

support. For example, in 2008 an anti-pornography law was passed, and in some regions local governments have imposed dress restrictions, curfews for women, and stricter Islamic education requirements. Aspinall says such developments “arguably point to the early stages of a long-term struggle to Islamize the state from within.”

Today Indonesia is grappling with second-tier reforms aimed at improving the quality of governance, which suffered because so many challengers were given “a piece of the democracy pie.” Aspinall warns, “Poor governance is often the midwife of authoritarian reversals, and while Indonesia has yet to produce its Alberto Fujimori, Thaksin Shinawatra, or Vladimir Putin, [it] is not yet out of the danger zone.”

OTHER NATIONS

Red, White, and Balkan

THE SOURCE: “Unapproachable Light” by Dimiter Kenarov, in *Virginia Quarterly Review*, Spring 2010.

PICTURE A PREDOMINANTLY Muslim city where residents celebrate Thanksgiving and Old Glory flies above storefronts. Pipe dream? Not in Ferizaj, Kosovo, home of the largest American military installation in the Balkans. As Dimiter Kenarov, a doctoral student in English at the University of California, Berkeley, tells it, “To walk around Ferizaj is to move through a weird fantasy that never came true in the Middle East.”

Before the disintegration of

Yugoslavia during the 1990s, Ferizaj was a small rural outpost that had grown around a train station built during the Ottoman era. (Eight thousand Christian Orthodox Serbs lived in the town. Now, one Serbian resident estimates they number just eight.) The vast majority of Ferizaj’s 165,000-odd inhabitants are Muslim Albanians.

Today, the town has the “frenzied atmosphere of a frontier settlement,” thanks to Camp Bondsteel—a 955-acre facility containing 50 helipads, two chapels, a Burger King, and a Taco Bell, along with three gyms and volleyball and basketball courts. It was created in less than 90 days in 1999.

Kenarov explains that Camp Bondsteel was ostensibly built to house the U.S. contingent of the United Nations’ peacekeeping mission in the region, but he thinks that the American planners had a longer-term commitment in mind. If the United States plays things right, he says, “Kosovo could become the strongest card in the

ideological campaign for hearts and minds among Muslim nations in the Middle East and Southeast Asia.” Yet this corner of the earth is not on the radar of most Americans.

The base provides more than 1,000 jobs, which endears it to locals, particularly given an unemployment rate close to 60 percent. As a member of the Ferizaj city council told Kenarov, “In Kosovo we are known as a city of America. Ferizaj is more stable, we have a better economy than other cities, and everyone knows this is thanks to America.”

The warm and fuzzy feelings aren’t limited to Ferizaj. Kosovars resoundingly supported the U.S. invasion of Iraq. In the capital, Pristina, one of the main drags is called Bill Clinton Boulevard and a replica of the Statue of Liberty sits atop Hotel Victory. Of a recently discovered Kosovar Al Qaeda fighter, the mayor of Ferizaj speaks plainly: “The whole Kosovo community is ashamed of him. We shit on him.”



Vice President Joe Biden addresses troops at Camp Bondsteel, a large but little-known U.S. military outpost, complete with Burger King, in pro-American Ferizaj, Kosovo, in 2009.