

## ✓ Question<sup>[2]</sup>

**What is the photograph's date, title, & creator? What does this suggest?** 1919. Packing up for home... Unknown Photographer. The title reads like a caption and provides a great deal of information: it identifies "Prizren," "Serbian," the "Red Cross," etc. There must have been a great need for humanitarian relief (flour and medicine) to victims of war. There seem to be a lot of bundles and packages of aid.

**What type of person might have taken this photograph? For what purpose?** The photograph could have been taken for promotional use by the Red Cross (i.e., brochures for recruitment or fund-raising purposes). Or it could be a personal photograph taken by a Red Cross worker to document the amount of aid provided. The mule is at the center of the photograph, a common convention of photographers to convey importance. Maybe this was an unusually large collection of bundles and packages distributed and seeing them all loaded onto one mule was a scene that someone wanted to remember or share with others.

**Was it random or posed, amateur or professional, private or published?** Likely random, only the person in the American-style suit and the person next to the door seem to be looking at the camera. No one is posed.

The mule will carry bundles to a home in the Sharr Mountains near Prizren in Southern Kosovo. The city is known for the "League of Prizren" a political group of Albanians who, in 1878, demanded autonomy from the Ottoman Empire. That same year, Serbs living several hundred miles North near the city of Belgrade formed a government, developed a constitution, declared independence, and were recognized by the international community as a sovereign nation: Serbia.<sup>[7]</sup> In 1912, after Albanians designed a government, sent representatives to negotiate for autonomy, and led a series of military revolts, the Ottomans agreed in principle to Albanians in Kosovo having their own autonomous state.<sup>[3]</sup> Before it could happen Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece declared war on the Ottoman Empire and the international community subsequently recognized new nations including an Albanian nation *without* Kosovo. The new "Albania" was west of Kosovo and governed only 40% of ethnic Albanians in the region.

Then, without following its own constitutional protocol for changing its borders and without a treaty or formal international recognition, Serbia claimed Kosovo.<sup>[3]</sup> Albanians in Kosovo rebelled and continued to advocate for independence. **Should Kosovo have been recognized as a sovereign nation in 1912?** The question underscores an important international law principle enshrined in Article 1 of the UN Charter: self-determination, the legal right of people to decide their own destiny in the international order. It also underscores another important international law principle enshrined in Article 2 of the UN Charter: territorial integrity, the legal right of sovereign states to defend their borders and all territory therein.<sup>[6]</sup> After the Great War territories once controlled by the defeated Austria-Hungary were claimed by Serbia and the international community recognized the "Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes" with Serbs as the dominant ethnic group. Because Serbia again claimed Kosovo, it was absorbed into this kingdom.<sup>[3]</sup> This nation later changed its name to "Yugoslavia" (i.e., Land of the Southern Slavs).

If "Serbian" in the title describes this man's citizenship it is likely wrong; if it describes his ethnicity that, too, is likely wrong. Historical facts and his clothes—he is wearing a traditional Albanian belt (Brez), sleeved vest (Xhamada), and hat (Qylafë)—suggest he is an Albanian from Kosovo. Shortly before this photograph, the Ottoman Empire controlled Southeastern Europe's Balkan Peninsula for nearly 400 years. Serbs and Albanians were two ethno-linguistic groups who had been controlled by, and often rebelled against, the Ottomans. Serbs are a large Slavic tribe that moved from Central Europe to the Balkans after the Roman Empire's fall. They tended to live in the lowland plains, practiced mostly Eastern Orthodoxy, spoke a Serbian Language, and wrote using Cyrillic letters. Albanians are descendants of the Illyrian tribe, inhabitants of the region prior to the Roman Empire's rise. They tended to live in and around the mountains, practiced mostly Islam and Catholicism, spoke an Albanian language, and wrote using Latin letters.<sup>[3]</sup> With many ethno-linguistic groups living so closely together—Albanians, Bulgars, Croats, Serbs, Slovenes, Turks, Greeks, etc.—a persistent issue arose: Who gets to have their own nation and why? The answer is surprisingly complicated because there are competing sets of criteria the international community accepts for national sovereignty. The Declarative Theory has four criteria: a permanent population; a defined territory; a government; and a capacity to enter into diplomatic relations with other sovereign nations.<sup>[4]</sup> The Constitutive Theory adds another criterion: formal recognition from established sovereign nations.<sup>[5]</sup> Is formal recognition by other nations required for national sovereignty? That question divides the international community. The United Nations favors the Constitutive Theory by awarding "full member status" to nations that receive approval by 60% (9/15) of Security Council members, including all 5 permanent members and 66% (127/193) of the General Assembly.<sup>[6]</sup>

## ✓ Observe

Unknown Photographer. (1919). *Packing up for home. A Serbian mountaineer having obtained his ration of American flour and Red Cross medicine for his family, ties it aboard the family mule and hits the trail for home. This picture was taken at Prizren where the Red Cross has a relief station.* Library of Congress.<sup>[1]</sup>



The man in the American-style suit is a member of the International Red Cross, a humanitarian organization that provides aid to victims of war and natural disasters.<sup>[8]</sup> The Red Cross was the idea of a businessman from Geneva, Switzerland who witnessed terrible suffering during war and convinced politicians to call the 1864 Geneva Convention where nations vowed to refrain from attacking hospitals and field medics during battles, actively protect all civilians and private property, and, without distinction, treat battlefield wounded and offer aid to civilians.<sup>[9]</sup> Hospitals and medics were to display a sign of immunity: a large red cross on a white background. **Why was the Red Cross in Kosovo in 1919?** The Balkan Wars (1912-1913) and The Great War (1914-1918) were especially destructive. Serbia claimed Kosovo and began a systematic effort to change its ethnographic statistics and character to favor Serbs. Serbia destroyed Albanian villages and committed massacres, prohibited Albanian-language schools, confiscated all weapons other than bread-knives, and turned Mosques and Catholic Churches into barracks and barns.<sup>[3]</sup> Albanians continued to rebel against Serbia and advocate for Kosovo's independence. During the Great War, a second campaign against Serbia resulted in Austria-Hungary (with Bulgarian support) defeating and occupying Kosovo; nearly all of the anti-Albanian laws were removed. At the end of the Great War Austria-Hungary was defeated by the Allied Powers, the Serbian government was restored, and Kosovo was reclaimed by Serbia. The "ethnic cleansing" resumed. In January and February of 1919 alone, Serbian troops killed over 6,000 Albanians and destroyed nearly 4,000 homes.<sup>[10]</sup>

## ✓ Reflect

**How does this photograph compare with other information?**

Much of the information gathered from this photograph coheres with texts from the 1864 Geneva Convention decisions and the Red Cross. This photograph explores international law as it concerns national sovereignty, other photographs may explore outer space, conduct of war, or the environment.

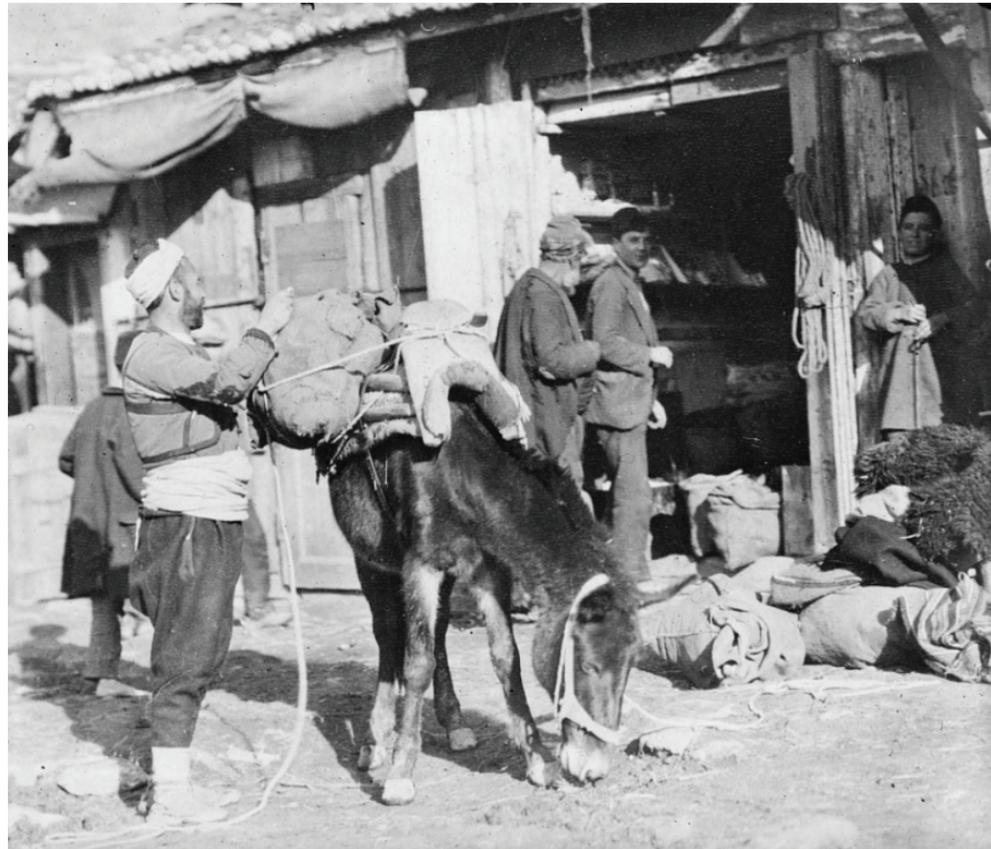
**Why might other information agree or disagree with this photograph?**

Other photographs or texts may explore international law from different perspectives that answer the overarching question differently. Other sources may have different reasons for presenting data, such as to make their perspective seem more reasonable, or to present "others" in a worse way: maybe concentrating just on Albanian responses to Serbia.

**What else do you need or want to know about this photograph?**

What subsequent conventions have met and what requirements have they added to international law related to national sovereignty? What should policy-makers do when international law conflicts with their state's national interests?

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**Citations: [#] throughout the primer and lesson**

1. Unknown Photographer (copyright from the American Red Cross). 1919. Packing up for home. A Serbian mountaineer having obtained his ration of American flour and Red Cross medicine for his family, ties it aboard the family mule and hits the trail for home. This picture was taken at Prizren where the Red Cross has a relief station. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/an-rc.04561>
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18. This photograph is from the online news story from the Canadian Broadcasting Company, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hundreds-protest-kosovo-independence-in-3-canadian-cities-1.769771>

Citations →