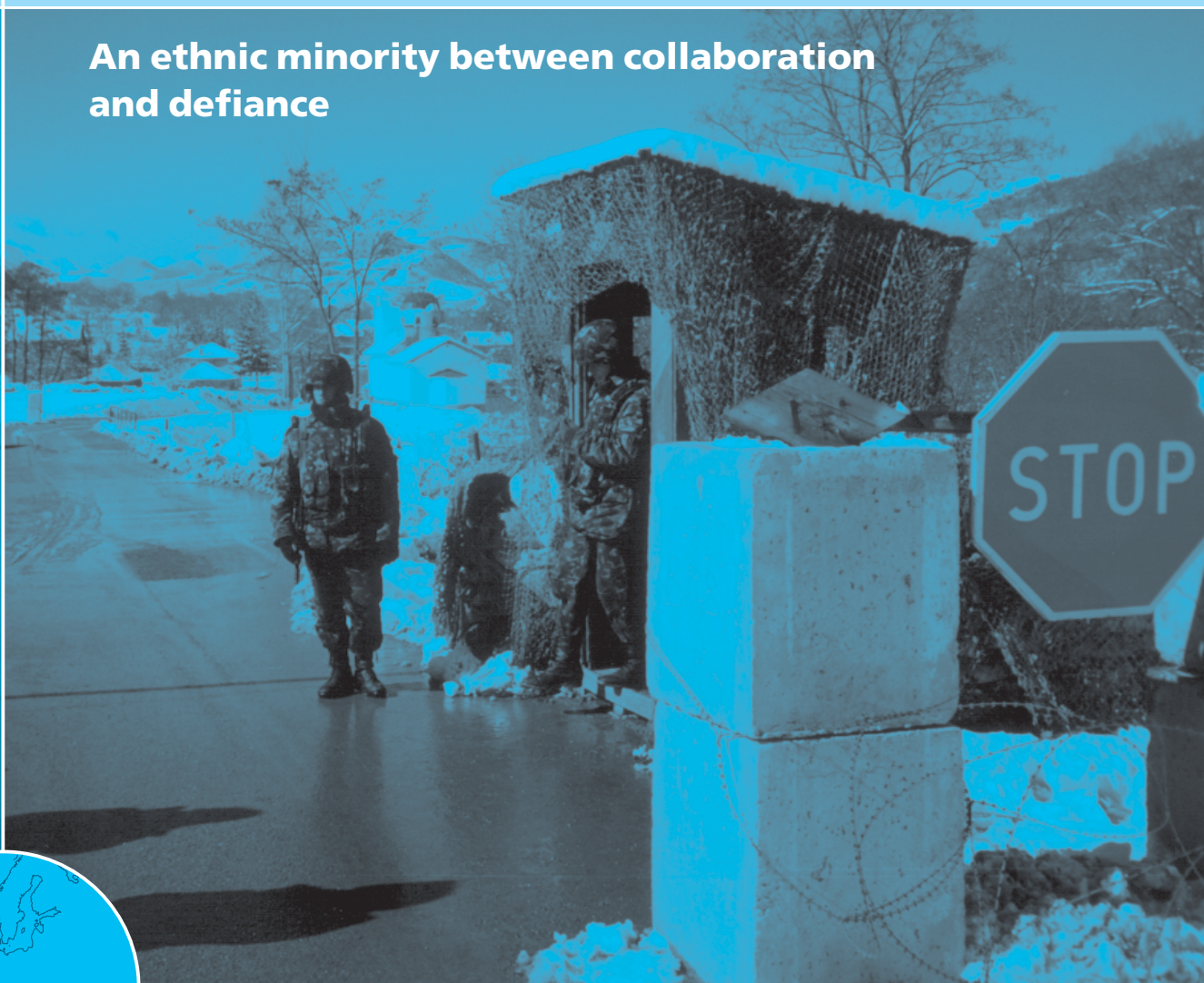


**Bonn International Center for Conversion,  
Friedrich Naumann Foundation and Saferworld**

# The Kosovo Serbs:

**An ethnic minority between collaboration  
and defiance**



**Anna Matveeva** and **Wolf-Christian Paes**

**June 2003**



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**JUNE 2003**

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# Serb communities in Kosovo



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## Acronyms

<b>AAK</b>	<i>Aleanca për Ardhmërinë e Kosovës</i> (Alliance for the Future of Kosovo)
<b>APC</b>	Armoured personnel carrier
<b>BICC</b>	Bonn International Center for Conversion
<b>CIVPOL</b>	United Nations Civilian Police
<b>DHSS</b>	<i>Demohriscanska Stranka Srbije</i> (Christian Democratic Party of Serbia)
<b>DOS</b>	<i>Demokratska Opozicija Srbije</i> (Democratic Opposition of Serbia)
<b>DS</b>	<i>Demokratska stranka</i> (Democratic Party)
<b>DSS</b>	<i>Demokratska stranka Srbije</i> (Democratic Party of Serbia)
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FRY</b>	Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
<b>FYROM</b>	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
<b>ICG</b>	International Crisis Group
<b>IDP</b>	Internally displaced person
<b>JIAS</b>	Joint Interim Administration Structure
<b>KFOR</b>	Kosovo Force
<b>KLA</b>	Kosovo Liberation Army
<b>KPC</b>	Kosovo Protection Corps
<b>KPS</b>	Kosovo Police Service
<b>LDK</b>	<i>Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës</i> (Democratic League of Kosovo)
<b>MOI</b>	Ministry of the Interior
<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
<b>ND</b>	New Democracy Party
<b>NLA</b>	National Liberation Army
<b>PKD</b>	<i>Partia Demokratike e Kosovës</i> (Kosovo Democratic Party)
<b>PISG</b>	Provisional Institutions of Self-Government
<b>RIP</b>	Regional Implementation Plan
<b>SALW</b>	Small arms and light weapons
<b>SECI</b>	Southeast European Cooperative Initiative
<b>SEESAC</b>	South Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons
<b>SFRY</b>	Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
<b>SNC</b>	Serb National Council
<b>SNC-G</b>	Serb National Council – Gracanica
<b>SNC-M</b>	Serb National Council – Mitrovica
<b>SPOT</b>	<i>Srpski Pokret Otpora na Kosovu i Metohiji</i> (Kosovo Serb Resistance Movement)
<b>SPS</b>	Socialist Party of Serbia
<b>SRS</b>	Special Representative of the Secretary General
<b>SSAP</b>	Szeged Small Arms Process
<b>SSZ</b>	<i>Socijalisti Sirinicke Zupe</i> (Socialists from the Sirina Valley)
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNHCR</b>	The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNMIK</b>	United Nations Mission in Kosovo
<b>UNSC</b>	United Nations Security Council

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# Foreword

## **SAFERWORLD BEGAN WORKING ACTIVELY IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE**

(SEE) in 2000. In the context of European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) expansion it became increasingly clear that issues such as arms proliferation, trafficking and control were Europe-wide problems that needed to be addressed at a regional level. Therefore, throughout 2000 Saferworld sought to bring together EU member states, EU associate countries, members of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, international organisations and civil society organisations in order to discuss the problems of small arms and light weapons (SALW) proliferation. There was growing awareness of the detrimental effects that uncontrolled and illicit arms proliferation can have, in terms of undermining stability and security, facilitating criminal and political violence, and undermining economic development. A need to improve control over small arms flows was thus recognised. In November 2000, Saferworld organised a roundtable in Szeged, Hungary, together with the Szeged Centre for Security Policy and the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which led to the initiation of an informal initiative known as the Szeged Small Arms Process (SSAP). At a second meeting in September 2001 it was agreed that the SSAP would 'play a complementary and reinforcing role in assisting the effective implementation of the [Stability Pact for SEE] Regional Implementation Plan,' (RIP) and this co-operation was explored further at a third meeting in Belgrade in June 2002. The SSAP has been further boosted by the creation of the Szeged Small Arms Network in November 2002 at a seminar held jointly by Saferworld and the Szeged Centre for Security Policy. This is a network of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) from SEE who plan to work together to increase their effectiveness in combating SALW proliferation.

The opening of the South Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, (SEESAC) in May 2002 is also very important for the future of arms control efforts in the region. SEESAC is based in Belgrade and is tasked with assisting governments and other actors in the region in their efforts to implement the Regional Implementation Plan. Saferworld has played an active role, through the SSAP, in supporting SEESAC. Among SEESAC's staff is a full-time 'NGO Co-ordinator' on secondment from the SSAP, whose responsibilities include liaising with the SSAP. In addition, SSAP representatives have attended 'Regional Steering Group' meetings of national government representatives, which the Stability Pact's Office of the Special Co-ordinator convenes twice a year to guide RIP work. SSAP members have also begun to carry out concrete projects in collaboration with SEESAC.

Saferworld's work in South Eastern Europe aims to support and develop the SSAP through a wide range of activities, including policy dialogue meetings, awareness-raising, capacity-building and research. The roundtable held in Skopje in March 2003

co-hosted by Saferworld and the Presidential Cabinet of Macedonia in association with BICC entitled 'Small Arms and Light Weapons in Macedonia: Priorities for Action' is a good example. It has sponsored and organised training sessions to encourage local students and municipal leaders to consider small arms issues and what can be done to prevent them. It has also run a number of projects in co-operation with local and regional organisations. For example, last year it helped the Southeast European Cooperation Initiative (SECI) Regional Centre for Combating Trans-border Crime Task Force on SALW to design a system for exchanging information between member countries on illicit SALW trafficking. In April 2003, it hosted a training workshop together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for NGOs in Kosovo, aiming to develop work on SALW, such as project planning and preparation and awareness-raising and a media seminar in Macedonia for Southern Serbian, Kosovo, Macedonian and Albanian journalists.

Saferworld has published a number of research reports since 2000 on arms and security issues in SEE. Recent reports have included *Small arms and light weapons in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: The nature of the problem*, *The Szeged Small Arms Process: Towards a South Eastern European action programme on small arms in the context of the Stability Pact*, and *An unprecedented experiment: Security sector reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (jointly with BICC). All the reports have been widely disseminated, and in some cases they have formed the basis of discussion for regional meetings. A study on efforts to establish multi-ethnic police forces in SEE, entitled *Policing the peace: police reform in Kosovo, Southern Serbia and Macedonia*, will be released in mid-2003 reflecting on the lessons learnt from such efforts and how they may be useful for international actors planning further interventions.

Based on field research and consultation conducted over the course of 2002 and early 2003, this research report aims to fill a gap in the existing literature on the region by focusing on the situation of the Serbs in Kosovo since the international intervention began in 1999. It is hoped that it will be of use both as a primary source of information and analysis, and to inform policy makers both domestically and within the international community, including donors. Finally, it is hoped that this report will stimulate further debate and discussion about the future for security in Kosovo, and the prospects for arms control and weapons collection initiatives.

**Paul Eavis**

*Director, Saferworld*

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# Preface

**ABOUT 100,000 SERBS**, out of a pre-war population twice that size, remain in the territory of Kosovo, the largest non-Albanian ethnic group in the province. While many Serbs sought refuge in Serbia and Montenegro after the withdrawal of the Yugoslav security apparatus and the establishment of the United Nations interim administration in the summer of 1999, those that did stay behind oscillate between resistance to and collaboration with the international community. Whereas the decade leading up to the international intervention was marked by the repression of the Albanian population by Serb-dominated state structures, the last four years have witnessed acts of violence and terror committed against Serbs and members of other ethnic minorities by Albanian extremists.

Protected by Kosovo Force (KFOR) troops, the situation in the Serb enclaves in the southern part of Kosovo seems to have stabilised, the communities settling into an uneasy co-existence with their Albanian neighbours. Meanwhile, the Serbs of Mitrovica and other towns north of the River Ibar remain defiant of international authority, pushing for eventual reunification with Serbia proper. This split, which reflects the different living conditions among different parts of the Serb community in Kosovo, is mirrored on the political stage. Whereas moderate political leaders, mainly from the South, have been co-operating with the international administration and participating in the Kosovo Assembly, some Northern leaders have applied pressure on their communities to abstain from the polls, perpetuating the Milosevic-era politics of self-isolation.

The situation is further complicated by international ambivalence about the future of Kosovo. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 provides for an international protectorate as an interim measure towards the establishment of multiethnic self-rule institutions within the framework of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), now Serbia and Montenegro. At the same time, the resolution makes a provision for the citizens of Kosovo to decide about their future, which Albanians interpret as the right to hold a referendum about the eventual independence of the territory. Such a motion, which would likely draw the support of virtually all Albanians in Kosovo, is vehemently opposed by the Serb population, which would prefer the return of Serbian sovereignty over the province. The international administration has so far avoided giving clear signals as to when the final status of Kosovo will be decided, using the ambivalent language of the resolution to defend the status quo, which becomes ever more difficult to maintain given the shrinking resources made available through the donor community.

While the Serbs of Kosovo do not represent the only ethnic minority which has been suffering from economic marginalisation and physical intimidation, they differ from other population groups such as the Roma because of their special relationship with

the authorities in Serbia proper. Serb leaders in Kosovo are certainly more than just puppets under the control of their Belgrade masters, and many hold positions within the political institutions of the Republic of Serbia as well. Consequently, the Serb political landscape in Kosovo reflects to some extent the divisions of Belgrade party politics. At the same time, the presence of Serbs in Kosovo presents both radical and moderate political forces in Serbia with a source of political capital. Whereas nationalists can use the issue of their Serb brethren in Kosovo to mobilise electoral support, moderates have been trying to use the issue to win political and economic concessions from the international community.

The impact of recent events on the political processes shaping the future of Kosovo such as the dissolution of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and its replacement with by the federation of Serbia and Montenegro, and the assassination of the reformist Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic in early 2003, is difficult to judge. Only time will tell whether they will help to sever the remaining ties between the breakaway province and the Republic of Serbia, or whether on the contrary they will strengthen nationalist forces in Serbia, which could lead to renewed confrontation with the international community over the final status of the territory.

The Friedrich Naumann Foundation, which is based in Potsdam, Germany, works in more than 80 countries around the globe to promote liberal democracy, human rights and economic opportunities through free market policies. The sub-regional office in Belgrade, previously in Skopje, is responsible for programs in Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania. Through seminars and workshops, policy dialogues and training the Foundation supports both political parties and civil society organisations. Our work offers a forum for new ideas and for discussions across ethnic and political lines. It is with this intention that we present this report – as food for thought – continuing the exploration of policy options for Kosovo that we started in November 2001 with the presentation of another report on the heritage of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA).

**Rainer Willert**

*Resident Representative, Friedrich Naumann Foundation*

# 1

## Introduction

**FOUR YEARS AGO**, at the height of international intervention, Kosovo was on everybody's television screens. At the time, the intervention into Kosovo was driven by two interlinked factors: to stop the persecution of the oppressed Kosovo Albanians and to deal a decisive blow to the regime of Slobodan Milosevic in Belgrade, which was regarded as the source of all the problems in the Balkans. With these two goals successfully accomplished, work to construct a new Kosovo began, and the province became a full-scale international protectorate. However, four years down the road much has changed, and since the fall of Milosevic regime Kosovo has received less and less attention. September 11, the war on terrorism, the US intervention in Afghanistan, and recently the war against Iraq have all stolen the international headlines. Kosovo has gradually ceased to be considered as a textbook case of 'humanitarian intervention', and is coming to be seen as an international liability. The international community has already started to scale down its commitment to Kosovo, as other priorities gain momentum. Serbia, by contrast, has emerged as the 'new darling' of the West.<sup>1</sup>

With the international community pondering state-building scenarios for Afghanistan and a post-war Iraq, now might be an appropriate juncture to examine earlier assumptions about how the situation in Kosovo has developed and to reflect upon how the framework that was designed for international engagement in the province measures up against the realities on the ground. This report is a follow-up to Saferworld's study on *Small arms and light weapons in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: The nature of the problem*<sup>2</sup> and the Bonn International Center for Conversion's (BICC) report on the mobilisation and demobilisation of the Kosovo Liberation Army, *Wag the Dog: The Mobilization and Demobilization of the Kosovo Liberation Army*,<sup>3</sup> and aims to fill a gap in the recent literature on Kosovo by focussing on the situation of Serbs in Kosovo. It seeks to shed light on some key questions: firstly, what factors have shaped the recent history of Kosovo and brought things to the current situation; secondly, to what extent does this situation match the expectations and visions for Kosovo at the time of intervention; thirdly, how sustainable are the present security arrangements for the survival of Serb communities in Kosovo; and fourthly, what are the prospects for small arms control in Serb areas of Kosovo. Finally, it discusses various options for arriving at sustainable peace, which is impossible without determination of the final status of the province.

<sup>1</sup> To provide some illustration, the EU's aid programme known as CARDS (Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation) provides the bulk of support to Serbia and Montenegro totalling €960 million, making it the largest recipient of the EU aid in Western Balkans, followed by Croatia (€191 million).

<sup>2</sup> Davis I, *Small arms and light weapons in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: The nature of the problem*, (Saferworld, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Heinemann-Grüder A and Paes W, *Wag The Dog: The Mobilization and Demobilization of the Kosovo Liberation Army*, (Bonn International Center for Conversion, 2001).

The report argues that the current situation of the Serb community in Kosovo is unviable. The international agencies on the ground provide a coping mechanism in an otherwise unpromising environment, and ensure the everyday survival of Serbs and other minorities. This, however, cannot last forever, as current levels of international protection cannot be sustained. The report also questions whether it is reasonable to invest energy and resources in an attempt to micro-manage particular aspects of day-to-day security in Kosovo, eg by providing armoured protection for the free movement of Serbs, when the fundamental political and security issues relating to the future of Kosovo – questions with which the international community is currently struggling – remain unresolved. One of the main obstacles to finding a lasting solution is the prevalent belief in the international community that a multi-ethnic society, which sticks to the letter of international law and respects the established territorial boundaries, can easily be recreated, and the pressure that is put onto international staff on the ground to accomplish this. As a consequence, the international community in the capitals of power has sometimes failed to be realistic in its assessments of what is either viable or sustainable. With these challenges in mind, this report aims to shed some light on the difficult situation of the non-Albanian population in Kosovo. It focuses in particular on the Kosovo Serbs, who form the largest minority group and play a special role in the discussion about the final status of the province because of their links to the Serb ‘motherland’ across the administrative border.

# 2

## History of the conflict



Village in Strpce

**THE CONFLICT BETWEEN SERBS AND ALBANIANS** in Kosovo in the 1990s, which ultimately triggered NATO's military actions against Yugoslavia and the creation of a protectorate in the territory administered by the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has deep roots in the history of South Eastern Europe. While the name 'Kosovo' entered the realm of history only in the 1870s and the current administrative borders have existed only since 1945, the area bordering present-day Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro and Serbia proper has been contested by various regional powers for many centuries. Since the end of Ottoman rule over the province in 1912, the competing historic and ethnographic claims of Serbs and Albanians have shaped the political agenda in the region. There is not enough space in this report for an in-depth discussion of the complex history of Kosovo and its 'politicisation' by nationalist historians on both sides during the 19th and 20th centuries.<sup>4</sup> Instead, this section endeavours to give a brief overview of the main historic developments, and describe how they are interpreted by both sides.

<sup>4</sup> For a good historical overview, see Malcolm N, *Kosovo – A Short History*, (Macmillan, 1998).

## Kosovo up to the twentieth century

### The Serb view

Kosovo (known by the Serbs as ‘Kosovo and Metohija’) holds a special place in popular Serb history as the ‘cradle of Serb civilisation’ and the birthplace of the first Serb kingdom in medieval times. It is this claim, coupled with the assumption of a continuous Serb settlement in the province throughout history, which forms the backbone of Serbia’s claim to sovereignty over the territory. Most historians agree that Slavs did not arrive on the Balkan peninsula until the sixth century AD and that present-day Kosovo was part of the medieval Serb kingdom during a period of some 250 years between 1200 and 1455 AD. While the ethnic composition of medieval Kosovo is not known in detail, it seems certain that a Serb peasant population shared the territory with Vlach and Albanian pastoralists.<sup>5</sup> Serb historians make reference to the number of Serb Orthodox monasteries and churches, believed to exceed 1,400 in the province, to bolster their claim of a Serb cultural and religious hegemony in the territory during pre-Ottoman times.<sup>6</sup>

Medieval Serbia, which had reached its peak in the reign of Stefan Dusan (1331–1355), began to decline almost immediately after Dusan’s death. The famous battle of Kosovo Polje in 1389 against the advancing Ottoman troops is seen by Serb historians as the turning point in the fate of the Balkans and serves as the historical backdrop for a powerful nationalist myth of Serbia sacrificing itself as the defender of Christian Europe against the Muslim hordes of the Ottoman Empire. This image, which was invoked repeatedly by Serb politicians during the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in Kosovo, has been critically dissected by Western scholars, pointing out that the battle of Kosovo Polje was but a minor skirmish in the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans and that Serbia did not lose sovereignty over Kosovo until 1455.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the story of the battle and the following destruction of the medieval Serb kingdom remains a powerful founding myth for modern Serbia, and continues to play a role in the discussion among politicians and the general public throughout Serbia about the future of Kosovo.

According to the Serb telling of their own history, the battle of Kosovo Polje started a period of severe repression for Serbs in Kosovo, forcing Serb families either to adopt the Islamic faith and later on the Albanian language, or to leave their homes and settle in other parts of the Balkans. When asked about the shifts in the demographic balance, Serb historians point towards two waves of Serb migration from Kosovo in 1690 and 1737. According to some scholars, it was only after the exodus of the Serb population that substantial numbers of ‘opportunistic’ Albanians settled in Kosovo, taking over the fields and houses of the departed Serb peasants. When Serbia and Montenegro claimed Kosovo from the remnants of the Ottoman Empire in 1912 this only served to rectify the injustices of the past.

### The Albanian view

Unsurprisingly, the Albanian view of the history of Kosovo differs from the Serb perspective. Unlike the Serbs, who could point towards a state tradition on the territory of Kosovo during the medieval period, the Albanians could not present similar evidence. As a people, Albanians had less of a tradition of statehood, with the first Albanian state not emerging until the fall of the Ottoman Empire in the early twentieth century. Nevertheless, Albanians claim deep roots in the territory that is present-day Kosovo. Albanian scholars assert that the ancient Illyrians, an Indo-European people which settled in present-day Albania, as well as Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Croatia and parts of Greece, are the ancestors of modern Albanians.<sup>8</sup> In the Albanian view, this

<sup>5</sup> Clewing K, ‘Mythen und Fakten zur Ethnostruktur in Kosovo – Ein geschichtlicher Überblick’ in *Der Kosovo Krieg – Ursachen, Verlauf, Perspektiven*, eds Reuter J and Clewing K, (Wieser Verlag, 2000), pp 26–27.

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, *Extremism – The Attacks, Incidents and Armed Provocations in the Ground Security Zone*, (Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, 2000), p 49.

<sup>7</sup> Sundhausen H, ‘Kosovo: Eine Konfliktgeschichte’ in *Der Kosovo Krieg – Ursachen, Verlauf, Perspektiven*, eds Reuter J and Clewing K, (Wieser Verlag, 2000), pp 65–66.

<sup>8</sup> Bartl, P, *Albanien – Vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, (Pustet Verlag, 1995), pp 18–21.

would indicate that Albanians have always been an important factor in the rich ethnic tapestry of the Balkans and can therefore claim older rights to Kosovo than the comparatively recent Slav immigrants. While much of the early history of the Albanians remains shrouded in mystery, there is little doubt that Albanians have been living in Kosovo for the last millennium. What is disputed is the question whether they formed a minority group among others or a majority.

During the Ottoman period, the Albanian population oscillated between integration into imperial structures and armed resistance. While some Albanians rose to prominence at the Porte, attaining high imperial offices in Istanbul and elsewhere in the far-flung Ottoman possessions, other Albanians, especially in the mountainous areas of present-day North Albania, remained fiercely independent. During the 15th century, Albanian national hero Georg Kastrioti (1405–1468), popularly known as ‘Skenderbeg’, fought successfully against Turkish armies for decades, establishing a reputation of Albanians as fierce and brave fighters which still lingers among the people of the Balkans. While armed bands of Albanians continued to spark rebellion in the Albanian territories of the empire, often in response to attempts of the Turkish authorities to disarm them, the majority of the population adapted to life in the empire. The vast majority of Albanians left their Catholic faith behind and converted to Islam in a pragmatic move to save taxes and to improve their social status. It has been argued that Albanians in Kosovo found Ottoman rule less oppressive than the previous incorporation into the kingdom of Serbia, as the new rulers put less pressure on them to adopt the Turkish language than the Serbs had done to adopt theirs.<sup>9</sup> Even in the 1880s, towards the end of Turkish rule in Europe, when other peoples such as the Serbs, Bulgarians and Greeks were stirring for independence, the predominantly conservative Albanian elites were more concerned with improving their fate within the empire than with secession.

The national renaissance (‘Rilindja’) period of Albanian history, which saw the Albanian nation emerge as a political factor in European politics, began only in 1878, when other Balkan nations had already firmly established their credentials as stakeholders in the partition of the withering Ottoman Empire. It has been pointed out by some scholars that ‘national renaissance’ is somewhat of a misnomer in this context – unlike other nations, the Albanians could not revive the image of an independent Albanian state from pre-Ottoman days.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the ‘League of Prizren’, which came together on 10 June 1878, is seen as the first organised attempt to unify Albanians living in the Balkans. Founded in response to the Berlin Congress, which was meeting to re-draw the borders of South Eastern Europe, the League sent a message to the powers complaining that of all the peoples of the Balkans, only the Albanians were not represented during the negotiations. When the diplomatic initiatives of the League were ignored, Albanians took up arms to prevent the occupation of Albanian lands by Serbia and Montenegro. Later on, when Istanbul denied Albanian wishes for greater autonomy in present-day Kosovo and Macedonia, the League turned against the Ottoman administration, which had previously tolerated the activities of the nationalist Albanians. While the military campaigns of the League met with little success on either front and the League as a political movement came to an end in the spring of 1881 after a Turkish army re-conquered Kosovo and Macedonia, this uprising remains a strong reminder of Albanian unity in the collective memory of the nation. Albanian historians never fail to point out that the league, which brought together Albanians (as well as a number of Muslim Slavs) from all over the Balkans, was founded in Prizren, the old capital of Kosovo, showing the great importance of Kosovo as an Albanian centre during the Ottoman period.

<sup>9</sup> Clark H, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, (Pluto Press, 2000), pp 24–25.

<sup>10</sup> Op cit Bartl P, pp 92–96.

## Kosovo under Yugoslav rule (1912–1999)

When the Ottoman Empire lost its final European possessions after bitter fighting against Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria and Greece during the First Balkan War, Albanians in the conquered territories found themselves in separate states. Albanians in present-day Albania declared an independent state during the Congress of Vlora on 28 November 1912, an entity that initially only survived because Austria threatened to declare war on Serbia if Serb troops continued their expansion into Albanian territory. Outside of Albania, substantial Albanian populations existed in Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria and Greece. Kosovo had been conquered by the advancing Serb troops, though Albanians continued to resist for some time, operating in small bands against the Serb ‘occupation’ forces. During the London Ambassadors’ Conference in May 1913, the powers accepted the annexation of Kosovo, establishing Serb (and since 1918, Yugoslav) sovereignty over the province. This act effectively divided the Albanian nation, separating more than half of all Albanians from the ‘motherland’ and created the ‘Albanian Question’, which continues to haunt Balkan politics nine decades later.

During the negotiations in London between the powers, the Serb government had repeatedly argued that ‘old Serbia’ (Kosovo) was populated predominantly by Serbs and that a large number of ‘Albanians’ were in reality ‘crypto-Serbs’, people who had adopted the Albanian language and the Islamic faith to avoid repression, while in reality retaining a Serb Orthodox identity. While such cases certainly did exist in Kosovo, there is little doubt that the vast majority of people in Kosovo after the Serb conquests were genuine Albanians. The new Serb rulers started to rectify these statistics by establishing a reign of terror on the Albanian population during the period from the Serb conquest to the start of World War I. While exact numbers are not known, it seems likely that tens of thousands of Albanians were massacred, towns and villages were razed to the ground during one of the first instances of ‘ethnic cleansing’ in modern times. The events in the annexed territories led to a public outcry in the European media: Austrian socialist Leon Freundlich calling Kosovo ‘Albania’s Golgotha’; Russian socialist Leo Trotsky wrote a book on the events; and the Carnegie Endowment established an international mission of inquiry into the fate of the Albanians in the Serb territories.<sup>11</sup>

However the start of World War I diverted international attention from Kosovo and the province remained part of Serbia, and then (after 1918) Yugoslavia. After World War I and during the inter-war period, Serbia continued attempts to change the ethnic make-up of the province, attracting Serb settlers by offering incentives and by forced migrations of the Albanian and Turkish population. While some 40,000 Albanian families were ‘repatriated’ to Turkey in 1938, some 60–70,000 Slav colonists arrived in Kosovo as settlers, a number far lower than expected by the authorities.<sup>12</sup>

During World War II, large parts of Kosovo were briefly united with Albania proper (then an Italian satellite state), and some Kosovo Albanians fought alongside the German *Wehrmacht* in a special Albanian SS unit named the ‘Skenderbeg’ division. After the war, however, Kosovo became part of the newly established Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). The first two post-war decades were characterised by the doubts of the federal authorities about the loyalty of the Albanians in Yugoslavia. After the souring of relations with Enver Hoxha’s government in neighbouring Tirana, many Serbs within the communist party saw the Kosovo Albanians as the ‘fifth column’ of Albania. The secret police, under the leadership of the Yugoslav Minister of the Interior, Aleksandar Rankovic, continued to harass Albanians, while the Belgrade authorities encouraged further migration to Turkey. It has been estimated that up to 100,000 Kosovo Albanians left Yugoslavia for Turkey under this scheme during the 1950s.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> See Freundlich L, ‘Albania’s Golgotha: Indictment of the exterminators of the Albanian people’ (1913), in Elsie R (ed), *Kosovo: In the heart of the powder keg*, (East European Monographs, 1997); Trotsky L, *Die Balkankriege 1912–1913*, (Arbeiterpresse Verlag, 1996); and *Report of the International Commission to inquire into the causes and conduct of the Balkan wars*, (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1914).

<sup>12</sup> Op cit Clark H, p 10.

<sup>13</sup> Op cit Malcolm N, p 323.

The situation changed drastically after the fall of Rankovic in July 1966. Now for the first time Albanian members had the majority within the provincial branch of the League of Communists in Kosovo, and a period of rapid ‘Albanisation’ began that lasted until 1981. While Albanians were still denied a fully-fledged republic as a constituent part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the autonomy enjoyed by the province was gradually expanded to a degree where the voting rights of the Kosovo delegates in federal institutions were similar to those enjoyed, for example, by the Slovenes. While Kosovo remained part of the republic of Serbia, the provincial government was independent on internal matters. Albanian and Turkish became official languages alongside Serbo-Croat, ending decades of discrimination. Secondary education was made available in Albanian, and the University of Pristina became the premier tertiary learning facility for Albanian students from all over Yugoslavia. It was during this ‘golden age’ that Pristina became the political and intellectual centre for the Albanian elite, replacing Tirana, which was still isolated behind an Iron Curtain of its own making. During the 1980s the university became a hotbed of Albanian nationalism, with some radical students asking for re-unification with Albania. A number of prominent Albanian politicians in Kosovo, Macedonia and South Serbia spent time at the university during this period; and the nucleus of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), as well as the Macedonian National Liberation Army (NLA) can be traced back to radical student politics in Pristina.<sup>14</sup>

Serbs in Kosovo during the period of Albanian autonomy complained about discrimination and felt increasingly marginalised. Serb scholars argued that ‘the Albanian political oligarchy carried out ethnic cleansing in Kosovo and Metohija on a daily basis’ during the 1970s and 1980s, ‘preparing the terrain to join the future Greater Albania’.<sup>15</sup> While the Serb exodus from Kosovo, which was estimated by Serb demographers to stand at 200,000 during this period,<sup>16</sup> was in all likelihood an exaggeration, there is no doubt that many Serbs left the province during this period for other parts of Yugoslavia, many of them in search of better economic opportunities, but some certainly to avoid having to live under ‘Albanian’ rule. In the 1980s, the Serb media printed numerous stories about physical violence and rape against Serbs in the province,<sup>17</sup> creating an atmosphere where in which Albanians were seen as savages and the Kosovo Serbs as a vulnerable minority in acute danger.

This period of increased tension between Serbs and Albanians coincided with the start of the dissolution of Tito’s Yugoslavia after the death of the country’s founder in 1980. His successors in power were less able to manage the centrifugal forces that were gaining strength in the republics. Partially triggered by an economic turn for the worse, the comparatively wealthy republics of Slovenia and Croatia were increasingly reluctant to support the underdeveloped southern Yugoslav territories of Kosovo and Macedonia. Meanwhile, Serb nationalism witnessed a renaissance as well, both in Serbia and among ethnic Serbs living in other territories of Yugoslavia. This groundswell of nationalist feeling was exploited by Slobodan Milosevic, whose swift rise to power owed much to his nationalist rhetoric. From the comparatively junior post of President of the League of Socialists in the Belgrade municipality in 1984, by 1987 Milosevic had been elected leader of the Serbian Communist Party. It was while campaigning for this post on 24 April 1987 that he uttered his famous words “no one should dare to beat you” to Serb demonstrators in Kosovo Polje, a reference to the way that the predominantly Albanian police had beaten the protesters with batons after the protesters had thrown rocks at them.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Op cit Heinemann-Grüder A and W-C Paes, p 11.

<sup>15</sup> Terzic S, ‘Kosovo, Serb Issue and the Greater Albania Project’, in *Extremism – The Attacks, Incidents and Armed Provocations in the Ground Security Zone*, (Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, 2000), p 20.

<sup>16</sup> Op cit Malcolm N, p 13.

<sup>17</sup> Among the most infamous episodes in this context was the ‘impalement’ of Kosovo Serb farmer Djordje Martinovic in May 1985. He claimed to have been raped by Albanians with a broken beer bottle. This case captured the imagination of the Yugoslav media at that time and was discussed twice in the Yugoslav parliament, despite serious doubts about the farmer’s story emerging after a medical investigation.

<sup>18</sup> Op cit Clark H, p 18.

Milosevic continued to invoke Serb history and the maltreatment of ethnic Serbs outside of the mainland as the cornerstones of his nationalist ideology even after he had been made leader of the Serbian Communist Party (and later President of the Republic of Serbia). With international attention focused on separatist tendencies in Slovenia and Croatia, his government began to remove Kosovo's autonomy and re-install direct political control. When the Albanian population responded with mass protests, in 1989 Belgrade declared a state of emergency in Kosovo and deployed troops in the province. Over the next decade, while Serbia was embroiled in armed conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia, inter-communal relations in Kosovo continued to worsen. While many Albanians sought to avoid military service with the Yugoslav armed forces, Belgrade began to purge Albanians from public institutions, and later on from state enterprises as well, replacing them with Serbs. Albanians initially responded with passive resistance and the creation of parallel 'government' structures aimed at providing a minimum of health and education services, and financed through remittances from the large Albanian diaspora in Western Europe and the United States.<sup>19</sup>

It was only during the last period of Serb rule in Kosovo that Albanians took up arms against what they perceived to be 'occupation troops'. From 1992 onwards, small groups of armed Albanians attacked Serb police posts and individual families, receiving support from the diaspora and using Albania (and to some extent Macedonia) as their staging post.<sup>20</sup> Serb authorities responded by using heavy-handed tactics against both the militants and civilians, establishing a vicious circle of violence and counter-violence. This episode of the conflict, as well as the numerous human rights violations committed by both sides, are extensively documented elsewhere.<sup>21</sup> The conflict ended in the summer of 1999 with the withdrawal of the Yugoslav security forces in response to the NATO-led bombing campaign against Yugoslavia, and the establishment of a UN-administrated protectorate in Kosovo. On the basis of UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1244 the autonomous status of the province within Yugoslavia is to be restored, based on the establishment of integrated and multiethnic administrative structures.

## Demographic trends in Kosovo

As noted above, the ethnographic history of Kosovo is heavily disputed, and at various times over the last one hundred years Serbs and Albanians, as well as several other interested parties, have used census figures and other statistical data to justify their claims to – or actions in – the territory that is now United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK)-administered Kosovo. While NATO supposedly intervened militarily in 1999 in order to protect ethnic Albanians in Kosovo against atrocities committed by Yugoslav security agencies and to stop the forced migration of Albanians into the territories of neighbouring Macedonia and Albania, Serb scholars maintain that international public opinion has been misled by the Albanian side. According to an official publication of the (post-Milosevic) Serbian Ministry of the Interior (MOI), Kosovo's 'Albanians have never been the subject of ethnic cleansing by the Serbs.'<sup>22</sup> On the contrary, most Serbs inside and outside of the disputed province are convinced that it is the Serb population in Kosovo which has been under intense pressure by Albanian extremists to leave the territory, in an attempt to fulfil a historical master plan for a greater Albania.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> For more information on this period, see op cit Clark H, pp 95–121 and op cit Malcolm N, pp 334–356.

<sup>20</sup> Op cit Heinemann-Grüder A and W-C Paes, pp 10–18.

<sup>21</sup> International Crisis Group, *Reality Demands – Documenting Violations of International Humanitarian Law in Kosovo 1999*, (International Crisis Group, 2000).

<sup>22</sup> Terzic S, 'Albanian Ethnic Cleansing of the Old Serbia' in Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, *Extremism*, pp 7–10

<sup>23</sup> Terzic S, 'Kosovo, Serb Issue and the Greater Albania Project' in Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Serbia, *Extremism*, pp 11–21.

As a result of these controversies, one needs to be very cautious when citing population statistics and discussing the ethnic identity of the people of Kosovo. Nevertheless, the comparison of Yugoslav census data for the years 1961 and 1991 may be a useful starting point for the discussion of ethnographic trends in the territory.

**Table: Ethnic breakdown of the Kosovo population according to Yugoslav census data<sup>24</sup>**

National affiliation	1961 (no. of people)	1991 (no. of people)
Serbs	227,016	194,190
Montenegrins	37,588	20,365
Yugoslavs	5,206	3,457
Albanians	646,605	1,596,072
Bulgarians	251	178
Hungarians	210	142
Macedonians	1,142	978
Muslim Slavs <sup>25</sup>	8,026	66,189
Roma	3,202	45,745
Russians	239	103
Slovaks	21	26
Slovenes	510	260
Turks	25,764	10,445
<b>Total</b>	<b>963,988</b>	<b>1,956,196</b>

The table above reflects the categories used by the Yugoslav authorities. People could opt for one nationality at will, explaining the existence of artificial nationalities such as ‘Yugoslavs’. While some of the demographic trends visible above are difficult to explain, such as the explosion in the number of Muslim Slavs during the three decades between 1961 and 1991, there clearly has been a marked shift in the balance between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo. While Albanians constituted about 70 percent of the population in the province in 1961, their number had grown 2.5 times by the beginning of the 1990s. Meanwhile, the Serb population stagnated during the 1970s and 1980s, and actually dropped by approximately ten percent compared with the earlier census figures.

These shifts in the ethnic composition of Kosovo’s population took place against the backdrop of an explosion in the overall number of people living in the province. This number surged from some 730,000 in 1948 to about two million in 1991; by the end of the decade, it has been estimated to have reached 2.2 million people – a trebling of the population in only five decades.<sup>26</sup>

This surge has been the result of better access to health care and generally improved living conditions in a predominantly traditional and patriarchal society. While it is obvious from the census data presented above that other ethnic communities – most notably the Roma and Muslim Slavs – also saw increasing birth rates during the 1970s and 1980s, there is no doubt that the Albanian population saw the largest increase in their numbers. The Serb public, especially during the 1980s and 1990s reacted with a mixture of hysteria and extreme chauvinism to what was perceived as the ‘Albanian demographic bomb’. Numerous Belgrade scholars have claimed that the high birth rates of the Albanian population were ‘unnatural and politically-motivated,’ hinting at an orchestrated plot to ‘out-breed’ the Serbs in Kosovo.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p 51.

<sup>25</sup> Muslim Slavs include a number of different ethnic groups, in particular the Bosniaks (Serbo-Croat speaking Muslims), and the Goranis.

<sup>26</sup> Op cit Clewing K, p 53.

<sup>27</sup> Igic Z, ‘Kosovo-Metohija – a demographic bomb in Southern Serbia’ in *Kosovo and Metohija. An integral part of the Republic of Serbia and the FR of Yugoslavia. Documents and facts*, (Review of International Affairs, 1995), pp 99–103.

More serious demographic research has confirmed that Albanians showed higher birth rates on average than their Serb neighbours, which can be partially attributed to a strong rural-urban divide between the predominantly conservative rural Albanian population and the more urban and technocratic Serb population.<sup>28</sup> While this may explain the Albanian boom, it does little to shed light on why the number of Serbs in the province actually dropped during the three decades from 1961 to 1991. Serb scholars claim that some 200,000 Serbs left the province during this period for other parts of Yugoslavia, fleeing repression from the increasingly assertive autonomous provincial government dominated by Albanian members of the League of Communists. Western scholars suggest that the total migration was probably closer to 45,000 Serbs (and Montenegrins), with many people leaving the underdeveloped province for Serbia proper in search of better economic opportunities and in order to avoid having to learn Albanian.

## Migration and exile during the 1990s

The revocation of Kosovo's autonomy status by the Milosevic regime initiated a period of repression for the Albanian majority. As many as 400,000 ethnic Albanians left the province during the 1990s, taking up employment in Western Europe (Germany, Switzerland, Italy) in an attempt to escape forced conscription into the Yugoslav Army and in order to support their relatives back home. The 'shadow state' established by the Albanian political elite in response to the 'Serbification' of the official public institutions in the province, which were now the domain of the Serbs, was largely built on remittances from abroad.

As a result of the increased hostilities between the now active KLA and the Yugoslav security apparatus, the number of civilians affected by the fighting rose in 1998. Orchestrated campaigns forced some 300,000 Albanians to leave their homes and seek refuge in other parts of Kosovo or in neighbouring countries. A second wave of forced displacements began in the spring of 1999, and was exacerbated by the insecurity in the province after the NATO bombing campaign began. This second wave saw virtually the whole Albanian population on the move, with more than 800,000 refugees abroad (mostly in Macedonia and Albania, and to a lesser degree in Western Europe), as well as about 400,000 internally displaced people within Kosovo itself.

The withdrawal of the Yugoslav armed forces from Kosovo by mid-June 1999 marks a reversal of ethnic fortunes. While many Albanian refugees returned with the advancing KFOR forces, it was now the turn of the Serbs to leave the province. While the majority of the professional elite had already left in the wake of the departing Yugoslav troops, many other Serbs, who had initially opted to stay behind, found themselves the target of the collective rage of the returning Albanians. It seems almost certain that there was an organised campaign by elements within the KLA to drive out the remaining Serbs (and other minorities) through acts of terror.<sup>29</sup> Without doubt, many attacks were motivated by material reasons, while other perpetrators used the opportunity to settle personal scores in the period of lawlessness between the departure of the Serb administration and the establishment of effective policing structures by KFOR in the autumn of 1999. Serb sources quote a total of 5,259 attacks for the period from 10 June 1999 to 18 November 2000, resulting in 1,055 killed and 1,045 wounded. While the vast majority of the victims were Serbs, they included members of other ethnic groups (including Albanians) as well.<sup>30</sup>

As a result of these developments, a large number of Serbs, as well as members of other minorities (Roma, Muslim Slavs, etc), have fled their homes and joined the ranks of

<sup>28</sup> Op cit Clewing K, pp 55–57.

<sup>29</sup> Op cit Heinemann-Grüder A and W-C Paes W-C, p 17.

<sup>30</sup> Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Serbia, *Extremism*, p 27.

the refugee and internally displaced person (IDP) population.<sup>31</sup> At the time of writing, the total number of displaced people from Kosovo in Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia was estimated to stand at about 235,000. A further 39,000 refugees live in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while more than 20,000 are believed to be internally displaced within Kosovo.<sup>32</sup> About 80 percent of the Kosovo refugees in Serbia and more than 50 percent of the refugees in Montenegro declared themselves as Serbs (and Montenegrins), with the rest being Roma and Muslim Slavs.<sup>33</sup>

## Settlement patterns of the remaining minority populations

After the initial exodus stopped with the establishment of effective UNMIK and KFOR structures in late 1999, a complex pattern emerged with regard to the distribution of minority areas in Kosovo. One of the most striking features of the situation is the fact that all ethnic groups present in the province suffer from minority status somewhere in the territory. This includes the Albanians, which who form the dominant population group in much of the province, but live in isolated enclaves north of the River Ibar in a Serb-majority area. Here, they face very much the same constraints with regard to physical security, freedom of movement and access to public services as non-Albanians do in the rest of Kosovo. In the absence of post-conflict census data, it is difficult to get reliable figures for the number of minorities in the province. It has been estimated that more than 100,000 Serbs (and Montenegrins), 35,000 Muslim Slavs, about 30,000 Roma, 20,000 Turks, 12,000 Gorani and 500 Croats have remained in the territory.<sup>34</sup>

Serbs continue to form the majority in five Kosovo municipalities. They include the rural enclave of Strpce with some 9,000 Serb inhabitants on the border with Macedonia, the highly contested northern part of Mitrovica, and the three northern municipalities of Zvečan, Leposavić and Zubin Potok. Serbs enjoy freedom of movement within those municipalities, however, the situation of those living in smaller settlements south of the River Ibar is more precarious. While the number of Serbs living in Pristina proper was reduced from some 20,000 before the conflict to a few hundred people, the number of Serbs living in villages in the municipal area is believed to stand at somewhere between 12–15,000. Other substantial pockets exist in Obilić (3,600), Kosovo Polje (3,800), Lipjan (9,500), Gnjilane (12,500) and Orahovac (2,000).<sup>35</sup>

Unlike the Serbs, the members of most other minorities have their population centres in one specific part of Kosovo, with individuals and families scattered in the urban areas. In the case of the Turks the largest group is to be found in Prizren, while the Gorani have their home area in the Gora region in the South West of Kosovo. Muslim Slavs have their population centre in the Prizren area and to a lesser degree in Pristina and Mitrovica. Only the Roma population, which, despite being despised by all other ethnic groups, is often associated by Albanians with the Serb 'side', has no clear population centres, often living in wretched social conditions at the fringes of villages populated by other ethnic groups.

<sup>31</sup> A distinction is made between internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees. IDPs have been forced to leave their homes, but still live within the same country according to internationally recognised boundaries, in contrast to refugees, who are displaced persons in a different state.

<sup>32</sup> International Crisis Group, *A Kosovo Roadmap (II): Internal Benchmarks*, (International Crisis Group, 2002), p 17.

<sup>33</sup> UNHCR Kosovo, 'Statistical Overview – Refugees and IDPs from Kosovo in Serbia, Montenegro and FYROM', cited in Mattern R, *Kosova – Situation der Minderheiten. Update zur Situation der ethnischen Minderheiten*, (Schweizerische Flüchtlingshilfe, 2002), p 18.

<sup>34</sup> UNHCR/OSCE, *Assessment of the Situation of Ethnic Minorities in Kosovo (Period covering November 1999 through January 2000)*, p 3. [www.osce.org/kosovo/documents/reports/minorities/min\\_rep\\_04\\_eng.pdf](http://www.osce.org/kosovo/documents/reports/minorities/min_rep_04_eng.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p 19–20.

# 3

## On a life-support machine: The situation of the Kosovo Serbs



Serbs using 'minority shuttle' bus to move between enclaves

**KOSOVO HAS BEEN ADMINISTERED** by the UN Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK) since June 1999 under the provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 1244. In January 2002 Michael Steiner of Germany was appointed as the new UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), following Bernard Kouchner of France (1999–January 2001) and Hans Haekkerup (resigned in December 2001). The NATO-led peacekeeping force, KFOR, which entered Kosovo after NATO's intervention in 1999, remains in the province. Initially about 50,000-strong (42,500 in Kosovo and the rest in Macedonia), levels were reduced to 38,000 as of June 2002, and on 6 June 2002 NATO Defence Ministers decided in Brussels to cut the force by a further 4,800 by the end of 2002, and then to 29,000 by June 2003. The Commander of KFOR is rotated every six months.

When the protectorate was first established, Kosovo Serbs were given little attention by the international administration and KFOR. The peacekeepers, who had come with a mandate to protect the Albanian population, were slow to realise that it was Serb

minority groups who were vulnerable to attacks by the Albanian majority. In Strpce, for instance, German KFOR did not even know that there were Serbs living in the area until they were sent to investigate reported disturbances in the area, which on closer examination turned out to be a gathering to greet a Serb Orthodox priest. German troops discovered that people would not venture out of the territory, after a few groups which had dared to travel out to buy food for the village were killed or abducted; in response, German troops began to provide escorts for essential purchases. Slowly, the international community on the ground has started to recognise the existing reality of the situation and adapt its actions accordingly. Nevertheless, it took a considerable time for internationals to start treating ethnic Albanian revenge and expulsion of Kosovo Serbs as a fundamental problem.

Since the withdrawal of the Yugoslav Army from Kosovo, around 100,000 Kosovo Serbs appear to have fled to Serbia out of the estimated 200,000 who resided in the province prior to the conflict.<sup>36</sup> Although around 3,000 returned in 2000, the return is vastly outnumbered by the continuing exodus of the Serb population, which continues to date. It is estimated that minorities currently constitute eight percent of population of Kosovo, against fifteen percent prior to the intervention.<sup>37</sup> The main reason for this is the fact that contrary to international expectations, in the last three years resentment between the Albanian majority and minorities in Kosovo seems not to have reduced at all. Simply put, in post-war Kosovo the tables have reversed: if in the 1990s it was Albanians who were the oppressed minority suffering persecution, it is now the Serbs who are harassed by Albanians. This inter-communal hatred – with the Albanian majority now in the ascendancy – has led to a situation where Serbs live in fear of ethnic violence and are afraid to travel unless protected by international armed escorts.<sup>38</sup> As the Ninth Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)/Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Minority Assessment states, ‘the situation is still generally characterised by inter-ethnic tensions, violence, and a high degree of impunity’.<sup>39</sup>

The remaining Serbs mainly live in rural or semi-urbanised areas, with the notable exception of North Mitrovica, the only surviving stronghold of Serb urban life. Smaller Serb areas are present in Gracanica and Strpce, and in several towns, such as Gnjilane and Orahovac. In most cases, Serbs live in separate villages within ethnically-mixed municipalities rather than in direct contact with other ethnic groups. Individual Serbs and families continue to live in small numbers in other towns and in a few urban areas. However their security situation continues to be poor and their freedom of movement is often restricted to their own home, forcing them to subsist on hand-outs from international agencies. While the rest of Kosovo enjoys an influx of money thanks to international assistance and remittances from Albanians working abroad, Serb areas are growing poorer. Apart from *immediate* physical security, all aspects of life are problematic, including freedom of movement, employment opportunities, property rights and access to education, healthcare and justice. What sets the Serbs aside from other, potentially even more vulnerable communities such as the Roma, is the fact that they receive political backing from neighbouring Serbia and have, at least in Northern Kosovo, the capacity to organise themselves into a credible political (and to some extent paramilitary) force.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p 3. However, higher figures are sometimes cited without giving corroborating evidence.

<sup>37</sup> According to Radmila Trajkovic, a Kosovo Serb politician, 92,000 Slavs (Serbs, Croats and Montenegrins) were pressurised into leaving Kosovo between 1961 and 1981, and a further 50,000 left in 1981–1990; see Trajkovic R, ‘Reconciling Kosovo’, *Institute for War and Peace Reporting Balkan Crisis Report*, no. 314, 1 February 2002.

<sup>38</sup> According to Trajkovic, 1,300 Serbs have been killed and the same number abducted since international intervention.

<sup>39</sup> UNHCR/OSCE, *Ninth Assessment of the Situation of Ethnic Minorities in Kosovo (Period covering September 2001 to April 2002)*, p 9. [www.osce.org/kosovo/documents/reports/minorities/min\\_rep\\_09\\_eng.pdf](http://www.osce.org/kosovo/documents/reports/minorities/min_rep_09_eng.pdf)

## Enclaves and mixed areas

Many Serbs who remained in Kosovo or returned after the conflict are rural dwellers with few skills to offer other than basic agricultural knowledge. The southern enclave of Strpce is the largest, with thirteen out of the sixteen villages belonging to the former Strpce municipality populated by Serbs, and the remaining three by Albanians. About 9,000 Serbs live there,<sup>40</sup> some of them internally displaced (IDPs) from other parts of Kosovo. In such a situation the local community can feel reasonably secure within the enclave. Jobs consist mainly of subsistence agriculture and basic local services, but extensive sheep husbandry has almost stopped after a shepherd was killed in an upper pasture, since others no longer dare to venture far. The main issue is isolation from the outside world, as physical security beyond the enclave remains an overriding concern. As one Serb respondent explained, 'our world is this little valley of 20 km along the river, from the first village with a KFOR watchtower to the last one.'<sup>41</sup>

As these Serbs still feel very threatened, the large majority of movement outside of the enclave depends on KFOR-provided armed escorts. These started in early 2000 after six months of almost complete entrapment. UNMIK, through international NGOs such as the Danish Refugee Council, runs the Minority Bus programme, a system of shuttles that connects Serb enclaves and mixed areas, allowing access to health care, shopping opportunities and a chance for social visits. Armoured vehicles provided by KFOR accompany buses at the front and rear. Such operations are costly, since they are mostly staffed and equipped by international drivers and managers. A similar system is operated by UNMIK Railways to connect North Mitrovica with the Serb enclaves in Kosovo Polje and Obilic, while the same train transports Albanians from the enclaves in Northern Kosovo to South Mitrovica. Dubbed the 'Freedom of Movement', this train is one of the few places where Albanians and Serbs from the enclaves meet, albeit unwillingly.<sup>42</sup> As KFOR has grown more responsive to the needs of local Serbs, mobility has increased, ie people can travel more often and to more diverse destinations: convoys run twice a week to Serbia, twice a week to Mitrovica and once weekly to Skopje (Macedonia). It costs €12.50 for a one-way ticket to Belgrade, and €5 to Skopje. Routes are growing increasingly sophisticated, passing through smaller enclaves and reaching more people. Travelling by 'minority shuttle', however, is not easy: convoys often start at 5 am, border formalities take 2–3 hours, and escort vehicles change at different national sectors – all of which makes journeys hard work both for locals and internationals. The existence of the convoys provides a strong lever for UNMIK and KFOR against any local protest – in the past, convoys stopped running during times of dissent. As most food comes from outside the enclaves, this is a serious matter.<sup>43</sup>

Life is more precarious in ethnically mixed, semi-urban areas such as Obilic, where people are forced to go out to work or to do shopping unescorted, and continue to be primary targets for violent, ethnically motivated attacks. Occasional killings of Serbs are reported from all parts of Kosovo, although these are on the decrease as international protection becomes more effective. However, incidents of beatings, stone throwing, spitting, and verbal abuse remain common, and do not seem likely to die out in the near future. Low-level violence serves as a reminder that more serious or fatal acts can and do occur, and that the threat of serious violence remains ever present. As an OSCE/UNHCR Assessment Report notes, 'the depth of the problem is perhaps illustrated when it is considered a measure of progress when a Kosovo Serb visits a local shop and manages to safely purchase goods.'<sup>44</sup>

40 OSCE Mission in Kosovo Department of Democratisation, *Strpce/Shterpce Municipal Profile*, August 2002, p 3. [www.osce.org/kosovo/documents/reports/municipal\\_profiles/22\\_ST.pdf](http://www.osce.org/kosovo/documents/reports/municipal_profiles/22_ST.pdf)

41 Authors' interview in Strpce with Anica Milkovic, February 2002.

42 Beardsley E, 'Brief Encounters on the people's train', *Focus Kosovo*, June 2002, pp 20–21. [www.unmikonline.org/pub/focuskos/june02/focusksocaffair4.htm](http://www.unmikonline.org/pub/focuskos/june02/focusksocaffair4.htm)

43 "All our food comes from convoys – if the convoys stop, we'll have no food" – authors' interview in Strpce with Anica Milkovic, February 2002.

44 UNHCR/OSCE, *Ninth Assessment*, p 58.

While the number of Serb families provides some degree of protection against isolated attacks by extremists in the more compact rural or semi-urban enclaves, life is most difficult for isolated families or single persons living among Albanians in urban apartment blocks in cities like Pristina and Prizren. It has been estimated that several hundred Serbs remain in the capital of the province, many of them working as local staff for UNMIK and international NGOs, while the number of Serb city dwellers in most other cities and towns of the South is much smaller. As the majority of people staying behind are poor and elderly – often too frail to move and without relatives to take care of them, it has in effect become the responsibility of the international community to look after them. Following a series of attacks on Serb households in the summer and autumn of 1999, KFOR now provides 24-hour protection to individual Serbs, a practice known among British KFOR soldiers as ‘granny sitting’.<sup>45</sup>

Given the level of KFOR protection, it is no longer as easy as it was immediately following the conflict to use physical and emotional intimidation to force any remaining Serbs into leaving Kosovo, especially if they have no real prospects of building a new life in Serbia. As a result, some Kosovo Albanians have turned to other techniques to get Serbs to leave. One such method, directed at Serbs in mixed areas and smaller enclaves in central Kosovo, involves making ‘strategic purchases’ of property in Serb areas. To begin with, a few Serbs living in homes in a good strategic location are offered highly inflated prices for their property. If they prove reluctant to sell, they may be threatened. It is only necessary to acquire a few such houses to make the Serb population feel insecure. Once the population is more ethnically mixed, it becomes much harder for KFOR to protect the area effectively. This in turn increases the remaining Serbs’ sense of insecurity, encouraging more to leave. As a result, the Serb population gradually exits, without for the most part having been directly forced to do so.<sup>46</sup> UNMIK, once it realised what was happening, made efforts to counterbalance this trend by passing a regulation (2001/17) in 2001 allowing the SRSG to designate geographical areas in Kosovo in which all housing contracts should be registered with the Municipal Administrator prior to court verification.<sup>47</sup> Such measures have had limited effect, however, as many cases are still settled either in local courts that are beyond UNMIK’s control or by informal transactions. Serb communities have tried to prevent such ‘strategic purchases’ from taking place, but ultimately it is very difficult to prevent individuals, encouraged to sell their property by money or force, from putting their own personal well-being in front of the community’s long-term viability.

At the moment, it is not only the lack of security that is driving Serbs out of Kosovo, but also the lack of jobs and education opportunities. Health and educational facilities for Serbs are entirely separate from those provided for Albanians. School education is segregated, even in mixed areas, since parents prefer to have their children educated in their native language. As KFOR reduced the level of escorts in 2002 for school buses for minority children, many parents refused to send their children to school. While basic ‘health centres’ exist in larger enclaves, emergency services are mostly dependent on KFOR transportation. With the notable exception of the hospital in North Mitrovica, there are no facilities for intensive medical care, as Serbs cannot freely be admitted, let alone travel to Albanian-staffed hospitals. In emergency cases, international staff provide treatment, in other cases the only viable option is to travel to hospitals in Serbia.

In short, many Serbs in enclaves see no future for themselves, nor prospects for their children. In the words of a young Serb woman, ‘we live in a cage and know that our kids will have to leave’. The Serb communities in the enclaves are getting older as more young people and families leave, and those who remain and do not plan to leave Kosovo have little aspiration beyond immediate survival.

<sup>45</sup> Op cit Clark p 5.

<sup>46</sup> UNHCR/OSCE, *Ninth Assessment*, p 36.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p 36.

## The North

The situation is the reverse in the North, where Serbs constitute a majority north of the River Ibar, and Albanians live in enclaves. Northern Kosovo consists of the three predominantly Serb municipalities of Leposavic, Zvecan and Zubin Potok, as well as the northern part of the divided city of Mitrovica. Unlike the situation in the enclaves, Serbs here enjoy unlimited freedom of movement, and the road from Mitrovica to mainland Serbia allows unhindered communication and trade. With the River Ibar forming a natural border to the South alongside which KFOR troops are deployed, Serbs in Northern Kosovo feel much more secure than their compatriots in other parts of the province.

Having fled from Pristina, North Mitrovica is the only remaining urban centre accessible to the Serbs. Historically, the area to the south of the river was populated mainly by Albanians, while Serbs prevailed in the north. At the same time, the divide was not absolute, with individual Albanians living on the Serb side of the river and vice versa. Following the conflict and the *de facto* partition of Mitrovica, a population exchange took place; both sides suspect that their community lost more property on the other side than their ethnic adversary. Some observers point out that many Albanians who moved there in 1998–99 were former KLA fighters rather than historic residents with roots in the area. In a similar vein, many of the Serb residents of North Mitrovica are IDPs from other parts of Kosovo as well, often taking more radical positions towards Albanians than the more established Mitrovica families.

The city was also home to a substantial Roma population, which found itself in the most vulnerable position of all after the conflict (since unlike the Serbs they could not expect any support from Belgrade), and Albanians burnt and destroyed their houses, accusing them of serving as informants for Serb security structures. The flattened Roma quarter on the southern side of the river, clearly visible from the heavily fortified bridge, serves as a vivid reminder of the inter-communal violence which flared up in the wake of the departure of Yugoslav troops and prior to the establishment of an effective international presence.

Some of the Roma population relocated to North Mitrovica and, together with 2–3,000 Muslim Slavs, make up the multi-ethnic character of the northern part. Checkpoints and barbed wire are a prominent feature on bridges over the Ibar. A number of Albanians continue to live in the north of the town as well, forming the majority in three high-rise apartment blocks located right on the banks of the river, as well as in some pockets on the periphery of town. In a virtual reversal of the situation on the southern bank, where the only Serbs are the family of a priest living under constant KFOR protection in the Orthodox church compound, the apartment blocks form an Albanian urban enclave in hostile territory. They too have KFOR protection and are linked by a footbridge to the southern part of town.

Petty trade, remittances from Serbia, local handicrafts and smuggling are the main sources of income in the North, although the latter is now reduced as control over the border with Serbia has become more effective. Utility bills and taxes are not paid, and corruption is rampant. Living standards for Serbs in the North are poorer than for those living in enclaves in the rest of Kosovo, as they are not considered as a minority by international organisations and NGOs and little aid reaches them. However, when the euro became the official currency in Kosovo and old Deutschmarks were exchanged for euros, it became clear that the population (or, at least, certain parts of the population) has more money than it was earlier believed, but is reluctant to spend or invest it because it anticipates worse times to come.<sup>48</sup>

Mitrovica remains a focus of tension in Kosovo. The partial expulsion of Albanians from the northern part of the town in early 2000 led to an attack on a UN bus carrying

<sup>48</sup> In January 1.1 billion DM were exchanged into Euros in Kosovo. One Serb enclave exchanged 1.8 million DM. €110,000 were exchanged in a single day – OSCE and UNMIK in North Mitrovica, February 2002.

Serbs, which in turn caused Serb riots and serious fighting between two communities divided by the river. In February 2000 KFOR reinforced its presence by deploying riot troops, *de facto* securing the partition. In August 2000 KFOR closed down the Trepca smelting plant in Mitrovica for environmental reasons after the concentration of lead in the blood of French troops deployed in the area was found to be 10 times higher than the acceptable norm. Serbs regarded the closure of the plant, which had been the main source of industrial employment in the city, as yet another attempt by the international administration to undermine their economy. While UNMIK has stressed its desire to re-open Trepca after an environmental clean-up, and in the meantime has been providing assistance to workers made redundant by the closure, the future ownership and operations of the industrial complex remains a source of tension and potential conflict.

Inter-ethnic tensions loom large. Both communities are on a high state of alert and ready for speedy mobilisation. All crime becomes easily politicised. When UNMIK and KFOR try to arrest criminals in the dead of night, sirens and mobile phones mobilise large crowds within minutes. UNHCR-organised 'go-and-see' trips for potential returnees cause stormy protests by both sides. Even if neighbours get along with each other as individuals, on a community level returns are interpreted as the beginnings of an Albanian, or Serb, 'flood'.

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## Outlook

The situation in Kosovo suggests that inter-ethnic relations have been irreparably damaged after the extreme destruction of human life and property that took place. Since international intervention, the province has become even more divided, with young and able-bodied Serbs largely having left the province and former mixed areas growing increasingly mono-ethnic. The trend towards mono-ethnicity in the Balkans, prevalent since the break-up of the SFRY, is powerful, and the only obstacle to full realisation of a mono-ethnic Kosovo are KFOR armoured vehicles. Only in Mitrovica does it appear that there may be some future for the Serbs. Despite the rhetoric about promoting minority integration, it is painfully obvious that if KFOR withdraws, the physical security of Serbs and other minorities in most of Kosovo will be put in life-threatening danger. This is not to pass judgement or to demand that inter-ethnic hatred should diminish – it is simply to register the phenomenon and accept it as fact. Though many individuals may have done nothing wrong, as a whole both communities treated each other very badly, and the international community's faith that both sides will realise that they have a 'common interest' in better jobs, education and healthcare and will work together to achieve such goals reflects little understanding of how much importance local people attach to their security, to their identity, and to their memories of the recent past.

# 4

## Kosovo Serb politics



Bridge over the River Ibar linking North and South Mitrovica

**BEYOND ISSUES RELATING TO THEIR DAILY SURVIVAL**, the Kosovo Serbs are deeply concerned by their insecure status within Kosovo, by the fact that IDPs have not returned and more Serbs continue to leave, and by the uncertain future of their community. Such issues dominate their politics, which revolves around the degree of co-operation which should be given to the international administration, and how the Kosovo Serbs should relate to politicians in Belgrade. To some extent, political cleavages divisions among Kosovo Serbs run along similar lines to those within Serbia. However, there is an additional split, reflecting the differences in lifestyle between those in the North and those in the enclaves in the rest of Kosovo.

### **The North/ South divide**

Given the difficulties involved in travelling between the Serb enclaves, the Kosovo Serbs do not form an integrated political community. Although Serbs in Southern and Central Kosovo have an active interest in political life in the North, their ability to influence it is extremely limited. In the enclaves, where there is near total dependence on KFOR and UNMIK, former administrative structures do play a role, but they more resemble social clubs than seats of power. As a result of their practical isolation, a 'siege' mentality prevails in the enclaves, an attitude that is only reinforced by the fact that there are no broadcasts in the Serb language on Kosovo TV, and all news comes from Belgrade- or Nis-based TV channels.

There is still a widespread belief among the Kosovo enclave Serbs that Serbs could still viably return to Kosovo, and that Kosovo could be reintegrated with Belgrade. This view holds that the international community should organise the return of all displaced Serbs in one go, make Albanians sell back to the Serbs property that had been acquired after the conflict, and rebuild Serb homes; as a result of such measures there would once again be a coherent Serb community in the region. This, they expect, would lead to reintegration with Belgrade.<sup>49</sup> However unrealistic such sentiments might be, they reflect the aspirations of those enclave Serbs who support co-operation with the international administration, and are thus located closer to the centre of the political spectrum. As the enclaves are entirely dependant on the international community, their political associations have to be reasonably moderate, since they are arguing from a position of weakness. There are currently three identifiable groupings, but the distinctions between them are often blurred.

The Serb National Council (SNC), which was created in January 1999, shortly before the NATO bombing campaign, in opposition to Milosevic's Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), sought to protect the interests of the remaining Serbs in Kosovo and to play a unifying role. This unity quickly fractured after the fall of Milosevic, following which there was much more political diversification among Kosovo Serbs. The SNC split into factions in Gracanica (SNC-G) and in North Mitrovica (SNC-M). Nevertheless, it continues to be an important voice on the political scene, though individual politicians appear to carry more weight than the factions they represent.

The second political grouping, *Koalicija Povratak* (Coalition for Return) is an umbrella organisation comprising of politicians from a variety of parties and a number of independent individuals. The organisation was formed in anticipation of the 2001 elections for the Kosovo Assembly, which functions as a sort of parliament for the province, after the government in Belgrade changed its course and began to advocate Serb participation in UNMIK-sponsored institutions. *Povratak* holds 22 seats in the Kosovo Assembly and unites Kosovar members of various Belgrade-based political parties from Serbia and Montenegro; for instance, its head, Radmila Trajkovic is a member of the Christian-Democratic Party of Serbia (DHSS), while other members represent the New Democracy Party (ND), the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS, led by Vojislav Kostunica) and the Democratic Party (DS, formerly led by Zoran Djindjic). Trajkovic, a medical doctor and university professor from Pristina, made a U-turn from radical Serb nationalism to supporting co-operation. She argues that the only way out is to freeze the debate over the final status of Kosovo for at least three elections, allowing time for passions to cool and a new generation of politicians to come of age. Trajkovic believes that the international community should concentrate instead on demilitarisation, strengthening civil institutions, and the return of displaced persons. She also advocates more contact between Pristina and Belgrade, though at the same time she recognises that the root of the Kosovo problem lies in the irreconcilable demands of Kosovo's Albanian and Serb communities which marked its history. In such a situation, she thinks, one can only hope that the international community can provide some alternative in the meantime.<sup>50</sup>

As a coalition, *Povratak* remains fragile, with liberals constantly undermined either by right-wing members from the DSS within *Povratak* or by the 'Bridge Watchers' from the North (see below). Though the government has tried to strengthen the liberals within the coalition by allocating some governmental appointments to them, their position is precarious and may deteriorate rapidly.

The third political grouping is the *Srpski Pokret Otpora na Kosovu i Metohiji* (SPOT, Kosovo Serb Resistance Movement), currently headed by Momcilo Trajkovic (not related to Radmila). Like some of the Serb leaders, he is also a member of the Serbian Parliament and belongs to the ruling the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS)

<sup>49</sup> Interviews conducted by the authors in Strpce, February 2002.

<sup>50</sup> Op cit Trajkovic.

coalition. SPOT claims to occupy the middle ground between *Povratak* on the one hand, which it says goes too far in its co-operation with the international community, to the point of neglecting Serb national interests, and the extremists from the North on the other hand. In Trajkovic's view, a sustainable integration of Serbs into Kosovar society in the near future is impossible. IDPs can only safely return to the Serb-inhabited areas, where their security can be maintained. Any future strategy should be aimed at creating and providing support for more enclaves and giving them maximum autonomy through a sophisticated system of local government. This would allow Serbs and Albanians to live peacefully alongside each other without intermingling, as they did throughout history, apart from a brief period of integration within cities in the old Yugoslavia.<sup>51</sup>

## Mitrovica

Serb politics to the north of the Ibar differs significantly from the rest of Kosovo. This is due to the fact that Serbs there are far less dependent on the international community, apart from relying on KFOR's protection to secure the divide across Mitrovica town. Moreover, direct access to Serbia allows more normal social and economic interaction, and an alternative to the international presence. UNMIK's efforts to establish its rule in the Serb part of the town were vehemently opposed. For a long time, Mitrovica Serbs refused to accept UNMIK administration in their territory, and the business of local government was conducted by the old municipal courts and administration, which the international community labelled 'parallel structures'. This 'parallel' administration was eventually closed down by UNMIK in February 2002, and some of the employees of the parallel municipality were then re-hired by UNMIK to work in the official municipality sub-office in North Mitrovica. Nevertheless, UNMIK structures have very little legitimacy in Serb eyes, and many parallel structures still operate informally (see below).

## The Bridge Watchers

On the Serb side, the divide in Mitrovica is patrolled by paramilitary formations popularly referred to as the 'Bridge Watchers'.<sup>52</sup> According to one of their leaders, one of the groups was formed spontaneously during the chaotic days of the withdrawal of the Yugoslav armed forces from Kosovo in the summer of 1999, when Serbs remaining in the town, realising the strategic value of the River Ibar, gathered around the two bridges in order to prevent Albanian incursions.<sup>53</sup> Thus, the territory north of the Ibar emerged as a Serb stronghold.

What started as a fairly informal group has over the course of the last four years developed into an effective self-defence force, closely linked to political parties both in Northern Kosovo and in Serbia proper. The total number of Bridge Watchers is not known: estimates by international observers range from 100 to 400 members, while the organisation itself claims to have more than 5,000 members.<sup>54</sup> As Bridge Watchers wear no uniforms and little is known about their organisational structures, independent verification of these numbers is impossible. However, it seems likely that a recent OSCE report is correct in differentiating between a hard core of more or less 'full-time' militants, comprising of maybe 200 people, and a larger number of 'reservists' on the periphery of the group who can be quickly mobilised if necessary.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> From an interview by Dusan Gamsler, Project Director at the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, with Momcilo Trajkovic, Caglavica, Kosovo, 1 June 2002.

<sup>52</sup> In early 2002, UNMIK announced that these gangs would from now on be referred to as 'bridge gangs' in order to underline the criminal dimension of their activity and to remove any trace of legitimacy that the term 'Bridge Watchers' might have suggested.

<sup>53</sup> Author's interview with Marko Jaksic, Mitrovica, December 2001.

<sup>54</sup> Author's interview with Marko Jaksic, Mitrovica, December 2001.

<sup>55</sup> OSCE Mission in Kosovo, *Background Report: Parallel Security Structures in North Mitrovica*, 21 May 2002, p 2.

The core group consists of young, unemployed men, either from Mitrovica or displaced from other parts of Kosovo in 1999, who have largely been operating from the *Dolce Vita* café near the main bridge. Many of the active members, who are well known to the representatives of the international community, had served with Serb police or the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) prior to the intervention. It seems that they operate according to a shift system, keeping the bridges under constant observation and monitoring the movements of UNMIK and KFOR representatives in the northern part of town. Members use mobile phones and hand-held radio to communicate, while sirens are used to quickly mobilise larger crowds.

While the Bridge Watchers portray themselves as a voluntary association, their leaders have confirmed on several occasions that at least the hard core of the force gets paid a monthly salary of 50–100 Euros, a substantial amount by Kosovo Serb standards. The origin of these funds remains unclear; one of their political leaders, Marko Jaksic, has pointed towards donations from Serb shopkeepers in Mitrovica as their main source of funding. Other members of the Bridge Watchers (as many as 50 according to the OSCE) are employed as security guards by the hospital in North Mitrovica, which receives its funding from the government in Belgrade. It is not known for certain whether other funds are received directly from Belgrade, but some observers have suggested that plain-clothed MOI agents operating throughout Northern Kosovo may be involved in paying the Bridge Watchers.<sup>56</sup>

Ostensibly, the Bridge Watchers fulfil the role of a 'neighbourhood watch', keeping an eye on North Mitrovica and occasionally arresting common criminals, which are then tried by Serb courts across the administrative border. Their leaders like to portray them as a civic and charitable association, officially known as the 'Citizens' Association of Sveti Dimitrije', with the dual aim of protecting the Serbs against 'Albanian extremists' and distributing humanitarian aid to the poor.<sup>57</sup> International observers have frequently linked the Bridge Watchers to organised crime, especially the operation of protection rackets and the smuggling of cigarettes from Serbia.<sup>58</sup>

## Political factions

On the whole, Serbs in Mitrovica enjoy a much higher degree of political organisation than in the rest of Kosovo, with diverse factions which mirror political divisions in Belgrade. The power struggles between the DS and the DSS are also played out in Mitrovica. As not many professionals remained in North Mitrovica apart from teachers and doctors, the local hospital emerged as a hotbed of radicalism. Three main figures dominate the Mitrovica political horizon: Oliver Ivanovic, Milan Ivanovic and Marko Jaksic.

Ironically, Oliver Ivanovic, who is now considered a moderate, shot to prominence during the KFOR deployment in Kosovo, when he was the organiser of the first group of Bridge Watchers set up to prevent an Albanian attack from across the river. Since then, Oliver Ivanovic has undergone a considerable shift towards supporting co-operation, having joined *Povratak* in 2001 and allied himself with Nebojsa Covic, the Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia, and head of the 'Co-ordination Centre for Kosovo and Metohija', who is known for his pragmatic stance on the future of Kosovo. Meanwhile, politics in Mitrovica became more radical, as Serbs came increasingly to feel that it was necessary to make a stand to protect the one area in Kosovo where they were still a powerful force. Oliver Ivanovic, although pursuing a relatively successful career in co-operation with UNMIK, has diminished in local influence and his splinter group is now little more than a personal bodyguard.<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, the genuine differences between Oliver Ivanovic and other more radical politicians do not actually seem to be

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p 3.

<sup>57</sup> Author's interview with Marko Jaksic, Mitrovica, December 2001.

<sup>58</sup> International Crisis Group, *UNMIK's Kosovo Albatross: Tackling Division in Mitrovica*, (International Crisis Group, 2002), p 3.

<sup>59</sup> Authors' interview in Mitrovica with UNMIK, February 2002.

that great, given that ultimately none of them is willing to accept the full deployment of UNMIK structures in the North as legitimate.

The main faction of the Bridge Watchers is headed by Marko Jaksic, who ousted Ivanovic from the office of the SNC president in January 2001,<sup>60</sup> and Milan Ivanovic. Marko Jaksic is an MP in the Serbian parliament and Vice President of the DSS, while Milan Ivanovic heads the Serb National Council of Northern Kosovo (SNC-M), as well as being Director General of Mitrovica hospital. Like Oliver Ivanovic, Marko Jaksic and Milan Ivanovic were appointed part of the 'Northern Advisory Group' for UNMIK by Deputy Prime Minister Covic, and are in regular contact with the UNMIK Police and the French KFOR Brigade that is deployed in Mitrovica.<sup>61</sup> Unlike Oliver Ivanovic, however, Milan Ivanovic and Marko Jaksic have rejected further co-operation with UNMIK. Their stated aim is the partition of Kosovo, with the northern part joining Serbia – an idea which legitimises the *status quo* rather than calling for change. Their other statements reflect concern over their ethnic brethren in the rest of the province, but offer less clarity about how a reasonable standard of life could be ensured for the Serb community.<sup>62</sup> The degree of political unity among Serb politicians in the North fluctuates depending on the security situation: at times of relative stability divisions become more apparent, but as security deteriorates, Serb politicians tend to stick together. For instance, in January 2002 the SNC-M sent a letter to UNMIK distancing itself from the Bridge Watchers, yet following the arrest of a Bridge Watcher in April that year it decided not to talk to international representatives.<sup>63</sup>

While moderate Serb politicians in Mitrovica argue that the Bridge Watchers have lost much of their role as an informal police force, and have expressed their interest in using 'official channels' to solve problems,<sup>64</sup> the degree of support among the population for the Bridge Watchers is hard to gauge. As the mass protests in 2002 have shown, the Bridge Watchers are able to mobilise the Serb population outside of their own constituency if there is a 'good cause'. Some representatives of the international community in Kosovo see the Bridge Watchers as Belgrade's chosen instrument for destabilising Northern Kosovo, in order to force UNMIK to accept the return of Serb police officers for the maintenance of law and order. While the majority faction of the Bridge Watchers certainly enjoys good contacts with the Serb government, it has shown in the past that it is quite willing to act on its own and against the expressed will of its backers in Serbia. This was clearly visible during the elections for the Kosovo assembly in November 2001, when the Bridge Watchers urged local Serbs not to participate, in direct opposition to Covic's statements encouraging Kosovo Serbs to vote.<sup>65</sup>

At any rate, despite all its efforts, UNMIK has not been able to fully extend its influence into North Mitrovica, where the Serbs refuse to recognise it as a legitimate authority. Neither invited nor elected by the Serb population, apart from the possible advantage of perhaps being less corrupt and more efficient administrators, it is difficult to see how UNMIK could claim legitimacy in the eyes of local Serbs. It should come as no surprise that Serbs view UNMIK rule as colonial and prefer their own institutions, however imperfect.

Serb leaders want to see as little authority as possible vested in the new institutions, whose establishment they fear would be a step towards the independence of Kosovo. In February 2002, UNMIK opened an office in North Mitrovica, resulting in disturbances in the town and protests by the municipal workers of the old Serb administration who were afraid of losing their jobs. In April 2002, violence flared up again after the UNMIK Police tried to establish a traffic checkpoint and arrest a Bridge Watcher in relation to a criminal offence. In a very short space of time, a large crowd had formed

<sup>60</sup> 'Kosovo Serb Hardliners Dismiss Moderate Chairman', *Deutsche Presseagentur (DPA)*, 30 October 2001

<sup>61</sup> Authors' interview with KFOR in Mitrovica, February 2002. At least one prominent Bridge Watcher is even employed by UNMIK police as a language assistant.

<sup>62</sup> International Crisis Group, *UNMIK's Kosovo Albatross*, p 9.

<sup>63</sup> OSCE Mission in Kosovo, *Background Report: Parallel Security Structures in North Mitrovica*, 21 May 2002, p 2.

<sup>64</sup> Author's interview with Moncilo Savic and Smilika Milisavjevic, *Povratak* assembly members, Mitrovica, December 2001.

<sup>65</sup> Author's interview with Dragisa Djokovic and Vladimir Rakic, senior Bridge Watchers, Mitrovica, December 2001.

and began fighting against the international police officers, 22 of which whom were injured, some severely. Communication broke down between UNMIK and KFOR, and as a result troops were slow to react. Many UNMIK officers remained trapped in the North surrounded by angry Serbs. As a result, international staff were temporarily withdrawn from all the northern municipalities and the Serb community suspended its co-operation with UNMIK.

Nevertheless, the political response of internationals on the ground has been measured. Even before the latest outbreak, UNMIK considered the Bridge Watchers to be more of a political than a security problem, as they serve as a kind of 'life insurance' for Serbs, and believed their existence should be addressed in a political manner.<sup>66</sup> Some point out that while former Albanian KLA fighters were demobilised, but integrated into Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC), a *de facto* army of Kosovo,<sup>67</sup> Serb paramilitary groups were not offered any option to fit in into legitimate security structures. Moreover, the Serb community feels that some sort of defence arrangement may be required in future if KFOR radically reduces its presence.

A common assumption about politics in Mitrovica is that local Serbs are the puppets of Belgrade.<sup>68</sup> For instance, US Senator Joseph Biden, a Democrat from Delaware and a representative of the pro-Albanian lobby in the US, stated that 'Belgrade continues to play a clever game in Kosova'.<sup>69</sup> While Belgrade's policies and divisions certainly play an important role in Mitrovica, this is too simplistic an explanation. On the one hand, some Serb activists consider Belgrade either unwilling or unable to provide much support for Kosovo Serbs and calculate that for the time being co-operation with the UNMIK administration may be an asset in uncertain circumstances. On the other hand, there is a hard core of local politicians, supported by much of the population, who would never support reconciliation with Albanians or agree to become subjects of what they see as colonial rule. Such people mistrust Belgrade, mindful of the fact that the Serb political establishment may regard them as a bargaining chip vis-à-vis the international community. These attitudes reflect deep-seated security concerns and identity issues. The International Crisis Group (ICG) notes that 'the Mitrovica Serbs are by no means subservient to Belgrade instructions. When the two sides have divergent interests, the Mitrovica Serbs may try to go their own way'.<sup>70</sup>

## Elections and Serb participation in the new administration

Since 1999, the Serb politicians have moved some way towards participation in internationally-designed institutions. The first SRSG, Bernard Kouchner, initially wished to prioritise the law and order agenda and re-establish a degree of security. This proved nearly impossible, and Kouchner preoccupied himself with attempts to set up some form of local administration. Involving Serbs was difficult, since Albanians were initially unwilling to co-operate with Serbs. Moreover, their basic safety could not be guaranteed, and this presented proved a powerful obstacle preventing Serbs from taking up their appointments. Subsequently, a Joint Interim Administration Structure (JIAS) was introduced in which each department was co-headed by a local representative and an international appointee. Initially, Serbs refused to participate, but in April 2000 a faction led by Bishop Artemije and Momcilo Trajkovic announced after serving as observers for a three-month period that they would consider participation. This move was rewarded by a joint understanding between UNMIK and the SNC on the right of Serbs to return and measures to implement this.<sup>71</sup> Trajkovic, formerly an associate of Slobodan Milosevic, was the first to become disenchanted when he

<sup>66</sup> Authors' interview with UNMIK in Mitrovica North, February 2002.

<sup>67</sup> Op cit Heinemann A and W-C Paes W-C, *Wag the Dog*.

<sup>68</sup> See, for example, Qirezi A, 'UN fails to wrest northern Mitrovica from Belgrade's control', *IWPR Balkan Crisis Report*, no. 333, 26 April 2002.

<sup>69</sup> Moore P, 'Serbia: Facing Up to the Past', *RFE/RL Balkan Report*, vol. 6, no. 20, 17 May 2002.

<sup>70</sup> International Crisis Group, *UNMIK's Kosovo Albatross*, p 9.

<sup>71</sup> 'Joint UNMIK-SNC Understanding on the Participation of the SNC in the JIAS,' [www.unmikonline.org/press/press/pr282.html](http://www.unmikonline.org/press/press/pr282.html)

realised that Milosevic cared little about the Kosovo Serbs and was using them for political manipulation. However, after a shooting incident in his flat which left him wounded, Trajkovic soon resigned from the Kosovo Interim Administrative Council, and was replaced by Radmila Trajkovic. The JIAS was dissolved after the parliamentary elections in October 2000.

Since the establishment of an international protectorate in Kosovo in the summer of 1999, the province has seen a number of elections. As the final political status of Kosovo remains still unclear, Serbs took part in two sets of elections: for UNMIK-supported institutions, and for elections held across Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY, now Serbia and Montenegro). While the international community has so far organised three Kosovo-wide elections for municipal and provincial assemblies, it also grudgingly accepted Serbs' participation in the FRY elections. A number of Serbs living in Kosovo serve as members of the parliament in Belgrade and hold high offices in Belgrade-based parties. In this context it is noteworthy that despite the majority of voters in Serbia and Montenegro supporting the DOS in the last elections, Serbs in Kosovo continued to vote overwhelmingly for Milosevic's Socialist Party even after the creation of the protectorate.<sup>72</sup>

Initially, the international administration ran Kosovo through a system of appointments, but after a year and a half it considered it appropriate to hold municipal elections in the province, which took place on 26 October 2000. In September 2000, Milosevic, still in power at the time, called upon the Kosovo Serbs not to register to vote. As a result, they barely won any seats. For example, in Strpce, which is 80 percent Serb, Serbs for a long time had no seat in the local municipal authority, which was made up entirely of Albanians. Throughout 2001, Serbs denied the elected Albanian administrators access to the municipal building on their territory. Finally, under pressure from KFOR, Bahri Hiseni, the ethnic Albanian municipal president, assumed his position in January 2002. Only in the November 2002 municipal elections were three Serbs from the 'Socialists from the Sirina Valley' (SSZ) party finally elected in the municipality, meaning that there was at least some Serb representation on the municipal council.<sup>73</sup>

Western capitals were insistent that Serbs should vote in the 17 November 2001 elections for the Kosovo Assembly. Intense pressure was applied to Belgrade to encourage Serbs to participate, and at the last minute Belgrade complied, recommending on 3 November that Kosovo Serbs should vote in the elections, which to a large extent they did.

**Table: Kosovo Assembly Election Results November 2001.**

Political Party	Votes	Percentage of votes	Seats
Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK)	359,851	45.65%	47
Kosovo Democratic Party (PDK)	202,622	25.70%	26
Return Coalition (Povratak)	89,388	11.34%	22
Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK)	61,688	7.83%	8
Others	74,754	9.48%	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>788,303</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>120</b>

Source: OSCE<sup>74</sup>

The results of the November poll were generally seen as a major step towards the integration of Serbs into mainstream Kosovo politics. Some 46 percent turned out to vote – still a comparatively low number in relation to the Kosovo-wide turnout of

<sup>72</sup> During the Serb elections in December 2000, for example, the Socialist Party emerged as the clear winner in the town of Mitrovica with 43 percent of the vote, trailing DOS with 30.2 percent and the Radical Party with 17.8 percent.

<sup>73</sup> OSCE Mission in Kosovo Department of Election Operations, *Report on Electoral Campaign Expenditure 2002 Municipal Elections*, December 2002.

<sup>74</sup> [www.osce.org/kosovo/elections/archive/2001/index.php3](http://www.osce.org/kosovo/elections/archive/2001/index.php3)

64.30 percent, but a large improvement compared with the results of the municipal elections a year earlier. *Povratak*, the only Serb party standing, emerged as the third largest voting block in the assembly, gaining a total of 22 out of 120 seats, including the ten seats reserved for Serb candidates by the international administration.

Law and order dominated voters' concerns in the parliamentary elections, particularly for minority communities.<sup>75</sup> The extent to which the Serb vote reflected a genuine desire to participate or was merely a case of 'playing the game' is not clear. Most of the enclave population participated in the vote, perhaps acknowledging that Belgrade no longer has power over the region and believing that the time for a 'separate peace' has come. Serbs from the North, on the other hand, were deeply divided: while about two-thirds registered (11,000 out of about 16,000 eligible voters), in the end only seven percent voted, as intimidation of voters in the vicinity of polling stations was widespread. The only Serb party competing in the election, *Povratak*, acquired a total of 89,388 votes from voters from inside and outside Kosovo; however, supporters of more hard-line political forces probably did not participate. For instance, even the relatively moderate SPOT opposed the elections, despite the fact that Momcilo Trajkovic was put under immense pressure by the Belgrade authorities for his 'anti-cooperation' campaign in Northern Kosovo and subsequent boycott of the elections.<sup>76</sup>

Following the elections and creation of an indigenous government with limited powers, Serbs were allocated the sector of agriculture in the new Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG). However, supported by Belgrade, they pushed for another seat – either for a new Ministry for the Return of IDPs or the Vice Presidency of the new government. Serbs also complained about the election of Bajram Rexhepi as the Prime Minister, whom they accuse of personally participating in the murder by decapitation of a Serb soldier during the NATO air raids. Finally, in June 2002 Serb leaders formally ended their boycott of the new government, having acquired two new specially created positions: an inter-ministerial Co-ordinator for IDP Return and a senior adviser to the office of the SRSG.<sup>77</sup> Meanwhile, Rexhepi started to make some conciliatory moves towards Serbs, but it is unclear whether these reflect his genuine aspirations or are simply the result of UNMIK pressure.<sup>78</sup> One of the first acts of the new Assembly was to pass a resolution condemning the agreement on border delimitation between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and Macedonia (FYROM) over the Kosovo sector of the border, implying that Kosovo should decide on its own borders as an independent entity. This caused Serb delegates to walk out in protest.<sup>79</sup>

On 26 October 2002 the second municipal elections under UN administration took place in Kosovo. The international community was confident that it would succeed in convincing the Serb population of the province to take part. Both Kosovo Serb leader Radmila Trajkovic and the government in Belgrade called upon the Serbs to take part in the polls, reinforcing similar statements by SRSG Michael Steiner. However, this time Serb participation was much lower than the average Kosovo-wide turnout of about 54 percent. Hard-line Serb leaders, including Belgrade-based Serb Radical Party leader Vojislav Seselj, had called for a total boycott, while other politicians urged Serbs only to vote in municipalities where they form a majority.<sup>80</sup> As a result, out of the 82 seats won by Serb candidates during the poll, 68 were in five Serb-dominated enclaves. Meanwhile, only a total of 113 votes were cast in the four polling stations in North Mitrovica.<sup>81</sup> This means that for the foreseeable future, there will be no Serb representation in the municipal assembly of the divided city.

<sup>75</sup> OSCE Mission in Kosovo Department of Democratisation, 'Kosovo's Concerns: Voters' Voices', November 2001.

<sup>76</sup> *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment: The Balkans* – No. 10, 2 May 2002.

<sup>77</sup> 'Kosovo Serbs end Assembly boycott', 13 June 2002, ISN.

<sup>78</sup> Qirezi A, 'Rexhepi Offers Serbs olive branch', *IWPR Balkan Crisis Report*, no. 337, 20 May 2002.

<sup>79</sup> ISN Security Watch, 'UN rejects Kosovar sovereignty assertion', [www.isn.ethz.ch](http://www.isn.ethz.ch), 24 May 2002.

<sup>80</sup> BBC News Online, 'Low Serb turnout mars Kosovo vote', [news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/2361783.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/2361783.stm), 26 October 2002.

<sup>81</sup> Haselock S, 'Kosovo Serbs' Own Goal', *IWPR Balkan Crisis Report*, no. 382, 14 November 2002.

## Political outlook

Moderate Serbs perceive that their ability to play a meaningful role in governing Kosovo is severely handicapped and that they are exclusively dependent on international administration to secure their presence in governing structures. They fear that their function is to maintain a multi-ethnic front for the international policies in Kosovo, which are in fact directed against their community.<sup>82</sup> In their view, the political commitments of Resolution 1244 have not been met in the last four years: democracy and respect for human rights are far away, IDPs have not returned and peace in the region is still under threat.

At the same time, there is a belief, especially south of the Ibar, that if the Serbs compromised and co-operated with UNMIK, the international community would abide by Resolution 1244, facilitate the Serb return and never allow Kosovo independence. Meanwhile, despite international assurances to the contrary, a train chain of events is already in motion that is potentially leading towards independence. When Kosovo Serbs fully realise this, it will spell the end of moderate politics in the Serb community. Therefore, international efforts to foster support for co-operation among Serbs are perhaps based on false premises. While Serbs assume that the overall objective is to create a multi-ethnic Kosovo incorporated back into a [renewed] Yugoslav – or now Serbian and Montenegrin – state, international efforts seem, intentionally or otherwise, to be leading in a direction which will result in the establishment of a Kosovo Albanian state in which Serb minority rights will be respected. However, a proper discussion of the future of Kosovo remains taboo. As long as it remains unclear exactly where Kosovo is headed, both sides can afford to interpret things in a favourable light. When the moment of clarity comes, however, much disappointment is likely to follow.

It appears that where the independence of Kosovo is concerned, there is no room in Kosovo Serb politics for conciliation. Even the most moderate politicians, such as Radmila Trajkovic, would not accept the possibility of an independent Kosovo. They believe that such a prospect would jeopardise the return of IDPs they are arguing for, would give Albanian and Serb extremists a free hand, and would endanger their own political standing vis-à-vis other Serb political forces.

## Messages from Belgrade

In legal terms, Kosovo is recognised as a part of the FRY, or now Serbia and Montenegro, but neither the Federal or Serbian governments exercise any jurisdiction over it, with all powers vested in the UN interim administration. Nevertheless, strong ties remain to Belgrade, and every new attempt to cut these ties cause tensions. Much applied legislation, such as the Criminal Code, is that of the former FRY, unless it has been amended by UNMIK. There is a substantial amount of trade between the Serb community in Kosovo and the 'motherland', and many people also go back and forth for family reasons. The decision by UNMIK in 2001 to establish customs posts on the administrative border between Kosovo and Serbia was bitterly opposed by the Serb minority and triggered week-long protests.

## Parallel structures

Since the departure of the Yugoslav army from Kosovo in 1999 and the *de facto* loss of jurisdiction over the province, Belgrade continues to run a system of parallel structures in civil administration, healthcare, education, and so on. In part, such measures reflect a desire to prove that the province is still run from Belgrade, though it is also due simply to the inertia of a system that has been entrenched for decades. To some extent, this system has been co-opted by UNMIK, which reluctantly accepted that short of creating a parallel Serb administration of its own making, there were few

<sup>82</sup> From an interview by Dusan Gamser, Project Director at the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, with members of the Povratak coalition in Gracanica, 1 June 2002.

options but to reach out to Kosovo Serbs for service delivery. This is particularly true in the educational sector, where Serb teachers often continue to follow the curriculum used in the Republic of Serbia without any influence from the Education Department in Pristina, while drawing salaries from both UNMIK and the Belgrade government. Other institutions, such as the Serb-language part of Pristina University, have relocated to towns in South Serbia, such as Nis, where many students from the enclaves do distance-learning courses. In response, UNMIK worked hard to get a number of university departments running in Mitrovica, in order to prove that higher education for Serbs is available on Kosovo territory.<sup>83</sup>

These parallel institutions, which for obvious reasons are a bone of contention for Albanian politicians and the international community alike, are strongest in the divided city of Mitrovica. Here, radical politicians have followed a policy of self-segregation from Kosovo, cutting the few existing ties to the Albanian-dominated municipality on the south bank of the river. Over the course of 2002, for example, North Mitrovica was cut off from the Kosovo telephone network, operated by the 'Albanian' utility PTK, and reconnected to the system of mainland Serbia provider PTT. In spite of this controversy, the parallel structures continue to deliver services to the Serb public, even though it has been pointed out by critics that the quality of services is low.

Despite these problems, most Serb residents in the North prefer their own administrative structures to the arguably more efficient administrative structures created and funded through UNMIK. The Serb government in Belgrade has fostered these attitudes by pumping substantial resources into Kosovo. It has been estimated that cash-strapped Serbia has invested more than €50 million in salaries, pension payments and direct budgetary assistance to parallel structures during the first eight months of 2001 alone.<sup>84</sup> The actual amount of benefit such cash can provide is still quite small, but it is more important as a symbol that links to the motherland of Serbia proper have not been broken.

### The obscure relationship

Meanwhile, the Serb government sends mixed signals, as different parts of the Serb political establishment pursue different policies. Kostunica's supporters in the DSS believe that Serbia should never give up Kosovo, not only for the sake of the Kosovo IDPs and the remaining community in the province, but also because of the high importance attached to the province, which is viewed as a cradle of Serb culture and civilisation. The pragmatic camp, which was led by Djindjic until his assassination in March 2003, is tacitly aware that all, or at least part, of Kosovo is lost, and that the remaining Serbs can be used to negotiate with the international community in return for an aid and development package; it is too early to predict how Djindjic's assassination might impact on negotiations over Kosovo.

As a sweetener to the Kosovo Serbs to encourage them to play by UNMIK rules, prior to the November 2001 elections, the previous SRSG, Hans Haekkerup, established an agreement with Covic's FRY Co-ordination Centre for Kosovo to set up a working group under the auspices of the SRSG. The group includes UNMIK representatives, as well as Belgrade politicians and Serb members of PISG, but excludes Kosovo Albanians. This step enabled UNMIK to negotiate more effectively on practical issues with Belgrade, such as Serb participation in the elections or healthcare and education for Serbs in the North, where many daily issues have to be resolved via Belgrade. The message this move sought to project to the Serbs was that co-operation with UNMIK is in their interests. Nevertheless, several Kosovo Serb politicians opposed the decision, while Kosovo Albanian leaders reacted furiously to the introduction of Belgrade as a factor in deciding matters concerning Kosovo, and the lack of consultation with them

<sup>83</sup> Mitrovica currently has the following departments, most of which relocated from Pristina: Law, Philology, Philosophy, Technical (including Electronics, Architecture and Metallurgy), Medicine and Dentistry. Sports and Teaching Faculties are based at Leposavic, while Zvecan has Faculties of Art and Agriculture.

<sup>84</sup> International Crisis Group, *UNMIK's Kosovo Albatross*, p 97.

on the course of the SRSG's negotiations with Belgrade.<sup>85</sup> Belgrade politicians dealing with Kosovo also complain that they have upset both sides: local Serbs regard them as compromising too much with the internationals to the point of selling Serb interests in Kosovo down the river, while UNMIK thinks they do not apply enough pressure on Kosovo Serbs.<sup>86</sup>

The continued existence of parallel security and judicial structures among the Serbs in Kosovo, as well as the massive presence of a 'home-grown' paramilitary group in North Mitrovica (the Bridge Watchers), presents the international community with a complex set of problems. They are exacerbated by the unclear position of both the Belgrade government and the elected representatives of the Kosovo Serbs towards these institutions, which oscillate between the denying any links to them and using them for their own political purposes. There are several theories as to why these institutions continue to exist in Kosovo.

Firstly, it has been argued that the government in Belgrade, with the support of the hard-line Kosovo Serb leadership in Mitrovica, is using the Bridge Watchers in Mitrovica to keep conflict between Serbs, Albanians and the international community at this northern flashpoint on the boil. Following this line of thought, Serb attempts to frustrate effective administration and policing in the northern part of town could be explained as part of a scheme to show that UNMIK is unable to stop violence and to justify calls for the return of an (overt) MOI and police presence to the Northern parts of Kosovo. Supporters of this theory like to point to Belgrade's financial support for the Bridge Watchers through the hospital and possibly through the MOI.

Another school of thought argues that Belgrade continues to subsidise the parallel institutions in health, education, municipal administration and justice mostly to underline Serbia's continuous claim to continuous sovereignty over the territory. This strategy, which costs the cash-strapped Serb government several dozen million Euros a year, would at the same time placate nationalist circles among the government's supporters in Serbia proper and improve the bargaining position of Belgrade vis-à-vis the international community with regard to the final status of the province. In such a scenario, the Serbs in Kosovo, including much of their political leadership, are reduced to the status of mere pawns on the chessboard of international diplomacy.

The third line of argument, which differs considerably from the two previous two theories, claims that the Bridge Watchers are indeed an indigenous formation which started as a self-defence group in the summer of 1999 and over the last four years has developed into a private army controlled by an influential group of Serb extremists in Mitrovica, part political militia and part criminal gang. According to this line of thought, the Bridge Watchers operate largely autonomously from Belgrade, with their leadership keen to maintain the 'lawless' status of North Mitrovica to facilitate their own criminal activities. Meanwhile the parallel structures in other fields are explained as the bureaucracy developing a shadowy life of its own, rather than as Belgrade's attempt to exercise control over the Serb population in Kosovo.

The truth probably incorporates elements of all three theories, especially since neither the Belgrade government nor the political leadership of the Kosovo Serbs are as monolithic in their approach as they are often perceived to be by the international community. The fragile nature of the ruling coalition in Serbia, which encompasses parties from the nationalist right to the liberal centre, has meant that Belgrade speaks not with one but with many voices on Kosovo. Meanwhile, the Serbian bureaucracy and security apparatus is going through a difficult transformation process of its own, especially since Prime Minister Djindjic's assassination. In this context it seems entirely plausible that some elements within the bureaucratic machine are acting without the consent of their political masters.

<sup>85</sup> 'Yugoslavia: Kosovo poll to increase tensions with UN', Oxford Analytica, 16 November 2001.

<sup>86</sup> Authors' interview with Bozidar Prelevic, Special Adviser, Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia, June 2002, Belgrade.

# 5

## Guns and security



Dolce Vita café in North Mitrovica

### Security arrangements

**GIVEN THE DIFFICULT SECURITY SITUATION** for most of the Kosovo Serbs, and their deep suspicions about anything related to KFOR or UNMIK, the Serb attitude towards the policing and judicial system established by the international administration varies between limited co-operation and outright rejection, depending on location. While Serbs in the southern enclaves seem to have grudgingly accepted the UNMIK-created security institutions, Serbs in the northern municipalities and Mitrovica remain largely hostile, and parallel security and judicial structures continue to exist, as they do in other fields (see above). In North Mitrovica in particular, it seems that the policing that does take place is carried out by the Bridge Watchers.

In theory, policing across the whole of Kosovo should be carried out by the Kosovo Police Service (KPS). The KPS, which by the end of 2002 had some 4,000 serving officers,<sup>87</sup> was founded by UNMIK as an integrated, multi-ethnic police force with a mandate to take over policing from UNMIK's own international civilian police (CIVPOL – commonly referred to as the UNMIK police). Yet despite the KPS's efforts to maintain a substantial minority representation within its ranks, with Serbs making up about ten percent of the force, many Serbs still appear to reject any form of co-operation, particularly in some parts of Northern Kosovo, where Serbs wearing the blue uniform of the KPS have faced verbal abuse and even physical attacks. However, (non-Albanian) KPS officers are now on duty in the enclaves and in most

<sup>87</sup> For more information on police reform in Kosovo, see Peake G, *Policing the Peace: Police reform in Kosovo, Southern Serbia and Macedonia*, (Saferworld, 2003 [forthcoming]).

municipalities in the North, with the significant exception of North Mitrovica. While local community leaders welcome the replacement of the resented international policemen with members of their own ethnic group, they argue that Serbs who have signed up for service in the KPS are ‘criminals’ and ‘sell-outs’, and would not be accepted by their community as keepers of law and order. Instead, they have repeatedly called for the return of Serb policemen from the mainland.<sup>88</sup>

In fact, it appears that policemen and MOI agents from Serbia are working in Mitrovica and in three other Serb-dominated northern municipalities. While they receive their salaries and orders from Belgrade, their precise function is difficult to ascertain. In general, they seem to limit their role mostly to the observation of the local population and of UNMIK activities, rather than actively attempting to police the territory. This work is left to the Bridge Watchers, who are by far the most important security structure in North Mitrovica, paramilitary or otherwise. Not only do they appear to perform certain informal police functions within their community, claiming to act as a ‘neighbourhood watch’, the local Serb population sees them as being essential protection from potential Albanian aggression. It is unclear how far the Bridge Watchers co-operate with Belgrade. Though some people within the international community believe that they are controlled and financed by the Serbian MOI, and some even argue that the bulk of the Bridge Watchers are plain-clothed policeman, there are some indications that the group actually enjoys a great deal of autonomy from Belgrade. Nevertheless, it is apparent that there has been some co-operation between the Bridge Watchers and the ‘official’ Serb security and judiciary system, at least in terms of law enforcement. On several occasions it has been reported that delinquent members of the Serb population in the North have been ‘arrested’ by the Bridge Watchers and transported to Serbia proper for trial, something that would be unlikely to happen without at least being tolerated by official Serb institutions.

It is clear that UNMIK cannot accept the presence of armed paramilitary groups or parallel security and judicial systems in the protectorate. Some people have therefore argued that the international community should attempt to incorporate both the Bridge Watchers and other Serb institutions into the framework of the interim administration rather than continue the present confrontational course. While such a policy would be acceptable to many Kosovo Serb politicians – who on occasion have argued that they could accept a separate Serb police force in Kosovo not run from Belgrade, as long as it would not wear the hated uniforms of the (‘Albanian’) KPS – such steps would cement the *de facto* partition of Kosovo into ethnic cantons held together by weak inter-communal institutions and a massive international presence, similar to Bosnia and Herzegovina. While such a solution would be unacceptable to most Albanians and many people within UNMIK and KFOR, Serbs have pointed out that the international community set a precedent for this when it turned parts of the unreformed KLA into the uniformed and garrisoned Kosovo Protection Corps, ostensibly a civil defence institution, but in reality the self-styled nucleus of Kosovo’s (Albanian) armed forces.

Just as with the new police service, many Serbs living in Kosovo seem to have more trust in the old judicial system than the new UNMIK-controlled one. This has a lot to do with the fact that the Kosovo court system is perceived to be Albanian-dominated. While minority judges (including Serbs) exist within the new system, even UNMIK admits there are problems in terms of providing equal access to justice for members of minorities.<sup>89</sup> Therefore, the Serb court system is still unofficially in place in Kosovo, with a Serb public prosecutor continuing to operate in Northern Kosovo. Lower level courts meet in exile in Serb towns just across the administrative border: for example, the district court in Kraljevo has been hearing cases from Northern Kosovo. Most of the cases heard by the courts are civil in nature, as the court lacks actual power to

<sup>88</sup> Authors’ interviews with community leaders in Mitrovica, December 2001.

<sup>89</sup> UNHCR/OSCE, *Ninth Assessment*, pp 16–20.

enforce its decisions on Kosovo soil, and the judicial personnel employed by this parallel system have on occasion complained about a lack of resources and also about the lack of co-operation from the international community.<sup>90</sup>

## Gun ownership among Kosovo Serbs

Comparatively little is known about the weapons available to Serbs in Kosovo, but it can be taken as given that members of all ethnic groups in the territory have access to considerable stocks of small arms and light weapons (SALW), and also explosives.

Mitrovica's Bridge Watchers are considered the only organised armed group among the Serb population in the province. There are presently no details available about the weapons at their disposal, as the group's members do not publicly carry weapons while 'on service' in the streets of the divided city. Nevertheless, during numerous clashes with the international community in the last four years, Bridge Watchers have used both hand grenades and small arms, including assault rifles such as the Serb version of the AK-47. The origin of these weapons is unknown; it has been speculated that they have been supplied by the Serb government in an attempt to destabilise Kosovo. It seems likely that some of the weapons were part of the more than 75,000 assault rifles handed out to Serb residents of Kosovo during the late 1990s in an attempt to create auxiliary forces during the campaign against the KLA, few of which were collected in any organised fashion during the Serb retreat.<sup>91</sup> Large numbers of weapons remain unaccounted for in Kosovo, and searches by KFOR yield new caches of arms and explosives on an almost daily basis.<sup>92</sup> While much international attention has recently focused on the Albanian population in the wake of armed insurrection in neighbouring South Serbia and Macedonia, which is generally believed to have been fuelled by arms and combatants from Kosovo, there is little doubt that the Serb community in Kosovo has retained substantial stocks of weapons as well. Significant stocks of SALW were discovered by KFOR in the elevator shaft of an apartment building in North Mitrovica.<sup>93</sup> Individual Serbs have been arrested for the illegal possession of weaponry on several occasions both in Northern Kosovo and in the enclaves. On 26 September 1999, for example, British KFOR troops searched a Serb house in the ethnically-mixed town of Kosovo Polje and seized four Kalashnikov rifles, four pistols, five rocket-propelled grenades and a hundred rounds of ammunition. Following this event, almost a hundred Serbs blocked the roads, insisting that they need to keep their weapons to protect themselves against their Albanian neighbours. One British KFOR officer was quoted as saying: "You can go to almost any Serb house here and find weapons, they are well-armed".<sup>94</sup>

These weapons seizures, which continue throughout Kosovo from members of all ethnic groups, indicate the magnitude of a problem that presents a real danger for the consolidation of both inter-communal relations and the international mandate in the territory. Clearly, the problem extends beyond a few farmers retaining rusty rifles under their bedsteads. The low cost and easy availability of SALW – including relatively modern assault rifles – and explosives on the local market means that armed groups among the main ethnic communities are still able to replenish their existing stocks. Armed violence, whether perpetrated by individuals or organised groups, has the potential to spin out of control, since it is comparatively easy to gain access to military-style weaponry in Kosovo. A series of attacks by Albanian extremists on Serbs in Southern Kosovo and the continuous violence orchestrated by Mitrovica's Bridge

<sup>90</sup> Authors' interview with the (Serb) public prosecutor for Mitrovica, December 2001.

<sup>91</sup> 'Armed and Dangerous: The Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Balkans', in Bonn International Center for Conversion, *Conversion Survey 2002: Global Disarmament, Demilitarization and Demobilization*, (Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2002), p. 139.

<sup>92</sup> As of 12 March 2003, KFOR has seized almost 3,000 rifles, 900 pistols, 56 machine-guns, 63 mortars, 450 anti-tank weapons, 2,200 grenades and 250,000 rounds of ammunition.

<sup>93</sup> Op cit Davis I, p 53–54.

<sup>94</sup> Associated Press, 'Although KLA Has Surrendered Weapons, No Shortage of Guns in Kosovo', 3 October 1999.

Watchers towards representatives of the international community bear witness to the explosive potential of the province's unresolved status question.

Vehicle searches at KFOR road blocks and the frequent raids on suspects' homes over the last four years by international peacekeepers have succeeded in creating a climate where few people dare to carry weapons openly or transport them on the main traffic routes during the day. KFOR has already held two gun amnesties of approximately a month in duration each, under SRSG Haekkerup and Steiner respectively. The gun amnesty announced by Michael Steiner from 15 March to 15 April 2002 was administered by KFOR, and both KFOR and UNMIK police distributed over 100,000 flyers through the province asking residents to turn over their weapons, ammunition and explosives anonymously and without questions to official collection points.<sup>95</sup> Collected weapons were to be destroyed at Janjevo Metal Factory, where a new furnace was built with the capacity to melt approximately one ton of weapons per day. Overall, the amnesty succeeded in collecting 516 personal weapons, 55 heavy weapons, 820 grenades and mines, and over 60,000 pieces of ammunition.<sup>96</sup> At the same time, searches continued, and those caught in illegal possession were to be prosecuted as normal. However, it remains unclear whether Kosovo has enough prisons even to host those detained for violent crimes, let alone for illegal gun owners.

Similarly, in June 2002 UNDP launched a 19-month 'Kosovo Illicit Small Arms Control Project' aimed at creating strategies to address SALW issues in a broader social context than had been the case in early law-enforcement and deterrence-based approaches. The project is made up of four main components: developing a strategy for Kosovo on reducing and controlling illicit SALW; establishing a regulatory framework for firearms possession and firearms registry offices; promoting community-based policing and building the capacity of civil society to contribute to SALW reduction; and further support for weapons collection and destruction.<sup>97</sup>

The creation of the indigenous KPS was meant to improve the problem of illegal gun possession and crime by enhancing individual security, but so far it seems questionable whether the presence of local police officers has had a serious impact on gun holdings in Kosovo, notwithstanding some isolated successes. Political concerns over the final status of Kosovo aside, another problem with regard to SALW possession is the continued existence of traditional gun cultures. While this phenomenon is more often associated with the Albanian population, there is no doubt that virtually all ethnic groups in the region attach a great symbolic and social value to individual gun possession, frustrating attempts to convince traditional segments of society to voluntarily hand in weapons which are no longer needed.<sup>98</sup>

The prevailing climate of political and physical insecurity for minorities is not conducive to the effective disarmament of Kosovo society. At present, no party to the conflict is likely to allow itself to be disarmed unless their political demands are met by the international community. The province and its international administrators are caught in a vicious circle: as long as extremists on both sides retain access to large stocks of weaponry and the capacity to organise themselves into paramilitary groups, a political solution which would allow the withdrawal of KFOR and UNMIK is impossible without Kosovo sliding back towards large-scale violence.

A number of factors conspire against the attempts of the international community to establish an effective system of gun control in Kosovo. The main obstacle towards an effective disarmament of the population remains the lack of trust of both Serbs and Albanians in the political process. While Albanians retain arms to be able to defend themselves against the reintroduction of Serb forces in the case of return to Belgrade jurisdiction, Serbs fear that in the event of Kosovo's independence, they need to be able

<sup>95</sup> Copies of the leaflet can be found at [www.nato.int/kfor/chronicle/2002/chronicle\\_06/19.htm](http://www.nato.int/kfor/chronicle/2002/chronicle_06/19.htm)

<sup>96</sup> [www.nato.int/kfor/press/pr/pr/2002/04/26-04.htm](http://www.nato.int/kfor/press/pr/pr/2002/04/26-04.htm)

<sup>97</sup> [www.kosovo.undp.org/Projects/ISAC/isac.htm](http://www.kosovo.undp.org/Projects/ISAC/isac.htm)

<sup>98</sup> Bonn International Center for Conversion, *Conversion Survey 2002*, pp 142–143.

to defend themselves against Albanian militants. Another factor is the widespread availability of weapons on the local and regional markets, fuelled by stocks looted from Albanian police and military barracks in March 1997,<sup>99</sup> sales from former Albanian and Serb paramilitaries and arms distributed by the withdrawing Yugoslav army. The lack of an effective disarmament programme both in Kosovo and in Macedonia continues to undermine the international community's attempts to stem the proliferation of SALW. In this context, and despite KFOR's efforts to seal the borders of the territory, Kosovo has emerged as an important hub in the organised criminal trade in human beings, narcotics and weapons.

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<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 130–131.

# 6

## International policies towards Kosovo



KFOR tank providing protection in Kosovo

### The situation on the ground

**IN MANY RESPECTS**, UNMIK 'reigns but not rules' in Kosovo, while the locus of power lies with KFOR, more precisely with the core brigades made up by the US, the UK, France and Germany, which are organised along national lines and are capable of supplementing UNMIK's amorphous governance with tangible sticks and carrots. The current administrative structure of Kosovo is reminiscent of a protectorate, with the international community keen on an honourable exit-strategy. Given conditions on the ground, such 'sunset strategies' are not easy, while international involvement poses its own challenges. Though the international presence has created jobs to service its operations in Kosovo and generated income through rental of accommodation etc, internationals' salaries have also driven local prices up to an unsustainable level. Serbs in mixed towns are mostly employed in internationally-administered jobs and it is clear that the withdrawal will mean ultimate job losses. Co-operation on the ground between people from many different countries is proving difficult. For example, the UNMIK Police draws officers from various national forces where policing practices vary widely, which has created problems over standards and practices, particularly in the first two years of the international presence.

To an extent, the international community on the ground is caught up in self-imposed restrictions. For example, Serb refugees from Krajina (Croatia) are concentrated in

Northern Kosovo, and UNHCR provided care for them until October 2000, when it was decided that UNMIK as a national government substitute is supposed to look after them. Yet, as UNMIK's rule does not extend properly to the North, it has little capacity to do so.<sup>100</sup> However, UNHCR has been prohibited from rendering any assistance to Serb refugees, as this would imply a recognition of authority of the Serb Commissioner for refugees who deals with Krajina Serbs. In practice, a local NGO is used as a go-between.

The need for protection has hardly reduced, but even KFOR's impressive armour cannot guarantee it. On more than one occasion Albanian villagers have tried to push buses off the road into ravines and KFOR tanks were too slow to react. However, the military presence sometimes appears out of proportion: in Osojane Valley, for instance, there are more Spanish KFOR troops than Serbs. Unfortunately, such measures are essential, as only overwhelming force precludes a new tide of killings. The decrease in serious violence can be largely attributed to the fact that KFOR has gained more experience and has started to do its job better, rather than to any significant improvement in inter-communal relations. However, such statistics tend to be interpreted in the capitals of power as genuine progress, allowing troops to be freed who are needed elsewhere. The OSCE/UNHCR Report warns against 'an unfortunate tendency within some sectors of the international community to down play the adverse effect of the less serious forms of violence'.<sup>101</sup>

In 2002 KFOR introduced a change of policy aimed at allocating supremacy to the civilian administration and reducing the visibility of the military in static duties (ie removing some of the watchtowers at entry points to enclaves and some of the armoured personnel carriers (APCs) accompanying minority shuttle buses). In general, KFOR has attempted to lessen its involvement in what could be seen as political battles and to patrol the area in a non-confrontational manner. As a result, it has proceeded to move towards a lighter, non-static security system, utilising more mobile forces that can better respond better to the threats caused by organised crime and trafficking.

Against all odds, but following the international line of the 'right to return' and Belgrade's pressure to move people back, UNHCR makes efforts to organise repatriation. Those who wish to return are predominantly farmers with no other skills, for whom it is hard to find work in Serbia. In 2001, UNHCR returned 84 families to Osojane area, creating another Serb enclave as a result. The murder of an Ashkali family one week after their return brought more bad publicity. In many areas Serb houses were flattened to prevent them from returning, and UNHCR is engaged in construction of new houses for them.

## Serb attitudes towards internationals

While at the time of NATO deployment the sympathies of the local populations were clear – ie Albanians cheered and Serbs resented the internationals – the current situation is more nuanced. In the North, Albanians perceive French KFOR as Serb border guards who preserve the partition of Mitrovica. Serb attitudes towards KFOR in Mitrovica and in Kosovo in general have improved, as they realise that they owe their survival to foreign troops. While the political relationship with UNMIK, as an institution, is one of outright resentment, personal relations between Serbs and international staff are quite relaxed. Most internationals rent housing in the North, although their offices are in the South, and the instruction to relocate their places of residence from North Mitrovica in response to the violence in April 2002 was met with

<sup>100</sup> Authors' interview at UNHCR in Mitrovica, February 2002.

<sup>101</sup> OSCE/UNHCR, *Ninth Minority Assessment*, p 9.

disobedience.<sup>102</sup> UNMIK and KFOR also maintain ‘backdoor’ contacts with Bridge Watchers.<sup>103</sup>

Local attitudes are also differentiated in terms of the internationals’ material capabilities (eg Ukrainians poor, Americans rich), ethnic and religious affiliation (Greeks and Russians are unpopular among Albanians) and degree of intermixing with the locals. There is also a perception among locals that many internationals came to their land not to reconstruct Kosovo, but to make money or to escape something from their domestic situation. As internationals come and go, their sense of responsibility for things going wrong is limited as they do not have to live with the consequences, while Serbs feel they become hostages to other people’s mistakes.

## Policies in the capitals of power

Some of the international community’s initial optimism about the prospects for the social, economic and political reconstruction of Kosovo derived from drawing (misplaced) parallels with the experience of Germany during both the Marshall Plan era and the unification of the 1990s. This, to a degree, still continues: Michael Steiner’s statement that “we have managed to unite Germany and we will achieve the same thing in Kosovo”<sup>104</sup> expressed this optimism. However, it has been suggested that today Serbia as a whole feels more like the Germany of the Weimar years than the two Germanys that came out of the Second World War.<sup>105</sup>

In the four years since the intervention, two factors have influenced the change of international attitudes towards Kosovo. Firstly, the fall of the Milosevic regime deprived Europe of a notable villain, and altered policies towards the region in general and Belgrade in particular. This has been a mixed blessing for Kosovo Albanians, as subsequently it became more difficult to maintain an external image as threatened victims in need of protection who sought independence as the best guarantee against Serb oppression; as *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment* notes, ‘Kosovar Albanians were more stunned than relieved by Milosevic’s removal from power’.<sup>106</sup> Post-Milosevic, the aggressor-victim dichotomy that had apparently informed international perceptions of Kosovo was replaced by something more complex. Secondly, there has been increasing disappointment over the state of affairs in Kosovo, as a number of negative trends have become apparent, such as the scale of organised crime, the spill-over of Albanian insurgency into border areas of Serbia and Macedonia, and the slow progress in developing self-governance. As the West started to look more favourably towards Belgrade, the matter of Kosovo’s independence, which had once – tacitly – seemed to be on the cards, became more ambiguous.<sup>107</sup> As a result, negotiations on the province’s future have also become more complicated, and the international community needs to tread carefully, for “any rash attempts to force a Serb-Albanian dialogue, even if formally agreed to by some segments of Albanian society, would inevitably strengthen the radical elements in Kosovo”.<sup>108</sup>

So far, the policies of international bodies, such as the UN and the EU, and of the key national governments, notably the US, the EU member states and Russia, have so far largely revolved around maintaining the status quo while scaling down their engagement on the ground. A combination of the following factors has determined such attitudes:

<sup>102</sup> Authors’ interview with OSCE staff, Belgrade, June 2002.

<sup>103</sup> Authors’ interview with French KFOR in Kosovo; see also OSCE Mission in Kosovo, *Background Report: Parallel Security Structures in North Mitrovica*, 21 May 2002, p 4.

<sup>104</sup> Cited in Kostovicova D, ‘Belgrade’s Kosovo Policy Endangers Local Serbs’, *IWPR Balkan Crisis Report*, no. 334, 1 May 2002.

<sup>105</sup> Moore P, ‘Serbia: Facing Up to the Past’, *RFE/RL Balkan Report*, vol. 6, no. 20, 17 May 2002.

<sup>106</sup> Jane’s Sentinel, *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment – The Balkans*, no. 10, 2 May 2002.

<sup>107</sup> In fact, even raising the issue of Kosovo’s independence remains taboo for the international community, and initiatives that appear to lead in such a direction can backfire. For example, throughout 2000 and 2001 there was much talk about international lawyers drafting a new criminal code for Kosovo. This was quietly dropped in 2002 after the Security Council reportedly concluded that such an initiative would violate Resolution 1244.

<sup>108</sup> Jane’s Sentinel, *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment – The Balkans*, no. 10, 2 May 2002.

- A belief that it is possible to reconstruct a multi-ethnic society after conflict, and that interethnic tensions should not be allowed to defeat such efforts;
- The political impossibility of accepting a population exchange, which leads to a policy which stresses the right of IDPs to return, regardless of how impractical or insecure this may be, rather than helping them to adapt to their new circumstances;
- A stress on the inviolability of the principle of territorial integrity, which is related to the fact that several European states face their own separatist movements;
- Fear of strengthening the hand of radicals in Serbia, and worries about a possible 'domino effect' on other regional hotspots, such as Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and South Serbia.

These considerations make a frank discussion about finding a realistic status for Kosovo almost impossible. Hampered by its own inability to accept the facts on the ground, the international community seems unwilling to move beyond maintaining an artificial stability, in the belief or hope that it is buying time for interethnic differences to subside.

As the long-term objectives for Kosovo were never clearly spelt out at the onset of the international intervention in summer 1999, there are no benchmarks against which to measure progress. To the outside world, Kosovo is a success story. As there is no overt violence, it is assumed that peace has, by and large, been achieved. The work that still remains to be done is presumed to be mere practicalities which international agencies such as UNMIK, KFOR and OSCE are equipped to deal with. With patience, time and money, it is assumed, the pieces of the puzzle will somehow fall into place. If progress is slow, such a view implies, it is because internationals are not doing their job properly: agencies are not trying hard enough (eg to return Serb IDPs), are biased (for example, French KFOR is sometimes accused of bias towards Serbs), do not delegate enough authority to local representatives, or listen to their own capitals rather than UNMIK. Even if this view is partially correct, a longer perspective is required – as the years of deadlock in Cyprus have shown, these situations can remain unresolved for decades. Yet there is a more fundamental problem, which is that the whole ideology born out of international intervention is largely blind to the problem caused by the continued strength of inter-communal resentment. This resentment is fuelled by uncertainty over the future, which leads both sides to prepare for the worst. As a result, a massive foreign force is needed to maintain an appropriate level of security, and removing this force from the equation could soon see all efforts at integration go back to square one.

# 7

## Options for the future of Kosovo



View from 'minority shuttle' bus

**IT SEEMS HIGHLY IMPROBABLE** that the existing arrangements in Kosovo are sustainable, and as international attention and commitment is likely to continue to wane, steps towards a definite and lasting solution need to be taken if the area is not to slide back into violence. Meanwhile, discussions in Kosovo have been overshadowed by the political agendas of radicals on both sides, and by Serbia's often unclear position on the matter. The contrast between the position of international legality and the realities of the ground could not be greater. While the gradual trend towards *de facto* independence for Kosovo is welcome to most Albanians, in the absence of an agreement on the status of the province ordinary people must live in a political limbo. For the minorities in particular, normal life is on hold as their status is bartered away in an international game of poker.

The need for a decision on status has been argued by the ICG on the grounds that 'the international community cannot afford to leave Kosovo in a state of uneasy and potentially dangerous limbo just because the issues involved are awkward'.<sup>109</sup> To this end, a range of potential solutions are analysed below. The analysis puts an emphasis on human security and those solutions which are more likely to bring peace, rather

<sup>109</sup> International Crisis Group, *A Kosovo Roadmap (II)*, p. ii. See also, ICG, *Kosovo's ethnic dilemma: The Need for a Civilian Contract*, May 2003.

than on desired notions which make more sense in Western capitals than on the ground.

- **Maintenance of the *status quo*.** The status quo is likely to be maintained in the short run, but it appears unrealistic that this can be continued for much longer. Frustration is growing on the Albanian side and the international will to continue to provide resources may soon reach its limit, as the focus has now shifted towards Afghanistan and Iraq. If the process of gradual withdrawal continues, there will be fewer and fewer international soldiers to protect Serbs and other minorities in the enclaves. The most likely scenario is further harassment and displacement of Serbs, creating new refugees among Kosovo's neighbouring states. Serbian security forces would be unlikely to intervene in territories that do not border Serbia proper. The area to the north of Mitrovica, on the other hand, is defensible, and this is where battles would be likely to unfold.
- **Independence within the current borders, full or conditional.** The ICG report argues for conditional independence under a form of international trusteeship. However, it tends to overlook the fact that it would be difficult to enforce any conditions after independence in some form has been granted. Kosovo Albanians have already started to bear grudges against the international administration. This process is likely to continue as the new Kosovo government acquires more power and as UNMIK will have to be tougher on a number of issues. It cannot be taken for granted that the Albanian majority will continue to abide by the rules prescribed by UNMIK once the international presence is further reduced. The only real leverage the international community has so far is a threat to fulfil Resolution 1244 and return Kosovo to Belgrade rule, which the Albanian community seeks to avoid at all costs. With such leverage removed, it is difficult to envisage how international administrators would impose their will in sensitive areas such as minority protection or the fight against organised crime.
- **Bosnian-style model of cantonisation.** This idea, which has been put forward by moderate politicians in Belgrade, would give the ethnic enclaves maximum autonomy and create a weak federal state. In Kosovo, this scenario is only viable at the cost of overwhelming external force offering protection to both communities. Covic recommended the creation of canton-type 'entities' in Northern Kosovo based on the experience of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Marko Jaksic of the Bridge Watchers has also articulated support for the 'entities' concept. Entities would include the territory of Northern Kosovo where Serbs are in a majority, along with several extended enclaves throughout the region.<sup>110</sup> The return of some 100,000 Serb IDPs who wish to go back to Kosovo to the enclaves would be encouraged in order to create a more viable Serb presence in Kosovo. The assumption behind this is that if a substantial number of Serbs live in the entity and maintain co-operation with the international administration, it will be politically impossible for the international community to grant independence to Kosovo Albanians. As relations between the international community and Belgrade are gradually improving, while the opposite is true with respect to the Kosovo Albanians, it would be more difficult to rally support for independence. However, there are two fundamental problems with such an option: firstly, it relies on an overwhelming external presence to provide security, and secondly, it preserves rather than resolves the conflict, potentially leading to renewed violence. Furthermore, it is difficult to view Bosnia and Herzegovina as a successful role model for Kosovo, as the country seems to be locked in its status of being yet another *de facto* international protectorate.
- **Fulfilment of Resolution 1244.** When Resolution 1244 was passed, it left much room for ambiguity as to what the final solution would be. However, international consensus at the time could only have been built on the basis that Kosovo would not be granted

<sup>110</sup> OSCE Mission in Kosovo, *Background Report: Parallel Security Structures in North Mitrovica*, 21 May 2002, p 6.

independence and would remain a part of the then FRY, even if Belgrade's authority over the province was minimal. Basically, the resolution sought to re-create the substantial Albanian autonomy enjoyed by the province during the 1970s and 1980s within the SFRY. While moderate Albanian politicians supported such a solution prior to the civil war, the experience of the conflict has radicalised the Albanian position. To most Albanians the re-imposition of any form of Serb sovereignty over the territory now seems impossible, and a return to widespread violence seems almost inevitable if the international community seriously pushes such a solution. While UNMIK continues to pay lip service to the principles enshrined in Resolution 1244, the actions and statements of the international community on the ground are far more ambiguous. Steiner declared that 'the rules of the game are clear: Pristina is not Belgrade. I do not interfere in Belgrade's affairs and Belgrade shouldn't interfere in [Kosovo's] affairs.'<sup>111</sup> The longer the international presence lasts in Kosovo, the less realistic the fulfilment of Resolution 1244 appears. If this were to happen, it is likely that Albanians would take up arms again to prevent Serb security forces from entering Kosovo, even if they were only there to protect the Serb enclaves. Moreover, recent steps towards the separation of Montenegro from Serbia make references to inviolability of existing state structures increasingly unconvincing.

- **Partition along the River Ibar.** This appears to be one of the more likely scenarios, and this could prevent further violence, but it is the one option the international community finds most difficult to swallow. The partition of Kosovo along ethnic lines would recognise the reality of a deeply divided society but would probably not be possible without the movement of Albanians from North to South, and Serbs in the other direction. While some members of the respective minorities would probably want to stay behind, their long-term survival would be difficult to guarantee without an international presence. Nevertheless, it seems that Belgrade would be willing to concede Kosovo's independence if the Serbs in the North were allowed to join Serbia, and Belgrade was offered a number of suitable 'carrots', such as a substantial aid package, inclusion into European and transatlantic bodies, and an international guarantee that Belgrade would not suffer any more territorial losses (such as South Serbia). Whether such a solution would be acceptable to Albanian politicians in Pristina, or whether they would indeed demand parts of South Serbia by way of compensation, as some have hinted at, remains open to question. In any case, with the international community so far unwilling to open Pandora's Box and redraw the borders, for the time being it remains trapped in a maze of its own making.

111 Qirezi A, 'Serbs urged to defy Belgrade', *IWPR Balkan Crisis Report*, no. 329, 10 April 2002.

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# United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999)

Adopted by the Security Council at its 4011th meeting on 10 June 1999

### The Security Council,

**Bearing in mind** the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and the primary responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security,

**Recalling** its resolutions 1160 (1998) of 31 March 1998, 1199 (1998) of 23 September 1998, 1203 (1998) of 24 October 1998 and 1239 (1999) of 14 May 1999,

**Regretting** that there has not been full compliance with the requirements of these resolutions,

**Determined** to resolve the grave humanitarian situation in Kosovo, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and to provide for the safe and free return of all refugees and displaced persons to their homes,

**Condemning** all acts of violence against the Kosovo population as well as all terrorist acts by any party,

**Recalling** the statement made by the Secretary-General on 9 April 1999, expressing concern at the humanitarian tragedy taking place in Kosovo,

**Reaffirming** the right of all refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes in safety,

**Recalling** the jurisdiction and the mandate of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia,

**Welcoming** the general principles on a political solution to the Kosovo crisis adopted on 6 May 1999 (S/1999/516, annex 1 to this resolution) and welcoming also the acceptance by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia of the principles set forth in points 1 to 9 of the paper presented in Belgrade on 2 June 1999 (S/1999/649, annex 2 to this resolution), and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's agreement to that paper,

**Reaffirming** the commitment of all Member States to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the other States of the region, as set out in the Helsinki Final Act and annex 2,

**Reaffirming** the call in previous resolutions for substantial autonomy and meaningful self-administration for Kosovo,

**Determining** that the situation in the region continues to constitute a threat to international peace and security,

**Determined** to ensure the safety and security of international personnel and the implementation by all concerned of their responsibilities under the present resolution, and acting for these purposes under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations,

- 1. Decides** that a political solution to the Kosovo crisis shall be based on the general principles in annex 1 and as further elaborated in the principles and other required elements in annex 2;
- 2. Welcomes** the acceptance by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia of the principles and other required elements referred to in paragraph 1 above, and **demands** the full cooperation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in their rapid implementation;

3. **Demands** in particular that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia put an immediate and verifiable end to violence and repression in Kosovo, and begin and complete verifiable phased withdrawal from Kosovo of all military, police and paramilitary forces according to a rapid timetable, with which the deployment of the international security presence in Kosovo will be synchronized;
4. **Confirms** that after the withdrawal an agreed number of Yugoslav and Serb military and police personnel will be permitted to return to Kosovo to perform the functions in accordance with annex 2;
5. **Decides** on the deployment in Kosovo, under United Nations auspices, of international civil and security presences, with appropriate equipment and personnel as required, and welcomes the agreement of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to such presences;
6. **Requests** the Secretary-General to appoint, in consultation with the Security Council, a Special Representative to control the implementation of the international civil presence, and further requests the Secretary-General to instruct his Special Representative to coordinate closely with the international security presence to ensure that both presences operate towards the same goals and in a mutually supportive manner;
7. **Authorizes** Member States and relevant international organizations to establish the international security presence in Kosovo as set out in point 4 of annex 2 with all necessary means to fulfil its responsibilities under paragraph 9 below;
8. **Affirms** the need for the rapid early deployment of effective international civil and security presences to Kosovo, and **demands** that the parties cooperate fully in their deployment;
9. **Decides** that the responsibilities of the international security presence to be deployed and acting in Kosovo will include:
  - (a) Deterring renewed hostilities, maintaining and where necessary enforcing a ceasefire, and ensuring the withdrawal and preventing the return into Kosovo of Federal and Republic military, police and paramilitary forces, except as provided in point 6 of annex 2;
  - (b) Demilitarizing the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and other armed Kosovo Albanian groups as required in paragraph 15 below;
  - (c) Establishing a secure environment in which refugees and displaced persons can return home in safety, the international civil presence can operate, a transitional administration can be established, and humanitarian aid can be delivered;
  - (d) Ensuring public safety and order until the international civil presence can take responsibility for this task;
  - (e) Supervising demining until the international civil presence can, as appropriate, take over responsibility for this task;
  - (f) Supporting, as appropriate, and coordinating closely with the work of the international civil presence;
  - (g) Conducting border monitoring duties as required;
  - (h) Ensuring the protection and freedom of movement of itself, the international civil presence, and other international organizations;
10. **Authorizes** the Secretary-General, with the assistance of relevant international organizations, to establish an international civil presence in Kosovo in order to provide an interim administration for Kosovo under which the people of Kosovo can enjoy substantial autonomy within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and which will provide transitional administration while establishing and overseeing the development of provisional democratic self-governing institutions to ensure conditions for a peaceful and normal life for all inhabitants of Kosovo;
11. **Decides** that the main responsibilities of the international civil presence will include:

- (a) Promoting the establishment, pending a final settlement, of substantial autonomy and self-government in Kosovo, taking full account of annex 2 and of the Rambouillet accords (S/1999/648);
  - (b) Performing basic civilian administrative functions where and as long as required;
  - (c) Organizing and overseeing the development of provisional institutions for democratic and autonomous self-government pending a political settlement, including the holding of elections;
  - (d) Transferring, as these institutions are established, its administrative responsibilities while overseeing and supporting the consolidation of Kosovo's local provisional institutions and other peace-building activities;
  - (e) Facilitating a political process designed to determine Kosovo's future status, taking into account the Rambouillet accords (S/1999/648);
  - (f) In a final stage, overseeing the transfer of authority from Kosovo's provisional institutions to institutions established under a political settlement;
  - (g) Supporting the reconstruction of key infrastructure and other economic reconstruction;
  - (h) Supporting, in coordination with international humanitarian organizations, humanitarian and disaster relief aid;
  - (i) Maintaining civil law and order, including establishing local police forces and meanwhile through the deployment of international police personnel to serve in Kosovo;
  - (j) Protecting and promoting human rights;
  - (k) Assuring the safe and unimpeded return of all refugees and displaced persons to their homes in Kosovo;
- 12. Emphasizes** the need for coordinated humanitarian relief operations, and for the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to allow unimpeded access to Kosovo by humanitarian aid organizations and to cooperate with such organizations so as to ensure the fast and effective delivery of international aid;
- 13. Encourages** all Member States and international organizations to contribute to economic and social reconstruction as well as to the safe return of refugees and displaced persons, and **emphasizes** in this context the importance of convening an international donors' conference, particularly for the purposes set out in paragraph 11 (g) above, at the earliest possible date;
- 14. Demands** full cooperation by all concerned, including the international security presence, with the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia;
- 15. Demands** that the KLA and other armed Kosovo Albanian groups end immediately all offensive actions and comply with the requirements for demilitarization as laid down by the head of the international security presence in consultation with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General;
- 16. Decides** that the prohibitions imposed by paragraph 8 of resolution 1160 (1998) shall not apply to arms and related **matériel** for the use of the international civil and security presences;
- 17. Welcomes** the work in hand in the European Union and other international organizations to develop a comprehensive approach to the economic development and stabilization of the region affected by the Kosovo crisis, including the implementation of a Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe with broad international participation in order to further the promotion of democracy, economic prosperity, stability and regional cooperation;
- 18. Demands** that all States in the region cooperate fully in the implementation of all aspects of this resolution;

19. **Decides** that the international civil and security presences are established for an initial period of 12 months, to continue thereafter unless the Security Council decides otherwise;
20. **Requests** the Secretary-General to report to the Council at regular intervals on the implementation of this resolution, including reports from the leaderships of the international civil and security presences, the first reports to be submitted within 30 days of the adoption of this resolution;
21. **Decides** to remain actively seized of the matter.

## Annex 1

### **Statement by the Chairman on the conclusion of the meeting of the G-8 Foreign Ministers held at the Petersberg Centre on 6 May 1999**

The G-8 Foreign Ministers adopted the following general principles on the political solution to the Kosovo crisis:

- Immediate and verifiable end of violence and repression in Kosovo;
- Withdrawal from Kosovo of military, police and paramilitary forces;
- Deployment in Kosovo of effective international civil and security presences, endorsed and adopted by the United Nations, capable of guaranteeing the achievement of the common objectives;
- Establishment of an interim administration for Kosovo to be decided by the Security Council of the United Nations to ensure conditions for a peaceful and normal life for all inhabitants in Kosovo;
- The safe and free return of all refugees and displaced persons and unimpeded access to Kosovo by humanitarian aid organizations;
- A political process towards the establishment of an interim political framework agreement providing for a substantial self-government for Kosovo, taking full account of the Rambouillet accords and the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the other countries of the region, and the demilitarization of the KLA;
- Comprehensive approach to the economic development and stabilization of the crisis region.

## Annex 2

Agreement should be reached on the following principles to move towards a resolution of the Kosovo crisis:

1. An immediate and verifiable end of violence and repression in Kosovo.
2. Verifiable withdrawal from Kosovo of all military, police and paramilitary forces according to a rapid timetable.
3. Deployment in Kosovo under United Nations auspices of effective international civil and security presences, acting as may be decided under Chapter VII of the Charter, capable of guaranteeing the achievement of common objectives.
4. The international security presence with substantial North Atlantic Treaty Organization participation must be deployed under unified command and control and authorized to establish a safe environment for all people in Kosovo and to facilitate the safe return to their homes of all displaced persons and refugees.
5. Establishment of an interim administration for Kosovo as a part of the international civil presence under which the people of Kosovo can enjoy substantial autonomy within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, to be decided by the Security Council of the United Nations. The interim administration to provide transitional administration

while establishing and overseeing the development of provisional democratic self-governing institutions to ensure conditions for a peaceful and normal life for all inhabitants in Kosovo.

6. After withdrawal, an agreed number of Yugoslav and Serbian personnel will be permitted to return to perform the following functions:
  - Liaison with the international civil mission and the international security presence;
  - Marking/clearing minefields;
  - Maintaining a presence at Serb patrimonial sites;
  - Maintaining a presence at key border crossings.
7. Safe and free return of all refugees and displaced persons under the supervision of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and unimpeded access to Kosovo by humanitarian aid organizations.
8. A political process towards the establishment of an interim political framework agreement providing for substantial self-government for Kosovo, taking full account of the Rambouillet accords and the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the other countries of the region, and the demilitarization of UCK. Negotiations between the parties for a settlement should not delay or disrupt the establishment of democratic self-governing institutions.
9. A comprehensive approach to the economic development and stabilization of the crisis region. This will include the implementation of a stability pact for South-Eastern Europe with broad international participation in order to further promotion of democracy, economic prosperity, stability and regional cooperation.

**The Bonn International Center for Conversion is an independent non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting the transfer of former military resources and assets to alternative civilian purposes.**

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**COVER PHOTO:** KFOR troops protecting the Strpce enclave.



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