

## ANALYSIS OF TITO'S POLICIES ON ETHNIC CONFLICT: THE CASE OF KOSOVO

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### Abstract

The Kosovo Conflict, which arose between ethnic Albanians and Serbs in 1998-1999, is a painful memory. However, the tension between them had existed since the Ottoman rule (1455 - 1912). During President Joseph Tito's period (1945-1980), a series of policy and constitutional changes occurred aiming to stimulate peaceful development in the region, and the granting of certain autonomous powers to ethnic Albanians in Kosovo.

Three important aspects of Tito's "integration-oriented policy" are examined in this article, including the Brother and Unity Policy, the "Blood Transfusion" Economy Policy, and the Migration Policy. This analysis demonstrates how those policies overall failed to alleviate the underlying ethnic tensions that afflicted the two ethnic groups. Furthermore, they did not stabilize the economy or advance the prosperity of the culture.

In view of the analysis, this article suggests that policy makers take an in-depth look at ethnic relations when developing and promoting relevant policies. General recommendations and strategies are presented in this paper in order to assist policy makers and future researchers to better address the ethnic issues between ethnic Albanians and Serbs. Such attention is crucial to the stability of the region, the development of the economy, the prosperity of the culture, and the improvement of relationships at every level.

**Keywords:** *Ethnic conflict, President Tito, Policy, Kosovo, Peacebuilding*

### Introduction

The end of World War II also marked the end of the Yugoslav Civil War (1941-1945), when the second Yugoslavia emerged as a federation of the six socialist republics, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Slovenia, as well as two autonomous provinces Kosovo and Vojvodina within Serbia. This federation developed peacefully



Map by Bruce Jones, [www.bjdesign.com](http://www.bjdesign.com)

for the next 35 years under the rule of Joseph Broz Tito (1945-1980). During this period, Kosovo was granted the right to direct its own cultural and economic development and was responsible for protecting its citizens' rights according to the Serbian Constitution, which was passed one year after the Yugoslav Constitution. During this time, Kosovo's ethnic Albanian populations gained an unprecedented level of influence as they were included as minority representatives in Yugoslavia's federal government, and were protected under Serbian law. This

### Biography

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peace however, did not last.

Ten years after Tito's death, the federation of Yugoslavia disintegrated and the number of confrontations between Kosovo and Serbia skyrocketed. As the tension between ethnic Albanians and Serbs intensified, the Kosovo War broke out on 28 February 1998. Three traditional theories offer explanations for the cause of these developments: 1) the history of ethnic conflicts in the region, 2) a lack of a leader capable of continuing President Tito's policies, and 3) political upheaval under Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic's strong political interests. Though each of these three theories is justified, they all ignore the key roles of Tito's policies themselves. Despite economic and cultural unification under Tito, his policies neglected to address one key issue: ethnic reconciliation.

In 1963, Yugoslavia adopted a new constitution, making Kosovo an autonomous province with greater decision-making powers. In the 1970s, Tito's policies continued to support ethnic Albanians within Kosovo. In 1974, Yugoslavia adopted an amended constitution, which entitled Kosovo to participate in the federal government, including being represented in the rotating federal presidency, electing parliamentarians to the federal legislature, and developing its own constitution. Along with these constitutional changes to grant Kosovo more autonomous power, Tito also introduced several policies in an attempt to improve inter-ethnic relations and reduce tensions between Albanian and Serbian ethnic groups.

This paper will focus on Tito's policies of "Brotherhood and Unity," "Blood Transfusion," and "International Immigration and External Emigration," arguing that they were not in fact well-designed to address ethnic tensions. Despite reducing Serbian cultural chauvinism, creating federal funding system to grant free-interest funds to under-developed states, and attempting to improve the economic and cultural situation between ethnic Albanians and Serbs, Tito's policies failed in these respective ways: to take the history of ethnic tensions into account, to consider local conditions, ultimately aggravating tensions.

### ***The Brotherhood and Unity Policy***

The "Brotherhood and Unity" policy introduced by Tito in 1963 was designed to eliminate existing tensions between ethnic groups and to maintain equal rights for each associated state member. In this

policy, he claimed that "We have spilt an ocean of blood for the brotherhood and unity of our peoples, and we shall not allow anyone to touch or destroy it from within." Propaganda and slanted media reports were the main tools to promote "brotherhood" and equal rights among Kosovo's Serbian and Albanian populations. However, this policy ignored historical precedents of ethnic tension, eventually resulting in the regressions following Tito's death.

Before 1945, the media, influenced largely by Albanians, portrayed an extreme situation of Serbian persecution of local Albanians. These reports played a large role in inciting Kosovo Albanians to rebel against the "annexation of Kosovo" under Tito and intensified the ethnic conflicts between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo (Ke 2012, p. 78). However, under the policy of "brotherhood and unity", media images were controlled to present only images of love and brotherhood. Unity was advocated by attempting to curb Serbian hyper-nationalism and restrict the Kosovo Albanians' rebellions. Furthermore, Serbs and Albanians were described as Yugoslavian brothers and friends who had cooperated in postwar socialist reconstruction, despite previous Albanian persecution (Ke 2012, p. 86). At the same time, Serbs who spoke openly against Kosovo's autonomy risked being punished or imprisoned.

Positive reports of the relationship between Serbs and ethnic Albanians prevailed in Kosovo's mainstream media through many kinds of works. For example, Rexhep Qosja's book "Death Comes to Me from Such Eyes" (1974) presents an optimistic picture of relations between Serbs and Kosovo Albanians as members living within a harmonious Yugoslavian family and holding positive attitudes toward each other.

It is clear that Kosovo's Albanians initially regarded Serbians as "evil" and "others", perceptions only strengthened by stories of wartime atrocities; the Serbian Other, in ethnic Albanians' mind, was a colonizer, a political persecutor and a war criminal. In short, a bridge that relied on nothing but imposed nationalism for support was impossible to construct between the two sides, as neither one could imagine sharing a community with the other.

Instead of reconciling historical ethnic tensions, bringing war criminals to justice, or encouraging



people to understand each other's history and culture, Tito's policy of "Brotherhood and Unity" covered up latent ethnic issues with false fraternity and neglected a history of abuse and victimization between the two groups. Thus, while Tito's policy of "unity and brotherhood" held Yugoslavia together while he was alive, that unity quickly dissolved after his death.

### ***Economy Policy - Blood Transfusion***

In theory, the policy of "Blood Transfusion" was designed to close the development gap between Kosovo and the other Yugoslavian states. In practice, however, the gap was actually widened, adding to ethnic tensions. When Yugoslavia was formed, Bosnia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo were the poorer states of the union with relatively less developed economies relative to Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia. Kosovo's per-capita income was \$800 compared with Slovenia's \$5000 per-capita income (Jiang 2007, p. 9). In order to fill the economic gap between federation members, Tito adopted "The Blood Transfusion Policy", a policy that attempted to facilitate the development of the region by funneling resources from richer to poorer states. The Blood Transfusion policy intended to shorten the distance and increase the trade, investment, and economic relations between Kosovo and other states. However, it soon became apparent that this solution was only a temporary one.

By the beginning of the 1990s, the per-capita income in Kosovo was \$1302 while Slovenia's was \$12618 (Jiang 2007, p. 9), presenting a larger gap. What Tito's policy lacked was a long-term plan, one that would create a local infrastructure in Kosovo, one that could support and maintain a growing economy. Not only did the economic gap widen, but a new problem arose as well: the developed regions complained about the unsustainability of Kosovo's system while Kosovo believed that the investments and newly-built industries were evidence of exploitation by those more developed regions. Such economic complaints leaked into Kosovo's already unstable social situation, inciting further ethnic conflicts.

After 1965, the source of funding for social assistance changed from the Social Investment Fund to the Federal Foundation, meaning Tito's government could now divert a certain proportion of funds

contributed by each member state of Yugoslavia to assist regions with lower economic development, such as Kosovo, at very low interest rates. In this way, the autonomous state of Kosovo accounted for nearly 70% of its production budget with funds borrowed from the Federal Foundation (Jiang 2007, p. 13). One of the main downsides of this plan was that it failed to take Kosovo's own situation into account before implementing an appropriate plan for economic development.

At the time, Kosovo's economy depended largely on agriculture: within the autonomous state, 68% of land was cultivable (Jiang 2007, p. 14). Kosovo's economy was very weak, with very limited transportation, energy resources, and heavy industry that might support industrialization. Despite this, the Yugoslavian union invested in the processing industry, one that requires a strong and well-established infrastructure to survive. Instead of taking advantage of Kosovo's rich mineral resources and exploring its potential basic industry, a large amount of money was injected to build and maintain the processing industry. This resulted in a disproportionate and irregular economic structure in Kosovo, as the processing industry preceded the basic industry base.

Specifically, many corporations started to buy the basic components, raw materials from foreign countries that already had established relevant industries. Because there was no industrial precedent for anything like this in Kosovo, initial investments produced extremely low rates of return as many rushed to throw together a flimsy infrastructure with no long-term potential. This resulted in the shutdown of many factories, a spike in unemployment, and another reason for regional destabilization.

The inefficient management of funds intended for Kosovo's economic reconstruction and Kosovo's dependency on state funds resulted in Slovenia, Serbia and other developed states' resentment of the Federal Foundations' appropriation of their money. Considering their investments "wasted," they were not willing to sacrifice more for Kosovo's development, and refused to provide further funding or assistance. At the same time, Kosovo felt that they had been exploited because the new projects were actually intended to provide energy and resources to other parts of Yugoslavia (Malcolm 1998, p. 348). This economic tension intensified the ethnic tensions

between developed and underdeveloped regions, since both sides believed they had been treated unfairly. In Kosovo, ethnic Albanians began to relate their low social status in the region to their local economic status, breeding social unrest. The myopic policy of “Blood Transfusion” only served to contribute an economic factor to Kosovo’s existing high ethnic tensions.

**Migration Policy** - *International Immigration and External Emigration*

Dissatisfaction with the status quo came to a head in the 1968 uprising of students demanding a “Kosova-Republika,” an autonomous Kosovo. As a result, Tito’s government responded with policies centered on migration. The migration policies were introduced by the Yugoslavian government in an attempt to ease tensions between ethnic Albanians in Kosovo and improve people’s economic situations.

Tito’s open internal migration policy encouraged those Albanians in need to move into Kosovo to mine the rich mineral wealth of the region, largely increasing the Albanian population in Kosovo from 68% of the total population in 1948 to 77% by the end of 1981 (Petrovic and Stefanovic 2010, p. 1091) (Table 1). Along with the Albanian population’s autonomy came ethnic unrest in Kosovo. In addition, there were a growing number of reports of Albanian hostility directed towards Kosovo’s native Serb population. Like the policies of “Brotherhood and Unity” and “Blood Transfusion”, this migration process had unintended consequences that directly affected relations between Kosovar Albanians and Kosovar Serbs.

The other migration policy implemented by Tito emphasized the emigration of unskilled, unemployed laborers. In doing so, the government intended to reduce ethnic tensions simply by changing the population make up. However, as soon became clear, it was not that easy. Not only did this transplant of citizens from one area to another not address the root of intercultural conflicts, but the new cultural dynamics had unforeseen consequences as well.

The Internal Migration policy that mobilized Albanian people’s moving to Kosovo increased the power of the historically repressed Albanians; however, the unintended consequence was the ethnic discrimination against Kosovo Serbs. As mentioned in Aleksandar Petrovic and Dorde Stefanovic’s (2010,

p.1073-1106) book, Kosovo’s Serbian peasants bitterly complained that after 1966 they were subjected to myriad acts of harassment from younger members of the Albanian majority who were hungry for land as their rural population increased dramatically. In a 1985 survey of Serbian migrants from Kosovo, 46.4% of rural households reported instances of verbal ethnic threats to their settlements, and 24.6% reported various forms of physical assaults, mostly bullying of children that were grounded in ethnic discrimination (Petrovic and Blagojvic 1989, p. 123, 135). Kosovo Serbs who wanted to discuss the ethnic harassment within the Kosovo communist institutions were labeled ‘nationalists’ and disciplined by Albanian-dominated communist institutions (Petrovic and Balgojevic 1989, p. 178). Such portrayals of

	Albanian	Serbian	Rest	Total
1948	498,242 68.46%	199,961 27.47%	29,617 4.07%	727,820
1953	524,559 64.93%	221,212 27.38%	62,130 7.69%	80,7901
1961	646,148 67.06%	264,604 27.46%	52,779 5.48%	693,531
1971	916,168 73.67%	259,819 20.89%	67,706 5.44%	1,243,693
1948	1,226,736 77.42%	236,525 14.93%	121,179 7.65%	1,584,440

Table 1: Kosovo Population (M. Bozinovich, 2003)

discrimination prevented any progress from being made on that front, and resulted in large numbers of Kosovo Serbs moving into central Serbia. As about 85,000, or one-third of all Kosovo Serbs, moved out of Kosovo between 1961 and 1981 (Winkle 2005, p.26), Albanian culture was promoted and Albanian people were empowered, yet the effort ended only in a worsening of reconciliation prospects and a greater lack of cross-cultural understanding. On the other hand, the government’s principal reasoning behind the external emigration policy was based in a desire to level the economic disparities between regions in the throes of ethnic unrest, such as in 1968 when Albanians protested against Serbian dominance. The external migration was initially billed as “temporary work abroad,” and later allowed many ethnic Albanians to work and settle abroad. This policy certainly satisfied the economic needs and wants of those who

left, and allowed them to remove themselves from situations of ethnic conflict, but did little to address the needs of those at home. In fact, the exodus of Albanians heading to Western countries caused further economic and social dissatisfaction, and heightened of nationalism on both sides of the conflict equation; economic woes and ethnic struggles continued to thrive.

In the end, both policies of migration, while providing temporary and concentrated solutions to the relevant problems of economic disparity and social unrest, failed to establish a long-term answer to the ethnic issues that would inevitably remain.

### **Conclusion**

Tito's policies were implemented with the intention of serving and stabilizing the six republics and two autonomous provinces that made up Yugoslavia. Kosovo was granted more autonomy to increase its power within the federation in the hopes that this would provide further internal stability. Tito was, however, reluctant to give Kosovo the status of "Republic" because he feared a Kosovo-Albania alliance that would lead to the collapse of the Yugoslav Federation. With this in mind, most of his policies during that time were aimed at managing the shaky economic and political situations throughout the federal states and to bringing peace and stability to each region. However, his social, economic, and migration policies did not account for strong feelings of nationalism and cultural pride that were widespread throughout the autonomous regions. As a result his policies were unsuccessful in alleviating either Kosovo's economic woes or the underlying ethnic tensions that afflicted everything from everyday interactions to government administration. In fact, Kosovo's attachment to Serbia remains a point of contention even today.

In the spring of 1981, one year after Tito died, Albanian students protested violently in Kosovo, proclaiming that Kosovo should be a Republic. Because of a lack of solid reconciliation of ethnic tensions, states started implementing their own policies. Yugoslav officials from Serbia argued that Kosovo's aim was indeed to secede from Yugoslavia and form a Greater Albania. Thus, the central government in Belgrade staged an anti-Albanian campaign that took an especially strong hold in Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro, the three republics that had large Albanian minority populations.

Ethnic tensions were further aggravated when the Serbian hardliner Slobodan Milosevic came to power. His aggressive policy focused on building up Serbia's power and revoking autonomous power of Kosovo regardless of law, historical precedent, and political reality, provoking strong opposition from ethnic Albanians in Kosovo and intensifying the conflicts on both sides.

While a tradition of ethnic conflicts in the region, political upheaval, and inconsistent leadership had without a doubt contributed to Kosovo's relapse into intense and seemingly endless ethnic conflict, oversights in Tito's policies had their own significant effects as well. Though the Kosovo War has been over for more than ten years, the ethnic turmoil in Kosovo has never reached a balance, and problems of ethnic tension between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo persist. Policies that correctly address issues of ethnicity in Kosovo are very important for the stability of the federation, the development of economy, the prosperity of culture, and the improvement of relationships at every level. Therefore, a discussion about the policy errors during Josip Tito's rule of the Yugoslav Federation is essential to solving the problems of today.

### **Resolution and Peace-building Strategies**

The story of Tito's policies failing to unite different ethnicities in the long-term tells us that an absence of conflict does not equate to peace. We must find an approach that builds the inner peace of each individual. Sociologist Galtung (1996, p.15) introduced the terms positive peace and negative peace. He claimed that negative peace entails the mutual agreement to end violence while positive peace entails reconciling current social identities and changing negative historical portrayals. Rather than ending conflicts, the reconstruction process involves building positive peace systems that are maintained by independent and long-lasting relationships. In this process, communication plays a significant role to foster the positive relationship needed for a peaceful society. Resolving conflicts is as complicated as conflicts themselves, requiring both communication and strategy. Knowing that addressing ethnicity issues is the key point in the situation of Kosovo, policymakers and future researchers should keep this in mind when making policies or implementing projects during post-conflict reconstruction. There are several

things that policymakers and researchers should know about Kosovo before starting their reconstructing works.

Historical ethnic barriers in Kosovo range from relatively recent political events to an ingrained cultural foundation. Kosovar Albanians and Serbs have their own legends that include identity narratives, land and historical events that are strongly held against each other (Landis 2012, p. 605). Such distinctive group identity and cultural foundations create significant barriers to cross-community trust and respect. These long-held historical troubles often contribute to the current political agenda, which exacerbate mutual aggression. Thus, to resolve remaining post-conflict problems, addressing only current issues and disagreements is not enough for long-lasting peace. It is vital to develop strategies to enable group communication to reconcile respective histories and distinctive identity portrayals.

The reason that communication is so important to the reconciliation of relationships, the dealing with discriminatory histories and the enhancement of understanding in multicultural societies, is because it incorporates trust and empathy into the peace process. During communication and interaction, people develop relationships and trust, which are necessary for further open communication. When groups in conflict are brought together to listen to each other's stories, empathetic listening and realistic discussions, though hard to achieve, are extremely helpful to build mutual understanding and relationships (Landis 2012, p.611). "Mutual reorganization of one another's sufferings creates a favorable atmosphere for progress of negotiation because underneath there is a verification of each other's group identity" (Landis 2012, cited in Draguns 2007, pp. 6-7). As a result, local level discussions should be advocated between government units and the two ethnic groups, creating an atmosphere of understanding for one another's concerns to increase the likelihood of living together peacefully. At the same time, those genuine discussions, open dialogues and respectful debates must also ensure the formulation and implementation of good policies.

There are multiple strategies for creating dialogue and conversation between conflicting ethnic groups from both the author and outside researchers including Montiel et al. (2012), Marsella (2005), Oudenhoven (2012), and Landis (2012). Peace education is the foundation for creating mutual tolerance and

building trustful relationships. It should be required to people, especially those who deal with issues involving intercultural individuals, including government officials, policymakers, international agencies, and NGOs. The rise in multi-cultural interactions between people in the world necessitates peace education in general. There are various educational resources available online that should be made available in public education. One example is The Carter Center, a nongovernmental organization and resource center, which lists various conflict resolution and education sources ([www.cartercenter.org](http://www.cartercenter.org)). Another is the International Center for Ethno-Religious Mediation, whose website contains relevant databases, online courses, mediation and mitigation related radio broadcasts and instructional resources ([www.icermediation.org](http://www.icermediation.org)).

The media plays a very important role in peace education and perception adjustment because of its direct dissemination of information and mass coverage. Media has a strong potential to inform and influence people with cultural information; it can also broadcast useful material such as methods to deal with conflict, thereby promoting an atmosphere of tolerance. Marsella (2005, pp. 615) has noted the power of media as one of the most influential means to transmit knowledge and moral patterns. The other critical value of media is the significant influence on individuals who are the direct recipients of the information in forms of TV shows, advertisement and other media content.

Utilizing social influencers to promote peace values as proposed by van Oudenhoven (2012, pp. 621) is another suggestion. Community, spiritual, and social leaders play important roles in shaping and influencing others' thoughts within groups; thus their promotion of an atmosphere of cultural respect, emphasizing interfaith reconciliation, and an inclusive perspective of ethnic "others," will not only help to ameliorate conflicts but contribute to bridging the gap between the two "differences" as well.

Peace building efforts should not rely solely on legislation. Conflicts start from civil society, and should be ended at the civic level as well. And civil society has great power in post-conflict reconstruction. One of the strategies to unite civil society and equip individuals with tools and knowledge for mutual understanding is linking institutions and organizations that implement programs within the civil society. Programs and projects designed by those

agents are often incorporated in the daily contact of people, aiming to promote cultural understanding of each other and change perceptions of one ethnic group towards another. Considering the often multi-layered structure of ethnic conflicts, the involvement of civil society ensures that the solutions penetrate several parts of the society, even at the grassroots level.

Programs and projects should involve bringing people from two ethnic groups together to reduce prejudice and stereotypes, and help to make sense of the other group's identity through the process of contact and dialogue. Project researchers and designers should find out the "central problems" and "key divergences" between cultures and come up with alternative interpretations of the situation. It is recommended that such alternative interpretations should be read to each group of people; then immediate follow-up and feedback sessions should be conducted for participants. The aim of those programs should be to generate the understanding of the perspective of the "other" in a conflict situation, as well as convey the other's views for peace building. Based on personal experience of working on dozens of projects designed for the same purpose, this author can vindicate the power of those carefully designed projects by linked institutions and organizations for peace building at the civic level.

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