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KOSOVO TURKS: FROM PRIVILEGED STATUS TO FEAR OF ASSIMILATION

Lauri Tainio

This article will look at the situation of Kosovo Turks. I start by providing a brief history of Kosovo and the Kosovo Turks, how they came into being and the main events before the beginning of the twenty-first century. Then I move on to examine how the current (non-)implementation of the rights of Kosovo Turks affects their lives. Finally I look at some aspects of their everyday cultural life before considering the challenges ahead of the Kosovo Turk community.

Before I can proceed with the substantial part of the article, I feel obliged to clarify certain issues concerning the still disputed status of Kosovo and the equally sensitive question of language.¹ Until the war in 1999, Kosovo was more or less an uncontested part of the Republic of Serbia and its predecessor, Yugoslavia. After military intervention by NATO forces in 1999, Kosovo was handed over to the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), which itself was sanctioned by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244. However, UNMIK lost much of its administrative powers after the unilateral declaration of independence by the Kosovo Assembly on 17 February 2008.² Despite the fact that the Security Council Resolution 1244 is still in force, governance and legislative work remain in the hands of the Kosovo institutions.³

According to Article 5 of the Constitution, the Republic of Kosovo has two official languages, Albanian and Serbian. In addition, it is possible to declare a language as official or in official use at the municipal level. Because this article focuses on Kosovo Turks, I have decided to use Turkish for Kosovan place names. While this is a rare approach, for the sake of consistency and in order to avoid repeating names in three languages, I find it an appropriate one. When the name is introduced for the first time, however, I also provide the Albanian and Serbian names. As for the name of Kosovo, I use the established English

1 To date, 83 states have recognised the independent Republic of Kosovo (20 Sept. 2011).

2 The vote was boycotted by the Kosovo Serb members of the assembly.

3 It should be noted that the institutions of the Republic of Kosovo have remained weak in the northern Serb-majority municipalities. Moreover, the Republic of Serbia has upheld parallel institutions loyal to Belgrade that provide certain basic services (such as health care and education) in the Serb enclaves south of Ibar.

name Kosovo, not the Albanian/Turkish name (*Kosova*) or the current Serbian one (*Kosovo i Metohija*). I should also emphasise that I personally take no stand in this article on the status of Kosovo. However, for practical reasons, I have put primacy on the applied legislation (as opposed to earlier Yugoslavian, Serbian or UNMIK legislation).



Map of Kosovo

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Few works written in English on Kosovo do not focus on the last two decades and the political struggle over its status. This is to some extent due to the fact that Kosovo as we know it, namely the administrative unit encompassing the current area, is a fairly recent creation. Moreover, the struggle over its status (independent or not) and its history (Serbian or Albanian) have dominated public discussion. For these reasons, the history of Kosovo has been a problematic topic.

The early history of Kosovo has been, to a certain extent, a battleground for the writing of nationalist histories as they try to establish either the Albanian or the Serbian roots of the area. As for the period of Ottoman domination, most general works on the Ottoman Empire tend to mention Kosovo, or rather the Plain of Kosovo, as the place of two great battles (1389 and 1448) that consolidated Ottoman domination in the area.⁴ On the other hand, when discussing the region in general, Ottoman histories treat Kosovo as a part of the Ottoman Balkans (for example, as a producer of human and material resources for the needs of the Empire and its capital, Constantinople).⁵ That is, until the creation of the province of Kosovo and the emergence of nationalism.

The nationalistic focus of history writing in the Balkans applies to the Ottoman era. As a rule of thumb, one might say that Ottoman rule has been widely regarded as a negative phenomenon for the Balkan nations.⁶ Therefore, there has been little interest so far in the Turkish communities that have remained in the region. Even histories of Yugoslavia emphasise the nations of the constituent states – not the Turks or Albanians who had their own nation states outside of Yugoslavia.

For all of the aforementioned reasons, the history of Kosovo written by Noel Malcolm stands out.⁷ As the standard work on the region's history, it is referred to in almost all studies on contemporary Kosovo. When outlining the history of Kosovo, I am also highly indebted to Malcolm's work as a main source of reference. However, although Malcolm has dedicated a short chapter to "Kosovo's other minorities", it is in no way adequate as a history of Kosovo Turks. This is a work that remains to be written.

4 See Finkel 2006; Inalcik 2000.

5 Constantinople was officially renamed as Istanbul as late as 1928.

6 A good example of this is the state of history books and teaching in schools. The issue of perceived bias was raised during the visit of the Turkish Minister of Education to Kosovo in September 2011 (Brajshori 2011). On a related note, there is a Southeast European-wide Joint History Project implemented by the Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe, which aims at reforming history classes in the region through cooperation and by producing teaching materials and training the teachers; see <www.cdsee.org/jhp/index.html>.

7 See Malcolm 2002.

If the history of Kosovo and Kosovo Turks has proved to be a challenging topic, the Kosovo Turks have also remained absent or marginalised in studies dealing with the political turmoil of the last decades. I was able to find only two English-language studies on Kosovo Turks – published in the same Turkish periodical.⁸ They were both outdated and lacking historical perspective. With this article I wish to contribute to the general knowledge on Kosovo Turks and cast light on their current situation.

ON THE HISTORY OF KOSOVO AND KOSOVO TURKS

The first Turks arrived in Kosovo some time during the fourteenth century. Prior to Ottoman expansion, many Turks had been drafted into the ranks of the Christian armies in the Balkans, such as those of the Catalans, Byzantines and even Serbs. The Serbian King Milutin is said to have employed 1,500 Turkish soldiers in the early fourteenth century, allowing them to settle in Serbian territory.⁹ There may also have been some Turkic-speaking Tatars who had migrated from the northeast before the arrival of the Ottomans.¹⁰ The main influx, however, came after the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 when Ottoman troops incorporated Kosovo into the Ottoman Empire, and Ottoman soldiers, officials, traders and their families started to settle in the newly conquered lands.

The newcomers were a motley crew, consisting of various ethnic groups that reflected the multi-ethnic character of the Ottoman Empire. The language of rule and Muslim religion distinguished the conquerors from the natives. Migration of Turks was gradual, and there was no policy for large scale colonisation of Kosovo. While the Ottomans did not impose a policy of Islamisation, over time most Albanians in Kosovo opted to convert to Islam. Subsequently, many Kosovo Turks today are actually descendants of native populations who adopted the Muslim religion and Turkish language.¹¹

The terms “Turk” or “Turkish” pose several problems for historians, as ethnic identities are imposed retroactively on people who were not aware of such issues at the time. In Kosovo (and the Balkans in general), it was common to speak more than one language, and initially it was religion that formed the basis of larger group identities. These religious identities were also supported by the Ottoman Empire through the introduction of the *millet* system, which provided a degree of self-rule to non-Muslim religious communities. As the spread of Islam in the

8 Kut 2000; Mandacı 2004.

9 Malcolm 2002: 60.

10 Zhelyazkova 2002: 233.

11 See Carter 1993: 297; Malcolm 2002: 209; Zhelyazkova 2002: 232.

Balkans was a by-product of the Ottoman conquest, “Turk” was commonly used as a generic term for Muslims by both Christians and Muslims themselves.¹² This habit persisted until the late twentieth century.¹³ Until the emergence of Turkish nationalism in the nineteenth century, “Turk” for the Ottomans meant uneducated, mainly nomadic Turkish speakers.

With heavy Persian and Arabic influences, Ottoman Turkish became the language of administration in the Ottoman Balkans. It was used in communications with the Empire’s capital and as the language of education in schools providing education for Muslim children. Meanwhile, common Turkish (spoken by immigrants from Anatolia) gained ground as the lingua franca in Kosovo. This was especially true in towns with concentrated Turkish populations.¹⁴ Turkish language held its ground well until the first half of the twentieth century, when many old and established Albanian and Serbian families were still able to converse in Turkish.¹⁵ This has changed drastically, however. Currently Turkish has survived as a language of interethnic communication only in Prizren (Alb. Prizren / Serb. Prizren).¹⁶

The previously divided area of modern-day Kosovo was united under the province (or *vilayet*) of Prizren in 1868 as part of the Ottoman provincial reforms led by Midhat Pasha. On his advice, an official local journal was established in 1871, and it was published in Turkish and Serbian. However, three years later the capital was moved to Prištine; both the *vilayet* and the journal were renamed *Kosova*. Further development reached Kosovo when it was connected by telegraph and railway to Salonica¹⁷ and Constantinople. The new railway benefited the towns of Mitroviça (Mitrovicë/Mitrovica) and Ferizovik (Ferizaj/Uroševac), while

12 Duijzings 2000: 159; Todorova 1996: 68.

13 An interesting case worth mentioning is the equation of Muslims and Turks by Serb nationalists throughout former Yugoslavia. This tradition lives on especially in the Serbs’ commemoration of the Battle of Kosovo (*Vidovdan*), a narrative of Serbs suffering at the hands of Turks, and the promise of vengeance on Muslim Turks repeated by General Ratko Mladić of Republika Srpska during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Duijzings 2000: 180, 201–202).

14 Highlighting the urban character of Kosovo Turks, only three Turkish villages have been recorded in Kosovo: Doburçan (Alb. Dobërçan / Serb. Dobrčane) in the municipality of Gilan (Gjilan/Gnjilane); the tiny, rural municipality of Mamuša (Mamushë/Mamuša); and the village of Sakate in the municipality of Yakova (Gjakovë/Đakovica), which no longer has Turkish inhabitants (Malcolm 2002: 210, n. 41).

15 On the role of Turkish in Prištine (Prishtinë/Priština), see Judah 2008: 56. The same was also true for Gilan, as confirmed by a member of an established Serb family who told me that her grandmother was still able to speak Turkish.

16 In Prizren, knowing Turkish is also a way of showing that one belongs to the established urban families, as opposed to the newcomers from the surrounding countryside (Duijzings 2000: 20).

17 Modern-day Thessaloniki.

Prizren lost some of its former central role.¹⁸ But the borders of the *vilayet* were to change. After the Treaty of Berlin in 1878, when the new European balance of power was reflected in the redrawing of the Balkan borders, its capital was moved to Skopje. The Ottoman Empire lost much of its land in the Balkans, but Macedonia, Albania, and Kosovo still remained part of the Empire. The *vilayet* of Kosovo that now stretched from central Macedonia to the *Sanjak* of Novi Pazar had an Albanian majority population, but also included large numbers of Muslim Slavs, Macedonians, Serbs, and Turks.

Official statistics exist on the population of Kosovo in the late Ottoman period. These statistics, however, only include the three main towns of modern-day Kosovo. Furthermore, the figures reveal the dichotomy between Muslims and non-Muslims, but not ethnic composition.¹⁹ Some additional population estimates were provided by European consuls residing in the region and the Austrians, who in the 1890s published figures based on a study of Ottoman statistics. Malcolm assumes that by the 1890s there were more Circassians than Turks in Kosovo (approximately 6,000 and 5,000, respectively). His assumption is based on the fact that many urban families identified as Ottomans were actually Albanians who had become fully bilingual and adopted Turkish.²⁰ This illustrates the difficulty of defining identity in a multilingual environment, especially one in which national identities were fluid until the mid-twentieth century.²¹

Many of the troubles that Ottomans faced in the Balkans were derived from rising nationalism among the peoples of the region, something that was supported by the rival empires of Austria-Hungary and Russia. From the early nineteenth century onwards, nationalist ideas began to gain ground among the Christian populations (Greeks, Romanians, Serbs, etc.).²² Albanian nationalism developed relatively late and was consolidated in the meeting of the League of Prizren in 1878.²³ Yet religious commitments and loyalty to the Ottoman Sultan belied the nationalist character to the point that the Ottoman authorities initially

18 Malcolm 2002: 191–193.

19 For example, based on Ottoman records, McCarthy (2004: 135) lists the largest groups in the province in 1911 as the Muslims (959,000), the Bulgarian Orthodox (531,000) and the Greek Orthodox (93,000), while the total population of the province was 1,603,000.

20 Malcolm 2002: 194–195.

21 For a good description of similarly fluid identities among the Christian population in Macedonia, see Mazover 2000: 194–195.

22 For a concise and helpful introduction to the development of Balkan nationalisms, see Mazover 2000.

23 Southern Albanians were represented by only two delegates. However, one of these (Abdyl Frashëri) is considered as the leading nationalist ideologue and a key figure in convincing the southerners to join the nationalist movement. See Vickers 2008.

acted sympathetically towards the League. This was confirmed by British travellers, who considered the League to be a mainly religious movement on good terms with the Ottomans.²⁴ The amicable relations between the Ottoman state and Albanians were, however, soon to turn into conflict.

In 1881, the Ottomans marched to Kosovo in order to crush the forces of the League of Prizren that were aspiring for Albanian independence. The relative peace that followed was accompanied by poor administration, causing a deterioration of conditions in Kosovo. The region was also receiving thousands and thousands of Muslims who had been expelled from neighbouring areas in Serbia, Montenegro, and Austrian-governed Bosnia; these joined earlier refugees from the Caucasus. Fear of possible retaliation on the Kosovo Serb population led thousands of Serbs to emigrate. The end of the nineteenth century saw Kosovo transformed into a contested area with rivaling claims of Albanian/Serbian history and character. The struggle between the Albanians and Serbs for Kosovo had started.

Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of Yugoslavia

The beginning of the twentieth century saw Albanian insurgencies in Kosovo rising up against tax collection and the reforms foreseen by the Young Turk movement,²⁵ which was running the government in Constantinople. Meanwhile, Serbia was agitating for the Serbian identity of Kosovo. The Young Turks were suspicious of the Albanians, leading to the rejection of the Albanians' demand in 1908 for the adoption of a Latin alphabet. The ban on Albanian schools remained in effect; all Muslim children were expected to attend Turkish schools.²⁶ In order to counter rising nationalism – and the Latin alphabet was seen as a manifestation of that – the Ottoman leaders decided to appeal to the Muslim Albanians. Young Turks, supported by the highest religious authority (*Şeyh-ül İslam*), urged the Muslim leaders to lobby for the Ottoman script. People mobilized in the streets to demonstrate against the Latin alphabet. In 1911, Sultan-Caliph Mehmet V even travelled to Salonica and Skopje, and then on to Priştine to commemorate the anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo. Crowds came to see him, but it was too late. Relations between Constantinople and Albanian leadership had been broken.²⁷

24 Malcolm 2002: 222.

25 Many Albanians were initially active in the Committee for Union and Progress, and the Young Turk revolution of 1908 was directed from the city of Manastir (modern Bitola in Macedonia) (Finkel 2006: 520).

26 Skendi 1980: 36, 38.

27 Finkel 2006: 521; Skendi 1980: 223–226.

In 1912, the Christian adversaries of the Ottomans in the Balkans, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, and Montenegro joined forces in the Balkan War. Montenegro and Serbia managed to take Kosovo from the weakened Ottoman Empire. More than 500 years of almost uninterrupted Ottoman rule in Kosovo had come to an end, leaving the Kosovo Turks between the Albanians and Serbs.

Serbia wanted Kosovo and a corridor through northern Albania in order to gain access to the Mediterranean. Although the European powers preferred to keep Serbia landlocked, it did manage to gain control of Kosovo. In 1913, Serbia agreed that Montenegro could have İpek (Pejë/Peč), Deçan (Deçani/Dečani) and Yakova.²⁸ In order to enforce their claims on the Serbian identity of Kosovo, Serbian authorities imposed a harsh regime and expelled thousands of Albanians from their villages. There were also cases of simple omissions of the Albanian population from census figures. According to various estimates, tens of thousands of Muslims emigrated from Kosovo in order to avoid Serbian rule. It is believed that 16,000 Muslims left the “liberated areas” of the Montenegrin forces for Turkey in the first half of 1914 alone.²⁹

During the First World War, the Serbian forces were expelled and Kosovo was divided into Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian zones. Serbia took over again after the war, however, and Kosovo was to become part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (which would later become Yugoslavia). The Serbian-led kingdom did not give linguistic rights to Kosovo’s Albanians, but the Turks were allowed to have private schools and could publish in Turkish. In 1919, a political party was founded in Skopje to represent the Muslims of Kosovo and Macedonia. *İslam Muhafaza-yi Hukuk Cemiyeti* (Islamic Protection of Justice Association, also known simply as *Cemiyet* (Community)) mainly represented Albanian landowners in Kosovo, but its paper *Hak* (Right) was published in Turkish. It did not last long. It ceased to exist by the end of the 1920s, and the paper was closed down.³⁰

The 1920s and 1930s saw the Serbianisation of Kosovo. Despite being a signatory of the 1919 Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye (which carried the obligation to “protect the interests of inhabitants [...] who differ from the majority of the population in race, language or religion”),³¹ the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes did not acknowledge the existence of any minorities in Kosovo. Its policies in Kosovo were based on Serb colonisation and the denial of the Albanian

28 This agreement is interesting due to Serbia’s historical claims on the Orthodox Patriarchate of Peč, the historic seat of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

29 Malcolm 2002: 256, 258.

30 Baki; Banac 1984: 377–378.

31 Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Article 51.

minority. In 1929, the area of Kosovo was divided into three newly-established provinces: Vardar, Morava, and Zeta.

Harsh policies led many Kosovo Muslims to seek life outside the boundaries of Yugoslavia, mainly in Albania and Turkey. In 1933, the governments of Yugoslavia and Turkey started to discuss the deportation of Muslims from Kosovo. Officially they were called Turks, but it is likely that most of the people under discussion were Albanians. In 1935, Turkey offered to take 200,000 of them (a number which exceeded the supposed population of Turks, according to Yugoslav statistics).³² Eventually, in 1938, the governments reached an agreement according to which Turkey would receive 40,000 families during the next six years, based on a list prepared by Yugoslav authorities. However, one of the clauses excluded the urban population; as mentioned above, most Kosovo Turks were urbanites. Although the implementation of the plan was halted by the outbreak of the Second World War, many Kosovo Muslims emigrated on their own initiative. It is estimated that approximately 100,000 Kosovo Muslims moved out of Kosovo between 1918 and 1941.³³

A socialist Yugoslavia led by Josip Broz Tito emerged from the ashes of the Second World War. Kosovo was to become the Autonomous Region of Kosovo and Metohija, while still remaining part of Serbia. The first two decades after the war brought a continuation of harsh rule in Kosovo, but also the drawing of Kosovo's current boundaries, the establishment of Albanian schools, and the granting of official status to the Albanian language. Despite these positive developments, many oppressive policies remained in place.

Immediately after the Second World War, as Turkey was siding with the Western powers, Yugoslav authorities suspected Turks of becoming a fifth column. In a widely reported case in 1948, seventeen Macedonian Turks were convicted of belonging to an alleged terrorist organisation, *Yücel* (Sublime), and spying for Turkey. According to the 1948 census, there were only 98,000 Turks in the whole of Yugoslavia.³⁴ Due to a change in political environment, Yugoslavia's rupture with Comintern and deteriorating relations with Albania, the number of Turks doubled in the 1953 census to more than 260,000.³⁵ The increase was even more striking in Kosovo, where the number of Turks grew almost thirty-fold in just five years.³⁶ These changes imply that claimed identities were still fluid and subject

³² Carter 1993: 301; Malcolm 2002: 285.

³³ Kut 2000; Malcolm 2002: 285–287.

³⁴ Carter 1993: 301. The figures for the previous censuses of 1921 and 1931 were 150,000 and 133,000 respectively. Banac (1984: 55) provides the number of Turks in 1921 as 168,000.

³⁵ Carter 1993: 301.

³⁶ From 1,300 in 1948 to 34,500 in 1953 (Malcolm 2002: 322).

to changes in the political atmosphere. A person could declare him or herself as an Albanian, a Roma or a Turk, depending on circumstances and personal benefits. This reflects the varied background of the people; for example, many Albanians had adopted the Turkish language and identity, while many Turks had become assimilated into the Albanian majority in Kosovo or parts of Macedonia.

The Turks in Yugoslavia theoretically enjoyed the same civil status as other citizens. They were allowed to receive an education in Turkish from primary school up until university level, and they were also allowed to publish in Turkish.³⁷ There were Turkish language broadcasts on the radio. And Turks were represented in political and decision-making bodies in Kosovo.

Migration from Kosovo resumed in 1953 when Yugoslavia and Turkey signed the Bled Agreement on voluntary emigration. Estimates for the number of emigrants vary, but it was significant enough that a steady decline in the number of Turks in both Yugoslavia and Kosovo began from 1953 onwards.³⁸ In addition to migration to Turkey, some Kosovo Turks moved out of Yugoslavia, seeking a new life as guest workers in Western Europe. It is hard to assess to what extent emigration was due to economic problems, political pressure, or other reasons (such as family ties, religion, etc.).

Kosovo was upgraded from an autonomous region to an autonomous province in 1963, while the repressive policies started to ease from 1966 onwards. When Albanians raised demands for more autonomy (and even for their own republic), concessions followed. A university was opened in Pristine. The number of Albanians holding public posts started to increase. The 1974 Constitution of Yugoslavia redefined Kosovo as the Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosovo, granting it greater autonomy. It received its own assembly, administration, and judiciary, as well as membership in the Presidency of Yugoslavia. As regards the Kosovo Turkish community, the new constitution granted Turkish language equal status to Albanian and Serbo-Croatian, making it an official language in Kosovo.³⁹

37 It is interesting that while there were no Turkish language dailies, the two newspapers published three times a week in Skopje and Pristine had a combined circulation of 438,000 in 1971. This exceeded the number of Turks in Yugoslavia (128,000) at the time (Carter 1993: 301, 323–324).

38 Malcolm (2002: 323) estimates that c.100,000 Muslims emigrated from Kosovo to Turkey during 1945–1966. Judah (2008: 52) writes that 175,000 Muslims moved from Yugoslavia to Turkey in 1952–1967. According to Carter (1993: 302–304), in 1965 there were 254,000 people living in Turkey, who had been born in Yugoslavia. Based on Turkish statistics (provided in Carter 1993: 303), the main influx of migration from Yugoslavia lasted from 1953 until 1970, with a peak in 1956–1958 when more than 90,000 people migrated to Turkey. These numbers include Turks, Bosniaks, Albanians, and other Yugoslav Muslims.

39 Stevens 2009: 11.

Towards war

After the death of Tito in 1980, Yugoslavia started to slowly disintegrate. In Kosovo, demonstrations demanding better conditions for students started in the spring of 1981. Severe retaliations from security forces attracted more and more Kosovo Albanians to the streets, and more political demands were heard. Rising Serbian nationalism fuelled the flames of the unrest; the Kosovo Albanians were already discontent due to economic woes and mass arrests following the demonstrations. In April 1987, the Communists in Belgrade sent young Slobodan Milošević to hear what the locals had to say. The local Serb nationalists were prepared, however. To turn the visit to their own purposes, they orchestrated a confrontation with the police, demonstrating what problems they faced in Kosovo. As Milošević's intervention was televised, his famous words "No one should dare to beat you!" would mark the beginning of his career as a ruthless nationalist leader.⁴⁰ In Serbia, numerous books were published that demonised the Albanian population, accusing them of crimes against Serbs and illegal entry into the country from Albania. Milošević, riding on the tide of nationalism, gained the leadership of the Serbian Communist party in 1987. He spent the next year consolidating his power, not only in Serbia but in Montenegro, Vojvodina, and Kosovo as well. After that he began preparing amendments to the constitution to transfer many of the provincial powers to Belgrade, as well as to repeal the official status of the Turkish language in Kosovo. These plans led to mass demonstrations in Kosovo. More security forces were sent in and a state of emergency was declared. In March 1989, the Kosovo Assembly approved the amendments under the threat of tanks, armoured vehicles and numerous guests from Belgrade.⁴¹ On 28 June 1989, Milošević addressed hundreds of thousands of Serbs commemorating the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo Polje. Milošević told the crowd that "[S]ix centuries later, again we are in battles and quarrels. They are not armed battles, though such things should not be excluded yet."⁴²

The 1990s began with violent clashes and claims that thousands of Kosovo Albanian children had been poisoned. Many Albanians were dismissed from public service, while many civil rights (such as the buying and selling of property) were questioned. Driven by discontent, most of the Albanian members of the Kosovo Assembly convened in July on the street outside the Assembly building to pass a resolution declaring Kosovo an equal and independent entity within Yugoslavia. Shortly thereafter, however, the authorities in Belgrade dissolved

40 Malcolm 2002: 341–342.

41 IDMC 2006; Malcolm 2002: 344.

42 Judah 2008: 68.

both the assembly and government, and Kosovo was taken under direct Serbian rule. In September 1990, the same Kosovo Assembly members met in Kačanik (Kačanik/Kaçanik) to proclaim a constitution for the Republic of Kosovo. In 1991 they declared independence that was endorsed in a referendum; in May 1992, elections were held for a president and parliament.⁴³

The Kosovo Albanian movement, which was led by Ibrahim Rugova and the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), advocated for non-violent protests, internationalisation of the situation, and systematic denial of Serbian rule.⁴⁴ This was best illustrated by the creation of a parallel government, as well as health and education systems that operated in private premises or in class rooms not used by the Serbs. The Albanians no longer participated in the affairs of Serbia.

The onset of the Bosnian war in 1992 revived the discourse in Serbia of the Islamic threat. Yet the tying of the Bosnian war to the Kosovo problem did not work out well for the Kosovars. After the Dayton Agreement, which put an end to the war in Bosnia, the issue of Kosovo remained unresolved.

Growing frustration with Rugova's peaceful methods led to the emergence of the Kosovo Liberation Army (UÇK), which initiated an armed campaign against the Serbs and their collaborators in 1996. The escalation of the conflict forced thousands of people from their homes, at which point the Western powers intervened. US Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke brokered a ceasefire in 1998; the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) was selected to monitor it. However, the ceasefire did not last long: hostilities resumed in December 1998. The parties were invited to Rambouillet in February 1999 to discuss a peace proposal, but by March the negotiations had stalled. Serbia could not accept the open-ended status of Kosovo included in the proposal. The rupture was followed by NATO intervention and 78 days of bombings in Kosovo, Serbia-proper, and Montenegro. By the end of the war, more than 800,000 people (mostly Albanians) had been displaced in a province with an estimated population of only two million.⁴⁵

UN administration and the declaration of independence

On 10 June of 1999, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1244, which placed Kosovo under transitional UN administration and authorised a NATO-led peacekeeping operation, Kosovo Force (KFOR). The United

43 Judah 2008: 69.

44 Malcolm 2002: 348.

45 Judah 2008: 88.

Nations' Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) was put in charge of governing the province that was still formally part of Serbia, thereby reaffirming the territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. UNMIK had to recreate all necessary institutions – from police to municipal bodies to the government. And this was done, to a certain extent.

Although many Kosovo Turks sympathised with the Albanians, most of them remained neutral during the conflicts of the 1990s.⁴⁶ Turks continued to work in public institutions, while Albanians resigned or were dismissed. Turks also continued to enjoy education in Serbian-run institutions. After the war and the expulsion of the Serbian forces, Albanian nationalists took over public institutions and dismissed the remaining Serbs and members of other minorities in reprisals that included violence.⁴⁷

UNMIK introduced a constitutional framework in May 2001 that provided for elections and the creation of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG), which included an assembly, a government and a presidency. Gradually the powers were passed to Kosovo's institutions, although these were to remain under UNMIK's supervision. The Special Representative of the United Nations' Secretary-General (SRSG) had the power to veto any legislation or decision passed or made by the PISG. For Turks, the constitutional framework was a disappointment as it did not include Turkish as one of the official languages.⁴⁸

The last major outbreak of violence took place in March 2004, surprising the international community. As a result, most of the remaining urban Serbs fled from their hometowns and the current residential landscape was established.

The sudden outburst of hostilities after five years of international administration forced the UN to reconsider its policies and the status quo in Kosovo. The UN Secretary-General appointed the former President of Finland, Martti Ahtisaari, as a Special Envoy for the Future Status Process for Kosovo. This decision was supported by the Security Council in November 2005. The Special Envoy's report and the Final Comprehensive Proposal for a Kosovo Status Settlement, known as the Ahtisaari Plan, were presented to the Secretary-General in March 2007. But the proposal on supervised independence did not receive the backing of the Security Council and it was never adopted.

Ahtisaari's work was not in vain, however, as it was taken as the basis for the unilateral Declaration of Independence by the Kosovo Assembly on 17 February

46 Brown 1998.

47 Judah 2008: 91; Mandaci 2004.

48 Although the constitutional framework names only Albanian and Serbian as the languages of government (Article 9.3.17–18), it does provide many rights to linguistic communities and the explicit right to use one's own language.

2008. The Republic of Kosovo has since been recognised by 83 states, and it has gained membership in both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Yet both the UN and EU remain divided on the issue. The International Civilian Representative, representing 25 western countries that have recognised the independence of Kosovo, has more or less inherited the role of the SRSG with extensive powers in Kosovo. To illustrate some of the problems that Kosovo faces, there are issues with car insurance and registration plates, passports, and the use of multiple country codes for international telecommunication.⁴⁹ Furthermore, Kosovo suffers from severe socio-economic problems, which affect all communities in Kosovo.

KOSOVO TURKS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

When discussing the current situation of Kosovo Turks, or any other community in Kosovo for that matter, one finds a lack of reliable population data. The last census, held in 1991, was boycotted by many Kosovo Albanians and possibly members of the other communities. For this reason, all current data is based on estimates.⁵⁰

According to the estimates of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, approximately 30,000 Turks live in Kosovo today, and up to 250,000 people speak or understand Turkish.⁵¹ Kosovo Turks reside mainly in Prizren (comprising approximately four percent of the population) and the new municipality of Mamuşa (where Kosovo Turks constitute the majority of the population).⁵² In addition,

49 Kosovo uses the Serbian country code for landlines, while Monacan and Slovenian country codes are used for mobile phones. Telecommunication has actually become a highly contested issue in Kosovo, and the government has tried to shut down the Serbian mobile service providers.

50 At the time of writing, a Kosovo-wide census based on the new Law on Population and Housing Census (2010) was being conducted. It was held from 1–15 April, and then extended in seven municipalities until 19 April. However, the northern Serb-majority municipalities were excluded, while the deadline extension to some municipalities was due to “initial reluctance of some residents to participate” (Balkan Insight 2011). While questionnaires were available in four languages, including Turkish, responses to questions related to ethnic identity and mother tongue were voluntary (Statistical Office of Kosovo 2011a). Citizens of Kosovo residing outside of its borders were not included in the census. According to preliminary results (which were made available 30 June 2011), the total population of Kosovo is only 1,734,000 (Statistical Office of Kosovo 2011b). This is much less than the oft-cited estimates of over two million inhabitants. The final results must be published at the latest on 31 December 2013.

51 OSCE 2010b: 3.

52 The municipality of Mamuşa was split from Prizren in 2005 as a pilot municipal unit (PMU). A total of three PMUs were established as a pilot project for the decentralisation process. They became fully-fledged municipalities in 2008, although they still lacked some municipal institutions and capacities. Decentralisation was also emphasised in the Ahtisaari Plan, which had as its objective the creation of Kosovo Serb-majority municipalities in order to encourage the inclu-

there are significant Kosovo Turk communities in southern Mitroviça, Vuçitryn (Vushtrri/Vučitrn), Prištine, Lipjan (Lipjan/Lipljan)⁵³ and Gilan.⁵⁴

Most Kosovo Turks live scattered among the majority community. After the conflict, religious and historical ties have facilitated the improvement of relations with Kosovo Albanians. The Kosovo Turk community is now well integrated in Kosovo society. According to an OSCE report, “Kosovo Turks are amongst the most integrated and represented communities in Kosovo institutions”.⁵⁵

Language rights and public representation of Kosovo Turks

In many European societies, the rights of and the relations with minorities are defined and regulated by the existing legal framework. The same applies to Kosovo. Since it was taken over by the UNMIK, Kosovo has had relatively progressive legislation as regards the rights of minorities – or “communities” as they are called in Kosovo – and their members.⁵⁶ The preamble to the UNMIK constitutional framework recognised several fundamental UN and Council of Europe (CoE) conventions and treaties.⁵⁷ The same principle was included in the Ahtisaari Plan and the consequent Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo,⁵⁸ even though Kosovo is not a member of either the UN or the CoE.

sion and participation of Kosovo Serbs in the Republic of Kosovo structures. (See GoK 2008; UNOSEK 2007.) The current municipal boundaries were established in 2008 with the passage of the Law on Administrative Municipal Boundaries.

53 In Lipjan, the Kosovo Turks are concentrated in the township of Yanova (Janjevë/Janjevo).

54 Kosovo Turks form 0.4–1.5 percent of the populations of these municipalities. For a more detailed breakdown, see OSCE 2010b (17–19).

55 OSCE 2010b: 10.

56 The main reason why minorities are referred to as communities in Kosovo is the sensitivity towards Kosovo Serbs. Since the creation of UNMIK, Kosovo Serbs have been treated as a constituent people, not a minority, in order to engage them in Kosovo institutions. Subsequently the same has been applied to all minorities to emphasise the multicultural character of Kosovo. Furthermore, the laws regulating the rights of communities apply to Kosovo Albanians in the municipalities where they are not in the majority.

57 “Taking into account the Charter of the United Nations; the Universal Declaration on Human Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Protocols thereto; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the Protocols thereto; the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages; the Council of Europe’s Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities; and other relevant principles reflected in internationally recognized legal instruments;” (Constitutional Framework for Provisional Self-Government, preamble).

58 UNOSEK 2007, Article 2.1; Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, Article 22.

Since the declaration of independence, the Kosovo Assembly has been preoccupied with the passing of new and updated legislation. That being the case, the legal system is still an odd mix of Kosovo, UNMIK, and even Yugoslav laws, decrees and regulations. Most of the legislation regarding the rights of communities is quite recent, passed in 2008 or later. These include the Constitution and laws on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of the Communities and Their Members in Kosovo, Local Self Government, Identity Cards, etc. Yet some of the major laws that were passed during the UNMIK rule still remain in force; these include the laws on the Use of Languages, Cultural Heritage, and Anti-Discrimination. Despite the complexity of the legal framework, the laws concerning the minorities are quite advanced, and even ahead of the standards of many European countries.⁵⁹ In order to reach the objectives of this advanced legislation, however, the laws need to be properly implemented.

I will now look in more detail at the legal framework in general, and some of the relevant laws and their (non-)implementation in particular, from the perspective of Kosovo Turks. I start with official institutions and minority representation at both the central and municipal level, including the decentralisation process. Then I move on to discuss questions of language, education and culture.

The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, as already mentioned, recognises and incorporates several international conventions and treaties, including the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. Furthermore, Article 5 of the Constitution defines the official languages as Albanian and Serbian; it goes on to state that "Turkish, Bosnian and Roma languages have the status of official languages at the municipal level or will be in official use at all levels as provided by law." The Constitution guarantees basic rights for all citizens including, *inter alia*, freedom of movement (Article 35), freedom of religion (Article 38), freedom of expression (Article 40), and freedom of association (Article 44). In addition to these basic rights and freedoms, Chapter III of the Constitution deals exclusively with the rights of communities and their members. According to Article 58, the state has the responsibility to promote tolerance and to ensure such conditions that will help the communities to preserve and develop their identities. Article 59 guarantees the rights of communities and their members, for example, to express their identity (religion, language, traditions and culture) and to receive education in their language to the extent prescribed by law. The next three articles of Chapter III lay the basis for the establishment of a consultative council for communities

59 Lantschner 2008: 488.

under the presidency, ensure equitable representation in public institutions, and outline the representation of communities in institutions of local government.

The Constitution also reserves twenty of the 120 seats in the Kosovo Assembly for representation of communities that are not in the majority in Kosovo. Half of these are for the Kosovo Serb community and two are for Kosovo Turks (Article 64). However, this only defines the minimum number. Currently the Kosovo Turk community has more than two representatives. The Kosovo Democratic Turkish Party (KDTP) gained three seats in the 2010 parliamentary elections,⁶⁰ while at least one deputy of the main Albanian parties comes from the Kosovo Turk community.⁶¹ Kosovo Turks are also represented in the government by the leader of KDTP, Mahir Yağcılar, who is the Minister of Public Administration.

There are other articles in the Constitution that concern communities. These regulate, for example, the amending of the Constitution (which requires two thirds of all deputies holding seats reserved for representatives of communities that are not in the majority in Kosovo (Article 65.2)) and the establishment and role of a parliamentary Committee on the Rights and Interests of Communities (which can discuss proposed laws and make recommendations if needed, or propose new laws (Article 78)). Article 96 sets the minimum number of ministers from the minority communities as one from the Kosovo Serb community and one from another community (and an additional one if the number of ministers exceeds twelve).

In addition to the Kosovo Turk members of the government and the Kosovo Assembly, there are three members representing the community in the Consultative Council for Communities (which functions under the auspices of the President of Kosovo) and one judge on the constitutional court.⁶²

The Law on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of the Communities and Their Members in Kosovo (Article 1.4) defines communities as “national, ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious groups traditionally present in the Republic of Kosovo that are not in the majority. These groups are Serb, Turkish, Bosnian, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, Gorani and other communities. Members of the community in the majority in the Republic of Kosovo as a whole who are not in the majority in a given municipality shall also be entitled to enjoy the rights listed in this law.” The law, true to its name, aims to protect and promote the rights of communities and their members. With the Law on the Use of Languages, it outlines the rights of communities and their members in

⁶⁰ KDTP gained 8,500 votes (or 1.2 %), which made it the ninth largest political entity in Kosovo (Central Election Commission 2011).

⁶¹ Suzan Novoberdali of the New Kosovo Alliance (AKR) (Milliyet 2011).

⁶² OSCE 2010b: 10.

expressing and advancing their identity and language, as well as their rights in the fields of education, health, municipal services, politics and media. Furthermore, any discrimination based on, for example, language, ethnic origin or religion is criminalised by the Anti-Discrimination Law (Article 2).

In practical terms, the Kosovo Turks have – in addition to the free use and expression of their identity and language in the private and public spheres of life – certain rights at the official level. According to Article 2 of the Law on the Use of Languages, if members of a community whose language is not an official language (that is, Albanian or Serbian) constitute at least five percent of the population of a municipality, their language shall be an official language in the municipality and enjoy equal status with the official languages. It further stipulates that in the municipality of Prizren, Turkish shall have the status of an official language, despite the fact that the Kosovo Turks constitute less than five percent of the population. If the members of the community consist of more than three percent of the population of the municipality, or if their language has been traditionally spoken in the municipality, their language shall have the status of a language in official use.

If a language has official status in a municipality, it obliges the municipality to provide all services and documents in that language and interpretation must be available in municipal meetings (Article 7). In addition, official signs (e.g. street and road signs or names of villages and municipal institutions) should be displayed in all official languages of the municipality (Article 9). If a language has the status of being in official use, speakers of that language have the right to present oral and written submissions and documents in their language and to receive a reply from the municipal institutions and officials (Article 8). Furthermore, upon request, municipal regulations and acts must be provided in that language, and the municipality must provide interpretation in municipal representative bodies and committees and public meetings if requested.

In accordance with these provisions, members of the communities have the right to have their names “recognized in their original form and in the script of their language as well as to [...] enter such names into public registries, personal identification and other official documents in their own language and script in accordance with the law”.⁶³

In practise, Turkish is the official language in the municipalities of Prizren and Mamuşa; it is a language in official use in the municipalities of Gilan, Mitroviça and Vuçitirın.⁶⁴ In the municipality of Priştine, Turkish is not defined

⁶³ Law on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Communities and Their Members in Kosovo (Article 2.4). See also the Law on Identity Cards (Article 9).

⁶⁴ OSCE 2010b: 12.

as a language in official use. The municipal statute does state, however, that Turkish (and Bosnian) can be used in accordance with the Law on the Use of Languages.⁶⁵ In Liplan, the Kosovo Turk community has submitted a request to give Turkish the status of a language in official use. However, the municipalities where Turkish is a language in official use (including Prishtine) lack the capacity to actually provide services or documents in Turkish. In Prishtine, the community has voiced their concerns through the municipal assembly's deputy chairperson for communities.⁶⁶ The situation is better in Prizren and Mamuša, but problems – such as non-issuance of civil certificates in Turkish or inadequate translation of documents – persist even in Prizren. Another reported issue is the misspelling of Turkish names on official documents and identity cards.⁶⁷

The Law on Local Self Government provides some mechanisms to ensure the participation of communities in municipal representative bodies. These include the deputy mayor for communities and the municipal assembly's deputy chairperson for communities (Articles 56, 57). The role of the deputy mayor for communities is to advise the mayor on community issues, while the deputy chairperson for communities acts as a “focal point for addressing non-majority communities' concerns and interests in meetings of the Assembly and its work” (Article 61). Theoretically, in order for these posts to exist, at least ten percent of the municipality's population should consist of members of minority communities. Some municipalities have nevertheless established these positions, even though the number of community members falls short of the ten percent requirement. Kosovo Turks have not fared well in local elections; at the end of 2010, excluding Mamuša, they had only seven municipal assembly members. However, there are currently two Kosovo Turk deputy mayors for communities and three deputy chairpersons for communities.⁶⁸

Education and cultural life

There are several issues with education, Turkish associations, media, and cultural heritage that should also be discussed here. In the field of education, Kosovo Turk children attend schools that follow the Kosovo curriculum (as opposed to schools with the Serbian curriculum). There are a limited number of schools that provide education in Turkish in Mamuša, Prizren, Gilan, Prishtine, and Mitroviça. There are also some private schools in Prizren and Prishtine that offer education in

65 Statuti i Komunës së Prishtinës (Article 13.6).

66 OSCE 2008: 4; OSCE 2010b: 12.

67 OSCE 2010a: 13.

68 OSCE 2010a: 14–15.

Turkish. Higher level education is available in Turkish in the faculty of education in Prizren and the Department of Turkish Language and Literature in Prishtine.

These schools face problems, however. Because many needed books are simply not available in the primary and secondary education schools, parents are forced to purchase them from Turkey.⁶⁹ The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology claims that it lacks the financial means to produce and publish the necessary materials. The books that are available are often of low quality.⁷⁰ Moreover, the limited availability of higher education alternatives has led many Kosovo Turks to seek education in Turkey, which provides scholarships for students from Kosovo.

Kosovo Turks are well organised. As mentioned above, they have a political party, the Kosovo Democratic Turkish Party (KDTP), to represent them in the municipal and central institutions. KDTP was founded in 2001 as a successor to the Turkish Democratic Union (TDB), which was founded as early as 1990 in Prizren.⁷¹ There are also several Kosovo Turk associations that focus mainly on cultural activities, and one amateur theatre group in Prizren. Many of these associations have contacts with Turkey and benefit from assistance that comes directly from Turkey, Turkish companies or the Turkish KFOR contingency based in Kosovo. Similarly, municipalities with recognised Kosovo Turk communities have ties with municipalities in Turkey. The Kosovo Turk community celebrates 23 April as their national day by holding large festivities in Prizren and Prishtine. This day has also been officially recognised by the Law on Official Holidays in Kosovo (Article 5.5) as a memorial day, the Day of Turks.

As almost all Kosovo Turks are at least bilingual, they can follow media in the Albanian language. Yet some Turkish broadcasts and TV channels based in Turkey are also available.⁷² The role of print media is quite insignificant, but the Internet news site Kosova Haber is active and provides both domestic and international news.⁷³

Kosovo has a rich tradition of Turkish culture and historical sites. Many of these sites – such as the tomb of Ottoman Sultan Murad I, the historic city centre of Prizren and the Fatih mosque in Prishtine – have historical, cultural and touristic value. As such, they should be protected. Yet despite the existence of relevant

69 Although Kosovo Turks speak their own dialect, written language and education are based on standard Turkish.

70 OSCE 2010a: 9–10; OSCE 2010b: 8.

71 KDTP 2004.

72 The public broadcast station RTK provides five-minute daily news and a one-hour TV programme once a week. In Prizren, some local TV channels broadcast in Turkish. Some radio channels also broadcast in Turkish.

73 <www.kosovahaber.net/>.

legislation and the designation of cultural heritage sites, at least two protected buildings important to the Kosovo Turk community have been demolished during the last year. Local Islamic councils were behind these demolitions. The first happened in Pristina in May 2010, when the Ottoman-era Hatunije mosque was demolished to make space for a new mosque. The second occurred in June 2010, when an old mosque was demolished in the Kosovo Turk-inhabited village of Doburçan in the municipality of Gilan. In the case of Doburçan, the local Kosovo Turk community appealed to the Turkish ambassador to intervene and to prevent the destruction. However, despite a decision to protect the mosque and a ban on demolition, the building was bulldozed just four days later.⁷⁴ Members of the Kosovo Turk community appealed to the municipality of Gilan to reconstruct the mosque, but in vain. There were no consequences for breaching the law, not even an investigation.⁷⁵

Despite all of these problems, the Kosovo Turk community is in a relatively good position compared to other communities in Kosovo. The Turks enjoy freedom of movement, they can freely express their identity, and they can use their mother tongue. Therefore, the community has identified education and the lack of school materials as their main concern. Otherwise, they suffer from the same socio-economic problems as the majority Albanian community.

CONCLUSIONS

The status of the Kosovo Turks has been in steady decline since the end of Ottoman rule, although they did gain legal recognition from 1951 onwards (as opposed to the period from 1912 to 1950). The community has been affected by numerous political developments, such as the change in Yugoslav-Turkish relations after the Second World War and the escalation of the conflict in Kosovo. The introduction of UNMIK rule meant the decisive removal of the privileged status of the Turkish language, which has been upheld by the Constitution of Kosovo.

As we have seen, Kosovo has a progressive legislation when it comes to minority rights and the mechanisms to protect them (I have not even mentioned municipal communities committees, the central-level language commission and ombudsman's office, or the special protective zones created to protect and preserve monuments of cultural heritage, or all the international actors monitoring and supporting the developments in Kosovo). Despite legal guarantees, the whole of Kosovo suffers from non-implementation of and non-compliance

⁷⁴ OSCE 2010a: 5.

⁷⁵ Personal observation in Gilan.

with the otherwise sound legal framework. Moreover, the Kosovan society does not seem to understand the purpose of community rights and their protection and promotion at a time when even the majority Kosovo Albanians suffer from serious socio-economic problems (such as wide-scale unemployment, lack of resources in education and health care, etc.).⁷⁶ Emma Lantschner has noted that the entire legal framework might actually be too ambitious, bearing in mind the institutional and financial capacities of Kosovo, and that it may lead the people (including public officials) to think that legislation has been pushed from the outside and lacks approval and institutional commitment in Kosovo itself.⁷⁷

It is easy to agree with the recommendations of both Lantschner and OSCE that the public should be made more aware about existing laws and rights. But it is also important for those working in public institutions to take seriously the implementation of these laws and policies. Moreover, sufficient financial resources should be allocated and coordination between the different actors should be improved in order to avoid overlaps.⁷⁸ But even good laws are not always enough. Socio-economic hardships in Kosovo are likely to mean continued emigration to Western Europe and Turkey. And due to the limited availability of educational opportunities in Turkish, many Kosovo Turk youths are faced with education in Albanian language (or, if possible, education in Turkey). Moreover, the process of assimilation may be accelerated by a number of factors: most Kosovo Turks are fully bilingual, have close cultural and religious ties with the majority Kosovo Albanians, and are well regarded by the majority. Mixed marriages between Kosovo Turks and Albanians are common as well.⁷⁹

The role of Turkey may also have an impact on the Kosovo Turk community. Turkey has been active in Kosovo; the Kosovo Turk community has benefited from this with aid and political backing. Turkish businesses, too, have shown interest in Kosovo; they have actively penetrated the Kosovo markets (from banking to construction and services such as education and the running of Pristina's airport). Furthermore, while many Kosovo Turks have migrated to Turkey, there has been an influx of Turkish entrepreneurs who have opened restaurants and shops in many towns. The role of Turkey, Turkish companies

⁷⁶ According to the World Bank, 45 percent of the labour force in Kosovo was unemployed and 45 percent of the population lived below the national poverty line (World Bank).

⁷⁷ Lantschner 2008: 488.

⁷⁸ Lantschner 2008: 489; OSCE 2010a: 20–21.

⁷⁹ There have been reports from Macedonia (where the Turkish population is more numerous both in absolute and relative terms) that assimilation, or the fear of it, caused internal migration as early as the late 1980s. In addition, there were claims that Macedonian Turks had been forced to rediscover their "Albanian roots" (Poulton 1991: 92–93). There is no reason to doubt that similar developments could take place in Kosovo, too.

and non-governmental organisations in Kosovo is extremely interesting both as a manifestation of the new Turkish foreign policy and because of its impact on the Kosovo Turk community. For practical reasons, however, it must remain outside the scope of this article.

Finally, as we have seen, ethnic identities have been fluid in Kosovo and the Balkans. While the assimilation of minorities in majority communities is a real and present issue, it can work two ways. As noted above, the number of Turkish speakers in Kosovo is almost nine times that of Kosovo Turks. This, together with the increased presence of Turkish actors, may be conducive to the preservation of Turkish language and culture.

Kosovo Turks are not immune to the developments in Kosovo and the world around them. While their future may look uncertain, there is also a glimmer of hope. But the future rests on the shoulders of the Kosovo Turk community and the Kosovo society at large.

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