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Geographical Dynamics on Independence Struggle of Kosova

Kosovo is located in a territory close to the South-western part of the Balkan Peninsula. It includes within its borders also a part of the former Ottoman district known as “Kosova Vilyeti”. The country won its independence after a war against the Republic of Serbia, which had emerged as a state after the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia. In spite of this, it is not yet a member of the UN, but an independent state with internationally recognised symbols and borders. The map of Kosovo shows a country with a rectangular shape, and its main border neighbours are Serbia from North to East, Montenegro in the West by a narrow border, Albania in Southwest and Macedonia in Southeast. Although the country has an almost 100 kilometres of bird-flight distance to the Adriatic Sea, due to the mountainous landscape, it remains 234 kilometres away from the nearest port (Durrës), while its distance to the nearest coast (Shengjin) is 204 km. Because of such a position, Kosovo is an especially landlocked country. Also its relative location makes up the reality and future of Kosovo, which represent a crucial role in features such as the climate and agricultural conditions, the foreign policy, the domestic agenda, the own economy and tourism as well as its prior characteristics. Moreover, this relative location has played an important role in the struggle for independence. The

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following research elaborates main geographical consequences which are a result of Kosovo's case being a landlocked country and its human effects on the future of the Republic of Kosovo. Besides the situation of the Republic of Kosovo according to the Economic Geography criteria, its self-sufficiency, demographic power, its role as a state on the region and its political stability as a result of all this, its geopolitical importance are the factors of primary effect. In this research about the last geographical actor in the last decade of Balkan Peninsula when the political geography reshaped, it has been intended to bring a different geographical perspective with an explanation of geographical dynamics of Kosovo and its role on country's struggle of independence at the glance of geographical perspective.

Key Words: Kosovo, Landlocked, Geopolitics, Geography, Border, Independence.

Preface

Kosovo is located in Southeast Europe in the central western part of Balkan Peninsula. In the Northwest it is surrounded by Serbia with a long border, In the Southwest, it is bordered by Albania, in the Southwest by Montenegro and in the East and Southwest by Macedonia. Its distances towards Adriatic sea is roughly 100 km, towards nearest sea shore Shengjin 204 km, Port city Durrës 234 km. For a country 450 m average elevation from sea level these are enough to call Kosovo as a landlocked continental country.



Image 1: Relative Location of Kosovo in Western Balkans (Yüksel HOŞ 2018).

There are changes that both people and the surrounding geographic environment bring into the space. These are shared with physical dynamics and human dynamics. The nature and structure of these dynamics determine their own destinies by making a distinct geographic area from others. Because geography is a destiny as Ibnî Khaldun said in Muqaddimah around 14.th century. As the destiny is inevitable, we must concern what kind of dynamic factors have

significant role on Kosovo's independency and what are Geographical dynamics?

Dynamic Factors

When the topic is dynamic factors, it must be explained as; major dynamic factors are; relief, climate, natural resources, land form, land type, rocks, water, forest etc. Soil structure, flood and permeability Population and the population power The ratio of the elderly / young population, urbanization level of the population, level of the population, economic structure of the population, Religion, language, national, cultural, identity characteristics. Boundaries of the area. Distance to the sea and its relative location. Affiliation and membership to other political organisations or alliances (e.g.NATO). Human rights violations, massacres and genocide. These are the effects of geographical human dynamics on overall state and independence struggle. To approach on this concept, we may call dynamic factors as "Geographical Dynamics" too.

Geographical Dynamics

In general concept, Dynamics is the work of forces (energy) which provides movement and change in space and shapes it as well. By shaping the system, Dynamics get also in an interrelationship among the elements of space, time and forces. As for the Geographical Dynamics, it barely stands between the earth and human enabling and facilitating his activities as well as making the human as another actor of its own dynamism. When it sounds Geographical Dynamics, it's not

just atmospheric dynamics or geological but also an interaction and interrelationship of human, surface, physical, biological domains of those all in the area which develops or deteriorates by the case of the time. Those Geographical dynamics are summarized into two main groups.

Natural Dynamics and Borders of Kosovo in Terms of Country Defence

Under this group, main indicators are, country's own relief, physical dynamics, atmospheric and geological structure and dynamism are counted. As these all changes into their own, they also become main actors to shape the relief, making it rich or poor in terms of natural resources. Climatic conditions determine the river debris as geological and geomorphological structure of the area defines its borders. River basins and precipitation determines Biological features as flora and fauna and these things determine livestock presence on the area for human being who is the main actor to consume it all. Besides these, mineral potential as stone, salt and other metals and hydrocarbons are also some other indicators depended on dynamic factors that also related to geological past of the area.

When the Geography of Kosovo is analysed, it appears that Kosovo is in the form of a closed basin, surrounded by forested mountains (39%), which enable a perfect advantage for all kind of independence struggles. The borders of Kosovo are largely marked by mountains. While this facilitates the protection of the country, among these borders the only smoother relief which creates the possibility of access towards the country, seems on its northern sector.

This part Leposavic-Mitrovica (Ibar valley) carries a mixed ethnic structure in the country's most fragile point hosting a concentration of the main ethnic Serbian population of Kosovo. During the handover of Kosovo in 1912 by Ottomans to Serbia, one of the main directions that Serbian army was advanced, was this sector (Mitrovica) knowing that the biggest Ottoman command garrison was stationed there¹. In historical resources we can see that Ottomans were placed a strong garrison in this part to control security of Kosovo and from this garrison, they were sending deployments to the different areas. It is one of the main crossings in the country since earlier ages. In addition to Serbs brought by the Serbian government to Kosovo in the last century, there were also existing Serbs as history recorded in various resources. According to Serbian resources Albanians were not. But this is untrue due to the thousands of Ottoman Archives that mentioning about “Arnavut” people which referred to “Albanians”. From the Serbian perspective, importance of the population living in the area is often regarded as a negative thing and mostly alienated as “Foreigners”. By the last century, from the Serbian nationalist look, the most precious things were the settlements around the Kosovo but not its inhabitants. The country’s itself was seen as more valuable than the population as a cradle of Serbian civilisation and the source of the national cosmogony. The attitude of the population living in this harsh land, has to become tough due to its own conditions which was a mixture of various diversity in a minor area such as; its strategic importance, being an interethnic fringe zone between Slavic and Albanian worlds, as well as being the interaction point of Islam and

¹ Fevzi ÇAKMAK, Batı Rumeli'yi Nasıl Kaybettik, İş Bankası “Kültür Yayınları”. İstanbul, 2011, p.161-169

Christianity as often ignored and back staged but still existed. Today it is important to ensure a sustainable internal peace in Kosovo and Serbia. Regardless of everything, as long as ethnic diversity is a colour for democratic countries, such a perception can be comprehended only by a peaceful education which can't be flourished under an area full with unrest. And among the factors needed to preserve in Kosovo except of the peace are international recognition, an independent economy, political stability, and full sovereignty is a necessity.

Without having any enemies, the Geography of Kosovo has some difficulties in geopolitical manner which shows him as an unlucky area. A country surrounded 210° out of 360° borders by Serbia and Montenegro which were forming "Yugoslavia" in times of Kosovo Crisis has a disadvantageous Geography. The only access were Albania and Macedonia where this advantage was the most crucial one to liberate the whole country enabling him a safe passage to break blockade against itself.



Image 2: Diameter Mapping for Borders of Kosovo and Neighbours Before Kosovo Crisis (Yüksel HOŞ).

A country that a sizable part of its borders surrounded by mountains and mountain ranges has natural advantageous to protect its central part as well as its borders. Switzerland, India and Kosovo are sample countries for this case. Since the country has no sea access, all borders currently passes from continental areas, especially mountains. Almost entire borders of Kosovo is rural and mountainous. The relief through the country gets a flat view especially in the middle part. Types of relief vary, by rugged mountain formed mostly by limestone. Except of these there are also, hilly areas, fields and lakes. The land borders because of mountain ranges, makes a difficulty for border traffic, especially in the winter season². In this manner, when it is approached on Kosovo borders, it seems that Kosovar borders are hard to attack and easy to defend. In the very beginning of the crisis of Kosovo this was a primary problem for Albanians. Nevertheless these borders were not under UÇK aka KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army) control except of south-western mountain ranges bordering with Albania. So, once those freed, it would be a natural barrier for the sustainable security of Kosovo. But during the liberation of Kosovo, this hasn't been realised 100% because of Ethnic Serbian existence in the Northern part of Kosovo where has less or limited Albanian control even today.

² “Strategjia Kombëtare E Republikës Së Kosovës Për Menaxhimin E Integruar Të Kufirit” www. Kryeministri -ks.net /repository/ docs/ Strategjia _Kombetare _per_MIK_2013-2018.pdf. S.20

Natural Dynamics in Terms of Protection

Forests and limestone structure with caves and mountains have been places for every civil and military causes when the concern is seeking protection (Place to Shelter, Fortification, and Protection) In case of any warfare, mass populations gathered for concealment and placement in a safe place, preferably in the middle of the country far from the enemy lines or bordering areas, which enables the success of a guerrilla war, making the minds of warriors just concentrated on frontline without concerned about their families and the safety of them. In this manner, the middle part of the Kosovo was a very unprotected space. Kosovo's gateway are just its surrounding mountains. In short, for the inner part of such these regions and countries are defenceless. According to the military Geography, To establish control on a flat area and to keep that territory safe in hand, harder than recapturing or attacking them once you lose it. As for the bordering mountainous zone the situation is vice-versa. Those places are easy to keep and hard to handover.

Under these conditions, the protection of Kosovo could be made from the mountainous boundaries surrounding itself. In the Kosovo war, this was the most tedious part. The defence was made against a power that existing with its entire force in Kosovo covering the whole middle part, heartland of the territory. Even if the country's structure provides a suitable geography for territorial defence, though it was not suitable to uproot the enemy that was already entered the inner part of the country for a hundred years ago. So, it was evident that there were two options.

1-Dragging the Serbian Army into an urban fight which was a big risk to make civilians as a target as it happened in the Siege of Sarajevo (1992-1995).

2-Waging a struggle outside of the cities, dragging the Serbian Army out. Leaving civilians safe behind enabling them temporary protection by neighbouring countries (mostly Albania).

In the struggle of KLA (UÇK), the second way has been followed. All kind of assistance and ammunition which KLA needed were transferred from the Northern Albanian mountains and reached to Kosovo's south-western part and distributed into the country to the different groups.³ During these fight, cities did not been damaged as heavily as Sarajevo experienced between 1992-1995 war.



Image 3: Kosovo, Relatively Flat Inner part and Surrounding Hilly Relief.

Abovementioned phenomenon about the Geography of Kosovo proves a consequence that is when ethnic cleansing process by aggressors took part in 1998, most vulnerable parts of the country were listed around the middle basin of Kosovo which were left almost

³ Interviews with the locals of Bajram Curri town in Albania.

defenceless against a power attacking them and 89% of the victim villages and settlements were located in the relatively flat areas of Kosovo while hilly areas were partially protected or did not been targeted as much as cities due to their sparsely or less inhabited status. But the middle of the country was suffering a catastrophic disaster as well as main urban areas of the area which were under a police terror but not shelled thanks to Ethnic Serbian presence living in each of them.



Image 4: Consequence of the Physical Factors. Most Attacked Villages in Kosovo⁴.

⁴ <http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eur/map1.html> (Every dots symbolize attacked villages)

Human Dynamics in Terms of State Formation and it's Defence

Humans are the main actor of the world, moving, growing, shaping his own environment using it for living by some resources he uses. As humanity shapes the world's itself, he also gets directly affected from the environment what he was previously changed and formed. While humanity grows, agricultural areas deteriorates against humanity by newly built up areas which grow and expand every day. Moreover, growing population also makes many resources inadequate for the future of the humanity. So human dynamics are the most enormous element among other dynamic factors. As humans grow, they prepare conditions for their wellbeing, safety, producer-consumer chain and some needs of protection especially the need of safety as well. To ensure this, people are formed States or State like organisations and used their population dynamics to sustain it. Governments, armies, taxpayers, manpower, security or military power are positive sides of dynamical populations. As the population of a country gets older, age group which suitable for military service, gets smaller.

Kosovo Struggle in Case of Demographical Dynamism

When the subject is "National Liberation Struggle" it often encounters by opposition. Oppositions against liberation movements can be grouped inside 2 type of reactions while there are 3 types of human reactions when the word "Independence" is pronounced.

1. Loyalists of Colonial Country: First group are usually people belongs to another ethnic identity inside the region which tries to keep their status higher. Those people usually tended to see their destiny bonded to the country whom they affinity. During liberation days of Kosovo, Serbian community was exactly representing this sample of people with strong loyalist senses for mainland Serbia and its aspirations inside the Kosovo. A similar sample also seems in Ulster (Northern Ireland) by Ulster Protestants which settled into the area by William of Orange from Scotland⁵. Since those days this community has strong loyalty to the English presence in the area refusing any future unity with Ireland. As for Balkans the situation in northern Kosovo seems like United Kingdom backed Protestant settlements in Ulster.

2. Defendants of Status Quo: Under this group, many other ethnicities including outnumbered ethnic fractions, some opportunist people or some people who mostly concentrated on their wellbeing and concerned and worried about their pensions are some samples constitutes this group. This phenomenon also related with elderly population and their reflex of votes. In the 1990's, the result of the Independency referendum in the Quebec region of Canada was 49.42% (ie No for independence!)⁶ Because the population was old and such a reflex repeated itself on public votes. The most prominent example for this group is voter profile against the proposal for Scotland to become an independent country. Those who oppose to a possible independency

⁵ Aly Boniface, Catherine Flaherty, Lizzy James, History A: "Explaining the Modern World", My Revision Notes: Hachette UK, 2018

⁶ The Canadian Encyclopedia. Archived from the original on December 21, 2014. Retrieved October 4, 2018. <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca>

were mostly elders or those who are in critical age (16-24) with highly worried about their future after education. In brief, while working age generation were in favour for the Scotland to become an independent country showing a brave reflex, people who receive direct social assistance may show different reflexes or seems reluctant.

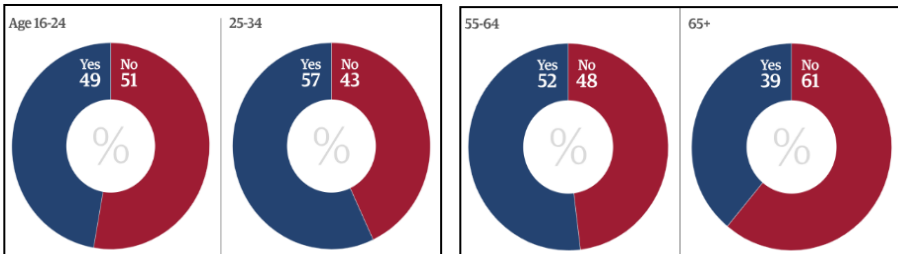


Image 5: Polls over General political tendency of Scottish People by age groups.⁷

3. Liberationists: Those who have less benefitted from their homeland and more persecuted by the system are the natural members of this group. Forming up another authority, a free Nation State is their dream and Adem Jashari was the most prominent character for the Kosovo’s liberation path. Besides that, the stance what Rugova represented by his “pro-negotiation” policy, this struggle mostly ignited and inspired by personal efforts and devotion of Adem Jashari as he often regarded as the first one that the country owes its independency. As for the way that Rugova represented, it contributed an enormous benefit for the general recognition of Kosovo in international area. So when the topic is Liberationism, the name Adem Jashari is the first figure to be mentioned. During the Kosovo’s struggle

⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/sep/12/scottish-referendum-too-close-to-call-says-icm-poll>

for independency, his efforts seem to have a similarity to the Michael Collins who was the warrior name behind the liberation success of Republic of Ireland. Nevertheless, after gaining his primary success, his efforts were needed to be clinched by negotiations with U.K. Once he negotiated with U.K, accepting division of Ireland giving up from Ulster, Irish state has been recognized by U.K. On his return, he subjected to mass critics from his own friends. In the end, Ireland has been formed successfully. Although the case of Northern Ireland conflict went on even after the death (assassination) of Collins.⁸ So the case of Kosovo has a strong similarity when the liberation struggle of Ireland is deeply analysed. In 90s the only University in Kosovo (University of Pristina) was closed, the size of family was subject of limitations and ethnic Kosovars were “non grata” (undesirable) persons regarding the jobs in public institutions. Human Rights Watch noted that persecution “forced emigration of some 350,000 Kosovo Albanians over the next seven years”⁹ That is why the members of these group are undesired persons by colonist powers. Members of the nationalist elite among Kosovar students were increasingly prosecuted and forced to leave Kosovo¹⁰.

In this manner, as the intention behind these policies is analysed, it seems that Serbia was do the same thing previously since its very beginning. When the “Idea of Free Serbia” was first mentioned, a homogenous country was the most ideal model for a nation state since

⁸ Mallon, Seamus., Phoenix Éamon., “Nationalism in Northern Ireland From Partition To The Belfast Agreement”, Working Papers in British-Irish Studies” No. 29, 2003, Dublin

⁹ Gollopeni, Besim., "Kosovar Emigration: Causes, Losses and Benefits" Institute for Social Research in Zagreb. Sociologija i prostor, 54 (2016) 206 (3): p. 298

¹⁰ Malcolm, N. (1999). Kosovo. A short History. New York: Harper.

the first years of Serbia. For instance when the Serbian Principality were gained big territories from Ottoman Empire, the 8.th article of the agreement protocol was about Turkish population (including all Albanians as well) to be deported according to the “Kanlidza Protocol” signed on 4 September 1862¹¹. Thus, Serbia was becoming a homogenous country. However same way thought to be applied in Kosovo on 20.th century but failed several times because of the human factor in Kosovo which is explained below. In reality it was difficult to apply it in the Balkans especially in this century.

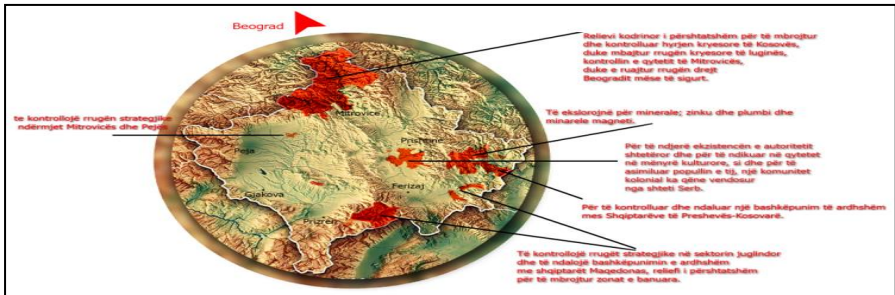


Image 6: Areas With Strong Ethnic Serbian Population in Kosovo till 1999.¹²

Nevertheless, the case of Kosovo is a unique model of this phenomenon. Under Milosevic’s rule a homogenous Serbia as well as a homogenous Kosovo was one of the plans of his ultra nationalist policy. Most probably all atrocities were done for this project. In the end, when Kosovo is liberated the story turned against the project makers and the existence of Ethnic Serbians of Kosovo.

¹¹Hamzaoğlu, Yusuf., “Sırbistan Türklüğü”, p.371, LogosA, 2004, Skopje.

¹²Ethno-Geopolitic map in Albanian by Yüksel HOŞ, Presented in Adem Jashari Symposium in March 1999, Prishtina.

It has been a primary subject when the future of Minorities of Kosovo was negotiated and still one of the crucial article which going on for the fate of the Kosovo's future along with some other options of arbitration proposals. Till 1998-99 Kosovo Crisis, Serbian inhabited areas of Kosovo were almost covering 40% of all country and concentrated in main 3 areas as Leposavić-Mitrovica in the north, Shtërpcë area in the south and another Serbian Dominance around Prishtina city and some important industrial areas around the entire Kosovo. After the war, there is just two concentration remained (North and South) except of Prishtina Serbians which mostly evacuated the area moving towards two main remaining areas and the "homeland" Serbia including the capitol Beograd. In the area of Kosovo, the homeland concept is also confusing. For Albanians Kosovo is their homeland for centuries while Serbians have the same rhetoric. After the political independence and the end of the Serbian rule, the homeland concept for Serbians changed in practice even not changed at much in rhetoric. Because many of them chosen migrating to various Serbian towns leaving Kosovo for a better life in "Homeland Serbia".

Population Dynamics in Terms of Country Defence

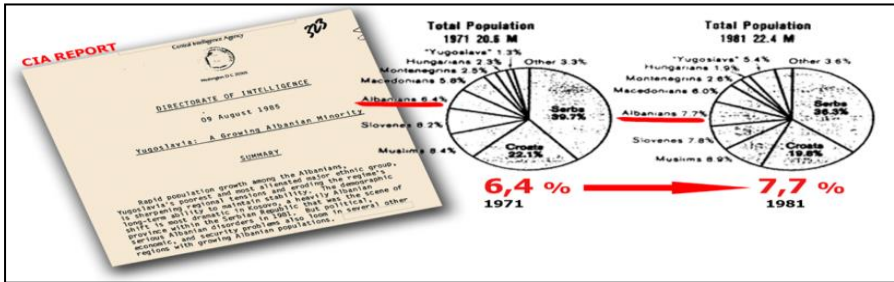


Image 7: Population Dynamics of Albanians in Yugoslavia which Subjected a CIA Report.¹³

For full sovereignty, it is important to ensure the majority of the population. Despite mass

expulsions, forced migrations and massacres if a population still remains stronger and keeps its growth rate, it is a dynamic population. Those can only be stopped with massacres and deportations as well as intimidation tactics. These tactics have remained in history as the legacy of the Mongols in history. Kill, burn, dump, destroy and own the depopulated area.

The reason that all atrocities and aggression began, was a conclusion but not the reason behind the Kosovo Problem. The problem was coming out when official numbers were showing a steady growth for the favour of Albanians in Yugoslavia from 6,4% in 1971 jumped to 7,7% in 1981. The 1980's were the final good years of Yugoslavia but not for Kosovo. Its fate was already decided by Serbian authorities looking the numbers of their population growth and most

¹³https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP_85_T01058_R000303230001-5.pdf

probably all suppressions were done to stop this dynamism by a fear that “overwhelming the number of Kosovar Albanians would annihilate or make Serbians in the country as an insignificant minority”. So the atrocity targeted mostly intellectuals, universities and ideologists which seen as

a threat to ignite the liberation struggle of Kosovo.

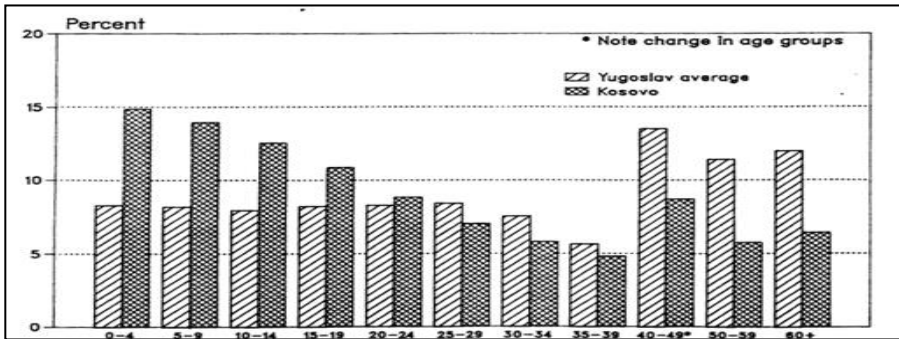


Table 1: Yugoslavian Population by Age Groups, 1981¹⁴.

In spite of all atrocities and difficulties, targeted and victim nations must keep their self-sufficiency for a sustainable sovereignty in their territory. Of course this is just a theory without sharing their difficulties and the pressure upon their lives. As the Immigration becomes imminent and inevitable, the abandonment of the territory becomes a result of a logical question “why to stay?” Being the least abandoned one in the area makes people feel solitude, feel weak. Bosnians of Herzegovina and Srebrenica in eastern Bosnia are similar samples of this phenomenon after chains of genocides and massacres targeting their existence for 170 odd years. Thus, communities fall into

¹⁴<https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP85T01058R000303230001-5.pdf>

minority after each migration waves. Even in the south and west of Sandzak Region that today divided between Serbia and Montenegro, the situation is similar and shows an advanced (concluded) version of what planned and failed in Kosovo. For reasons such as retirement, education of the next generation, working and social security advantages and fear to lose prosperity, no returnees pay any interest towards their homeland after spending a period of 20 years. As it is shown below (Table 2), by the death of Josip Broz Tito in 1980, the first oscillation on immigrations out of the country appears clearly.

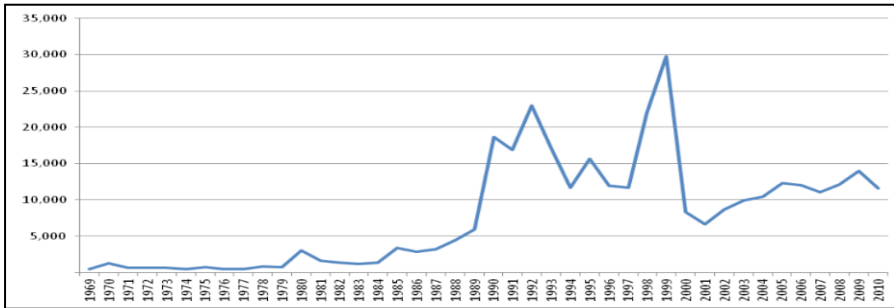


Table 2: Migration Speed of Kosovo by Timescale.¹⁵

During the ensuing years especially because of Milosevic's atrocities and ultra nationalist policies these oscillations reaches exaggerated numbers for a minor country which have no more than 2 million inhabitants. Today in Germany and Switzerland many of the Kosovar Albanians have not any intention for a permanent return to Kosovo¹⁶. For ones who criticize the situation "Why there are so few

¹⁵ KAS, Kosovar migration, 2014, pg. 24.

¹⁶Interviews with Albanian Community in Geneva, Aarau, Basel, Zurich, Frankfurt, Düsseldorf, Berlin, Hamburg during a survey by Yüksel HOŞ. 2009.

returnees even the war is over?” there are two offers. “The population of Kosovo, whatever it may be, should keep their home despite poverty, mass killing and intimidation. because of the need to preserve sovereignty in the future.” And the other offer is “Bringing back all immigrants who left the country can only be possible by providing them best conditions even better than those who remained in Kosovo.”

So in this part, another question emerges. To achieve such a goal is possible for a newly independent state with its limited resources? If it's not possible, next generations may easily follow previous ones and they going to do same way as they did by emigrating towards different western European countries maybe never to return. This is the biggest threat for the population dynamics of Kosovo which enabled him a sovereign state. There are some resources showing the Monthly wages of returned migrants and non-migrants in Kosovo. The difference shows that returnees have approx. 100€ or more wages than others who remained in Kosovo¹⁷. Despite this, it is inefficient to make Kosovo enough attractive for those who still living in Germany, Switzerland and other developed economies throughout the world. In conclusion, all immigration outside the Kosovo is a threat against its demographic sustainability. Yet it is clear that the population dynamism is crucial for a country's self-sustainability as well as its self-defence. After the Kosovo war, a famous saying about Albanian population dynamism which was attributed to some Serb officials is a short sentence to express many things itself “we were defeated to Albanian mothers but not their fighters”

¹⁷World Bank “Migration and Economic Development in Kosovo Report” No. 60590 – XK p.6

Result

If there were not any population dynamism of Kosovo, today most probably Kosovo would be a district of Serbia as it used to be for the big part of the last century. Without population dynamism Kosovo wouldn't develop, would not even run its natural resources including mineral industry by needed labour force. Unless the population dynamism, no any demand for human rights, or no any public demonstration to establish or protect their own institutions (the case of Prishtina University) and to protect their self-identity. Unless the Kosovo has its own population dynamism, being a part of Serbia could be its unwanted destiny. Unless this dynamism, situation could have been worsened after each pogrom, massacre and genocide which continued since 1912 till onwards systematically. Unless this dynamism, Kosovo could have remained as a colony of Beograd as a famous Serbian saying quoted out "*Terpça radi, Beogradi segradi*" which means (Trepça works, Belgrade develops).

As it had repeatedly proven in history that, Intellectuals gives the first reaction against injustice, young people are the ones who appear first in the streets, then first elderly and weak people die. Unless having a dynamism no any armed opposition would have welcomed by public support and both Adem Jashari and his friends could have remained alone in his struggle, and most probably could have labelled as "*a group of extremists*" or "*a group of adventurers*". Unless all what had been experienced good and bad, today no one would be able to stand with proud as a citizen of an independent state called "Kosova".