistical Office of Kosovo, *Ndryshimet demografike të popullsisë së Kosovës në periudhën 1948-2006*, 2008, 18. <https://ask.rks-gov.net/media/1834/ndryshimet-demografike-te-popullsise-se-kosoves-ne-periudhen-1948-2006.pdf> (Accessed: 4/15/2023).
17. The Kosovo Report, *Conflict - International response - Lessons learned - The independent international commission on Kosovo*, Oxford University Press, New York 2000.
18. UNHCR, *Chronology for Kosovo Albanians in Yugoslavia*, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/469f38f51e.html> (Accessed: 4/23/2023).