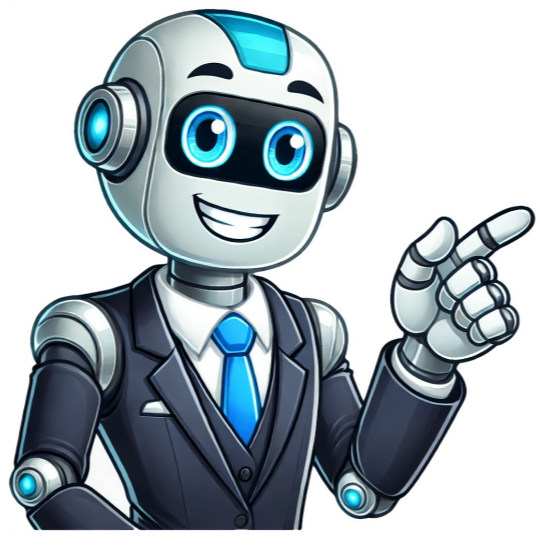


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Albanian units being brought into Kosovo and a state of emergency being declared resulting in violence and the protests being crushed.[105] In the aftermath of the 1981 protests, purges took place in the Communist Party, and rights that had been recently granted to Albanians were rescinded including ending the provision of Albanian professors and Albanian language textbooks in the education system.[105]While Albanians in the region had the highest birth rates in Europe, other areas of Yugoslavia including Serbia had low birth rates. Increased urbanisation and economic development led to higher settlements of Albanian workers into Serb-majority areas, as Serbs departed in response to the economic climate for more favourable real estate conditions in Serbia.[107] While there was tension, charges of "genocide" and planned harassment have been discredited as a pretext to revoke Kosovo's autonomy. For example, in 1986 the Serbian Orthodox Church published an official claim that Kosovo Serbs were being subjected to an Albanian program of "genocide".[108]Even though they were disproved by police statistics,[108][pageneeded] they received wide attention in the Serbian press and that led to further ethnic problems and eventual removal of Kosovo's status. Beginning in March 1981, Kosovar Albanian students of the University of Pristina organised protests seeking that Kosovo become a republic within Yugoslavia and demanding their human rights.[109] The protests were brutally suppressed by the police and army, with many protesters arrested.[110] During the 1980s, ethnic tensions continued with frequent violent outbreaks against Yugoslav state authorities, resulting in a further increase in emigration of Kosovo Serbs and other ethnic groups.[111][112] The Yugoslav leadership tried to suppress protests of Kosovo Serbs seeking protection from ethnic discrimination and violence.[113]Main article: Kosovo WarFurther information: War crimes in the Kosovo WarIbrahim Rugova advocated for the rights of Kosovar Albanians and their self-determinationInter-ethnic tensions continued to worsen in Kosovo throughout the 1980s. In 1989, Serbian President Slobodan Miloević, employing a mix of intimidation and political maneuvering, drastically reduced Kosovo's special autonomous status within Serbia and started cultural oppression of the ethnic Albanian population.[114] Kosovar Albanians responded with a non-violent separatist movement, employing widespread civil disobedience and creation of parallel structures in education, medical care, and taxation, with the ultimate goal of achieving the independence of Kosovo.[115]In July 1990, the Kosovo Albanians proclaimed the existence of the Republic of Kosovo, and declared it a sovereign and independent state in September 1992.[116] In May 1992, Ibrahim Rugova was elected its president.[117] During its lifetime, the Republic of Kosovo was only officially recognised by Albania. By the mid-1990s, the Kosovo Albanian population was growing restless, as the status of Kosovo was not resolved as part of the Dayton Agreement of November 1995, which ended the Bosnian War. By 1996, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), an ethnic Albanian guerrilla paramilitary group that sought the separation of Kosovo and the eventual creation of a Greater Albania,[118] had prevailed over the Rugova's non-violent resistance movement and launched attacks against the Yugoslav Army and Serbian police in Kosovo, resulting in the Kosovo War.[114][119]By 1998, international pressure compelled Yugoslavia to sign a ceasefire and partially withdraw its security forces. Events were to be monitored by Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) observers according to an agreement negotiated by Richard Holbrooke. The ceasefire did not hold and fighting resumed in December 1998, culminating in the Raak massacre, which attracted further international attention to the conflict.[114] Within weeks, a multilateral international conference was convened and by March had prepared a draft agreement known as the Rambouillet Accords, calling for the restoration of autonomy for Kosovo and the deployment of NATO peacekeeping forces. The Yugoslav delegation found the terms unacceptable and refused to sign the draft. Between 24 March and 10 June 1999, NATO intervened by bombing Yugoslavia, aiming to force Miloević to withdraw his forces from Kosovo.[120] though NATO could not appeal to any particular motion of the Security Council of the United Nations to help legitimise its intervention. Combined with continued skirmishes between Albanian guerrillas and Yugoslav forces the conflict resulted in a further massive displacement of population in Kosovo.[121]Kosovar Albanian soldiers holding pictures in memory of the men who were killed or went missing in the Krusha massacrePhotograph of Kosovo Albanian refugees during the Kosovo War, presented as evidence at the trial of Slobodan MiloevićDuring the conflict, between 848,000 and 863,000 ethnic Albanians fled or were forcefully driven from Kosovo and an additional 590,000 were internally displaced.[122][123] Some sources claim that this ethnic cleansing of Albanians was part of a plan known as Operation Horseshoe, described as "Milosević's final solution to the Kosovo problem".[124][125][126][127] However, the existence and implementation of this plan has not been proven.[128][129]During the war, over 90,000 Serbian and other non-Albanian refugees fled the province. In September 1998, Serbian police collected 34 bodies of people believed to have been seized and murdered by the KLA, among them some ethnic Albanians, at Lake Radonji near Gloane (Glogjan) in what became known as the Lake Radonji massacre, the most serious atrocity by the KLA during the conflict.[130][131] By June, Miloević agreed to a foreign military presence in Kosovo and the withdrawal of his troops. In the days after the Yugoslav Army withdrew, over 80,000 Serb and other non-Albanian civilians (almost half of 200,000 estimated to live in Kosovo) were expelled from Kosovo, and many of the remaining civilians were victims of abuse.[132][133][134][135][136] After the Kosovo and other Yugoslav Wars, Serbia became home to the highest number of refugees and IDPs (including Kosovo Serbs) in Europe.[137][138][139]Serbian and other children refugees, Cernica, Giljan"Heroinat" (Heroines) monument in Pristina. It is dedicated to women victims of sexual violence perpetrated by Serbian forces, during the Kosovo War, of which vast majority were Albanian women[140]The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) prosecuted crimes committed during the Kosovo War. Nine senior Yugoslav officials, including Miloević, were indicted for crimes against humanity and war crimes committed between January and June 1999. Six of the defendants were convicted, one was acquitted, one died before his trial could commence, and one (Miloević) died before his trial could conclude.[141] Six KLA members were charged with crimes against humanity and war crimes by the ICTY following the war, and one was convicted.[142][143][144][145]In total around 10,317 civilians were killed during the war, of whom 8,676 were Albanians, 1,196 Serbs and 445 Roma and others in addition to 3,218 killed members of armed formations.[146]Main articles: United Nations Administered Kosovo, United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, and Kosovo status processUS President Bill Clinton with Albanian children during his visit to Kosovo, June 1999On 10 June 1999, the UN Security Council passed UN Security Council Resolution 1244, which placed Kosovo under transitional UN administration (UNMIK) and authorised Kosovo Force (KFOR), a NATO-led peacekeeping force. Resolution 1244 provided that Kosovo would have autonomy within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and affirmed the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, which has been legally succeeded by the Republic of Serbia.[147]Estimates of the number of Serbs who left when Serbian forces left Kosovo vary from 65,000[148] to 250,000.[149] Within post-conflict Kosovo Albanian society, calls for retaliation for previous violence done by Serb forces during the war circulated through public culture.[150] Widespread attacks against Serbian cultural sites commenced following the conflict and the return of hundreds of thousands of Kosovo Albanian refugees to their homes.[151] In 2004, prolonged negotiations over Kosovo's future status, sociopolitical problems and nationalist sentiments resulted in the Kosovo unrest.[152][153] 11 Albanians and 16 Serbs were killed, 900 people (including peacekeepers) were injured, and several houses, public buildings and churches were damaged or destroyed.International negotiations began in 2006 to determine the final status of Kosovo, as envisaged under UN Security Council Resolution 1244. The UN-backed talks, led by UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari, began in February 2006. Whilst progress was made on technical matters, both parties remained diametrically opposed on the question of status itself.[154]In February 2007, Ahtisaari delivered a draft status settlement proposal to leaders in Belgrade and Pristina, the basis for a draft UN Security Council Resolution which proposed "supervised independence" for the province. A draft resolution, backed by the United States, the United Kingdom and other European members of the Security Council, was presented and rewritten four times to try to accommodate Russian concerns that such a resolution would undermine the principle of state sovereignty.[155]Russia, which holds a veto in the Security Council as one of five permanent members, had stated that it would not support any resolution which was not acceptable to both Belgrade and Kosovo Albanians.[156] Whilst most observers had, at the beginning of the talks, anticipated independence as the most likely outcome, others have suggested that a rapid resolution might not be preferable.[157]After many weeks of discussions at the UN, the United States, United Kingdom and other European members of the Security Council formally 'discarded' a draft resolution backing Ahtisaari's proposal on 20 July 2007, having failed to secure Russian backing. Beginning in August, a "Troika" consisting of negotiators from the European Union (Wolfgang Ischinger), the United States (Frank G. Wisner) and Russia (Alexander Botsan-Kharchenko) launched a new effort to reach a status outcome acceptable to both Belgrade and Pristina. Despite Russian disapproval, the U.S., the United Kingdom, and France appeared likely to recognise Kosovar independence.[158] A declaration of independence by Kosovar Albanian leaders was postponed until the end of the Serbian presidential elections (4 February 2008). A significant portion of politicians in both the EU and the US had feared that a premature declaration could boost support in Serbia for the nationalist candidate, Tomislav Nikolić.[159]In November 2001, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe supervised the first elections for the Assembly of Kosovo.[160] After that election, Kosovo's political parties formed an all-party unity coalition and elected Ibrahim Rugova as president and Bajram Rexhepi (PKD) as Prime Minister.[161] After Kosovo-wide elections in October 2004, the LDK and AAK formed a new governing coalition that did not include PDK and Ora. This coalition agreement resulted in Ramush Haradinaj (AAK) becoming Prime Minister, while Ibrahim Rugova retained the position of President. PDK and Ora were critical of the coalition agreement and have since frequently accused that government of corruption.[162]Parliamentary elections were held on 17 November 2007. After early results, Hashim Thaçi who was on course to gain 35 per cent of the vote, claimed victory for PDK, the Democratic Party of Kosovo, and stated his intention to declare independence. Thaçi formed a coalition with president Fatmir Sejdiu's Democratic League which was in second place with 22 percent of the vote.[163] The turnout at the election was particularly low. Most members of the Serb minority refused to vote.[164]Main article: 2008 Kosovo declaration of independenceSee also: International recognition of KosovoThe Newborn monument unveiled at the celebration of the 2008 Kosovo declaration of independence proclaimed earlier that day, 17 February 2008. PristinaThe prime minister of Kosovo Hashim Thaçi, then-U.S. Vice President Joe Biden and the president of Kosovo Fatmir Sejdiu with the Declaration of Independence of KosovoKosovo declared independence from Serbia on 17 February 2008.[165] As of 16 April 2025, 116UN states recognised its independence, including all of its immediate neighbours, with the exception of Serbia:[166] 10 states have subsequently withdrawn that recognition.[167][168] Of the UN Security Council members, while the US, UK and France do recognise Kosovo's independence, Russia and China do not.[169] Since declaring independence, it has become a member of international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.[170][171] though not of the United Nations.The Serb minority of Kosovo, which largely opposes the declaration of independence, has formed the Community Assembly of Kosovo and Metohija in response. The creation of the assembly was condemned by Kosovo's President Fatmir Sejdiu, while UNMIK has said the assembly is not a serious issue because it will not have an operative role.[172]On 8 October 2008, the UN General Assembly resolved, on a proposal by Serbia, to ask the International Court of Justice to render an advisory opinion on the legality of Kosovo's declaration of independence. The advisory opinion, which is not binding over decisions by states to recognise or not recognise Kosovo, was rendered on 22 July 2010, holding that Kosovo's declaration of independence was not in violation either of general principles of international law, which do not prohibit unilateral declarations of independence, nor of specific international law in particular UNSCR 1244 which did not define the final status process nor reserve the outcome to a decision of the Security Council.[173]Some rapprochement between the two governments took place on 19 April 2013 as both parties reached the Brussels Agreement, an agreement brokered by the EU that allowed the Serb minority in Kosovo to have its own police force and court of appeals.[174] The agreement is yet to be ratified by either parliament.[175] Presidents of Serbia and Kosovo organised two meetings, in Brussels on 27 February 2023 and Ohrid on 18 March 2023, to create and agree upon an 11-point agreement on implementing a European Union-backed deal to normalise ties between the two countries, which includes recognising "each other's documents such as passports and license plates".[176]A number of protests and demonstrations took place in Kosovo between 2021 and 2023, some of which involved weapons and resulted in deaths on both sides. Amongst the injured were 30 NATO peacekeepers. The main reason behind the 202223 demonstrations ended on 1 January 2024 when each country recognised each other's vehicle registration plates.Main article: Politics of KosovoSee also: Government of Kosovo and Human rights in KosovoVjosa OsmaniPresidentAlbin KurtiPrime MinisterKosovo is a multi-party parliamentary representative democratic republic. It is governed by legislative, executive and judicial institutions, which derive from the constitution, although, until the Brussels Agreement, North Kosovo was in practice largely controlled by institutions of Serbia or parallel institutions funded by Serbia. Legislative functions are vested in both the Parliament and the ministers within their competencies. The Government exercises the executive power and is composed of the Prime Minister as the head of government, the Deputy Prime Ministers and the Ministers of the various ministries. The judiciary is composed of the Supreme Court and subordinate courts, a Constitutional Court, and independent prosecutorial institutions. There also exist multiple independent institutions defined by the constitution and law, as well as local governments. All citizens are equal before the law and gender equality is ensured by the constitution.[177][178] The Constitutional Framework guarantees a minimum of ten seats in the 120-member Assembly for Serbs, and ten for other minorities, and also guarantees Serbs and other minorities places in the Government. The president serves as the head of state and represents the unity of the people, elects every five years, indirectly by the parliament through a secret ballot by a two-thirds majority of all deputies. The head of state is invested primarily with representative responsibilities and powers. The president has the power to return draft legislation to the parliament for reconsideration and has a role in foreign affairs and certain official appointments.[179] The Prime Minister serves as the head of government elected by the parliament. Ministers are nominated by the Prime Minister, and then confirmed by the parliament. The head of government exercises executive power of the territory. Corruption is a major problem and an obstacle to the development of democracy in the country. Those in the judiciary appointed by the government to fight corruption are often government associates. Moreover, prominent politicians and party operatives who commit offences are not prosecuted due to the lack of laws and political will. Organised crime also poses a threat to the economy due to the practices of bribery, extortion and racketeering.[180]Main article: Foreign relations of KosovoThe foreign relations of Kosovo are conducted through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Pristina. As of 2023[update], 104 out of 193 United Nations member states recognise the Republic of Kosovo. Within the European Union, it is recognised by 22 of 27 members and is a potential candidate for the future enlargement of the European Union.[181][182] On 15 December 2022 Kosovo filed a formal application to become a member of the European Union.[183]Kosovo is a member of several international organisations including the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, International Road and Transport Union, Regional Cooperation Council, Council of Europe Development Bank, Venice Commission and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.[183] In 2015, Kosovo's bid to become a member of UNESCO fell three votes short of the two-thirds majority required to join.[184] 23 countries maintain embassies in Kosovo.[185] Kosovo maintains 24 diplomatic missions and 28 consular missions abroad.[186][187]The relations with Albania are in a special case considering that both countries share the same language and culture. The Albanian language is one of the official languages of Kosovo. Albania has an embassy in the capital Pristina and Kosovo an embassy in Tirana. In 1992, Albania was the only country whose parliament voted to recognise the Republic of Kosova. Albania was also one of the first countries to officially announce its recognition of the Republic of Kosovo in February 2008. From 1 January 2024 Kosovo nationals became exempt from visa requirements within the Schengen Area for periods of up to 90 days in any 180-day period.[188]Main article: Law of KosovoThe Kosovo Police is the main law enforcement agency in KosovoThe judicial system of Kosovo follows a civil law framework and comprises regular civil and criminal courts, alongside administrative courts. Administered by the judicial council in Pristina, the system includes the supreme court as the highest judicial authority, a constitutional court and an independent prosecutorial institution.[189] Following the independence of Kosovo in 2008, the Kosovo Police assumed the primary law enforcement responsibilities within the country.Covering a broad range of issues related to the status of Kosovo, the Ahtisaari Plan introduced two forms of international supervision for Kosovo following its independence, including the International Civilian Office (ICO) and the European Union Rule of Law Mission to Kosovo (EULEX).[190] The ICO monitored plan implementation and possessed veto powers, while EULEX focused on developing judicial systems and had arrest and prosecution authority. These bodies were granted powers under Kosovo's declaration of independence and constitution.[191][192]The legal status of the ICO depended upon the de facto situation and Kosovo legislation, with oversight provided by the International Steering Group (ISG) comprising states that recognized Kosovo. Serbia and non-recognising states did not acknowledge the ICO. Despite initial opposition, EULEX gained acceptance from Serbia and the UN Security Council in 2008. It operated under the UNMIK mandate with operational independence. The ICO concluded operations in 2012 after fulfilling obligations, while EULEX continues to operate within Kosovo and international law.[192] Its role has been extended, primarily focusing on monitoring with reduced responsibilities.[193]According to the Global Safety Report by Gallup, which assesses personal security worldwide through the Law and Order Index Scores for 2023, Kosovo has distinguished itself by ranking among the top ten countries globally in terms of perceived safety and law enforcement effectiveness.[194][195]Main article: Kosovo Security ForceThe Kosovo Security Force is the military of KosovoThe Kosovo Security Force (KSF) is the national security force of Kosovo commissioned with the task of preserving and safeguarding the country's territorial integrity, national sovereignty and the security interests of its population.[196] Functioning under the president of Kosovo as the commander-in-chief, the security force adheres to the principle of non-discrimination, guaranteeing equal protection for its personnel regardless of gender or ethnicity.[196][197] Kosovo's notable challenges are identified in the realms of persistent conflicts and societal safety and security, both of which are intertwined with the country's diplomatic ties to neighboring countries and its domestic social and political stability.[198]The Kosovo Force (KFOR) is a NATO-led international peacekeeping force in Kosovo.[199] Its operations are gradually reducing until Kosovo's Security Force, established in 2009, becomes self-sufficient.[200] KFOR entered Kosovo on 12 June 1999,[201] one day after the United Nations Security Council adopted the UNSC Resolution 1244. Camp Bondsteel is the operation headquarters of the Kosovo Force (KFOR) in Kosovo. It is located near Ferizaj[202] in southeastern Kosovo. It is the Regional Command-East headed by the United States Army (U.S. Army) and it is supported by troops from Greece, Italy, Finland, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Switzerland and Turkey. In 2008, under the leadership of NATO, the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC) undertook preparations for the formation of the Kosovo Security Force. A significant milestone occurred in 2014 when the government officially announced its decision to establish a Ministry of Defence by 2019, with the aim of transforming the existing Kosovo Security Force into the Kosovo Armed Forces. This transformation would entail aligning the armed forces with the high standards expected of NATO members, reflecting Kosovo's aspiration to join the alliance in the future.[203] Subsequently, in December 2018, the government enacted legislation to redefine the mandate of the Kosovo Security Force, effecting its transformation into an army. Concurrently, the establishment of a Ministry of Defence was set in motion, further solidifying these developments and ensuring the necessary infrastructure and oversight for the newly formed armed forces.[204]In 2023, the Kosovo Security Force had over 5,000 active members, using vehicles and weapons acquired from a number of NATO countries. KFOR continues to operate in Kosovo under its UN mandate.[205]Main article: Districts of KosovoThe system needs additional citations for verification. Please help improve this article by adding citations to reliable sources in this section. Un sourced material may be challenged and removed. Find sources:"Kosovo"news newspapers books scholar JSTOR (April 2025) (Learn how and when to remove this message)See also: Municipalities of KosovoKosovo is divided into seven districts (Albanian: rraj; okrug), according to the Law of Kosovo and the Brussels Agreement of 2013, which stipulated the formation of new municipalities with Serb majority populations. The districts are further subdivided into 38 municipalities (komun; optina). The largest and most populous district of Kosovo is the District of Pristina with the capital in Pristina, having a surface area of 2,470km2 (953.67sqmi) and a population of 477,312. PejaGjakovaPrizren MitrovicaPristinaFerizaj GjiJanDistrictsSeatArea (km2)PopulationDistrict of PejaPeja1,365174,235District of MitrovicaMitrovica2,077272,247District of PristinaPristina2,470477,312District of GjiJanGjiJan1,206180,783District of GjakovaGjakova1,129194,672District of PrizrenPrizren1,397331,670District of FerizajFerizaj1,030185,806Main article: Geography of KosovoLandscape in Rugova within the Bjeshtë e Nemuna National Park bordering AlbaniaDefined in a total area of 10,887 square kilometres (4,203 square miles), Kosovo is landlocked and located in the centre of the Balkan Peninsula in Southeastern Europe. It lies between latitudes 42 and 43 N, and longitudes 20 and 22 E.[206] The northernmost point is Bellbrbra at 43°14′09″ northern latitude; the southernmost is Restelc at 41°56′40″ northern latitude; the westernmost point is Bog at 20°3′23″ eastern longitude, and the easternmost point is Destovica at 21°44′21″ eastern longitude. The highest point of Kosovo is Velika Rudoka at 2,660 metres (8,730ft) above sea level.[207][208][209][210] and the lowest is the White Drin at 297 metres (974ft). Most of the borders of Kosovo are dominated by mountainous and high terrain. The most noticeable topographical features are the Accursed Mountains and the ar Mountains. The Accursed Mountains are a geological continuation of the Dinaric Alps. The mountains run laterally through the west along the border with Albania and Montenegro. The southeast is predominantly the ar Mountains, which constitute the border with North Macedonia. Besides the mountain ranges, Kosovo's territory consists mostly of two major plains, the Kosovo Plain in the east and the Metohija Plain in the west.Additionally, Kosovo consists of multiple geographic and ethnographic regions, such as Drenica, Dushkaja, Gollak, Has, Highlands of Gjakova, Llap, Llapusha, Reka e Keqe and Rugova.Kosovo's hydrological resources are relatively small; there are few lakes in Kosovo, the largest of which are Lake Batllava, Badovc Lake, Lake Gazivoda, Lake Radoniq.[211][212] In addition to these, Kosovo also does have karst springs, thermal and mineral water springs.[213] The longest rivers of Kosovo include the White Drin, the South Morava and the Ibar. Sitnica, a tributary of Ibar, is the largest river lying completely within Kosovo's territory. Nerodime river represents Europe's only instance of a river bifurcation flowing into the Black Sea and Aegean Sea.Main article: Climate of KosovoAlpine climate in Pashallora as seen from BrezovicaMost of Kosovo experiences predominantly a Continental climate with Mediterranean and Alpine influences.[214] strongly influenced by Kosovo's proximity to the Adriatic Sea and in the west, the Aegean Sea in the south as well as the European continental landmass in the north.[215]The coldest areas are situated in the mountainous region to the west and southeast, where an Alpine climate is prevalent. The warmest areas are mostly in the extreme southern areas close to the border with Albania, where a Mediterranean climate is the norm. Mean monthly temperature ranges between 0C (32F) (in January) and 22C (72F) (in July). Mean annual precipitation ranges from 600 to 1,300mm (24 to 51in) per year, and is well distributed year-round.To the northeast, the Kosovo Plain and Ibar Valley are drier with total precipitation of about 600 millimetres (24 inches) per year and more influenced by continental air masses, with colder winters and very hot summers. In the southwest, climatic area of Metohija receives more mediterranean influences with warmer summers, somewhat higher precipitation (700mm (28in)) and heavy snowfalls in the winter. The mountainous areas of the Accursed Mountains in the west, ar Mountains on the south and Kopaonik in the north experiences alpine climate, with high precipitation (900 to 1,300mm (35 to 51in) per year), short and fresh summers, and cold winters.[216] The average annual temperature of Kosovo is 9.5C (49.1F). The warmest month is July with average temperature of 19.2C (66.6F), and the coldest is January with 1.3C (29.7F). Except Prizren and Istog, all other meteorological stations in January recorded average temperatures under 0C (32F).[217]Main article: Biodiversity of KosovoSee also: Protected areas of KosovoBjeshtë e Nemuna National Park is home to a wide range of flora and fauna species.Located in Southeastern Europe, Kosovo receives floral and faunal species from Europe and Eurasia. Forests are widespread in Kosovo and cover at least 39% of the region. Phyogeographically, it straddles the Illyrian province of the Circumboreal Region within the Boreal Kingdom. In addition, it falls within three terrestrial ecoregions: Balkan mixed forests, Dinaric Mountains mixed forests, and Pindus Mountains mixed forests.[218] Kosovo's biodiversity is conserved in two national parks, eleven nature reserves and one hundred three other protected areas.[219] The Bjeshtë e Nemuna National Park and Sharr Mountains National Park are the most important regions of vegetation and biodiversity in Kosovo.[220] Kosovo had a 2019 Forest Landscape Integrity Index mean score of 5.19/10, ranking it 107th globally out of 172 countries.[221]Flora encompasses more than 1,800 species of vascular plant species, but the actual number is estimated to be higher than 2,500 species.[222][223] The diversity is the result of the complex interaction of geology and hydrology creating a wide variety of habitat conditions for flora growth. Although, Kosovo represents only 2.3% of the entire surface area of the Balkans, in terms of vegetation it has 25% of the Balkan flora and about 18% of the European flora.[222] The fauna is composed of a wide range of species.[220]:14 The mountainous west and southeast provide a great habitat for several rare or endangered species including brown bears, lynxes, wild cats, wolves, foxes, wild goats, roebucks and deers.[224] A total of 255 species of birds have been recorded, with raptors such as the golden eagle, eastern imperial eagle and lesser kestrel living principally in the mountains of Kosovo.Environmental issues in Kosovo include a wide range of challenges pertaining to air and water pollution, climate change, waste management, biodiversity loss and nature conservation.[225] The vulnerability of the country to climate change is influenced by various factors, such as increased temperatures, geological and hydrological hazards, including droughts, flooding, fires and rains.[225] Kosovo is not a signatory to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Kyoto Protocol or the Paris Agreement.[226] Consequently, the country is not mandated to submit a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) that are voluntary commitments outlining a nation's actions and strategies for mitigating climate change and adapting to its impacts.[226] However, since 2021, Kosovo is actively engaged in the process of formulating a voluntary NDC, with assistance provided from Japan.[226][227] In 2023, the country has established a goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 16.3% as part of its broader objective to achieve carbon neutrality by the year 2050.[227]Main article: Demographics of KosovoFurther information: Demographic history of KosovoAccording to the last census of 2014 by the Kosovo Agency of Statistics, Kosovo's population is 1,585,566.[228][229] In 2023, the overall life expectancy at birth is 79.68 years; 77.38 years for males and 81.87 years for females.[230] The estimated total fertility rate in 2023 is 1.88 children born per woman.[231] The country is the 11th most populous country in the Southeastern Europe (Balkans) and ranks as the 152nd most populous country in the world. The country's population rose steadily over the 20th century and peaked at an estimated 2.2 million in 1998. The Kosovo War and subsequent migration have decreased the population of Kosovo over time. Relations between Kosovar Albanians and Kosovar Serbs have been hostile since the rise of nationalism in the Balkans during the 19th century.[232] During Communism in Yugoslavia, the ethnic Albanians and Serbs were strongly irreconcilable, with sociological studies during the Tito-era indicating that ethnic Albanians and Serbs rarely accepted each other as neighbors or friends and few held inter-ethnic marriages.[233] Ethnic prejudices, stereotypes and mutual distrust between ethnic Albanians and Serbs have remained common for decades.[233] The level of intolerance and separation between both communities during the Tito-period was reported by sociologists to be worse than that of Croat and Serb communities in Yugoslavia, which also had tensions but held some closer relations between each other.[233] Despite their planned integration into the Kosovar society and their recognition in the Kosovar constitution, the Romani, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities continue to face many difficulties, such as segregation and discrimination, in housing, education, health, employment and social welfare.[234] Many camps around Kosovo continue to house thousands of internally displaced people, all of whom are from minority groups and communities.[235] Because many of the Roma are believed to have sided with the Serbs during the conflict, taking part in the widespread looting and destruction of Albanian property, Minority Rights Group International report that Romani people encounter hostility by Albanians outside their local areas.[236] A 2020 research report funded by the EU shows that there is a limited scale of trust and overall contact between the major ethnic groups in Kosovo.[237]According to the World Happiness Report 2024, which evaluates the happiness levels of citizens in various countries, Kosovo is currently ranked 29th among a total of 143 nations assessed, compared with neighbours Serbia ranked 37th, Montenegro 76th, North Macedonia 84th and Albania 87th.[238]Largest municipalities by population (2024)
[239]PristinaPrizrenRankMunicipalityPopulationRankMunicipalityPopulationFerizajPeja1Pristina227,15411Lipjan5,9742Prizren147,42811Drenas48,0543Ferizaj109,34513Suharek45,7134GjiJan82,90114Malisheva43,8715Peja82,66115Rahovec41,7776Gjakova78,82416Skenderaj40,6327Podujev71,01817Vit35,548Mitrovica64,68018Istog33,0669KosovoPolje64,07819Kina30,57410Vushtrri61,49320Dragash28,908Distribution of ethnic groups in Kosovo, as of the 2011 census[240]Kosovo is a fairly ethnically homogeneous country. In 2024, Albanians constituted around 92% of the population of Kosovo, followed by ethnic Serbs (2.3%), Bosniaks (1.7%), Ashkali and Balkan Egyptians (1.7%), Turks (1.2%), Romani (

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