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[Anti-Islam Conservatives Demonize Balkans, Kosovo](#)

By [Andrew Belonsky](#) Sunday, January 02, 2011

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International conservatives have long targeted so-called “Islamization.” While their previous efforts focused on the Middle East, they’re now moving their attention to the Balkans, particularly the contested nation of Kosovo.



[The United States and Kosovo have the same goal: inclusive democracy.]

With the new year upon us, the European Union has relaxed visa regulations for a number of its member nations, including Bosnia, Serbia and Montenegro. Kosovo, whose US-backed independence has yet to be recognized by nations like Russia, China and Venezuela, will most likely join that group in the near future.

While certainly a welcome step for millions of Europeans looking for unhindered travel on the continent, conservatives are decrying the relaxed visa policies as a portal for hypothetical “radicals.”

As the new rules go into place, asserts the site [Gates of Vienna](#), “About seven million new Muslims will be able to walk across the borders of the EU and disappear into the no-go zones along with the millions of legal and illegal immigrants who are already there.”

They go on, “Let’s say that a only tiny minority of 1% of those new migrants have jihad on their minds. That’s 3,500 new *mujahideen*, safely ensconced in the heart of Europe and drawing on state benefits to finance their jihad.”

The [Astute Bloggers](#), the site that helped fuel the [white supremacist ‘Thor’ boycott](#), has also targeted the Balkans, including Kosovo, which they describe as part of a “Muslim invasion of the EU.” I hate to break the news to these people, but [Muslims have lived in Europe for decades](#), and these visa rules do not feed into an “invasion.”

Kosovo’s rapidly becoming target number one in this fabricated war on the Balkans. “U.S. and other Western policy makers persist in portraying the Kosovo intervention as a great success,” writes blogger [Ted Galen Carpenter](#). “Governments are notoriously reluctant to acknowledge being responsible for a major policy

blunder. But the United States and its principal NATO partners need to make such an admission regarding Kosovo. Pretending that the policy has been justified, much less that it has been successful, will not make the unpleasant reality go away.”

As part of their attempts to smear the region, conservatives are taking aim at Kosovar Prime Minister Hashim Thaci, who investigators say was leader of the Kosovo Liberation Army’s organ trafficking ring during the war against the Serbs.

While surely Thaci, if guilty, should be punished, past atrocities should not be held over the heads of Kosovo’s population as a whole. It would be like calling all Germans “Nazis,” something social satirists and comedians sometimes still do.

It’s no secret Kosovo struggles under economic and ethnic strains: unemployment hovers around 45% and race-based clashes are still quite common. To use this nation, however, as a proxy for an anti-Islam war is nothing short of irresponsible, and anti-democratic.

“We have achieved a victory for a safer world, for our democratic values, and for a stronger America,” said [President Bill Clinton](#) in 1999, after the successful NATO-led strike against Serbian forces who had for decades enacted ethnic cleansing against Kosovo’s Albanians.

Vice-President [Joe Biden](#) made similar remarks during his visit to the nation last year, telling an enthusiastic crowd, “Kosovo’s independence was and remains today in my view, in the view of my government, the only viable option for stability in the region.” Biden concluded, “And your independence — as I’ve said in the countries I have visited — your independence, is irreversible, absolutely irreversible.”

Even Republican President [George W. Bush](#) celebrated Kosovo’s right to democratic life. “Independence is the goal. That’s what the people of Kosovo need to know,” the former President said in 2007. “Sooner rather than later you’ve got to say enough’s enough: Kosovo’s independent.”

Some on the right will insist that Muslims in Kosovo are launching their own holy war. The website [Twilight of the American Empire](#) claims Kosovo’s Muslim population has threatened Protestants and other Christians, and the writers conclude these people are enacting a “clash of civilizations.” You’ll no doubt hear similar arguments in the months ahead. They are, however, misleading.

While ethnic conflicts still exist in Kosovo, especially in the North, they are not characteristic of the nation as a whole. These incidents an example of the trials and tribulations of democratic progress, something even our nation hasn’t accomplished: see, for example, [Rep. Peter King’s](#) attacks on “Muslim radicalization” or unrelated [Rep. Steve King’s](#) remarks about “reparations” for black farmers.

And then, of course, there’s the staggering amount of [hate crimes](#) reported from coast to coast: nearly half of the estimated 8,336 hate crimes of 2009 were motivated by race, while about 20% were based on religious intolerance.

If we’re going by these anti-Kosovo conservatives’ standards, then our nation could be viewed as a bastion for white, Christian power. But it’s not. It’s a proverbial melting pot.

Kosovo’s not as diverse as our nation, but it is part of Europe, and its relationship with the rest of that continent should not be seen as a threat. It should be welcome with open arms, a test for American commitment to sustainable, inclusive democracy.

In the interest of full disclosure, and to prove my point, my last boyfriend hails from Kosovo. He’s also Muslim. And, you know what, he worked as a translator for the U.S. Army during the post-war period. As I told him on the 7th anniversary of his American arrival last year, he embodies the American dream, even if

he's not this nation's native son. He overcame persecution and violence, came to America and is building a prosperous life for himself.

Kosovo and its Balkan neighbors are not our enemies. They are part of the European continent and deserve support in their struggles for democracy, rather than being demonized as a failure of our own creation. To ostracize the region and its people as being "Islamic terrorists" will not only alienate our allies in the Balkans, but in Europe as a whole.

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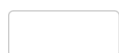
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Gforse 11 hours ago



I am an American who lived in Kosovo for four years working for the UN. I found the Kosovars to be the most pro-USA Europeans I ever met! The predominate religion, Muslim, is much more traditional and secular. Even the devout Muslims I knew well were appalled by the radical and twisted view of Islam they preached from many middle eastern countries. Although I knew many good Serbian people living in Kosovo, I saw first hand the amazing levels of propoganda and rhetoric that the Serb government would perform to try and demonize Kosovar Albanians.

Before I got there I knew little of the region, and after four years of direct contact with the people and studying the history from independent sources, it was so obvious to me the latest organ scandal claims probably will eventually be traced back to Belgrade. However in the short term the accusations alone may do the damage they intend.

They do need to clean their own house of corruption, but this seems to be the norm in any emerging democracy. I hope they eventually find peace. Good luck to Kosovo.

4 people liked this.

Like

Reply



Maximilian 16 hours ago

The Albanian religious harmony is something that world can learn from. Even Gandhi was impressed by it. Serbs and Greeks on the other side did every thing they could to entice religious friction among Albanians so they can achieve their territorial ambitions. If you look at old pictures of Serbian and Greek cities you can see hundreds of non-Orthodox religious buildings that are completely erased now. Salonika and Belgrade are exemplary with the first being the largest Jewish city in Europe.

This paid ultra conservative commentators are doing a great injustices to Christianity by including Serbs in that group. Serbian crimes against humanity were blessed by its Orthodox church. The destruction of mosques and catholic churches during the 99 war in Kosovo is very well documented by International NGO-s. Albanian European lifestyle has been witnessed and admired by thousands of visitors and reporters every year making Albania a top tourist destination for 2011.

Maximilian

5 people liked this.

Like

Reply



Go_sweden 1 day ago

The Liars are criminals. I am from Kosovo and I am a muslim. Religion in Kosovo has, is not and never will be a problem for the albanians. Serbia (russia also) and some romes are the problem, because the have terrorized freedom. Kosovo is a free country, thanks to USA. We love freedom. We love democracy.

And this criminals who are used to get away with their lies have to realize that people are not stupid. Kosovo is not a fanaticism islamic country. It's a free country where people can practice their religion.

7 people liked this.

Like

Reply



whosyourbuddy 22 hours ago [in reply to Go_sweden](#)

Is it because of peace loving muslims that christian churches and holy places were desecrated and destroyed in Kosovo? You guys keep trying to sell your bs but no one is buying, least of all the christians.

1 person liked this.

Like

Reply



Bujar Beqiri 1 day ago

Great article Mr. Belonsky. If Serbia launched four wars, her forces killed hundred of thousands persons, ruined million lifes and still serbs are not colectively guilty, how can all albanians be guilty of unproven allegations.

7 people liked this.

Like

Reply

**Guest1** 1 day ago

"While ethnic conflicts still exist in Kosovo, especially in the North, they are not characteristic of the nation as a whole." Sure, once there are no more ethnic groups but Albanians, there is no resistance to this idyllic picture...

Few questions fro the author:

-Do you know that the flag in the picture is the flag of another country, called Albania? (just a naive mistake on your part, right?)

-What happened to the Serbian ethnic minority in Albania proper since the WWII? How did it just cease to exist? Do you have any interest to investigate how it just vanished into the thin air?

-There's such pride about Mother Theresa being an ethnic Albanian woman these days; are you aware then how did the catholic Albanians fare as a religious minority within their own ethnic group, compared to majority muslims?

-Why did Albanians massively illegally emigrate from Albania into Serbian province of Kosovo for decades? Who was abusing them in Albania? Serbs, perhaps? And why go to the so dreaded Serbia of all the places if it was so bad for their human rights?

-Is it totally unremarkable to you that the ethnic structure of a region goes from 70% to less than 10% ethnically Serbian in just about 5 decades? Did the god-awful Serbs do that to incriminate Albanians?

-Despite all of the country paying special flat tax "for the development of Kosovo" for more than 3 decades while their ethnic counterparts were forced to flee before the relentless wave of Albanian immigration and silent terror under their noses, do you believe it is somehow Serbian responsibility that Kosovo was relatively poor? (As if Serbia was so rich all that time, right?)

-If you really think that little Serbia was so culpable for ignoring the development of Kosovo (despite everything above), how come the whole of the rich and powerful West wasn't able to make any difference there for more than 10 years?

I am going to stop here, although I could go on.

Yes, it is true that a part of the right wing overstates Albanian dedication to the radical Islam (although it is very existent - see under Fort Dix, for example). But your shrewd exchange of the thesis in an attempt to present Albanians as nothing but poor peace-loving victims of yet another type of chauvinism is even more off mark. You can not make right with a bigger wrong.

9 people liked this.

Like

Reply

**Viktori_72_02** 23 hours ago [in reply to Guest1](#)

I'm an Albanian of catholic religion living in Prishtina, Republic of Kosovo. Regarding the ethnic tolerance, I must say it is a foundation pole of our society. Where else in the world can you find a country with predominant muslim religion population which builds and assists the building of the grand Catholic Cathedral in the heart of its capitol city? That's only in Kosovo. If our neighboring countries (including Serbia and Greece) can learn something from Albanians, is the multicultural secularism and tolerance.

4 people liked this.

Like

Reply

**John** 8 hours ago [in reply to Viktori_72_02](#)

Ah yes, Ethnic Cleansing, Burning Churches, Stealing the Organs, Setting huge amounts of prizren on fire because Serbs live there, Running Concentration camps for minorities, A human rights record comparable to Nazi Germany's. All part of the 'Ethnic Tolerance'

1 person liked this.

Like

Reply

**Rom** 1 day ago

It was not only the Serbs that were cleansed from Kosovo. Roma, Gorani,

Ashkali & Egyptians, were driven out from their homes & in many cases murdered by KLA terrorists.

It is not strange that these minorities would prefer to live in the multi-culture that is Serbia. During the NATO bombing of Serbia I even met Kosovo Albanians in Belgrade escaping the wrath of the KLA!

Take away the international heroin trade, people trafficking & Organ trading & Kosovar society would collapse, as crime is by far the biggest

sector in the economy.

4 people liked this.

Like

Reply



Zoti 23 hours ago

Thank you Mr. Belonsky for presenting teh other side of the coin in the ongoing Kosovo debate.

I would like to refute the claim that there has been illegal immigration of Albanians from Albanian proper to Kosova, a tool of Serb propaganda that keeps being repated by Serb commenters. Yes there have been some Albanians from the Dukagjini highlands who have settled in Kosova before WWII but that's because historically that region belonged to Kosova. After WWII Enver Hoxha's communists did not allow any movement of Albanians anywhere and anyone who tried to flee the country was severely punished and their families sent to interment camps.

Asa matter of facts in the Albanians lowlnads of Myzeqe there are to this day settlements of Kosovar Albanains who fled persecution after WWI from the Serb terror.

3 people liked this.

Like

Reply



just another human being 11 hours ago [in reply to Zoti](#)

very true

Like

Reply



John 8 hours ago

“We have achieved a victory for a safer world, for our democratic values, and for a stronger America,” said President Bill Clinton in 1999, after the successful NATO-led strike against Serbian forces who had for decades enacted ethnic cleansing against Kosovo’s Albanians.

Erm Decades? The first external refugee was registered 3 days after the bombing began and even a Nato general said that they'd bombed the wrong people

1 person liked this.

Like

Reply



[Fatmire Halili-Bunjaku](#) 1 day ago

Finally some sense about KOSOVA!

5 people liked this.

Like

Reply



bishop 11 hours ago

Al Qaeda in Kosovo

<http://www.vwwnews.net/story.p...>

Albanian Mafia fueling Al Qaeda terrorist activity in US

<http://www.examiner.com/adopti...>

2007 Fort Dix attack plot - all Albanians

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2...>

1 person liked this.

Like

Reply



Dragoslav 1 day ago

obviously this great reporter hasnt seen the destruction of serbian churches and monasteries in Kosovo,which still have to be guarded by foreign troops by the way.Maybe this so called writer can look at this picture and interpret what it means

<http://www.kosovo.net/kladecap...>

maybe he hasnt read that even albanian intelligence agencies confirm the presence of al qaeda in Kosovo.Maybe this writer should investigate a little further before he actually writes something.Oh sorry thats old school journalism.

2 people liked this.

Like

Reply



Bozana1978 23 hours ago

The article is a clear display of ignorance of the situation in Kosovo. The conflict in Kosovo is nothing more than a land grab for Albanians. The picture in the article shows the flag of the republic of albania alongside a "Kosovo" flag.

The writer might be surprised to know that the stars on the "Kosovo" flag represent the greater albanian territories of Presavo (in Serbia proper), Tetovo (in FYR Macedonia), southern Montenegro, Northern Greece. Kosovo and Albania. It was the only way to get the albanians to agree to the new flag.

1 person liked this.

Like

Reply



just another human being 10 hours ago [in reply to Bozana1978](#)

I don't agree with Bozana.

You are in fact projecting Serbia's and Greece's historical main goals--- the "land grab" of Albania from the north--Serbia and the south--Greece by the only way through assimilation through religion and economic reforms. The fact that Albanians reverted to Islam was to put a stop to this Land stealing. And the fact that to this day, Kosova/Albania, are PARAMOUNT countries in terms of a BACKGROUND HISTORY FOR RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE that the WEST and the EAST can learn from.

JUDAISM/ CHRISTIANITY/ ISLAM are all ABRAHAMIAN religions.

CHRISTIANITY is a sect of JUDAISM (it stayed in the Synagouge for 3 centuries)

ISLAM is a way of life, with pure revelations (that haven't been altered ever since they were revealed)

Therefore, we are all sons of ABRAHAM, a concept that Albanians/Kosovars have understood well beyond the EAST and the WEST.

1 person liked this.

Like

Reply



bishop 11 hours ago

"after the successful NATO-led strike against Serbian forces who had for decades enacted ethnic cleansing against Kosovo's Albanians" - LIE

Like

Reply



Icibana 16 hours ago

As someone new to Kosovo and trying to learn as much about it as possible I was amazed by all the negative publicity of the country so I made blog to show the positive side of the country and would like people to write something good about it instead of the usual negative propaganda.

<http://friendsofkosovo.wordpre.../>

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Reply



[mrlood](#) 21 hours ago

This is Islam:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v...>

ATTACHED FILES



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Reply



[tlwinslow](#) 23 hours ago

It's not just conservatives but all non-Muslim Westerners who need to unite against the onslaught of the intolerant supremacist ideology of Islam, which seeks to make the Quran the constitution and destroy every freedom we fought for. While most Muslim spokesmen are disinfo. artists and turn black white and white black to get Allah's hands on the green, the real goals are openly proclaimed by Anjem Choudary and others. The Saudis have for years been financing the infusion of their fundamentalist brand of Islam to the Balkans, and the horrific results are seen almost daily.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/t...>

<http://www.jihadwatch.org/2010...>

<http://tinyurl.com/islamwatch>

Like

Reply



[mrlood](#) 21 hours ago [in reply to tlwinslow](#)

You can unite all you want, but you can't fight the Truth.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v...>

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Full (Leather) Circle
January 3, 6:53 pm



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January 3, 6:30 pm





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