Kosovo in between Dreams and Nightmares

Dick Zandee

‘The horrors actually began as soon as we crossed into Kosovo. Entire Albanian villages had been turned into pillars of fire, dwellings, possessions accumulated by fathers and grandfathers were going up in flames (...).’
Account of a Serb army officer, 1912.

‘(...) their national awareness is awakened and if we do not settle accounts with them at the proper time, within 20-30 years we shall have to cope with a terrible irredentism, the signs of which are already apparent (...).’
Serbian academic Vasa Cubrilovic, 1937.

In Miranda Vickers' book *Between Serb and Albanian* one may find many other examples of past experiences which resemble the 1998 crisis in Kosovo. Violence has been the norm rather than the exception in the Serb-Albanian relationship over the past hundred years. Several generations of Albanians have undergone repression and humiliation under Serbian rule, have lost property or even have lost life. On the other hand, acts of violence against Serbs in Kosovo by Albanian rebels have also occurred repetitively. The long cycle of Serbian attempts to rule Kosovo with an iron grip and of Albanian reactions to break free from it have created an environment in which reverting to violence is an easy step, while compromising is often considered a non-option. History cannot justify either Serbian or Albanian attitudes in the current Kosovo conflict, but it does explain the difficulties of finding a solution to the problem.

**Roots of conflict**

Until the second half of the nineteenth century Serbs and Albanians shared a common cause, i.e. their opposition to Ottoman Turkish rule. Furthermore, they had common customs and traditions; often there were even family ties between them. By the beginning of the twentieth century the situation had dramatically changed. Both ethnic groups were now opposing each other. The first large-scale clashes between Serbs and Montenegrins on the one hand and Albanians on the other broke out in 1877-78, starting a trail of violence which continues until today. What had caused the change?

The weakening of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century turned the Balkans into a political hunting ground for the Great Powers. At the same time the forces of nationalism were unleashed. This changed the region dramatically; the Ottomans were gradually pushed to the south, being replaced by an unstable patchwork of new states, Kosovo being located in the middle. Confronted by expansionist Christian Slavism, Albanian Muslims had founded the Prizren League in 1878. Its purpose was to prevent further loss of territory to Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro. Albanian national consciousness grew and became increasingly Islamic. By 1900 Kosovo had become predominantly Albanian. Anarchy reigned. A declining number of Serb inhabitants suffered pillage and looting by Albanian outlaw bands.

Inflamed by the rebirth of nationalism, the Serbian-Montenegrin invasion of Kosovo in 1912 was accompanied by arson and destruction of property as well as by rape, torture and the killings of large numbers of Albanians, who were punished for joining the Ottoman Turks against Belgrade. In the diplomatic aftermath of the First and Second Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, the Great Powers tried to create a new balance of power in the Balkans. Ethnic considerations played only a secondary role. Albania was granted independence, but Kosovo was ceded to Serbia. One of the Kosovar Muslim leaders expressed his bitterness by saying: 'When spring comes, we will manure the plains of Kosovo with the bones of the Serbs, for we Albanians have suffered too much to forget.'
Violence as continuum

Serbia lost one-fifth of its population during the First World War, in which it alone had to face the Central Powers who were joined by Bulgaria. Great Britain, France and the United States rewarded Serbia by recognising its claim on Kosovo, which became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The Albanians entered two dark decades of suppression. In 1918-1919 the Serbian army massacred thousands of Albanians and destroyed their property. Albanian educational and cultural institutions as well as the Albanian media were closed down. Serbia tried to change the ethnic balance by offering land, property and attractive financial arrangements to Serbian settlers. Albanians were forced to emigrate, but instead many of them flew into the hills.

This ‘Serbianisation’ had a counter-productive effect in increasing armed resistance. The Kachak movement was the Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK) of the twenties. It conducted guerrilla warfare by carrying out raids and terrorising local Serbian officials. The political objective of the movement was to gain international support for annexation of Kosovo to Albania. The Serbs considered the Kachak movement as a subversive organisation. Because of its popular support, suppression tactics often involved detention or killing of the total population of villages.

During the Second World War, the majority of the Albanians collaborated with the occupation forces of Mussolini and Hitler. The pendulum swung in the other direction. Serbs and Montenegrins were forcefully expelled from Kosovo, thousands of them were killed and their houses burnt down. After the liberation by the Yugoslav partisans, an Albanian revolt in the Drenica area led to intense fighting with the new national government’s forces. Massacres took place on both sides. Kosovo remained a security risk, also to the new Federal Yugoslavia. In July 1945 the Communist Party decided that the region would become a constituent part of Federal Serbia.

Under Tito’s leadership tensions in Kosovo remained high. After Belgrade’s break with Stalin in 1948, neighbouring Albania was considered a political-ideological threat. The State Security Service started to hunt and arrest Albanian spies and dissidents in Kosovo, which continued throughout the 1950s. The young writer Adam Demaci, the current political spokesman of the UCK, was arrested in 1958. He would spend nearly 28 years in prison, which gave him the name of Kosovo’s Nelson Mandela.

The situation improved after Yugoslav Vice-President Alexander Rankovic, a proponent of Serbo-centralism, was removed from power in 1966. Cadres loyal to him in the Secret Service were purged and Rankovic’s personal rule over Kosovo was terminated. Tito’s position was strengthened. His decentralisation plans were implemented and Kosovo entered the best period in its entire history. In 1974 it became an autonomous province with its own administrative and judicial institutions. Albanian culture and education flourished. The University of Pristina became the centre of the new intelligentsia, which would play a major role in expressing nationalist ideas. During the 1970s Kosovo was a de facto republic within the Yugoslav Federation.

Fall of Yugoslavia

Tito’s decentralisation policy had two consequences for Kosovo. First, Kosovo’s Serbs felt abandoned, unprotected and threatened by the Albanians. Many left the province. The influx of Albanians from Macedonia, Montenegro and southern Serbia and of Muslims from the Sandjak region further increased the Albanian-Muslim majority. Secondly, the Albanians did not consider autonomy as the final stage. They argued increasingly for the de jure status of Republic, which would give them the right to secede from the Federation.

After Tito’s death in 1980 Yugoslavia started to disintegrate. The old decentralised system of government and party structures was retained, but one-man rule was replaced by a collective leadership, which was to function on the basis of a complex scheme of rotation and balance. It would not stand the test of time. In 1981 demonstrations by students in Pristina, calling for
improved working and living conditions, turned into riots which spread to other parts of Kosovo. Anti-Serbian acts of violence and calls for independence and for a unified Albania provoked a reaction from Belgrade. The Serbian police and the Yugoslav army intervened, using tanks and other forceful means, resulting in a new cycle of violence which would continue throughout the 1980s. On the other hand, the Serbs in Kosovo suffered under Albanian violence and demanded support from the Serbian government. In April 1987 the then leader of the Serbian League of Communists, Slobodan Milosevic, used a visit to Kosovo to launch the new Serbian nationalism. He assured the Serb inhabitants of Kosovo that they would be protected and would never be left alone. Kosovo had thus been put into the front line of Milosevic’s ethnic campaign, which was soon to affect the whole nation. Fuelled by hysterical propaganda, the Serbs massively supported their new leader. At the end of 1987 Milosevic became President of Serbia.

Separate worlds

Kosovo’s autonomous status was soon terminated. In 1989 Serbia imposed a new constitution on Kosovo, fully restoring Serbian authority over the province. After the provincial parliament was completely deprived of its authority in July 1990, the Albanian parliamentarians proclaimed the sovereign Republic of Kosovo and its secession from Serbia. Belgrade reacted by abolishing the Kosovo government and parliament. In September 1990, the Albanian members of parliament met secretly in Kacanik, where they adopted a new constitution of the Republic of Kosovo and elected a new government. The ‘Kacanik Constitution’ defined Kosovo’s status within the Yugoslav Federation. After Slovenia and Croatia had proclaimed their independence the Albanian leadership in Kosovo adapted its position. In September 1991 a referendum was held on the question of independence for Kosovo, which got almost unanimous support from the Albanians. The Constitution was consequently amended and Kosovo was declared independent on 19 October 1991. In the same month the Republic of Kosovo was recognised by Albania, the only country to do so. Elections were held in 1992. The Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) received the majority vote and the party’s leader, Dr Ibrahim Rugova, was elected President with 99.5 per cent of the vote. Rugova and other leading Albanian intellectuals promoted the concept of non-violent resistance, arguing that the Albanians were only to suffer more if they had to fight the militarily superior Serbs. In the early 1990s, this policy found wide support among the Albanians and the LDK managed to suppress any group calling for violent action. In the meantime Belgrade followed its own strategy of the Serbianisation of Kosovo. Albanian cultural institutions were shut down, Albanian street names and other symbols were replaced by new ones in Cyrillic, Albanian enterprises were closed and both company and private capital was confiscated. Kosovo was renamed Kosmet (Kosovo and Metohija), the traditional Serbian name for the area. Albanians were removed from the University of Pristina. Even more dramatic in its impact was the segregation of education at the secondary school level. The new generation of Albanians would no longer learn the Serbian language. The Albanians reacted by creating parallel institutions, in particular with regard to education and health-care. In fact, on the same territory two distinct societies existed. The Serbs, making up no more than 10 per cent of the population, governed Kosovo through repression. Beneath the surface the Albanians had their shadow state. Formal contacts ceased to exist. Communication between the two sides was dead.

Escalation

While from 1991 onwards the international community focused its attention on the conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia tightened its grip on Kosovo. In a way, the Albanian boycott of Serbian and Yugoslav Federal elections only contributed to repression. The leading Serbian nationalist parties occupied the Albanian seats in the Serbian and Federal parliaments, facing no Albanian opposition. The situation in the province further worsened by deteriorating socio-economic conditions. By 1994 approximately 20 per cent of the Albanian
population had become dependent on humanitarian aid. The number of Albanian emigrants from former Yugoslavia had increased to 400,000, with the largest communities now living in Germany (120,000), Switzerland (95,000), Sweden (35,000) and Austria (23,000). The disintegration of Yugoslavia had falsely turned the distant dream of Kosovo’s independence into a real expectation among the Albanian political leaders. Even at the time of the Dayton negotiations in 1995 they still believed that Kosovo’s future status would be arranged as part of an overall peace settlement. Shock, disillusionment and anger were the result when it turned out that Kosovo was left out of the Dayton Agreement. Both within and outside the LDK radicals voiced their criticism on Rugova’s policy, while calls for violent resistance increased.

In 1996 the UCK carried out its first bombing attacks and raids against Serbian targets. There had been other comparable groups, but during 1997 it turned out that UCK activities showed a more regular pattern of better organised and more professionally executed hit-and-run attacks on Serbian police posts and convoys. The availability of arms in northern Albania, where government control could not be restored following the internal crisis in that country in 1997, made it easier to build up and arm the UCK. The Albanian emigrant communities in Western Europe, favouring a more radical approach, supported the UCK with financial and other means. Revenues from Albanian involvement in drug trafficking and from other criminal activities were also used to support the UCK.4

In 1992 the United States left the handling of the Bosnia crisis to Europe. Three years later it took the lead to end the war and to broker the Dayton Agreement. In 1998 Washington was in the front seat from the start of the Kosovo crisis, but differences of opinion among the other international passengers about the route to take resulted in a slow start. For several months the Contact Group5 struggled to develop a sanctions’ policy. The Group was united on weak measures – such as an arms embargo which had no significant effect – but

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disunited on potentially stronger financial and economic sanctions. The Contact Group nevertheless managed to formulate a set of principles for a solution of the Kosovo crisis, which would remain valid:

1. neither support for the Albanian aim of independence nor for maintaining the status quo of Serbian repression;
2. a solution has to be based on the territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia;
3. support for an ‘enhanced status’ for Kosovo, based on increased autonomy, including ‘meaningful self-administration’.

In May 1998 an attempt by the United States to launch negotiations failed. After two meetings Rugova postponed further talks with Belgrade, responding to criticism from more radical elements in the LDK for dropping his demand that an international mediator should lead the talks. Postponement of negotiations also laid bare the growing division within Albanian political ranks. The LDK domination of the political leadership was increasingly challenged as the Serbian campaign continued. Radicals, such as Hydajet Hyseni and student representative Bugar Dugolli, left Rugova’s negotiating team. Rexhep Qosja formed the new LDK, which argued for a peaceful solution but with the participation of the UCK. Some defectors advocated the establishment of a political wing of the UCK. By late summer Adam Demaci finally appeared as the UCK’s political spokesman. While Milosevic had strengthened his position, Rugova’s power had diminished. The American ambassador in Skopje, Christopher Hill, had to invest a great deal of time in assisting the Albanians to establish a new negotiating team. It would be led by the LDK Vice-President Fehmi Agani but would not represent the defectors.

NATO’s role

As the Contact Group approach had failed and with negotiations stalled, the United States and its European allies focused on other means to end the fighting. By early June 1998, NATO had decided to carry out several military exercises and other activities in Albania and Macedonia, and, more importantly, had authorised the military authorities to plan for a full range of options, including air strikes. During summer these plans were reviewed, discussed and refined. Meanwhile, the question of whether a UN Security Council resolution would be required to launch air strikes became the centre-piece of the political debate. Opinions varied among NATO countries but also within member states. Russia consistently argued against intervention through NATO air power and clearly stated it would veto a United Nations Security Council resolution (UNSCR) authorising the Alliance to intervene militarily. UNSCR 1199 of 23 September 1998, listing the demands the parties had to fulfil, was adopted under Chapter VII (peace enforcement) of the UN Charter and announced ‘further action and additional measures to maintain and restore peace and stability in the region’. It was impossible to carry the issue any further in the Security Council. The Allies were left with no other option than to approve the Activation Order for air strikes without a specific UN mandate. Consensus was only achieved after the humanitarian tragedy had reached new dimensions: by mid-October 1998 the number of Albanians displaced in Kosovo had grown to approximately 200,000, while another 100,000 had fled to other countries. Indications of war crimes increased and the images of the massacre at Gornje Odrinje – where 14 members of the same Albanian family were murdered – proved that arbitrary executions had sadly become part of the conflict.

The breakthrough reached by Ambassador Holbrooke on 13 October 1998 once again underlined that, for crisis management in the Balkans to succeed, diplomacy has to be backed up by military force. It applies all the more to dealing with a regime that had been shown to give in to international demands only when confronted with the threat of strong military action. NATO went to the brink in the Kosovo crisis. It could have been drawn into an armed confrontation with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia without a clear concept of the
objective, as a political settlement for Kosovo was lacking at the time. In the near future Holbrooke may reveal how he ended yet another war in the Balkans, but it seems clear that the credibility of NATO air power in combination with strong American political-diplomatic pressure convinced Milosevic to back off.

**Settling the impossible**

The October 1998 deal ended the Serbian military campaign and marked a turning point in the humanitarian disaster. Within two weeks the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia’s armed forces and the Serbian police forces were reduced to pre-March levels. Most displaced Albanians, who had been living in the hills without effective shelter, had returned to their homes or to other accommodation by early November.

These positive short-term effects should not distract us from considering the longer-term requirements. According to UNHCR estimates some 20,000 houses in Kosovo are damaged, of which around 60 per cent are inhabitable. Close to 400 villages have been damaged. Many displaced Albanians will have to stay with host families or relatives until reconstruction programmes start after the end of the winter season. In certain areas land-mines and booby traps will obstruct humanitarian operations and the return of displaced persons. Some 1,000 Albanians are imprisoned under suspicion of involvement in anti-state activities. An estimated 140-150 Serbian civilians and police officers are missing after having been abducted by the UCK. The smallest incidents can result in breaches of the cease-fire. Both sides are still in possession of various sorts of weaponry. The UCK may easily provoke the remaining Serbian police. Vice versa, Serbian police actions will likely lead to UCK responses.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the cease-fire was quickly followed up by the Dayton Agreement and the deployment of a robust NATO-led military force to guarantee compliance with its provisions. The current situation in Kosovo can only last for a short period. The impact of the NATO Activation Order, which remains in place, will diminish over time. The cease-fire has already been violated on several occasions and it is likely to be challenged more seriously when winter comes to an end. Finding a political solution for the Kosovo problem is imperative, but it is also a Herculean task. There is hardly any room for compromise between the Kosovar Albanian aim of independence and Belgrade’s view that Kosovo has to remain part of Serbia. Whatever the settlement will entail, it is likely to take the form of an interim arrangement and it will be extremely vulnerable to those willing to disturb its implementation. If the agreement entails restrictions on (para)military elements and movement, a robust international force will be required to ensure compliance with these provisions. If the agreement lacks such provisions, it will be fundamentally weak. In both cases the current NATO air and OSCE ground verification missions – even backed up by an Extraction Force deployed in Macedonia – will not suffice to prevent the parties from sliding back towards a more violent attitude which is part of body and soul on both sides.

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**Notes**


2. Many Serbs experienced the 1912 campaign in Kosovo as the rebirth of Serbian statehood. According to wide-held belief it ended centuries of suppression under Muslim rule, which had started after the Serbs lost the Battle of Kosovo Polje in 1389. The myth of this Battle had been passed from generation to generation. In the late nineteenth century, like in the 1990s, nationalist propaganda turned myth into fact, which influenced Serbian attitudes and behaviour considerably.
5. The Contact Group was established in 1994 to develop a peace plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina. It continued to meet after the signing of the Dayton Agreement. Members are: France, Germany, Italy, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States.
7. This article was concluded on 30 November 1998 while US Ambassador Hill and EU Ambassador Petrisch were continuing their mediation efforts.
Another major difference between nightmares and night terrors is how you might react when you wake up. With nightmares, you may wake up easily and still feel scared or any other number of negative emotions but ultimately be able to think clearly, the Mayo Clinic says. But when it comes to night terrors, you may be hard to wake up, and be confused if someone does manage to wake you. What does nightmare treatment entail? Because between My dreams and My nightmares, Only kind words Will distinguish them. But, no matter What happens in These nightmares, My dreams always Keep me safe. The contrast between dreams and nightmares was very well shown here! I also liked how you mentioned the nightmares returning to your world; it was a good touch and added to the overall impact of the poem. Good work on this poem! *TheFinalHikari Founder of #Writers--club, #LandoftheSky, and #Live-Love-Write. Even a section of Dreams and Nightmares was used as their Super Bowl LII entrance song to show solidarity with Meek, who was born and raised in Philadelphia. The Eagles proceeded to win the game 41-33, earning their first super bowl. They, like Meek, succeeded despite being written off. Following their Super Bowl victory, NBCSports Philadelphia heralded the song as the greatest Philly sports anthem ever. Expand â. Ask us a question about this song. Ask a question.