



# Kosovo-Serbia Conflict

**For Prelims:** Kosovo-Serbia Conflict, [NATO](#), Albanians, [World War 2](#), [Soviet Union](#).

**For Mains:** Kosovo-Serbia Conflict.

## Why in News?

Serbian protesters and [NATO \(North Atlantic Treaty Organization\)](#) peacekeepers recently clashed in Kosovo, leading to more than 60 injuries. It is the most serious violence seen in the region in over a decade.

## What is the Cause for Current Tension?

- Northern Kosovo experiences frequent tensions stemming from the larger ethnic and political divide between **ethnic Serbs and Albanians**.
- Ethnic Serbs, who form a majority in northern Kosovo, attempted to block **Albanian mayors from taking charge in local councils**.
- Serbs boycotted local elections in April 2023, resulting in a low voter turnout of less than 3.5%. The election results were **rejected by Serbs as illegitimate**.

## What is the Kosovo-Serbia Conflict About?

- **Geography:**
  - **Serbia:** Serbia is a landlocked country in **eastern Europe that shares borders** with Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria.
  - **Kosovo:** Kosovo is a small landlocked region that **lies to Serbia's southwest**, sharing borders with North Macedonia, Albania, and Montenegro. Many Serbs consider **Kosovo the birthplace of their nation**.
    - Kosovo declared **independence from Serbia in 2008**, but Serbia does not recognize Kosovo's statehood.

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#### ▪ **Ethnic Background:**

- Kosovo is a region where Serbs and Albanians, representing different ethnicities and religious backgrounds, have been living for centuries.
  - 1.8 million people living in **Kosovo, 92% are Albanian and only 6% Serbian.** The rest are Bosniaks, Gorans, Turks and Roma.
- Serbs are primarily **Eastern Orthodox Christians**, while Albanians in Kosovo are predominantly Muslim. Other minority groups **include Bosnians and Turks.** Serbs form the majority in Serbia, while Albanians are the majority in Kosovo.

#### ▪ **Battle Of Kosovo:**

- Serbian nationalists view the 1389 Battle of Kosovo **between the Serbian prince Lazar Hrebeljanovic and the Ottoman Sultan Murad Hudavendigar** as a defining moment in their national struggle.
- On the other hand, Kosovo's majority ethnic Albanians view Kosovo as belonging to them and accuse Serbia of occupation and repression.

#### ▪ **Disintegration of Yugoslavia:**

- From 1945 after the end of **World War II** to 1992, the area in the Balkans comprising present-day **Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia, was one country, officially known as the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY)** with Belgrade as its capital. Serbia included autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina.
- Following the collapse of the **Soviet Union, Yugoslavia disintegrated**, with each republic becoming an independent country.
  - Slovenia was the first to **secede in 1991.**
- The late 1980s and early 1990s saw the weakening of the central government in Yugoslavia, **accompanied by resurgent nationalism.**
  - Political leaders exploited nationalist rhetoric, eroding the common Yugoslav identity and fueling fear and mistrust among ethnic groups.
- In 1998, ethnic Albanian rebels formed the **Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA)** to challenge Serbian rule.

#### ▪ **Intervention of NATO:**

- NATO intervened in 1999 after **Serbia's brutal response**, leading to a 78-day air campaign against Kosovo and Serbia.
- Serbia agreed to withdraw its forces from Kosovo, **resulting in the return of Albanian refugees** and the displacement of many Serbs who feared reprisals.
- In June 1999, Kosovo came under international administration, with its final status **remaining unresolved**. Several Serbian leaders, including President Milošević, were indicted for war crimes by the UN's tribunal.

### What is the Current Status of Kosovo?

- While Kosovo declared independence in 2008, Serbia still considers it to be an integral part of Serbian territory.
- Countries such as **India, China, and Russia** do not recognise Kosovo as a separate country, while the **US, the majority of EU countries**, Japan and Australia do so.
- A total of 99 out of 193 **United Nations (UN)** countries **now recognize Kosovo's independence**.

### What was India's Stand on the Status of Kosovo?

- India claims that **Kosovo does not fulfill the three principles required for recognition**: a defined territory, a duly constituted government accepted by the people, and effective control over an area of governance.
- India has **opposed Kosovo's membership in international bodies such as UNESCO, Apostille Convention, Convention for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes, and Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units**.
- India's non-recognition of Kosovo is **based on its support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia**, with whom it has a long-standing relationship.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

**Q. Consider the following pairs : (2023)**

**Region often Reason for being in news mentioned in news**

1. North Kivu and Ituri : War between Armenia and Azerbaijan
2. Nagorno-Karabakh: Insurgency in Mozambique
3. Kherson and Zaporizhzhia: Dispute between Israel and Lebanon

**How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?**

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

**Ans: (d)**

**Exp:**

- Kivu and Ituri are related to the Republic of Congo. A war between the Republic of Congo and Rwanda started in 1994 with genocide of 800,000 Rwandan Tutsis and Hutus. **Hence, pair 1 is NOT correctly matched.**
- Nagorno-Karabakh is a region of southwestern Azerbaijan. It is used to refer to an autonomous oblast (province) of the former Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic (S.S.R.) and to the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, a self-declared country whose independence is not internationally recognized. The old autonomous region occupied an area of about 1,700 square miles (4,400 square km), while the forces of the self-proclaimed Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh presently occupy some 2,700 square miles (7,000 square km). **Hence, pair 2 is NOT correctly matched.**

- Kherson and Zaporizhzhia are related to Ukraine and they are related to the dispute between Ukraine and Russia. **Hence, pair 3 is NOT correctly matched.**

**Source: IE**

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