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Yugoslavia: Ethnic Tensions Still High in Kosovo

Summary

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Tensions between ethnic Slavs--Serbs and Montenegrins--and Albanians in Serbia's Kosovo Province have heightened in recent months and they probably will continue at current levels or increase slightly over the next half year. The Republic of Serbia is the instigator of these tensions and is attempting to use the ethnic strains as a pretext to reassert control over the Albanian-dominated province. Serbia received support from other regions for this effort at a national Communist Party plenum last June. [REDACTED]

Public protests against discrimination by Kosovo's Slavic minority are likely to continue in the coming months, raising the chances for political miscalculations, ethnic Albanian backlash, and communal violence. Security forces, and in the last resort the military, almost certainly can keep such unrest in check. Nonetheless, the broad US interests in Yugoslav unity, stability, and development will remain threatened as festering problems in the province inflame emotions and hamper the already difficult national policymaking process. [REDACTED]

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Political Conflict over Kosovo

Serbia's Aims and Motives. The Republic of Serbia has been the main instigator of growing political tensions over Kosovo. Serbian officials are pushing for increased control over Kosovo and Serbia's other autonomous province of Vojvodina. The effort began in earnest after a younger, more assertive and nationalist-oriented group of leaders sensitive to the concerns of Serbs in the autonomous provinces was elected to the Serbian leadership in 1984. These new leaders--more regionally-minded than the Yugoslav-minded older party stalwarts--believe that increasing Serbia's control over the provinces will strengthen its power base and its voice in the federation on other issues such as increasing Belgrade's authority in Yugoslavia's decentralized political system. [REDACTED] Serbian leaders recently proposed revisions to the Serbian constitution to extend Serbian judicial control over the autonomous provinces that go far beyond those being considered in a parallel Yugoslav debate on the national constitution. [REDACTED]

The second main political goal of Serbian officials is to protect the Serb and Montenegrin minority in Kosovo from perceived persecution by the large and growing ethnic Albanian majority. Kosovo's Slavic groups believe Albanians harass them, destroy their property, and discriminate against them in employment, leading them to emigrate from the province to elsewhere in the country. Many sources indicate that the continuance of a Serb presence in Kosovo is an extremely emotional issue for Serbs, and historical events in Kosovo are deeply ingrained in the Serb national consciousness. Serbian leaders, and the officially inspired Serbian press, are quick to condemn even the most minor and unproven incidents of ethnic Albanian hostility toward Kosovo Serbs. [REDACTED]

Ethnic Albanian Aims and Motives. We believe most ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, both leaders and the public, desire an eventual separation from Serbia and the elevation of Kosovo to full republic status within Yugoslavia. But, fearing Serb recriminations, for the time being they hope just to maintain the status quo. Since the last major riots in spring 1981, ethnic Albanian officials have tried to avoid actions that would leave themselves open to charges by Serb nationalists and politicians of assisting or tolerating Albanian nationalism. In the past several months, they again have been placed on the defensive by such charges against several prominent ethnic Albanian Kosovo leaders. Kosovo officials are also wary of Serbia's ire because they are also dependent on Serbian backing within the federation for acquiring continued high levels of financial support from the richer northern republics. [REDACTED]

The Kosovo leadership is resisting Serbian demands for increased control over the province indirectly by remaining silent on the issue and leaving the fight against increased Serbian control to Vojvodina. [REDACTED] At the same time, however, significant circumstantial evidence suggests that Kosovo officials may be raising the issue in private with leaders in other regions; the Kosovars probably are raising the specter of a resurgent "greater Serbia" that would dominate all regions, as Serbia did prior to World War II. [REDACTED]

Kosovo officials also are subtly resisting pressure from both the federation and Serbia to change their domestic policies. While the Kosovo authorities pay lip service to protecting the rights of ethnic Serbs and Montenegrins and halting their outflux, in practice they take few actions to accommodate Serbian suggestions. Kosovo officials,

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however, did agree to give preferential treatment--in employment and housing--to the comparatively small number of returning Serbs and Montenegrins, but only when this was demanded by the national party Central Committee's June plenum conclusions. [REDACTED]

The National Scene. Other republics generally are wary of Serbia's demands on Kosovo, but they are also concerned about increased tensions in the province--fearing a repeat of the 1981 riots--and are willing to grant Serbia limited increased de facto control over the province. The regions probably hope that Serbia will suppress or discourage both ethnic Serb and Albanian agitation. The latest sign of federal support for Serbia came at a national party plenum last June, which called for greater discipline in the Kosovo party, increased incentives to Slavs to return to the province, and family planning programs (aimed at the ethnic Albanians). The plenum also gave Serbia unusually broad powers of oversight over the implementation of these conclusions. The decision was the first the internally-divided Central Committee had been able to make on an important topic since its election in June 1986, suggesting the seriousness with which national leaders view Kosovo. Shortly after the June plenum, the Serbian party held its own plenum on Kosovo which discussed a Serbian program of implementation of the plenum conclusions. [REDACTED]

Security Problems

Serb Protests. The security scene is most immediately threatened by Kosovo Serbs and Montenegrins who, aided by nationalist-oriented Belgrade intellectuals, have developed the organized protest into a fine art. Since early last year, Serbs and Montenegrins have held largely peaceful protest gatherings frequently, on short notice, and in a wide variety of locations in Kosovo and Serbia, suggesting that they have established an effective informal network of contacts. The aim of the gatherings, which often involve up to several thousand Serbs and Montenegrins, is to publicly pressure Kosovo officials as well as national officials in Belgrade, to help protect their rights. Such protests probably are giving rise to a new cadre of popular Kosovo Serb leaders, although few identifiable figures have yet to emerge. One of them, Kosta Bulatovic, became a rallying point in 1986 when about 1000 followers demonstrated for his release after he was detained by Kosovo police. At the latest mass gathering--of about 5000 on 15 August in the village of Kosovo Polje--participants demanded speedier implementation of the June plenum's conclusions. [REDACTED]

So far, Serbian officials have largely tolerated these Kosovo Serb and Montenegrin protest gatherings in Serbia proper, as have the defensive ethnic Albanian authorities in Kosovo.

- o While Serbian officials publicly warned Kosovo demonstrators not to come to Belgrade during the June Central Committee plenum, they took little adverse action when several thousand Kosovo Serbs and Montenegrins--joined by some Serbs from Belgrade--gathered across from the meeting hall.
- o Serbian politicians and press demanded and got punishment of police--including a high ethnic Albanian police official--responsible for provoking an April clash in Kosovo with Serb demonstrators. [REDACTED]

Albanian Organization and Repression. Another potential security threat comes from organized ethnic Albanian nationalist groups, which plan and occasionally carry out violent terrorist-like actions. The Yugoslav press reports periodically on gunrunning activities from Western Europe by Albanian nationalist groups like the pro-Tirane

"Marxist-Leninists of Kosovo," as well as the uncovering of small arms caches by security police. These are, however, relatively small operations, according to press descriptions, and we believe such groups are unlikely to be able to plan and carry out broader armed actions in the foreseeable future. [REDACTED]

Unlike their tolerance of ethnic Serb demonstrators, Kosovo officials have responded to Albanian nationalist gatherings and other activities with massive arrests and other repression.

- o The majority of political prisoners in Yugoslavia are ethnic Albanians, according to most Western sources.
- o Reports on the number of ethnic Albanians imprisoned on charges of nationalism since the 1981 riots vary greatly, ranging from 1200 to 3000.
- o An additional 4000 to 6000 have suffered other punishment, including fines and official warnings, according to the Yugoslav press. [REDACTED]

Yugoslav press sources indicate that most of these ethnic Albanians have been arrested for nothing more than making nationalist public statements; ethnic Albanians thus are more likely to be tried for such "verbal crimes" than any other ethnic group in the country. Of further note, since 1981, about 287 teachers have been removed their jobs in Kosovo, and 383 have been expelled from the Kosovo League of Communists for alleged nationalist activity, according to the Yugoslav press. The June Central Committee plenum also called for the removal of nationalist-oriented teachers from Kosovo schools. [REDACTED]

Role of Albania. Yugoslav officials generally believe that Albania aids Albanian nationalists in Kosovo, and that as the only European country not to sign the Helsinki Final Act, which recognizes the frontiers of Europe, it covets ethnic Albanian Yugoslav lands. For example, last September, ethnic Albanian Kosovo party chief Azem Vlasi publicly charged that propaganda from Albania was instigating ethnic Albanian "irredentism" in Kosovo. In our view:

- o Albania probably serves as a model of national self-determination for many Yugoslav Albanians.
- o It may also inflame ethnic Albanians with its strong public support for Kosovo Albanian demands for autonomy.
- o It may also engage in other low level activities, although we have no solid evidence that Tirane is instigating Albanian separatism in Kosovo by providing arms, funds, or any training. [REDACTED]

Outlook

Kosovo almost certainly will remain one of Yugoslavia's most pressing and divisive problems for many years. On the political side, Serbian officials will continue to try to exploit these troubles to push for constitutional reforms aimed at strengthening its control over Kosovo. They will also promote federal pressure on Kosovo's leadership to ensure ethnic Serb rights. The June plenum gave Serbia important backing on both counts. The current debate over changing the Serbian and national constitutions probably will continue over the next 1 to 2 years. Overly aggressive moves by Serbia in the

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debate to strengthen its legal control over its autonomous provinces, however, probably will be resisted by the other regions. They will take care to specifically delineate any new prerogatives granted to Serbia. [REDACTED]

On the security side, ethnic tensions in Kosovo almost certainly will continue, and an uneasy calm is the best that national officials can hope for in the foreseeable future. Serb nationalists surely will continue to attempt to undermine public confidence in the ethnic Albanian leadership in Kosovo and play up relatively minor incidents to call attention to their plight. More Serb demonstrations, and concessions granted to them, will fuel ethnic Albanian resentment, possibly producing a potentially violent Albanian backlash. [REDACTED]

US interests in maintaining a stable, united Yugoslavia will remain at least somewhat threatened by the political and security problems stemming from Kosovo. A new round of ethnic disorders could constrain and even temporarily halt the ad hoc process of liberalization taking place elsewhere in the country. Even without such a flareup, Kosovo will continue to strain relations among many ethnic groups, and make national policymaking more difficult. [REDACTED]

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FACT SHEET ON KOSOVO

Note: All information cited below is from published Yugoslav sources, except where specifically noted.

Historical Ownership of Land: Both Serbs and Albanians believe they are the historical "owners" of Kosovo, and that the other group is an intruder. Most Western historians believe that the ethnic Albanians were present in Kosovo before Serbs and other Slavic groups; these historians trace Albanian heritage back to the ancient Illyrians. Slav groups migrated to the area beginning in the 11th Century Slavs generally settled the lowlands, while Albanians were predominant in the higher elevations. Inter-ethnic conflict began in earnest when population pressures forced the Albanians to begin migrating to the then Slav-settled lowlands in the 12th century, according to US historians. By the 15th century, Serbs were predominate in the province, but since then population decreases from wars and high ethnic Albanian population growth rates have erased this Serb predominance.

Serb Views of Kosovo: Control over Kosovo is an emotional issue to Serbs, who view Kosovo as the cradle of their culture, and trace their control over the area back to the 12th century. The battle of Kosovo Polje in 1389--where the Serb army was destroyed defending the province against invading Turks--remains a strong memory in Serbian collective consciousness. Nowadays, Serbs believe they are deliberately being pushed out of the province by ethnic Albanians. Kosovo Serbs publicly charge that they are constantly harassed by ethnic Albanians, who they claim blind their cattle, buy up Serb land, and rape young girls. Moreover, Serbs suspect Albanians of wanting to create a "greater Albania"--uniting present-day Albania with Kosovo and ethnically Albanian parts on Macedonia and Montenegro. Serbs reject even ethnic Albanian demands that Kosovo be separated from Serbia and elevated to republic status--arguing that the area is traditionally Serb, that the ethnic Albanian-dominated Kosovo Government already represents Albanian interests, and that Albanians already have their own ethnic homeland--the neighboring country of Albania.

Albanian Views: Albanians, on the other hand, believe they are discriminated against by Serbs. Ethnic Albanians argue correctly that they are the fourth--close to third--largest ethnic group in the country, yet do not have their own republic as do the less numerous Montenegrins, Macedonians, and Slovenes. They point to the high unemployment and poverty in Kosovo--the poorest part of Yugoslavia--as evidence that Serbia cares little for Kosovo. Kosovo is rich in mineral resources, and much developmental aid has gone to the mining industry--leaving some ethnic Albanians to charge that Serbia exploits Kosovo as a colony providing raw materials. Publicized arrests of Albanian nationalists in Kosovo reinforce the view of ethnic Albanians that their national aspirations are being suppressed.

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Citizenship and Representation: Many ethnic Albanians charge that they are inadequately represented in Yugoslavia, since they do not have their own republic. Citizens of Kosovo are, however, constituents of the Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosovo, the Republic of Serbia, and Yugoslavia. Albanians hold predominant decisionmaking power at the Provincial level, and are represented within both government and party bodies and have some influence at the Republic and National levels. For example, Sinan Hasani, an ethnic Albanian from Kosovo, is former President of the collective Yugoslav Presidency, the leadership of which rotates annually among the regions.

Birthrate: Serbs charge that Albanians are attempting to overwhelm them demographically in the province. Albanians, however, have strong cultural proclivities towards large families. At present, almost one-half all ethnic Albanians live in Yugoslavia. The rate of population growth in Kosovo is about 2.53%, much larger than the national average of 0.73% and the highest in Europe. Serbs and other Yugoslavs advocate greater family planning programs for Kosovo to keep down the Albanian birthrate.

Per Capita GSP: Kosovo is the poorest and least developed part of Yugoslavia. In 1985, the per capita gross social product in Kosovo was about \$555, about a third of the national average of \$1805.

Employment: Many Albanians point to high unemployment as evidence that they are oppressed. The unemployment rate in Kosovo is about 35%, the highest in Yugoslavia and well above the national average of 14%. Kosovo has about 11.1% of the total number of Yugoslav unemployed as of last year, although the province's 1981 population was only 7.8% of the Yugoslav total. 21.7% of the working age population in Kosovo is employed, as compared with 41.1% for Yugoslavia as a whole. In 1986, the rate of unemployment grew by about 10% over 1985.

Unemployment problems will be aggravated by Kosovo's population structure, according to Yugoslav sociologists. Of those currently unemployed, 70% are under the age of 30, and 60% are classified as "highly qualified." About 60% of the population is under 25, and 75% is under 35. Many graduates of Pristina University are unemployed for an extended period after graduation.

Expulsions from the Provincial Party Organization: From 1981--when ethnic Albanians rioted through the province--through 1985, 1,800 people were expelled from the League of Communists of Kosovo (the local party). About 1,600 were ethnic Albanians. Ethnic Albanians accounted for about 89% of expulsions, which is higher than their 1985 share of Kosovo provincial party ranks (about 67% of the Kosovo party are ethnic Albanians while they comprise about 78% of the province's population). Kosovars are also generally underrepresented in the national League of Communists of Yugoslavia--being only 4.3% of total party membership compared to about 7.8% of the country's population.

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Kosovo Albanian Organizations: Kosovo security officials publicly say that Albanian "irredentists" are increasingly attempting to organize themselves politically. Kosovo Internal Affairs Secretary Rahman Morina last year publicly stated that since 1981, Kosovo police had uncovered 8 "counterrevolutionary organizations" in Kosovo, and 88 presumably smaller "counterrevolutionary groups." This number included the "Marxists-Leninists of Kosovo," an ethnic Albanian irredentist organization that is attempting to create a mass movement that eventually would detach Kosovo from Yugoslavia and join it to Albania, according to official charges. In addition, the Yugoslav press reported a 1985 attempt by the "Marxist-Leninists of Kosovo" to merge with another irredentist group to form a new "Communist Party of Kosovo." The Yugoslav press charged that these groups had direct links to the Albanian intelligence service. The Yugoslav press charges that these groups also engage in arms smuggling into Yugoslavia, and that they engage in violence to accomplish their goals, including at least one shootout with local police.

Political Prisoners: Published numbers of political prisoners in Kosovo vary greatly. A Serbian official stated that from 1981-1985, 3000 people were sentenced in Kosovo for political crimes, and 6000 people given warnings. Kosovo internal affairs officials have stated publicly that from 1981 to 1986, 1200 individuals were sentenced, 3000 fined by courts, and 3700 issued warnings. The Yugoslav press indicates that the majority of these received only unspecified light sentences, but a hefty minority of those sentenced reportedly received longer prison terms. Most US sources indicate that the majority of those sentenced are ethnic Albanians.

Nationally, in 1985 451 Yugoslavs were charged with political crimes, according to security officials. These included 154 Croats (34%), 137 Albanians (30%), 77 Serbs (17%), 25 Muslims (6%), 15 Slovenes (3%), and 9 Macedonians (2%). No explanation for wide discrepancies in Albanians sentenced has been forthcoming.

Emigration of Serbs and Montenegrins: Serbs and the ethnically similar Montenegrins charge that ethnic Albanians are attempting to force them to emigrate from the province and create an ethnically pure Albanian Kosovo. Serbian nationalist-oriented intellectuals charge that over 200,000 Serbs and Montenegrins have been forced from the province in the past 20 years. The 1981 census showed that 236,525 Serbs and Montenegrins lived in Kosovo. They represented almost 15% of the population. Between 1982 and 1985, according to one Yugoslav study, about 20,416 Serbs and Montenegrins (about 8.63% of Kosovo's Serb and Montenegrin population) emigrated from the province to other parts of the country. During this same period, about 2,714 Serbs and Montenegrins returned to the province. Specific annual emigration figures often vary widely. The following are some of those cited in the Yugoslav press for the past few years:

1982	6,646
1983	4,341
1984	3,658
1985	4,024
1986	3,291

Demographic Breakdown: In the 1981 Yugoslav census, the ethnic breakdown of Kosovo Province was as follows:

1,227,424	Albanians	77.5%
209,795	Serbs	13.2%
20,875	Montenegrins	1.7%
58,984	Muslims	3.7%

Federal Effort to Respond to Serb Complaints: The national party Central Committee held a plenum on Kosovo which produced the latest federal plan of action on Kosovo, according to the Yugoslav press. According to the published conclusions, the Central Committee advocated:

- o Increased discipline within the Kosovo party apparatus, and possible prosecutions of some Kosovo Albanian officials who allegedly promote nationalist tensions.
- o A reform of education, and removing nationalist-oriented teachers and textbooks from schools.
- o Halting the emigration of Serbs and Montenegrins, and increasing incentives for Slavs to return to the province.
- o New legislation to ensure the security of the property of Serbs and Montenegrins to protect them against alleged "trusts" which buy up Serb lands.
- o Beginning a program of population control to reduce the high ethnic Albanian birthrate.
- o Expanding a bilingual language policy, such as in schools.

Developmental Aid From Other Republics: Albanians in Kosovo charge that they are deliberately kept underdeveloped. The Federal Developmental Aid Fund was set up in 1965. Its stated purpose is to redress regional economic inequalities by providing grants and extremely low cost loans to underdeveloped parts of the country. Kosovo receives priority in the distribution of these funds. This federal fund accounts for about 60% of total investment in the province. Currently 24% of Kosovo's population is engaged in agriculture, contrasting with a national average (excluding Kosovo) of 18%. In 1987, Kosovo Province is scheduled to receive about 472 billion dinars (944 million dollars) from the fund--48.1% of the total--a jump of about 68% over 1985 in dinar terms, but a net loss when accounting for inflation. Other less developed regions also receive developmental funds: Bosnia receives 25.2%, Macedonia 17.8%, and Montenegro 8.9%.

Land Deals: Serbian nationalists--particularly Belgrade intellectuals--have made strong public statements against Albanians' buying up Serb lands, according to the Yugoslav press. These Serbs publicly allege that "trusts" of Albanians offer large sums of money to Serbs to sell their land in an effort to encourage Serb emigration from the province. According to a published study by the Kosovo Internal Affairs ministry, there were 2,245 property deals from 1981 to 1986 in which Serbs or Montenegrins sold their land to ethnic Albanians. The Kosovo Internal Affairs ministry investigated 148 of these cases. It maintained that in only 11 cases, the origin of the money used by ethnic Albanians to buy the property was suspicious. The report concluded that "neither the irredentist movement, nor

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hostile emigre groups, nor somebody else abroad are supplying funds to purchase property from Serbs and Montenegrins."

Rapes: Kosovo Serbs publicly charge that ethnic Albanians frequently rape Serb women to promote insecurity among Serbs and Montenegrins and encourage them to leave the province. Kosovo internal security officials found, however, that from 1982 to October 1986 there were 118 rapes and 135 attempted rapes in the province. In only 16 cases of rape, and 15 of attempted rape, the perpetrators were Albanians and the victims Serbs or Montenegrins. 97 rapes and 98 rape attempts were by Albanians against Albanians. One recent case of attempted rape--protested by small demonstrations of Serbs and Montenegrins throughout the province--allegedly took place in broad daylight directly in front of the Provincial Internal Affairs building.

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