

Armend R. Bekaj

## The KLA and the Kosovo War

From Intra-State Conflict to Independent Country

**Armend R. Bekaj:**

The KLA and the Kosovo War: From Intra-State Conflict to Independent Country.

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Copies can be ordered from:

Berghof Conflict Research

Altensteinstraße 48a

D-14195 Berlin, Germany

Tel. +49/(0)30 - 844154-0

Fax +49/(0)30 - 844154-99

Via Internet:

<http://www.berghof-conflictresearch.org/>

[order@berghof-conflictresearch.org](mailto:order@berghof-conflictresearch.org)

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# **Berghof Transitions Series**

## **Resistance/Liberation Movements and Transition to Politics**

### **Editors**

**Véronique Dudouet and Hans J. Giessmann**

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## About this Publication Series

This case-study is one of a series produced by participants in an ongoing Berghof research programme on transitions from violence to peace (*Resistance and Liberation Movements in Transition*). The programme's overall aim is to learn from the experience of those in resistance or liberation movements who have used violence in their struggle but have also engaged politically during the conflict and in any peace process. Recent experience around the world has demonstrated that reaching political settlement in protracted social conflict always eventually needs the involvement of such movements. Our aim here is to discover how, from a non-state perspective, such political development is handled, what is the relationship between political and military strategies and tactics, and to learn more about how such movements (often sweepingly and simplistically bundled under the label of *non-state armed groups*) contribute to the transformation of conflict and to peacemaking. We can then use that experiential knowledge (1) to offer support to other movements who might be considering such a shift of strategy, and (2) to help other actors (states and international) to understand more clearly how to engage meaningfully with such movements to bring about political progress and peaceful settlement.

Political violence is a tool of both state and non-state actors, and replacing it by political methods of conflict management is essential to making sustainable peace. With this programme we want to understand better how one side of that equation has been, or could be, achieved. Depending on the particular case, each study makes a strong argument for the necessary inclusion of the movement in any future settlement, or documents clearly how such a role was effectively executed.

We consciously asked participants to reflect on these movement's experience from their own unique point of view. What we publish in this series is not presented as neutral or exclusively accurate commentary. All histories are biased histories, and there is no single truth in conflict or in peace. Rather, we believe these case-studies are significant because they reflect important voices which are usually excluded or devalued in the analysis of conflict. Increasing numbers of academics, for example, study "armed groups" from outside, but few actually engage directly with them to hear their own points of view, rationales, and understandings of their context. We are convinced that these opinions and perspectives urgently need to be heard in order to broaden our understanding of peacemaking. For exactly this reason, each case study has been produced with the very close co-operation of, and in some cases authored by, members of the movement concerned. As the results amply illustrate, these perspectives are sophisticated, intelligent, political and strategic.

The reader may or may not agree with the perspectives expressed. But, much more importantly, we hope that the reader will accept that these perspectives are valid in themselves and must be included in any attempt at comprehensive understanding of violent conflict and its transformation. We urgently need to understand in more depth the dynamics of organisations who make the transition between political violence and democratic politics, in order to improve our understanding of their role, and our practice, in making peace.

The views expressed are those of the authors and contributors, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or views of the Berghof Foundation for Conflict Studies or any of its constituent agencies.

For further information on the project, please contact:

Véronique Dudouet (Project Coordinator)  
v.dudouet@berghof-conflictresearch.org

Prof. Hans J. Giessmann (Director, BCR)  
giessmann@berghof-conflictresearch.org

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1. Background and the years of nonviolent resistance</b>	<b>9</b>
1.1 The historical perspective of the armed movement	9
1.2 1945 to 1989: Kosovo and the socialist ideology	10
1.3 Kosovo in the parallel system	12
<b>2. Armed mobilisation and international intervention</b>	<b>17</b>
2.1 Emergence of the armed struggle: the appearance of armed resistance cells	17
2.2 The dominance of the KLA	18
2.3 The intensification of hostilities: March 1998 – March 1999	21
2.4 The involvement of international actors and NATO’s bombing campaign	23
<b>3. The post-war transformation of the KLA</b>	<b>27</b>
3.1 KPC: transformation, not dissolution	27
3.2 Integration into the police force	31
3.3 The leap from combatant to politician	31
<b>4. The post-independence security presence</b>	<b>33</b>
4.1 Security sector review	33
4.2 The “dignified” dissolution of the KPC	34
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Internet Sources</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Interviews</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Annex I: Acronyms</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Annex II: Chronology</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Annex III: Map of Kosovo</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>About the Author</b>	<b>47</b>

## Introduction

The recent conflict in Kosovo<sup>1</sup> is often referred to as a unique case study for several reasons: the factors that contributed to the sudden rise of the Albanians' armed insurgency movement in the mid- to late-1990s; the heavy involvement of the international community, climaxing in the armed intervention of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) against a sovereign state – Serbia/Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY);<sup>2</sup> and the subsequent establishment of the international protectorate in Kosovo, led by the United Nations (UN) in concert with the NATO Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the widest array of international organisations to date. These unique circumstances, so the argument goes, have followed Kosovo's political path, leading up to its declaration of independence. Along this path, international norms of self-determination and human rights *versus* those of national sovereignty and non-interference in internal matters have been invoked, tested and have even clashed repeatedly. The recent deliberations at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) at the Hague as to whether or not Kosovo's declaration of independence is legal bear testimony to this clash.<sup>3</sup>

*Sui generis* theory aside, Kosovo's conflict has been a protracted one, and in this respect shares resemblances with other cases of occupation and/or self-determination and liberation. If one is to set a date, it originated in 1912/13, when the territory was forcefully and illegally annexed by Serbia, later becoming part of Yugoslavia. With this context in mind, this study aims at offering an account on the rise of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) (*Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës*, UÇK), whilst analysing some of the root causes that led to its formation. It will look at how the KLA has interacted with its international partners, such as NATO; how it has transformed itself into a civilian force; and how its leaders have reinvented themselves as political figures.

The research framework of Berghof Conflict Research's publication series "Resistance/Liberation Movements and Transition to Politics"<sup>4</sup> views armed struggle as an expansion of political strategies, or as a way for resistance/liberation movements to attain their goals. The aims of this research scheme are to identify the origins and objectives of the movements concerned, their transition from non-violent to armed struggle and the reasons for this shift. It also explores the "internal and external factors [that have] persuaded the movement to pursue or consider a non-violent political strategy", and addresses the causes that have assisted the movement in pursuing a political strategy. Furthermore, it looks at the "nature of any resulting/potential transformation" from armed conflict to peace-time politics, whose actors – as many resistance movements across the world testify – have "in the course of the conflict made the transition from opposing a state regime to participating in the construction of a new, more democratic system" (Dudouet 2009: 14).

In this context, the research on the KLA's armed struggle and the subsequent transition to politics has several commonalities with other research papers in this series. However, this research paper will also highlight those singular historical moments in Kosovo's recent war which make this

<sup>1</sup> The term "Kosovo" shall be used throughout this text, as it is the version that has become standard in the English language. "Kosova", the Albanian name of the country, shall be referred to as such only when quoted from direct sources. All other place names within Kosovo shall be noted as in the Albanian vernacular, unless otherwise quoted in sources.

<sup>2</sup> The names "Serbia/FRY (or Yugoslavia)" and "Serb/Yugoslav forces" are used interchangeably throughout the text. Although Serbia was indeed the hegemonic power of rump Yugoslavia in the 1990s, the federation was also comprised of a second republic: Montenegro. However, in the Kosovo context, historically the Serbian regime and its policies were always the primary political and military rival.

<sup>3</sup> On 22 July 2010 the ICJ rendered its advisory opinion as to whether the declaration of independence by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Kosovo is in accordance with international law, a question put forward by Serbia. The ICJ found that "the declaration of independence of Kosovo adopted on 17 February 2008 did not violate international law". For more, see "Accordance with International Law of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in Respect of Kosovo", at <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/141/16010.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> See [www.berghof-conflictresearch.org/en/publications/transitions-series](http://www.berghof-conflictresearch.org/en/publications/transitions-series).

particular case unique for several reasons. Notwithstanding the heavy involvement of international diplomacy and armed intervention, Kosovo's transition to post-war politics did not culminate in the incorporation of former combatants into a more democratic system of the existing state, as has been the case with most other resistance/liberation struggles. Rather, post-conflict political developments eventually led Kosovo to complete secession and independence from Serbia. These singular historical moments, which make Kosovo's case unique and arguably unprecedented, will be noted in this paper.

The methodology employed throughout this research paper takes as its basis the primary data gathered in interviews with some of the main actors of the armed movement.<sup>5</sup> Their insight and first-hand experience offer a much-needed originality to the research, thus endeavouring to put forward the KLA's perspective on Kosovo's recent war and its aftermath. A few interviews were also conducted with persons who did not necessarily represent the KLA, but whose opinions derive from their own experience with other armed or non-armed organisations of that time. The points of view and experience of the armed and other actors are reflected in this paper. However, in order to achieve the necessary degree of academic and balanced rigour I have also made use of secondary data available on the topic. With the literature consulted, I have attempted to refer to mainstream academic writings from abroad, but also to focus on texts and books published within Kosovo and by local authors. These local authors have often been best positioned to offer an inside story that is uniquely valuable, notwithstanding the potential bias. However, in this regard, it was the author's responsibility to have placed a degree of objectivity and cool-headedness to the research.

Initially, this study looks at the historical events that led or contributed to the armed insurrection of the late 1990s. There will be a short overview of the nature of the Serbian and/or Yugoslav system exercised in Kosovo, culminating in the introduction of a de facto 'apartheid' system in the 1990s. In relation to these events, there will be a synopsis of the rise of Kosovo's parallel system of governance and the peaceful resistance movement. The second chapter will analyse the KLA's arrival onto the scene and the gradual inclusion of the international community (read: NATO members and Russia) into the conflict. Following the NATO bombardment in the first half of 1999, the third chapter will examine the issues of disarmament of the KLA and its transformation into the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC). Finally, the last chapter will take a quick look at the current state of play of the newly-established Kosovo Security Force (KSF), following the KPC's demise in 2009.

<sup>5</sup> These will be referenced throughout the text as (Xhemajli interview) etc. For details of the posts held by the various interview partners, see the bibliography.

# 1. Background and the years of nonviolent resistance

The conflict in Kosovo in the late 1990s was the culmination of a long history of Serbian oppression on one hand and Albanian resistance on the other. It stretches right back to the beginning of the 20th century, with the crumbling of the Ottoman Empire and the subsequent hunt for territories in the newly-liberated Balkan nations.

Following the defeat of the beleaguered Ottoman Empire in the Balkans, Kosovo was forcefully and illegally annexed by Serbia during 1912-13. This went against the wishes of its Albanian majority population, who saw unification with the newly-created Albania as the natural course of events. In actual fact, they were cut off from it. Nevertheless, at the Ambassadors' Conference in London in December 1912, Serbia's occupation of Kosovo was supported by the great powers Britain, France and Russia, and opposed by Austria-Hungary. Since then, Kosovo remained part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, proclaimed as such in 1918, and then of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), as it was named after World War II. Throughout these political transformations, Serbia kept its monopoly on its claim over Kosovo (Malcolm 1998; Glenny 1999; Judah 2002, 2008).

## 1.1. The historical perspective of the armed movement

In order to have a more realistic grasp on the events that led to the creation and consolidation of the KLA, one needs to have an informed overview of the earlier resistance movements in Kosovo. Being one episode of a larger historical process, the emergence of the KLA should not be viewed as an isolated or single point in Kosovo's most recent history. Rather, its creation is part of the same trajectory of resistance movements that has been witnessed in Kosovo throughout the 20th century. Scattered throughout the century, these movements were different in their intensity and longevity, but the political rival was always personified in the Belgrade regime. They followed a consistent, coherent and logical path of continued development that culminated with the KLA. This trajectory of resistance movements was instigated because of Belgrade's consistent state policy of occupation, colonisation, assimilation and/or forceful emigration of Albanians out of Kosovo. It was stirred into action by the need for self-determination, freedom and justice of the Albanian people, suffering under the rule of the Serbian regime. The final objective was normally defined as the life-long aspiration of unification of Kosovo with Albania.

The annexation of Kosovo by Serbia in 1912/13 sparked off a series of armed resistance movements between the two world wars. The period right up to World War II witnessed several armed undertakings by Albanians in Kosovo. Such was the case, for example, with the armed struggles of Azem Bejta (Galica) and Shote Bejta (Galica) from the Drenica region. One of the political leaders of that time, Hasan Prishtina, formed the Committee for the National Defence of Kosovo, more simply known as the Kosovo Committee, which lobbied with the US and other western governments for the inclusion of Kosovo in the new Albanian state. Others, such as Isa Boletini, Bajram Curri or Idriz Seferi, also led various armed movements that were eventually silenced by the Belgrade regime or interrupted by the upcoming World War II.

These armed leaders led a clandestine existence, since they were persecuted by Belgrade. People referred to them as "*kaçaks*", which means outlaws and rebels, who resisted the "*hyqymet*", or the state, which in this context was identified as an oppressive and colonialist system. Following this logic, any act against this state was an act of patriotism, an attempt to

gain freedom. “It is clear that, overall, the kaçak movement was a political phenomenon, directed against Serbian rule as such, and it is also clear that the anti-Albanian policies of the government and local authorities (including the whole colonisation programme) were a powerful stimulus to the rebellion” (Malcolm 1998: 273).

In addition to the colonisation programme – through which Serbia planned to settle thousands of Serb families in Kosovo – the plan for the mass exodus of Albanians from Kosovo took precedence during the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s. After many discussions between Yugoslavia and Turkey, the two countries signed an agreement in 1938 under which the latter would take 40,000 Muslim Albanian families into its territories. It should be noted that, according to the agreement, a family was defined as “blood relations living under one roof”, which for Albanian families in Kosovo often meant three-generation households of more than ten persons (see Malcolm 1998; or Kraja 2003a). The entire process was meant to take six years, starting from 1939. However, the plan stalled due to the outbreak of World War II. If the plan had been accomplished in full, Kosovo would have been emptied of more than 75% of its Albanian population. However, despite the non-implementation of this agreement, it is estimated that between 1918 and 1941 up to 150,000 Albanians and other Muslims emigrated out of Kosovo.

Shortly before the end of World War II, the will of the people of Kosovo was reflected in what came to be known as the Bujan Conference. Namely, between the period of 31 December 1943 and 2 January 1944, the “First Conference of the National Liberation Council for Kosovo and Dukagjin Plateau” was held in Bujan, northern Albania. The ensuing Declaration of Bujan was endorsed by “the representatives of all parts of Kosova and the Dukagjin Plateau, Albanian, Serbian and Montenegrin: nationalists, communists, anti-fascist youth, communist youth, anti-fascist women, representatives of the National Liberation Army and others inspired by the lofty ideal of the unification of various political trends, for the development and union of the peoples of Kosova and the Dukagjin Plateau [...]”. The Declaration, signed by the representatives’ National Liberation Council, envisaged Kosovo’s unification with Albania after the end of World War II, in accordance with the will of the people (Weller 1999: 50-51). However, this will did not find fulfilment when the war came to an end.

## **1.2. 1945 to 1989: Kosovo and the socialist ideology**

After World War II, Kosovo entered a period of cohabitation with the other republics and provinces of Tito’s SFRY. This was a phase of flirtation with the socialist ideology, promoted by slogans of “Brotherhood and Unity” (Kraja 2003a). The first generation of the home-grown communist elite seemed a zealous advocate for successful integration into the Yugoslav model-state. Their own engagement in public and political life was supposed to be proof of a prosperous cohabitation.

However, away from the official political doctrine propagated by the Yugoslav authorities, the suppression of Albanians in Kosovo continued. In line with the expressed political will of the Bujan Conference, in mid-1945 around 5,000 Albanians, under the leadership of their commander Shaban Polluzha, took up arms against the Yugoslav partisans. The resistance was subsequently crushed. In the few years after the war, it is estimated that tens of thousands of Albanians were killed, persecuted and forced to leave their lands (Hyseni interview; Independent International Commission on Kosovo 2000). The 1950s were marred by the infamous “arms collections” campaign. The crackdown on persons suspected of possessing arms brought indiscriminate misery upon many Albanian families, particularly in rural areas. The rigged trials of 1956 in Prizren served to clamp down on Kosovar Albanian communists accused of collaborating with the Socialist People’s Republic of Albania. The accused were given harsh prison sentences (Banac 2006).

Consequently, the period after World War II was marked by the rather random but repeated emergence of political resistance movements. The common reason for establishing these movements was the disadvantageous socio-political position of Albanians in Kosovo and wider Yugoslavia. Being part of the same but divided nation, their aspiration continued to be unification with the mother country – Albania. Of course, voicing such aspirations publicly was punishable by law, and many were persecuted. Often the popular discontent was shown through impromptu and fragmented organisations of groups, largely youth and students. These movements were clandestine by nature and began gathering a serious critical mass towards the end of 1960s. Since then the whole movement, or rather a series of them, began to be led by people working largely underground. These movements came to be known by the common name of “Illegality” (in Albanian “*llegalja*”).

The demonstrations of 1968 were the first clear and collective call for human rights and freedoms for Albanians living in socialist Yugoslavia. The slogan “Kosovo – Republic” was first heard on the streets of Kosovo’s capital Prishtina on 27 November of that year, chanted by several hundred demonstrators. Other slogans included “Down with colonial policy in Kosovo”, “We want a university” and “Long live Albania” (Malcolm 1998). One of the leading and inspiring figures at that time was Adem Demaçi, a young writer and political activist who was already serving his second prison sentence for denouncing the harsh conditions of Albanians living in Yugoslavia. Having co-founded one of the first illegal organisations in 1963, called the Revolutionary Movement for Albanian Unification (*Lëvizja Revolucionare për Bashkimin e Shqiptarëve*, LRBSH), he was calling for the right of self-determination and unification of Albanians. Adem Demaçi served a total of 28 years as a political prisoner, and was finally released in 1990 (Gashi 2010).

The new Yugoslav Constitution of 1974 gave Kosovo greater autonomy within Yugoslavia, with an almost equal status to the rest of the entities of the federation, be they republics or provinces. The constitution gave the provinces the right of direct representation in the main federal bodies. The Presidency of Yugoslavia was to change on a rotating basis, with representatives from the provinces as well as the republics (Kraja 2003a; Malcolm 1998).

However, despite the positive changes brought forward with the new constitution, the dissatisfaction of the Kosovar Albanian population with their status in Yugoslavia was still present. The core cause of their grievance stemmed from the fact that, after all, they remained a subordinate entity within Yugoslavia. They were not elevated to the constitutional status of a nation, but were acknowledged as a nationality, which meant that as such they remained relegated to being a province of Serbia. The latter, herself a republic, enjoyed the status of being a nation.

The 1980s mark the period of intensification of clandestine activities by the ‘*llegalja*’ movement. There were a few different initiatives, organised groups comprised mostly of students, who began conducting illegal activities, such as drafting pamphlets highlighting the Albanians’ position in Yugoslavia, holding secret meetings to recruit followers, setting up local radio stations in the west and publishing bulletins, most prominently that of “*Zëri i Kosovës*” (“The Voice of Kosovo”). Throughout this decade, hundreds of Albanians were killed and thousands were imprisoned or tortured for alleged subversion.<sup>6</sup>

The most active and dynamic of these groupings was the organisation that eventually came to be known as the People’s Movement of Kosovo (*Lëvizja Popullore e Kosovës*, LPK). This organisation was established on 17 February 1982, at a meeting held in Turkey by persons who had been exploring ways to organise themselves politically. The LPK went on to operate clandestinely throughout the ’80s and ’90s, living side by side with the official Yugoslav/Serbian regime. A year before, massive protests erupted in Prishtina, with students demanding equal rights for

<sup>6</sup> See *Conflict history: Kosovo*, on <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/key-issues/research-resources/conflict-histories/kosovo.aspx>.

Albanians. The slogans “Kosovo – Republic” and “Unification with Albania” were chanted with increasing frequency. It was during these protests that some of the LPK’s future members found the momentum for political organisation, having identified potential partners for clandestine operations (Xhemajli interview).

The LPK’s political programme at the beginning of 1980s was to demand the status of republic for Kosovo within Yugoslavia. Its wider ambition, accentuated increasingly towards the late 1980s and 1990s, was to demand rights of self-determination for Kosovo, which meant either complete secession from Serbia and/or unification with Albania.

The LPK’s strategy also included the organisation of armed struggle. War was seen as an acceptable and possible means of reaching their political goals. Being a liberation organisation, its programme stated:

“To achieve the national objectives, the liberation of the country, LPK will employ every form of liberation wars: democratic, peaceful, as well as those of armed uprisings” (quoted in Kelmendi 1999).

1989 witnessed the short-lived emergence of the first armed group, called *Çeta e Llapit* (“The Group of Llap”). However, at that time the organisation of such armed groups was intermittent and there was a lack of planning. But it is important to highlight the political programme of this organisation, because of its close association with the KLA a few years later. As will be seen below, many of the founding members of the KLA had earlier been members of the LPK and its leadership. In fact, the KLA was closer to the LPK than it was to any other group or association. Unlike some other Albanian political formations, the LPK’s support for the KLA was always open and consistent (Xhemajli interview).

Because of its clandestine activities, the LPK and other political activists were constantly persecuted by the authorities of that time. Hence many of them, including most of the leadership, escaped to western European countries, set up their offices in Germany, Switzerland etc., and operated as part of the Albanian diaspora. However, the Albanian political activists were not immune from persecution in the West either, even before the LPK was formed. Most prominently, on 17 January 1982, in Untergruppenbach in Germany, Jusuf Gërvalla, Kadri Zeka and Bardhosh Gërvalla – Kosovo’s Albanian political activists operating in exile – were assassinated by Serbian agents. Jusuf and his friend and brother had emigrated to the West with the aim of assembling and coordinating the various Albanian political factions operating amongst diaspora communities. They were an inspiration for the “*Illegalja*” movement, and the leadership of the LPK, formed a month after their assassination.

### 1.3. Kosovo in the parallel system

In 1987, as inter-ethnic relations between Albanians and Serbs worsened, Kosovo proved to be the most expedient nationalist card to play during the rapid ascendancy of Slobodan Milošević as President of the Serbian League of Communists (later President of Serbia and Yugoslavia). The unconstitutional annulment of Kosovo’s autonomy in 1989 marked the stepping-up of institutionalised discrimination of Albanians in public life. Over 100,000 Albanians were removed from their jobs, while the University of Prishtina and most secondary school premises were closed off to Albanian students and pupils (Clark 2000). The 1990s found Kosovo in a political climate of ‘apartheid’:

...“The quite open and undisguised nature of the programme of ethnic politics and repression, enshrined in Serb law, was a reflection of the belief that the armour of state sovereignty would protect Belgrade from significant international interest in

relation to these practices. After all, all the relevant decisions had been adopted by what Serbia claimed were the appropriate constitutional procedures, and only Serbia would be in a position to judge the validity of her own actions. While the abolition of Kosovo's independent powers had, in fact, occurred under rather controversial circumstances, the protestations of the ethnic Albanian leadership were now being portrayed as manifestations of separatism which, in turn, could justify even fiercer oppression" (Weller 1999: 26).

The response of the Albanian population was to organise themselves around the newly-founded political party called the Democratic League of Kosovo (*Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës*, LDK). In conditions of secrecy and under pressure from the police and other security mechanisms, on July 2, 1990 the Assembly of Kosovo approved a Constitutional Declaration, which paved the way for asserting Kosovo's equal status with the other Yugoslav republics. On September 7 of the same year, the Assembly met in the town of Kaçanik, approved the constitution and declared Kosovo a republic. In September 1991, a referendum for independence was organised, with a turnout of 87% of Albanians, of whom 99% voted in favour. In April 1992 the first multi-party elections were held, confirming people's trust in the LDK's political programme of civil resistance, led by Dr. Ibrahim Rugova (Buxhovi 2009; Malcolm 1998; Kraja 2003b).

The political acts detailed above were not acknowledged or validated by Serbia or by the international community. However, they provided a legal platform (albeit unilaterally recognised) and legitimacy for representing the majority population of Kosovo. The LDK government led the way in ushering Kosovo into a shadowy parallel existence, setting up their own health care, welfare and education systems. Financial contributions from the Albanian diaspora played a significant role in maintaining this parallel system.

Belgrade's regime intensified its repressive methods, installing Serb officials in all public offices in higher education, police, judiciary, media etc., despite the fact that only around ten percent of Kosovo's population of approximately 2 million inhabitants was of Serb ethnicity. On the other hand, the political strategy of the Albanian civil resistance rested on boycotting Belgrade, consolidating the parallel reality in Kosovo and, crucially, lobbying for assistance from the West. However, in the first half of the 1990s Kosovo never really made it to the forefront of international negotiations. With the intensification of the wars in Croatia and then Bosnia, Kosovo was completely sidelined and remained in the margins of the international corridors of power. The parallel experience of daily oppression by Serbian forces, and the call for patience on the Albanian side, is amply illustrated in the passage below:

"...the ethnic conflict in Kosova has turned into a kind of intense war of nerves, in which one side stops at nothing, committing the most brutal violations of human rights and civil liberties, completely ignoring the protests of international organisations which for a while kept monitoring teams in Kosova, while the other side bottles up its humiliation, despair, fury, rage and hatred – but for how long before it explodes?" (Maliqi 1998: 24).

The 1995 Dayton (Ohio) Peace Accords on Bosnia and Herzegovina provided a rude awakening for the Albanian nonviolent resistance movement. Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia signed a peace agreement, thus exposing the fragility of the situation in Kosovo, left entirely as an "internal matter" of rump Yugoslavia. The American architect of the Bosnia peace accords, Richard Holbrooke, recalls Milošević's blunt refusal to even entertain a discussion on the human rights violations in Kosovo (Holbrooke 1999; also see Glenny 1999). On the other hand, the Kosovar Albanian leadership's political arsenal rested on the West's diplomatic intervention in the Kosovo crisis. However, looking at this event retrospectively, to have expected that the Kosovo issue was going to be discussed at any meaningful length in Dayton seems like a clear sign of delusion. It can

perhaps be explained by the desperate, albeit completely unfounded, and hopeless expectation that somehow Kosovo would finally come to the forefront of the international agenda. That obviously did not happen, and from then on the peaceful resistance movement lost its momentum and became increasingly stagnant (Hyseni interview). The parallel world was supported by the diaspora's contributions, but the leadership was often reduced to a simple mechanism of listing the many cases of human rights violations, and appealing to the outside world for help. In this dispiriting atmosphere, and in addition to the widespread poverty, unemployment and state terror, the Albanians' dignity and the sanctity of their homes were repeatedly being offended. All this meant that by mid-1990s, the peaceful resistance seemed too weak to push back the Serbian oppression, to the growing frustration of Kosovar Albanians (Ibishi interview).

Notwithstanding the rise of the armed insurgency – which will be described at length in the next chapter – the first serious manifestations of popular discontent were the students' peaceful protests of 1997. On 1 October that year, the Independent Students' Union of the University of Prishtina (*Unioni i Pavarur i Studentëve i Universitetit të Prishtinës*, UPSUP) organised their first protest, demanding the return of university premises that had been usurped by the Serbian regime. More than 20,000 students took to the streets in what proved to be a successfully orchestrated, nonviolent demonstration. The ensuing brutal intervention by the Serbian police resulted in the arrest of the UPSUP leadership, beatings of demonstrators, teargas and the forceful dispersion of the crowd. Other protests were organised later that year and in early 1998. As stated above, the official demand of the students' movement was the return of university premises and the improvement of teaching conditions (Clark 2000). However, the students' discontent also addressed Rugova's civil resistance. Students were becoming increasingly vocal in criticising the LDK's lack of inventiveness and lack of concrete results on the ground. In fact, by then it was clear to the UPSUP that the LDK-led parallel government was stifled by inertia, and passive peaceful resistance had become another name for lack of available diplomatic options, kept alive by fear and submission.

The students' movement has played a pivotal role in Kosovo's recent history, not only because of its successful organisation of nonviolent protests, modelled on other peaceful resistance movements and figures, such as Martin Luther King Jr., Ghandi, or Northern Ireland's civil rights marches. The immediate effect of this movement was to appeal to the internal audience: to the LDK-led government for a drastic and proactive change in its political approach. The outward effect of the movement was to trigger a sudden rise of the international media's interest in the developments in Kosovo. Finally, the longer-term consequence of the movement was galvanising the society and the political scene into action, and helping to change the status quo. Actually, this was the meeting point in the agenda of both the students' peaceful movement and the armed resistance, which was to break the intolerable status quo, and explore other more proactive means of achieving rights for Albanians in Kosovo.

To summarise, the resistance movement in Kosovo has been an ongoing and consistent presence amongst the Albanian population throughout the twentieth century. It abated or flared up at intervals, depending on the socio-political context. During different phases, it became more intense, or brewed silently beneath the peaceful, socialist veneer. Its manifestation was symptomatic of the popular discontent reigning amongst Albanians, which in itself was triggered by the colonialist, and later overtly oppressive and discriminatory policies of Belgrade towards the majority population of Kosovo.

Moreover, a holistic study of this resistance would not be complete if it did not examine its complex nuances. Namely, one should recognise that there have been two streams of Albanian resistance throughout the twentieth century: the nonviolent, political or diplomatic attempts at resistance and boycott, and the armed struggles. Far from negating each other, these two streams

have generally either complemented or replaced one another. The 'kaçak' movement between the two world wars was followed by sparks of rebellions during and after World War II, only to find expression in the student demonstrations of 1968. Later, the 1980s began with another series of student demonstrations, seeking equal political rights for Kosovo within Yugoslavia. This decade also ended with massive protests, following the annulment of Kosovo's autonomy in 1989. The Albanians' response to the introduction of the apartheid system of the 1990s was to set up a parallel system led by the LDK, inspired by principles of civil and nonviolent resistance. However, its increased passivity and lack of creativity in civil disobedience towards the mid-1990s failed to alleviate the desperate living conditions of Albanians in Kosovo. The formation of the KLA in the mid-1990s signalled the return of the armed struggle that eventually culminated in open warfare and brought the world's most powerful alliance into the conflict.

## 2. Armed mobilisation and international intervention

The resolution of Kosovo's political crisis through diplomatic means looked increasingly delusory, particularly in the aftermath of the Bosnian war and the Dayton Accords. By the mid-1990s, the Albanian peaceful resistance was being undermined even from within, as different radical and militant groups began to emerge. The students' peaceful movement of 1997-8 was openly vocal about its revolt against Belgrade's discriminatory policies in Kosovo's education system. Simultaneously, this movement was attacking the LDK's passive resistance. Other groups, such as the LPK, continued their clandestine operations during the 1990s, strengthening their links with the diaspora communities and reorganising themselves, with the aim of creating a sustainable armed wing.

Meanwhile, with the annulment of Kosovo's autonomy in 1989 and the subsequent centralisation of powers in Belgrade, the regime intensified its policy of oppression. After Dayton's success, the international community was quick to baptise the Serb leader Milošević as the "peacemaker of the Balkans", due to his role in brokering a peace deal with Croats and Bosniacs (Holbrooke 1999). International actors themselves seemed to have reached a state of fatigue. In reality, after half a decade of bloody wars in the former Yugoslavia, they were very reluctant to entertain the idea of further involvement in Balkan conflicts. In this context, feeling vindicated after the Dayton Accords, Milošević's regime enjoyed ample space to contain any unrest in Kosovo, treating it as a strictly internal state matter. In Kosovo, the voices of those who did not see peaceful resistance as a feasible option continued to grow. Alternatives to passive nonviolence, involving armed resistance, were actively being explored:

"For a long time, they [the people of Kosovo] would not be searching for other political alternatives, but would instead end up comprising a subordinate mass of people, led by an almost unconscious inertia. Therefore, however harsh and not humane this might sound, Kosovo was in need of a war also for internal reasons. Kosovo had to get rid not only of Serbia, but also dispose of the idea of subordination [...] Kosovo needed a war to help her understand that there were other political alternatives, apart from that capital deception that dictated one could live in occupation, whilst dreaming of their freedom" (Kraja 2003b: 36).

### 2.1 Emergence of the armed struggle: the appearance of armed resistance cells

As the nonviolent resistance was losing ground, various groups began to search for alternatives that embraced armed conflict as the way to achieve liberation. At first, such initiatives were undertaken by a few individuals or groups of people, mostly students and young intellectuals, who were willing to fight for a common cause. Initially, due to lack of experience and the risks associated with illegal activities, the organisation of these small cells was not centralised or coordinated by some joint body. But the emergence of illegal groupings in Kosovo in the late 1980s and early 1990s was illustrative of the stifling political environment. Consequently, people's initiatives for finding a way out of the political quagmire meant undertaking armed resistance (Mustafa interview).

As noted above, the clandestine political organisation LPK had been active in this regard since 1982. By the early 1990s, the idea of armed resistance was becoming predominant in their thinking. In fact, most of the people who contributed to the emergence of the KLA had been in the LPK movement for shorter or longer periods of time, operating within Kosovo or abroad.

This is important to note because the LPK, or at least some of its leadership members, played a crucial role in setting up the foundations and providing financial and logistical support to the KLA (Xhemajli interview). The LPK provided political guidance to the nucleus of this armed insurgency, and consciously encouraged them to portray themselves as an army of liberation that adhered to the Geneva International Convention of 1949 and other international treaties, such as the Right to Self-Determination of the UN Charter, and that of Helsinki and Paris. Internally, the armed struggle drew its legitimacy from the 1990 Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo (although this was not recognised internationally), specifically Article 77, which stipulated:

“The defence of the country is an inviolable and inalienable right, obligation and great duty for every citizen” (quoted in Elshani, 1998).

From this cooperation with the LPK, the KLA came out with a directive which was meant to regulate its internal functioning and war strategy. It stated that the “KLA should commit liberation acts with a just character, and not attack socio-cultural monuments, civilian population and subjects of importance for the life of the people”. It further stipulated that only the following should be subject to KLA attacks:

1. The military and police apparatus, including their telecommunication equipment;
2. The special police units, volunteers, paramilitary personnel, as well as combatants brought from Croatia and Bosnia into Kosovo;
3. Albanian persons who, after conclusive evidence, had been identified as traitors and working with the enemy forces;
4. Finally, military actions were not allowed to be exercised in public spaces, i.e. in places where civilian lives would be at risk (Kelmendi 1999).

Since the LPK was closely associated with the establishment of the KLA, the former's initial idea was to act as a political wing to the army. Political and strategic decisions regarding the war would rest with the former, whilst the latter would be the depoliticised guerrilla formation on the ground (Xhemajli interview). However, in reality there were difficulties attached to this vision. A large part of the LPK's leadership was based in the West – mainly in Switzerland and Germany. In addition, with the KLA's growth, it made sense that the people who had founded it and were inside Kosovo should take complete ownership of the movement. As the KLA became increasingly stronger, this is what happened. However, by offering its political and financial support, the LPK assisted in creating the right conditions for the establishment of the KLA (Selimi interview).

In the first half of the 1990s, other groups were established that saw war as the inevitable means to achieve liberation. Such was the case with the National Movement for the Liberation of Kosovo (*Lëvizja Kombëtare për Çlirimin e Kosovës*, LKÇK). Formed in March 1993, it placed special importance on preparing the population for upcoming armed resistance by means of mobilisation and disseminating political information. In this respect, although the goal was clearly identical, there was an ideological difference between the LKÇK and the KLA. The LKÇK believed that prior to entering a conflict people should be prepared for the “path to national liberation”, through a comprehensive propaganda and mobilisation effort. True to their word, from 1993 to 1999 they clandestinely published and distributed a magazine called “*Çlirimi*” (Albanian for “Liberation”) (Murati interview). The KLA tactic, on the other hand, seemed to consist of entering a conflict sooner rather than later, while the mobilisation of the masses would naturally be borne out of that conflict.

Although there was a ‘divergence in concepts’ and approach towards open warfare, combatants on the ground both from the KLA and the LKÇK ranks sought a common front for cooperation. Facing the same enemy, this cooperation most often developed naturally amongst individuals and groups at different operational levels. By 1997-8 the KLA was swiftly becoming the dominant military and even political factor. Seeing this, the LKÇK's members joined forces

with the KLA, thereby contributing to the latter's strengthening of organisational capacities. Since many of the LKÇK's members were based in Prishtina, this merging of forces actually assisted in "urbanising the conflict" (Murati interview). Rural regions of Kosovo were directly affected by the armed conflict, whereas urban areas had somehow been insulated from it thus far. However, with an increasing number of combatants operating from the cities, the existing urban-rural divide on the ownership and perception of the conflict was lessening. Increasingly, this was no longer a war waged in the hills of Drenica, or the Dukagjin plateau, while Prishtina and other cities bizarrely went about their normal daily business. This was a conflict that was affecting everyone, it was enveloping all parts of the country, and as such everybody had a stake in it.

With these various armed cells in formation, it seemed prudent that there should be one unified chain of command structure. In fact on 11 May 1998, following a period of negotiations, the LKÇK signed an agreement with the KLA which consisted of two points. The first point stated that the entire military capacity of the LKÇK would formally merge under the command of the KLA's General HQ, while the former would continue to preserve their political entity. This part of the agreement was implemented. The second point set some guidelines for the creation of a "joint political war front", a sort of government, in which the LKÇK would partake, and which would lead the politics of war. This second point of the agreement did not come to fruition (Murati 2010).

The question as to whether there was a centralised or joint political war front amongst Albanians, as the conflict with Belgrade accelerated, is legitimate, seeing that every armed/resistance cell had an identical political goal: the liberation of Kosovo from Serbian occupation. This goal was bigger than any ideology, according to everyone's understanding. Only the means and methods for reaching this goal might have varied. In this regard, this objective was also shared by the nonviolent movement. Thus, on the wider political goal, a synergy and understanding existed across the board. Therefore to analyse the formation of the joint political war front, or the lack of it, the contribution of all the actors belonging to the armed as well as the nonviolent resistance movements ought to be taken into consideration.

Some have been quite direct in their claim that the KLA leaders fell short of contributing to the creation of a "joint front for the liberation of Kosovo" (Kelmendi 1999). There were a few other armed cells that sprung up during the 1990s, as was the case with the LKÇK or the LPK. With the KLA's rise, the expectation was that the "joint front" would be representative of all the various factions of the time. Moreover, the KLA grew in juxtaposition with the LDK's nonviolent resistance. Far from talking about coordinated political efforts, certain tensions developed in this relationship.

However, we make mention of this debate to highlight the political climate which accompanied the emergence of the KLA. What the recent historical facts show, though, is that this formation, which was eventually named the Kosovo Liberation Army, came to attract popular support in increasing waves. There was also a natural fusion between it and other existing resistance cells. Its political goal being straightforward, i.e. the liberation of Kosovo from Serbia, the KLA went on to become the dominant armed force for Kosovar Albanians.

## 2.2 The dominance of the KLA

As the crisis was accelerating, the first cells of the KLA began to appear. Its political goal, as stipulated clearly in its name, was straightforward: creating a Kosovo army that would start a liberation struggle against the oppressor. As clarified above, this goal had not changed essentially from that of prior resistance movements throughout the 20th century. Its overall political platform remained the same as those of the clandestine groupings of the '*lllegalja*' movement in the 1980s and beyond.

The intention in the sub-chapter above was to focus on the relationship between the KLA and other military formations. In this sub-chapter, the aim will be to look at the rise of the new army, for which there will be a short look back to its early days.

The first documented record of the KLA's existence was its Communiqué No. 1, dated 17 November 1994. The letter confirms the creation of the guerrilla group and claims responsibility for an attack a few days earlier in the town of Drenas, where a police inspector was wounded. It also takes responsibility for several combat operations against the Yugoslav forces which had occurred around that time (Elshani 1998). At this point, the nucleus of the insurgency group did not number more than twenty people. In the next three years, the KLA managed to recruit a very small number of interested men, so that by November 1997 it attracted a following of just under 200 combatants, in addition to logistical and operational support (Selimi interview).

The base of this organisation was in Drenica, a more underdeveloped region of Kosovo, historically known for rebellious endeavours and subsequent crushes by Serbian forces. More concretely, the coordinating epicentre of the KLA's clandestine activities was the village of Prekaz, which had virtually been outside Belgrade's reach since 1991. Adem Jashari, of Prekaz, was identified early on as the moral force to lead and inspire the efforts of the fledgling army. Other cells of the KLA came from the region of Llap, in the east, and Dukagjin in the west of Kosovo.

Around this time, members of the army began to be dispatched clandestinely to Albania to undergo intensive military training on intelligence/counter-intelligence, clandestine military actions, and other kinds of guerrilla warfare. They were trained by retired Albanian military officers, who were willing to volunteer and share their personal expertise with KLA members (Xhemajli interview).

Being prudent about its limited power in the event of a frontal clash with the Serbian forces, the KLA strove to become a guerrilla army by using the tactics of spontaneous and isolated attacks on military, paramilitary and police targets. Until early 1998, not only was its membership very limited, but the fighters were also quite inexperienced. The level of coordination and communication between different cells operating around Kosovo was far from sophisticated. This was partly because of the lack of experience, but also due to the utmost secret conditions under which the armed movement was developing.

Its preparations and activities were financed by the diaspora in the West (Abazi interview). The fund "Homeland Calling" was opened in Switzerland in 1993 and its assets were to be "dedicated to the war for the liberation of Albanian territories under yoke" (Xhemajli interview). Although it was of major importance in financing the war, this fund was not the only source of income for the KLA. There were other sources, individual-based and organisational, that supported the war efforts. The famous voluntary 3% contributions from the salaries of diaspora members, collected by Kosovo's government in exile, were also at times directed to this goal (Mustafa interview).

In an unrelated event in 1997, Albania experienced a breakdown of its state structures, following the fall of a financial pyramid scheme. The police and military forces were no longer in control of the monopoly of violence. Suddenly, thousands of weapons became available on the black market at very affordable prices. This was a big opportunity for the KLA men to arm themselves, which was swiftly seized. Also, a lot of weapons were filtered through different routes from the West to Kosovo (Xhemajli and Abazi interviews).

Being a very small formation, its visibility was still limited. Until late 1997, most people in Kosovo viewed the KLA as a phantom organisation. The attacks on Serbian forces were accompanied by written communiqués, normally sent from abroad to the local press, claiming responsibility for those attacks. In response, Serbia stepped up its practice of raids and maltreatment of suspected

individuals. In this atmosphere, the anonymity surrounding the KLA triggered suspicions about its existence or its true intent. Uncertainty became more prevalent when the LDK's leadership refused to recognise the KLA for what it purported to be. This time, the LDK went even further and accused KLA members of working surreptitiously for the Serbian regime, which apparently gave the Serbs a reason to retaliate against the Albanian population. However, as the KLA became stronger, its leadership and the LDK established direct lines of communication, and held several meetings in Albania and other places. But they never managed to overcome their differences, and instead stuck to their respective methods – passive nonviolence *versus* armed resistance – until the end of the conflict.

The discordance between the LDK or the peaceful resistance and the KLA or the armed struggle represented two different tiers of the Albanian resistance, both claiming to fight for the same goal. The question is then, why did it come to this clash? In hindsight, the KLA had tried to reach out to the LDK officials, in Kosovo and abroad. However, neither then, nor later with the rise of the armed insurgency, did the peaceful resistance agree to put its weight behind the KLA (Xhemajli interview). It might be that at the beginning, some leadership officials really did not possess reliable information on the KLA's true identity. However, others in the LDK's top leadership had indeed been informed about the rise of the armed struggle from the start (Hyseni interview).

But in reality, the LDK was not ready to embark on an armed conflict; and hypothetically speaking, if it ever had been, then it would have wanted political control over that army. In fact, under its Ministry of Defence the LDK-led government had created a military formation called The Armed Forces of the Republic of Kosovo (*Forcat e Armatosura të Republikës së Kosovës*, FARK). However, their operations remained limited. One of their more tangible contributions was the opening of a frontline along the Kosovo-Albania border during NATO's bombing campaign (Kraja 2003b). But by then the KLA had become such a dominating and popular armed force in the local context that FARK's impact proved to be short-lived.

Finally, the LDK parallel government of Kosovo still believed that since they had won the elections, they still enjoyed the legitimacy of representing the Albanian people of Kosovo. As such, if anyone was going to yield, the expectation was that the KLA would do that, and not the other way around.

However, by late 1997 the KLA was of a different opinion and had other plans. They considered that the time of futile diplomacy with Serbia was over, and the armed insurgency was the only way to reawaken the people from their submissive lull, and bring back the dignity which had been lost in the 'apartheid' system. Freedom would be won by armed struggle, since all peaceful and diplomatic means had failed, having been met with silence by the international community (Perritt Jr. 2008).

However, it was clear that people's doubts about its existence had to be dispersed, and the army had to step out of the shadows. The first public appearance of the KLA occurred at the funeral of a local schoolteacher who had been shot by Serbian forces during skirmishes two days before. The funeral was held in the village of Llaushë in Drenica on 28 November 1997 – the Albanian Flag Day. One of the KLA founding members, Rexhep Selimi, accompanied by Mujë Krasniqi and Daut Haradinaj, read a short statement, articulating the guerrilla army's intention to protect civilians and fight against the oppressive forces of the Serbian regime (Selimi interview). In the statement, Selimi claimed that the army remained "...the only serious force for the realisation of ideals and aspirations of our people for national unification" (Elshani 1998: 211). This first public display of the KLA sent electric waves through the masses present in the fields of that funeral in Drenica. It reverberated throughout Kosovo, impacting on people's psyches and signalling that the existence of this force was no longer in doubt.

### 2.3 The intensification of hostilities: March 1998 – March 1999

The crackdown of the Serbian military, paramilitary and police forces intensified in the first quarter of 1998. At this stage, the KLA was still strengthening its ranks, and practising tactics of isolated attacks upon key military installations. The first serious blow that it received was back in the end of January 1997, when three of its members were killed as the result of an ambush north of Prishtina. This attack left a gap in the organisational structure of the insurgency since one of the fallen, Zahir Pajaziti, had been the coordinator for the Llap region in the east. However, the crackdown also served the KLA as an argument to mobilise more people, convincing them that armed resistance from the newly-emerging army was the only right response (Selimi interview).

At the end of February 1998, the Serb/Yugoslav Special Forces used excessive retaliation on the KLA and civilian population in the villages of Qirez and Likoshan, in the west-central part of Kosovo. Twenty-four civilians were massacred, which caused an outrage in the international media and human rights organisations, such as Human Rights Watch (Independent International Commission on Kosovo 2000; Elshani 1998).

It is in response to such crimes that the international community's attention began to focus on Kosovo. It is correct to say that one of the aims of the KLA was precisely to draw the attention of the international community – read: the US and the European Union (EU) states – to the escalating crisis triggered by Belgrade. This was in fact also the aim of the LDK-led government, which had been lobbying internationally for involvement from the above-stated countries. This government, although not recognised internationally, was seen as the manager of the crisis in Kosovo, or as the mechanism through which the Kosovar Albanians' discontent was channelled. With the emergence of the armed resistance, that growing discontent began to find a different alleyway, through the KLA (Çeku interview).

However, the KLA's entry onto the international scene was first met with scepticism, to say the least. Famously, upon his visit to Prishtina in February 1998, President Clinton's Special Envoy to the Balkans, Robert Gelbart, was explicit in condemning any "terrorist actions in Kosovo". He then went on to specify that the "UCK [KLA] is, without any question, a terrorist group" (quoted in O'Niell 2002: 24).

What followed a month later is a defining moment in the history of the armed struggle. Several commentators made the argument that Gelbart's remarks had given Milošević the green light to go after and eradicate the armed cells. On 5 March 1998, the village of Prekaz was surrounded by Serbian tanks and other artillery, aimed at annihilating the Jashari family. What followed was a three-day siege, with Serbian forces incessantly attacking the family's compound. In the end, 56 members of the extended Jashari family were killed, including children, women and elderly, together with Adem Jashari, his brother Hamëz Jashari and their father Shaban Jashari, all three of them being leading proponents of the armed resistance.

While still alive, Adem Jashari had already acquired the status of moral leader of the KLA movement. He is known today as the 'legendary commander' (*komandanti legjendar*) who had stood ready to pay the ultimate sacrifice with his large family. For almost a decade his village of Prekaz had literally been out of bounds for the Serbian regime, thereby provoking its wrath. Adem Jashari's open defiance to the occupation evoked an earlier Albanian tradition of the *kaçak* rebellion, when an individual or a small group of armed men would take it upon themselves to protect the Albanian code of honour and the Albanian home. The police had made armed attempts to reign upon him as early as December 1991 and again in January 1998. Both attempts were met with fierce resistance. During the second attempt, one of his daughters and one of his nieces were wounded.

“Adem Jashari became the first symbol of a different Albanian type to the oppressed but pacifist one that was dominant in the 1990s; he marked an important change in popular attitudes, as Albanians followed his example and joined as *vullnetarë* (‘volunteers’) of the armed insurrection in their thousands. The Adem Jashari legend thus provides a powerful counter-narrative to the one of victimisation and accommodation with the enemy” (Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers 2006a: 518)<sup>7</sup>.

The massacre of the Jashari family triggered an unprecedented surge of popular support and solidarity. Thousands of young men and women volunteered to join the ranks of the KLA. However tragic this event had been, Prekaz was not viewed as a defeat; on the contrary, it became the moment of popular awakening and pride. It stirred, gave rise to, and became the symbol of national identity and freedom. In the months that followed, the Albanians’ solidarity and support for the KLA was so overwhelming that the people’s identification with the army, and vice versa, was virtually complete. The evolution of this synergetic process led to an almost all-encompassing support for the armed struggle among Albanians.

The number of volunteers who joined the KLA rose drastically after the March events. While until the beginning of 1998 the army had numbered only a few hundred in its ranks, soon after March the numbers jumped to over 10,000 volunteers (Selimi interview). Albanians from the diaspora also came to join the resistance, as if their financial contributions were not enough. Most notably, a group of around 400 Albanian Americans volunteered in the so-called “Atlantic Battalion”. Most of them returned to the US after the war (Heinemann-Grüder and Paes 2001).

To adjust to the much larger membership, the KLA began a phase of organisational re-structuring. Seven operative zones were drawn up, each one of them commanding two to eight brigades. All of the above reported directly to the General HQ (Selimi interview). Professional Albanian military personnel from the old Yugoslav army were recruited, bringing with them experience and strategic know-how. In the process of growing, the KLA leadership attempted to adopt NATO’s standard operating procedures and organisational structure (Çeku interview).

Becoming a factor on the ground meant having a formally-structured political organism that would act as the mouthpiece, or the political wing of the armed struggle. Until this time the KLA was consolidated as an armed organisation, but did not have its own separate political affiliate. In contrast to other armed movements, where the political wing gave birth to the armed resistance, with the KLA this happened in reverse. As described above, the political organisation LPK enjoyed a close association with the KLA, particularly in the beginning, but as the army grew the former’s intention to act as the political wing did not translate into practice. With the increase of interest from the international diplomatic community and media, the KLA needed to set up a political wing that would be the interlocutor and voice of its political goals. Thus, towards the end of 1998 the KLA created its Political Directorate, with Hashim Thaçi – the current Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo - as its representative (Selimi and Mustafa interviews). To be precise, the Political Directorate was hierarchically on the same level as the other directorates of the army (such as the directorate for intelligence/counterintelligence, the directorate of operations etc). In other words, it was not designed to be the government to lead the army. Nevertheless, taking a pragmatic step, the Directorate did come to play a leadership role for the KLA, representing the army in talks with international negotiators and media.

Meanwhile, the fighting between the KLA and the Serbian/Yugoslav forces was expanding across Kosovo, subjecting Albanian civilians to indiscriminate treatment by the latter. According to UNHCR documents, by October 1998 more than 1,500 Kosovar Albanians had been killed, while the number of internally displaced people reached 300,000, raising the alarm of a

<sup>7</sup> For an insightful analysis on the socio-psychological meaning of the cult of Adem Jashari as the symbol of Albanian resistance, freedom and independence, see Di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers (2006a & 2006b).

pending humanitarian catastrophe that would surpass the borders of Kosovo (Roberts 2000). This situation produced an internationally-brokered ceasefire between the two sides, to be monitored by an OSCE mission, which proved short-lived when hostilities commenced with renewed vigour. However, the engagement of the OSCE mission in Kosovo did herald the beginning of a period of heavy-handed involvement by the “international factor”.

## 2.4 The involvement of international actors and NATO’s bombing campaign

“Throughout the past decade, the actors in this episode have been engaged in a far larger conflict – a struggle for the redefinition of the international system, specifically:

- the struggle for ultimate authority within the state: sovereignty vs. human rights;
- the struggle about the definition of the state: territorial integrity vs. self-determination;
- the struggle about manifestations of international interest: non-intervention vs. international action;
- the struggle among international actors: collective action vs. unilateralism” (Weller 1999: 25).

The so-called “international factor” was becoming a major stakeholder in the political scene of the late 1990s. At the beginning of the decade, the international community had adopted the role of the passive observer, viewing the Kosovo crisis as a background to the much more attention-grabbing wars in Croatia and Bosnia, and as an essentially internal matter for Serbia/rump Yugoslavia to settle. By the end of the decade, however, international involvement was comprehensive and formidable. From being an often marginal topic of discussions at international fora, by 1999 the Kosovo issue reached the pinnacle of its internationalisation.

As international involvement in Yugoslavia intensified in the early 1990s, the lobbying by Kosovo’s LDK-led parallel institutions with the western corridors of power increased. However, their access to high-level politicians and diplomatic events was often limited or had marginal effects. For example, upon Dr. Rugova’s query at the London Peace Conference on Yugoslavia in August 1992, chaired by Lord Carrington, the Kosovo delegation was politely denied access to the conference chamber itself, but was invited to attend a ‘Salle d’ecoute’, or listening room next door, where the formal proceedings of the conference would be relayed live (Weller 1999: 86).

The Dayton Accords had served as a clarion-call for Kosovar Albanians that their plight was nowhere near receiving the international attention they desired. When mentioned, the situation in Kosovo was often discussed in passing, with certain actors from western countries raising concerns about human rights violations. Even then, the discussions revolved around the topic of Kosovo as an internal issue for what was left of Yugoslavia, or more precisely Serbia to settle. Accusations of human rights violations in Kosovo were flagrantly refuted by Milošević’s regime, which grew accustomed to making good use of the principle of “internal matters of sovereignty” on the issue.

However, various international organisations increasingly tried to draw attention to the intolerable human rights abuses in Kosovo. In the early 1990s the European Community, later the European Union, took some enthusiastic steps towards mediating in the resolution of the Balkan conflicts, but proved to be ineffective (the words of the European Commission’s (EC) former president, Jacques Delors, “The hour of Europe has dawned”, sound cynical in retrospect).<sup>8</sup> Full American involvement became increasingly necessary in order to enforce peace deals and compromises in the Yugoslav crises.

Unlike the EU, the United States was more effective in leading the efforts to stop the

<sup>8</sup> As President of the EC, Jacques Delors stated in 1991: “We do not interfere in American affairs; we trust America will not interfere in European affairs” (quoted in Holbrooke 1999: 21).

accelerating humanitarian catastrophe in Kosovo and bringing the parties to the negotiating table. As early as December 1992 the then-president George Bush had written to Milošević, drawing a red line on Kosovo: “In the event of conflict in Kosovo caused by Serbian action, the United States will be prepared to employ military force against the Serbs in Kosovo and Serbia proper” (quoted in Weller 1999: 272). This so-called “Christmas warning” was later evoked by the Clinton administration, after Kosovo had been allowed to recede into the background of international attention during the Croatia and Bosnia conflicts in the early to mid-1990s.

As part of its monitoring role in 1992-3, the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) expressed its concern regarding police reprisals against Albanian civilians in Kosovo. From 1992 to 1999, numerous resolutions were passed by the UN General Assembly in relation to the escalating crisis in Kosovo, in the context of Yugoslavia, raising deep concerns about violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Grave concerns were noted about Serbian police brutality and harassment, arbitrary searches, seizures and arrests, forced evictions, torture, ill-treatment of detainees and discrimination in the administration of justice, and killings. During 1998 and 1999, the UN Security Council passed a number of resolutions, referring to Chapter VII of UN Charter, whereby the “impending humanitarian catastrophe” in Kosovo was viewed as a threat to international peace and security (Weller 1999; Tahiri 2001).

The acceleration of the conflict was followed by an intensification of international action, beyond just holding discussions in Western capitals. In October 1998, the US special envoy Richard Holbrooke was dispatched to deliver an ultimatum to Belgrade to cease military operations. After many deliberations, whereby Milošević was threatened with NATO’s use of force, a ceasefire was agreed (Tahiri 2001; Weller 1999). Following this agreement, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) established its Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM). This mission was primarily comprised of former or active-duty military officers serving as civilians, and by March 1999 it numbered up to 1,400 staff. The mission of KVM was to monitor and report on the compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 1199 (1998), which appealed for an immediate ceasefire, and “withdrawal of security units used for civilian repression”. Their reports portrayed a bleak picture of the situation in Kosovo. “A review of their reports shows a clear, organised, and brutal campaign by Serb forces to intimidate the Albanian population” (O’Niell 2002: 24-25).

The Holbrooke agreement proved to be short-lived, with the KLA and Serbian/Yugoslav forces re-engaging in combat. Caught in the middle, the Albanian civilian population experienced frequent retaliation by Yugoslav forces. One event that particularly outraged international public opinion was the killing of civilians in the village of Reçak, west of Kosovo. This happened on 15 January 1999 when, while going after the KLA, the Yugoslav forces retaliated and killed 45 civilians. Upon arriving at the scene, the OSCE KVM’s ambassador William Walker condemned the massacre of civilians, and called upon the International Criminal Tribunal on the former Yugoslavia to investigate the atrocity (Independent International Commission on Kosovo 2000).

Meanwhile, there was an accelerated pace of negotiations and shuttle diplomacy between Belgrade and Prishtina (KLA representatives and others), conducted by various western diplomats, but mainly led by Holbrooke and the then-US ambassador to Macedonia, Christopher Hill. These negotiations resulted in a document called ‘Contact Group Non-negotiable Principles/Basic Elements’, dated 30 January 1999. Amongst the ten non-negotiable points outlined in this document, there was emphasis on the need to end violence and to find a peaceful solution through dialogue, and a call for an interim agreement which would allow a mechanism for a final settlement after a period of three years. The document also guaranteed the territorial integrity of FRY (Weller 2009).

The international community’s engagement peaked during the concerted efforts of the Contact Group – an ad hoc six-nation formation, comprised of the US, UK, France, Germany, Italy and Russia – to organise an international peace conference on Kosovo. Taking into account the

above-mentioned principles, the Contact Group summoned Prishtina and Belgrade to talks in Rambouillet, France, to negotiate and sign an “Interim Agreement for Peace and Self-Government in Kosovo”. The Kosovo delegation was comprised of all dominant political factors, and led by the KLA representative, Hashim Thaçi. In fact, one third of the delegation came from the armed resistance, one third represented Dr. Rugova’s LDK party, and one third were members of a new party called The United Democratic Movement (*Lëvizja për Bashkim Demokratik*, LBD), led by the academic Rexhep Qosja, who was more closely aligned to the war wing. Two independent members, publicists, were also part of the team. The FRY/Serbia team consisted of middle-tier politicians who would report to Milošević in Belgrade.

The Rambouillet Conference lasted from 6 to 23 February 1999. Before accepting the final document, the Kosovo delegation asked for a period of grace to consult with people back home. At this point, meetings were held with the KLA’s regional command centres before a common consensus was reached on accepting the deal. However, vehement opposition was noted amongst some in not accepting an agreement that would ensure the territorial integrity of FRY/Serbia. The most prominent voice in this opposition was Adem Demaçi, Kosovo’s symbol of resistance, who had been appointed to the position of the KLA’s General Political Representative in August 1998.<sup>9</sup> His opposition led him to resign from this post.

The Peace Accord talks recommenced in Paris between 15 and 18 March 1999, at which point the Kosovo delegation signed the document. The so-called Rambouillet document provided an interim agreement for peace and self-government in Kosovo. Although it guaranteed the territorial integrity of FRY/Serbia, it also provided for an international conference after three years to determine Kosovo’s political status, “taking into account the will of the people”. The Kosovar delegation understood this to be an interim agreement that would pave the way for a referendum and independence. Belgrade refused to sign the document.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, the UNHCR estimated that between January and mid-March, 150,000 to 200,000 refugees had been forced out of their homes due to the accelerating crackdown by Serb/Yugoslav forces. On 20 March, the OSCE evacuated its KVM personnel from Kosovo (Roberts 2000). After Rambouillet, the last attempts by international mediators to persuade Belgrade to agree to the peace terms or face military consequences came to a dead-end.

Judging that all diplomatic means had been exhausted, on 24 March 1999 the NATO Alliance launched military airstrikes over Serbian/Yugoslav military and other installations. NATO’s “virtual” bombing campaign (the first of its kind in the Alliance’s 50 years of existence) over rump Yugoslavia went on for 78 days, until Milošević’s regime capitulated. The so-called Military Technical Agreement between NATO and FRY/Serbia was signed in Kumanovo, Macedonia, on 9 June 1999, which set the terms of the latter’s immediate withdrawal, northwards from Kosovo to Serbia (Ignatieff 2000).

While NATO was bombing from the air, the KLA’s operations on the ground accelerated. The Alliance’s intervention was welcome for the KLA, whose soldiers viewed themselves as “NATO’s ground force” (Selimi interview). NATO’s commanders also regarded the KLA’s operations as being of specific importance during this time. For instance, it was considered a priority that the KLA kept control of Mount Pashtrik, strategically located near the border with Albania, and that NATO provided the necessary air force to ensure its control (Clark 2002).

Milošević’s regime accelerated its persecution of the Albanian civilian population. The project of ethnic cleansing was unravelling with frightening speed. By the time the war was over,

<sup>9</sup> Adem Demaçi was named the KLA’s General Political Representative, tasked with “leading the politics of war”. In many ways, this position overlapped with that of the Political Directorate. Both this convergence of competencies and his refusal to support the Peace Accords led Demaçi to resign his position (Gashi 2010).

<sup>10</sup> On Rambouillet, refer to Tahiri 2001; Weller 1999 and 2009; Independent International Commission on Kosovo 2000; Judah 2002.

around 12,000 Albanians had been killed, most of them civilians; more than 3,500 were unaccounted for; 120,000 homes had been pillaged and destroyed; rape had been used as an intentional war tool against Kosovar Albanian women. Almost 900,000 Albanians had fled from Kosovo. Of those, almost 450,000 went to Albania, around 250,000 to Macedonia, 70,000 to Montenegro, and 90,000 to other countries. This, in addition to hundreds of thousands of Albanians displaced within Kosovo, brought the total number of refugees and internally displaced persons to almost 1.5 million people, or more than 80% of the total population of Kosovo (Human Rights Watch 2001; UNHCR records in Roberts 2000; Tahiri 2001; Gow 2003). Belgrade's capitulation interrupted its orchestrated and systematic campaign of emptying Kosovo.

During the NATO bombardment, on 24 May 1999, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) issued an indictment against the top leadership of FRY/Serbia. The ICTY was established in 1993 in response to allegations of atrocities committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. On 10 March 1998, its jurisdiction was expanded to cover the alleged atrocities committed in Kosovo. After the NATO bombardment and the establishment of UNMIK, several KLA individuals were accused of having taken part in revenge killings and kidnappings of Serb civilians and Albanian collaborators during the conflict and in the immediate post-war period. Over the last decade, the ICTY has issued indictments against several KLA members for their alleged crimes. For this reason, many authors have stated that these alleged actions by some of its members have placed a blemish upon the KLA's stance of waging a just war. As this topic is of particular relevance, we make mention of it here and refer the reader to several sources of data for more detailed analysis.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> On this topic see, among others, ICG (2000), Human Rights Watch (2001), Weller (2009) and the website of the ICTY (see "The Cases", accessed at [www.icty.org/action/cases/4](http://www.icty.org/action/cases/4)).

### 3. The post-war transformation of the KLA

The day following the signing of the Military Technical Agreement between NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR) and FRY/Serbia, on 10 June 1999 the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1244 which provided the legal framework for establishing the UN administration and KFOR in Kosovo. On 12 June, NATO entered Kosovo from the south, as FRY/Serb forces were leaving northwards. Under the resolution, Kosovo entered a period of international administration, titled the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), which consisted of a comprehensive conglomerate of international institutions and organisations, geared to provide orchestrated efforts in post-war reconstruction and institution-building. KFOR's membership of almost 50,000 men and women was set up to provide security in the territory. One of its first tasks was to oversee the process of demilitarisation and transformation of the KLA.

After the war, a lot of KLA combatants returned to civilian life. But the biggest percentage of them was eventually recruited to join the newly-formed civilian emergency agency and the police force. A considerable number of them were integrated into locally- or internationally-owned private security companies. Quite a few such companies were formed in Kosovo after 1999, thus attending to an urgent post-war security vacuum. In section 3.3 we will address the transformation of KLA combatants into politicians, their views channelled mainly through two political parties that became dominant forces of Kosovar post-war politics (ICG 2000).

#### 3.1 KPC: transformation, not dissolution

By March 1999 there were approximately 18,000 KLA combatants. After the war, the estimated figure was around 20,000 (Heinemann-Grüder and Paes 2001; Pettifer 2003). One of the first challenges in post-war Kosovo was how to adequately address the demobilisation of this force.

The demobilisation and transformation of the KLA was regulated by international agreements and primarily overseen by NATO forces. This process was preceded by the "Military Technical Agreement between the International Security Force (KFOR) and the Governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia". The KLA was not a signatory to the agreement, largely because of its status as an actor that operated within internationally-recognised state borders. The document was a bilateral agreement between KFOR on one hand and representatives of the Yugoslav Army and its Interior Police on the other. The agreement called for an immediate cessation of hostilities, and specified the timeline and procedures for the withdrawal of Yugoslav/Serb forces from Kosovo. It also delineated a clear buffer area that extended beyond Kosovo and into the Yugoslav territory.<sup>12</sup>

UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (10 June, 1999) demanded that the KLA end all their offensive actions and comply with the requirements for demilitarisation (Article 15).<sup>13</sup> The resolution stipulated that the public security mechanisms are reserved as executive competencies of UNMIK (Peci and Dugolli 2006).

With the legal framework in place, one of NATO's first priorities was to set the terms of agreement for the demilitarisation of the KLA. In fact, NATO's initial plans were to consider doing away with KLA succession and push forward for complete dissolution and a return to civilian life for its combatants. In other words, there was not much eagerness to transform KLA structures into another security mechanism in post-war Kosovo. However, a large majority of the population

<sup>12</sup> The text of the agreement can be accessed at [www.nato.int/kfor/docu/docs/pdf/mta.pdf](http://www.nato.int/kfor/docu/docs/pdf/mta.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> The resolution can be accessed at [www.unmikonline.org/UNMIKONLINE2009/1244resolution.htm](http://www.unmikonline.org/UNMIKONLINE2009/1244resolution.htm).

considered the KLA to be the army of Kosovo, and as such they were expected to continue their existence, albeit admittedly in another form and with another mission. The persistency of its legacy was viewed to be one of the main symbolic features in the newly-liberated Kosovo. For Kosovar Albanians it was very important, even essential, that there be a continuation of the KLA legacy, as a symbol of a country that aspired to become independent (Çeku interview; Hamzaj 2001).

The KLA leadership was aware of its symbolism and prestige. Of course, there was across-the-board agreement that, with NATO's arrival, its war mission was complete. However, they were just as insistent that its legacy ought not to be broken off, and that the force should be transformed into one that would be suitable for times of peace. The end result of a series of negotiations between NATO officials and the KLA's leadership was the conclusion that there would be no dissolution. Instead, the KLA would undergo a process of demilitarisation and transformation (Çeku interview).

The negotiations resulted in an agreement entitled "Undertaking of Demilitarisation and Transformation by the UÇK", signed on 20 June 1999. The document was signed by the then-KFOR Commander General Mike Jackson, the-then Chief of Staff of the KLA General Agim Çeku, the-then Director of the Political Directorate of the KLA Hashim Thaçi, and in the presence of NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), General Wesley K. Clark, and UNMIK's Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) Bernard Kouchner. The agreement set out the terms, the process and the timeline for demobilising KLA combatants, and stated that the authority with regards to monitoring the implementation rested with the Commander of KFOR (COMKFOR). The Joint Implementation Commission, comprised of COMKFOR as Chair, two senior representatives from KFOR and NATO respectively and a civilian from the UN Administration, ensured compliance with the agreed arrangements for the ceasefire. Within 90 days of this agreement entering into force, the KLA was to complete the process of demilitarisation and cease wearing military uniforms or insignia (Qehaja interview).<sup>14</sup>

Exactly 90 days later, on 20 September 1999, UNMIK promulgated Regulation No. 1999/8 on the Establishment of the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC).<sup>15</sup> By this time the process of disarmament was complete, with the KLA handing over to KFOR around 9,000 small arms, 800 machine guns, 300 anti-tank mines, 1,200 mines, 178 mortars, 27,000 hand grenades, 1,000 kg of explosives and over 5 million rounds of ammunition. However, this number still did not account for the 20,000 KLA combatants registered at the end of the war. The explanation provided is that, despite enjoying a huge following, there were shortages of weapons for all combatants. According to some estimates, perhaps as many as 50% of those drafted had not had a weapon at some point during the conflict (Heinemann-Grüder and Paes 2001).

Borrowing from the French model of *Securité Civile*, the KPC was established as a civilian emergency service agency, with the following tasks:

- (a) provide disaster response services;
- (b) perform search and rescue;
- (c) provide a capacity for humanitarian assistance in isolated areas;
- (d) assist in demining; and
- (e) contribute to rebuilding infrastructure and communities.

In 2006, those tasks were expanded, after the promulgation of an amendment to the above regulation (Regulation No. 2006/3),<sup>16</sup> to comprise the following:

<sup>14</sup> See also "Undertaking of Demilitarisation and Transformation by the UÇK" at [www.nato.int/kfor/docu/docs/pdf/uck.pdf](http://www.nato.int/kfor/docu/docs/pdf/uck.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Accessible at [www.unmikonline.org/regulations/unmikgazette/o2english/E1999regs/RE1999\\_o8.htm](http://www.unmikonline.org/regulations/unmikgazette/o2english/E1999regs/RE1999_o8.htm).

<sup>16</sup> Accessible at [www.unmikonline.org/regulations/unmikgazette/o2english/E2006regs/RE2006\\_o3.pdf](http://www.unmikonline.org/regulations/unmikgazette/o2english/E2006regs/RE2006_o3.pdf).

- (a) provide disaster response services;
- (b) perform search and rescue;
- (c) provide a capacity for humanitarian assistance in isolated areas;
- (d) assist in demining;
- (e) contribute to rebuilding infrastructure and reconstruction for communities, including monitoring unoccupied reconstructed homes of minority communities and other humanitarian tasks; and
- (f) perform ceremonial duties within its scope as a civilian emergency service agency, in accordance with directives of the KPC Coordinator and KFOR.

In essence, the KPC was a civilian emergency organisation, equipped and trained to carry out rapid response tasks for public safety in times of emergency and humanitarian assistance. Its mission was also set out in the Constitutional Framework for Provisional Self-Government in Kosovo, which came into effect in 2001.<sup>17</sup> It was a reserved power and came under the authority of the Special Representative of UNMIK. Nevertheless, in the eyes of the Albanian majority population, the KPC was always viewed as more than a civilian organisation. If not an army as such, it was certainly considered to be an army in waiting, as well as a direct successor of the KLA.<sup>18</sup>

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) was charged with the responsibility for registering and integrating KLA combatants, as well as building capacities for the new KPC members in the area of civil protection. Around 25,000 persons were registered with the IOM as former KLA combatants, out of which 20,000 applied for the 5,000 positions in the KPC (ICG 2006). The training was geared to promote basic individual and organisational skills, personal responsibility and discipline. Specialised training on civil protection was also offered (KCSS 2010).

It should be noted that the structure and organisation of the KPC remained pretty much the same as that of the KLA. Most of the commanding officers were former KLA fighters. Out of 5,000 members, 3,000 were on active duty, and 2,000 were reserve members. However, unlike its predecessor, the KPC's profile was designed to be multi-ethnic (in addition to being a non-religious and apolitical organisation). Minority representation was minimal, and virtually non-existent from the Serb minority community. Officially, UNMIK and KFOR officials did try to push for the creation of an organisation that would be representative of all ethnic groups living in Kosovo. From very early on, the KPC allocated available slots for Serb minority representation. However, attempts to recruit Serb members in its ranks were immediately seen as too ambitious, since the KPC was regarded as and indeed stemmed directly from the KLA (KCSS 2009). In fact, in early 2000 UNMIK had even suggested forming a separate KPC Serb unit, based in the Serb enclave of Graçanica. This suggestion was quickly dropped, however, as it clearly would have posed a challenge to the KPC's operational chain of command, and Albanians were strongly opposed to it (Qehaja 2004).

Being a direct KLA successor, recruiting minority community members, particularly Serbs, remained an issue throughout the KPC's mandate. This was made clear in UNMIK's "Standards before Status" report.<sup>19</sup> There were four major prerequisites for the KPC to fulfil, according to this report: 1. the KPC was expected to act in a transparent, disciplined and professional manner; 2. the KPC should be representative of all the people of Kosovo; 3. the KPC should be proactive

<sup>17</sup> Regulation No. 2001/9: A Constitutional Framework for Provisional Self-Government in Kosovo, accessible at [www.unmikonline.org/regulations/unmikgazette/02english/E2001regs/RE2001\\_09.pdf](http://www.unmikonline.org/regulations/unmikgazette/02english/E2001regs/RE2001_09.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> The Albanian name for the Kosovo Protection Corps is *Trupat e Mbrojtjes së Kosovës* (TMK). "*Mbrojtjes*" means "protection", but also "defence", and in fact is more often used to mean the latter. During negotiations, KLA pushed for the usage of this particular word. Although purely symbolic, such a close association between the KPC and defence/army was important for people's perception, as well as for the morale of the members of this organisation.

<sup>19</sup> "Standards before Status" was the document produced to assess standards that were to be reached before commencement of talks on Kosovo's political status. Standard 8 focused on the consolidation of the KPC.

in recruiting minority communities; and 4. the KPC was to be financed by the Kosovo budget in a transparent manner (Qehaja 2004). Its 10% threshold of minority inclusion, however, was eventually reached when the report was published in October 2005.

One of KPC’s ongoing challenges in its hierarchical structure was the disproportionately heavy representation in upper levels. A lot of men who had held more senior positions with the KLA held similar or higher posts in the KPC. The war legacy definitely counted for seniority with the KPC, which in turn could also deflate the ambitions of its younger members. Also, the percentage of women in its midst was quite minimal – around 3.5% (KCSS 2010). The table below, borrowed from ICG’s report “An Army for Kosovo?” (2006), offers a breakdown of the KPC’s structure as of the year 2006.

<b>KPC’s Structure as of July 2006</b>			
<b>Rank</b>	<b>Active</b>	<b>Serving Members</b>	<b>Reserve</b>
<b>Lt. General</b>	1	1	0
<b>Maj. General</b>	2	1	0
<b>Brig. General</b>	14	13	0
<b>Colonel</b>	50	48	2
<b>Lt. Colonel</b>	119	117	2
<b>Major</b>	209	203	13
<b>Captain</b>	356	356	60
<b>Lieutenant</b>	440	436	136
<b>Staff Sergeant</b>	439	438	96
<b>Sergeant</b>	366	365	188
<b>Corporal</b>	1,035	1,028	1,438
<b>Private</b>	21	20	65
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,052</b>	<b>3,026</b>	<b>2,000</b>

### 3.2 Integration into the police force

As part of its institution-building mandate, UNMIK was tasked with the responsibility of creating a new police force, called the Kosovo Police Service (KPS). The OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMiK) took charge of this responsibility, setting up the Kosovo Police Service School to select and train interested applicants. Careful attention was paid to selecting members from all communities living in Kosovo, making this force one of the most successful multi-ethnic institutions to date. Initially, the KPS worked closely with UNMIK Police, often providing support for the latter. Following independence and the passing of new legislation, its name was shortened to Kosovo Police (KP), with a direct line of accountability to the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Being mindful of the reintegration of former combatants in 1999 and thereafter, the KLA leadership referred a large number of them to the KPS. Like the KPC, the police was seen as an institution that could absorb a relatively big percentage of former combatants (Selimi interview). In the end, according to statistics, approximately 25% of the 7,000 KPS members were former KLA soldiers. When one has in mind that out of 3,000 active KPC members, 70% came from the KLA, this represents roughly an equal distribution of KLA combatants in the KPC and KPS (ICG 2006).

### 3.3 The leap from combatant to politician

The immediate aftermath of the war in Kosovo saw the emergence of two kinds of political parties: those that sprung from the KLA, or the war wing of resistance, and Dr. Rugova's LDK party, which had led the pacifist, parallel system. After the war, the latter continued to be one of the dominant political forces, even winning the first democratically free and internationally recognised elections in 2001.

On the other hand, the disbandment of the KLA saw the creation of two main political parties. The first one was the Party for Democratic Progress of Kosovo (*Partia e Progresit Demokratik të Kosovës*), which soon afterwards became known as the Democratic Party of Kosovo (*Partia Demokratike e Kosovës*, PDK), led by the KLA's former leader of the Political Directorate, Hashim Thaçi. The PDK was formed just as the demilitarisation and transformation of the KLA was completed, in September 1999. A lot of former members of the LPK, the organisation that had operated illegally during the 1980s and 1990s and had been closely associated with the KLA, joined its ranks. The second one to be formed was the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (*Aleanca për Ardhmërinë e Kosovës*, AAK), under the leadership of the KLA's former commander for the Dukagjin area, western Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj.

Ideologically, these two parties have not yet been able to position themselves clearly, although officially they would beg to differ. In the last ten years they have both promoted policies on the left and right of the political spectrum. However, this situation reflects the overall lack of profiling of political parties in the last ten years. In light of the importance of the national cause, which was resolving the status of Kosovo, all other differences were seen as a lesser priority. However, one categorisation that has always been clearly discerned between the PDK and AAK is the regional factor. Whereas the PDK attracts large followings in the Drenica region, the AAK continues to reign supreme in the Dukagjin area, in both cases because their respective leaders come from these two places.

More than ten years after the conflict, Kosovo's political scene is still dominated by the parties that have emerged from the war. And, evocative of the second half of the 1990s, the LDK has trodden alongside the KLA parties, even holding the position of the biggest party in national

and local elections until 2007. From 2004 until 2007, the AAK managed to strike a deal with the LDK for a coalition government, reserving the Prime Minister's post for itself.

In the November 2007 national and municipal elections, the PDK won the largest number of votes, with its leader Hashim Thaçi becoming Prime Minister. In an ironic twist of fortunes, they invited the LDK – the second largest party in the elections – to form a coalition government. These two parties had represented two extreme positions of the resistance movement in Kosovo: the pacifist and armed ones. Yet a political marriage that had seemed inconceivable in the past was able to materialise in 2007. But in a way, the coming together of these two extremes – although many would argue that it was done for sheer expedient reasons – symbolised the convergence and complementarity of the armed and non-violent wings of popular resistance. On 17 February 2008, the government and parliament that came out of these elections proclaimed Kosovo a free, democratic and independent country.

## 4. The post-independence security presence

During UNMIK's era, the security sector in Kosovo evolved into a conglomeration of international and local mechanisms, with little or no accountability towards Kosovo's institutions, and little or no democratic oversight or control of armed forces. UNMIK Police and KFOR were accountable to their own political masters, be they the SRSG, KFOR Commander, or their HQs in New York or Brussels. Similarly, the KPC and KPS, although they were local, remained under the executive competencies of the SRSG.

### 4.1 Security sector review

By 2004 and 2005, preparations were underway for talks on Kosovo's future political status. Reflecting the politics of the day, the need for a review of the security mechanisms became increasingly more prevalent. In 2005, the then-SRSG Soren Jessen-Petersen initiated a comprehensive Internal Security Sector Review (ISSR), put together by the Security Sector Development Advisory Team, comprised of international and local experts. This was the most comprehensive security review to date, aiming to assess the whole sector as such, and to offer related recommendations for the institutions concerned.

The holistic study came at a time when the Ministry of Justice and that of Internal Affairs had just been created. The study placed emphasis on strengthening those two ministries, as well as exploring the possibilities of creating a Ministry of Defence. By way of enhancing ownership of the Kosovo institutions, the review also recommended establishing a Kosovo Security Council. It further recommended that the KPC should be disbanded, whereas the KPS should be reformed. With regards to political competencies, it stated that the President and Prime Minister ought to have an executive say in Kosovo's security institutions. Finally, it called on the Assembly to exercise its role by creating the relevant parliamentary committees for internal affairs and intelligence, so as to ensure democratic oversight of Kosovo's security mechanisms (ISSR 2006).

This review is worth noting, because the political developments that unfolded in Kosovo in the next couple of years did herald dramatic changes to the security sector, changes that to a large degree fit in with the findings of the report.

In 2005, the UN Secretary-General appointed the former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari as his Special Envoy, charging him to lead negotiations between Prishtina and Belgrade on Kosovo's future political status. Talks were held in Vienna in several rounds during 2006 and 2007. Finally, in March 2007 Ahtisaari submitted his Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement to the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon.<sup>20</sup> His Proposal recommended that Kosovo should be granted independence, with an interim period of supervision by the relevant international mechanisms. The UN Secretary-General gave his full endorsement to the Proposal before sending it to the UN Security Council for adoption. However, due to Serbia's opposition to Ahtisaari's recommendation, and thanks to its support from Russia, the UN Security Council has not yet passed a resolution recognising Kosovo's independence.

Based on Ahtisaari's Proposal, Kosovo declared its independence on 17 February 2008. The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo came into force on 15 June 2008. Until now, Kosovo has been recognised as independent by 70 states, including 22 out of 27 EU member-states, as well as the US and all former Yugoslav republics, barring Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. It has gained full membership in the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. The issue of further

<sup>20</sup> The proposal can be accessed at [www.unosek.org/docref/Comprehensive\\_proposal-english.pdf](http://www.unosek.org/docref/Comprehensive_proposal-english.pdf).

recognitions is an ongoing political process. The issue of membership in other institutions, such as the Council of Europe, EU, OSCE or UN, is also a political one, depending on an increase in the number of recognitions and the political good will to accept the new reality. However, the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice pronounced on 22 July 2010 was clear: the declaration of independence of Kosovo adopted on 17 February 2008 did not violate international law.

Internally, the consolidation of state structures and the application of the rule of law is also an ongoing process, fraught with many challenges. In addition to an economic situation that needs urgent resuscitation, the north of Kosovo with its Serb community continues to challenge Prishtina's authority. In this regard, Belgrade's official or informal involvement poses obstacles to the consolidation of state structures for Prishtina.

#### 4.2 The “dignified” dissolution of the KPC

As the negotiations on Kosovo's future status were nearing completion, it was becoming clear that the KPC would dissolve. As it transpired, the KPC did not evolve into a fully-fledged army, or a “Kosovo Defence Force”, as had clearly been the expressed aspiration of the KPC leadership (Çeku, quoted in Pettifer 2003). Its war legacy and its identification as a direct inheritor of the KLA were disqualifying traits in the eyes of the international community. It was considered that the KPC had successfully accomplished its post-war emergency mission and needed to disband. A necessary package of support would accompany its retirees, so as to make the dissolution as appropriately dignified as possible. Moreover, there would be a clear interregnum between its dissolution and the creation of the new security structure. For political reasons, “the international community is not open for the KPC to become an army [...] there would be more support for the creation from scratch of a different professional security force, with clear criteria” (Palokaj 2006).

The Ahtisaari Plan and the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo called for the dissolution of the KPC. It also called for the establishment of a “new professional and multi-ethnic Kosovo Security Force (KSF)”. The KSF was to be lightly armed, and possess no heavy weapons, such as tanks, heavy artillery or offensive air capability. According to Article 5 of Annex VIII of the Ahtisaari Proposal:

“Initially, the KSF shall be primarily responsible for crisis response, explosive ordinance disposal, and civil protection. In addition, the KSF will be designed and prepared to fulfil other security functions, not appropriate for the police or other law enforcement organizations.”<sup>21</sup>

Article 6 of the same document envisages the dissolution of the KPC:

“The KPC, having accomplished its goals, including facilitation of Kosovo's post-conflict recovery, shall be dissolved. The IMP [International Military Presence], in consultation with the ICR [International Civilian Representative] and Kosovo, shall have executive authority over the KPC, and shall decide on the timing of the KPC's dissolution. The dissolution is to be within one year of the conclusion of the transition period as set forth in Article 15 of this Settlement. A Demobilization and Reintegration process is to be developed by the International Community for these KPC retirees.”<sup>22</sup>

For its part, the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo states:

“The Kosovo Protection Corps shall be dissolved within one year after entry into

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

force of this constitution. Until such dissolution, the International Military Presence, in consultation with the International Civilian Representative and the Republic of Kosovo, shall exercise executive authority over the Kosovo Protection Corps and shall decide on the schedule of its dissolution.” (Article 154)<sup>23</sup>

On the establishment of the new force, it stipulates the following:

“The Kosovo Security Force shall serve as a national security force for the Republic of Kosovo and may send its members abroad in full conformity with its international responsibilities [...] The Kosovo Security Force shall be professional, reflect ethnic diversity of the people of the Republic of Kosovo and shall be recruited from among the citizens of the Republic of Kosovo.” (Article 126)<sup>24</sup>

Unlike the KPC, whose oversight was a reserved competence of the SRSG, the KSF was to be directly accountable to the newly-formed Ministry of the Kosovo Security Force, the latter representing an integrated model of civilian control. The President of the Republic of Kosovo is simultaneously the Commander-in-Chief of the KSF. The Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo has also established a Committee on the Kosovo Security Force, expected to provide parliamentary oversight on the latter’s performance.

The ‘deactivation’ of the KPC took place in January 2009. International experts who worked closely with the KPC state that the organisation had grown and become fine-tuned in matters of demining, disaster relief, urban search and rescue, and many routine community construction projects. The KPC was praised for its demining contribution in Albania, in the aftermath of the Gërdec ammunition explosion in that country in March 2008. In the final weeks of its existence, the KPC achieved international recognition for its Urban Search and Rescue Capability (Clewlow 2010). However, with its mission being transitory, it came to a final completion after the declaration of Kosovo’s independence.

The KSF was formally created immediately after the end of the KPC’s mandate. All the symbols and insignia of the new force are unlike any previous ones, in this way representing a detachment from the old legacy. According to the Law on the Kosovo Security Force, as an all-volunteer force, it is designed to fulfil “security functions not appropriate for the police or other law enforcement organisations”. It is envisaged to consist of an active component of a maximum of 2,500 personnel and a reserve component of a maximum of 800 personnel. The KSF’s emergency response component consists of search and rescue, demining, hazardous materials, fire-fighting and other humanitarian assistance capabilities. Its mandate also includes contributing to peace operations. After five years, the current legislation foresees a possible review of the KSF’s mission and remit of operation. Article 10 of the Law on the Kosovo Security Force, which describes its missions and tasks, states:

“The Kosovo Security Force shall be lightly armed and possess no heavy weapons, such as tanks, heavy artillery or offensive air capability. Any changes will be determined by the International Military Presence, in coordination with the International Civilian Representative. A full review of these limits to be conducted no earlier than 5 years from the date this Law enters into force. The initial tasks of the Kosovo Security Force shall be:

- a) to participate in crisis response operations, including peace support operations. This will include operations outside the territory of the Republic of Kosovo where invited to do so;
- b) to assist civil authorities in responding to natural and other disasters and

<sup>23</sup> The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo can be accessed at [www.assembly-kosova.org/common/docs/Constitution1%20of%20the%20Republic%20of%20Kosovo.pdf](http://www.assembly-kosova.org/common/docs/Constitution1%20of%20the%20Republic%20of%20Kosovo.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

- emergencies, including as part of a regional or international response effort,  
c) to conduct explosive ordnance disposal,  
d) to assist civil authorities through civil protection operations”.<sup>25</sup>

Although it is a new force, a relatively large percentage of current KSF members were recruited from the KPC. This is for the simple reason that the KPC possessed most of the skills required for the new force. However, for many Kosovar Albanians, politicians and military men alike, the “dignified dissolution” of the KPC was one of the hardest compromises that Kosovo had to make on its way to statehood (Çeku interview). Especially for former KLA members, it was vital that war veterans were offered an acceptable scheme of early retirement or reintegration. The overall feeling was that failure to do so would be disrespectful to their contribution to Kosovo’s recent history (Mustafa interview). In this regard, much has already been done, with support from NATO countries, facilitated through the UNDP. However, the government has still got some way to go towards accommodating war veterans. At present, the draft law on war veterans is still being debated at the government level, before it is sent to the Assembly for review. One of the pending issues to resolve has to do with the financial implications of the draft law, namely the costs that need to be absorbed by the government in accommodating war veterans (Kajtazi interview).

For war veterans and others, during the dissolution process of the KPC, it was not just a necessity to emphasise the “dignified” aspect of it. It was also the symbolism of it: the insecurity that with the KPC, people would also witness the end of the KLA legacy. For it is a strongly held feeling that the memory of war, the people’s sacrifices and tragedies, as well as the living legacy of the resistance movement embodied in the KLA and inherited by the KPC, are and should continue to be attributes of the state. These elements of remembrance, recollection and respect are much needed for a new-born state, which Kosovo is. The preservation of this legacy, or its memory, and the pride that comes with it, contribute towards state-formation and state-identity (Çeku interview). These are some reasons as to why people were unsettled to see the KPC being dissolved.

However, the new force, although it is not called an army, is again seen by people as being exactly that. Or, to be more realistic, being the force that already bears the symbolism of defence and pride of the new country, it is expected to evolve into a sophisticated defence force or army, working in close partnership with NATO,<sup>26</sup> as is already the case.

<sup>25</sup> The Law on the Kosovo Security Force can be accessed at [www.assembly-kosova.org/common/docs/ligjet/2008\\_03-Lo46\\_en.pdf](http://www.assembly-kosova.org/common/docs/ligjet/2008_03-Lo46_en.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> NATO has over the years reduced its KFOR presence in Kosovo, bringing it to just under 10,000 troops at present, who are still “deployed in Kosovo to help maintain a safe and secure environment” (see [www.nato.int/kfor](http://www.nato.int/kfor)).

## Conclusion

The KLA experienced a relatively short existence in Kosovo's history, only occupying a dominant stage in the second half of the 1990s. Its emergence represented the climax of a long history of resistance movements, peaceful and armed ones, stretching right back to the beginning of the 20th century. The consistent underlying principle was to give voice to the will of the people for self-determination, justice and freedom from Serbia/FRY. Its struggle represented the interests and concerns of the predominantly Albanian majority population of Kosovo. In this context, the Kosovo case study shares many resemblances with other movements analysed in the context of the Berghof series "Resistance/Liberation Movements and Transition to Politics".

However, the KLA narrative, and with it the recent history of Kosovo, have also followed their own trajectory of development, out of which one can distinguish a few unique traits:

- There were two tiers of resistance in Kosovo: that of the peaceful resistance, led by the LDK government, and the armed struggle, personified in the KLA. However, although their objective was essentially the same, the gulf and the tension between the two tiers were never reconciled. Far from acting as the political or armed wing of one another, both the peaceful resistance and the armed struggle led a parallel existence until the end of the conflict.
- The heavy involvement of the international factor: from being confined to the margins of international attention in the first half of the 1990s, in the latter half Kosovo became a major cause for concern due to its pending humanitarian catastrophe. In early 1999 international diplomacy reached the peak of its involvement with the Rambouillet peace talks, which in the end were signed by the Kosovar Albanian delegation but not by Belgrade. Considering this as the end of diplomacy, the NATO Alliance embarked on its first military intervention against a sovereign state, bombing Serbia/FRY for 78 days. The international community followed this pattern of heavy engagement after the war, when the United Nations took over the administration of Kosovo, with NATO's KFOR providing security for its citizens.
- Unlike many other resistance movements, whose actors have been reintegrated into an existing state structure following peace accords, Kosovo represents a breaking point in this practice. After a period of almost a decade as an international protectorate, the Kosovo representatives declared the country independent, thus factually and legally seceding from Serbia.
- In this whole context, Kosovo has proven to be a testing playground for the application of some potentially conflicting norms in international relations and international law. Namely, the ongoing dilemma between the principles of human rights and self-determination versus those of sovereignty and non-interference in internal matters have accompanied Kosovo throughout its most recent history. It was in the context of this imbalance that the International Court of Justice, upon request, gave its advisory opinion that Kosovo's declaration of independence in February 2008 was not in contravention with international law.

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## Interviews

**Agim Çeku** – 14 April 2010

Chief of Staff of the KLA, 1999;

Commander of the KPC (Lieutenant General), 1999-2006;

Prime Minister of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of Kosovo, 2006-2008;

Currently Chair of the Social-Democratic Party of Kosovo.

**Besim Kajtazi** – 27 April 2010

Currently Director of the Legal Department, Office of the Prime Minister,

Republic of Kosovo.

**Emrush Xhemajli** – 24 December 2009

Secretary General of the LPK, 1987-1998;

President of the LPK, 2000-2008;

Currently Member of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo.

**Hajdin Abaz – Lumi** – 29 January 2010

Officer for Morale, Policy and Communication with the KLA, 1998-1999;

Currently Member of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo.

**Hydajet Hyseni** – 05 January 2010

Former Deputy Chair of LDK;

Currently Member of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo.

**Nuredin Ibishi – Leka** – 29 December 2009

Chief of Staff of the KLA for the Llap Region, 1998-1999.

**Ramadan Qehaja** – 13 April 2010

Commander of the KPC Academy, 1999-2000;

Special Advisor to the KPC Coordinator at UNMIK, 2001-2005;

Advisor on Security to PM 2005-06;

Currently Executive Director of the Kosovar Center for Security Studies (KCSS).

**Rexhep Selimi** – 28 December 2009

A founder of the KLA, 1993-1994;  
Member of the KLA General HQ, 1994-1999;  
Chief of the Operational Department of the KLA (G3), 1998;  
General Inspector of the KLA, 1998-1999;  
Minister of Public Order, Provisional Government of Kosovo, 1999-2000;  
Commander of the KPC Protection Academy (Major General), 2000-2001;  
Secretary General of AAK, 2003-2004

**Rrustem Mustafa – Remi** – 29 December 2009

Commander of the KLA for the Llap Region, 1997-1999;  
Commander of the 5th Zone (Prishtina) of KPC, 1999-2000;  
Commander of the 6th Zone of KPC, 2000-2001;  
Currently Deputy Chair of PDK; Member of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo;  
Chair of the Committee for Internal Affairs and Security of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo.

**Valon Murati** – 21 & 23 April 2010

Member of LKÇK, 1993-99;  
Chair of LKÇK, 1999;  
Member of Command of the Llap Region of the KLA, 1998-99;  
Currently member of the presidency of “Movement for Unification” (Albanian: *“Lëvizja për Bashkim”*).

## Annex I: Acronyms

<b>AAK</b>	Alliance for the Future of Kosovo ( <i>Aleanca për Ardhmërinë e Kosovës</i> )
<b>COMKFOR</b>	Commander of KFOR
<b>CSCE</b>	Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>EC</b>	European Community
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FARK</b>	Armed Forces of the Republic of Kosovo ( <i>Forcat e Armatosura të Republikës së Kosovës</i> )
<b>FRY</b>	Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
<b>ICJ</b>	International Court of Justice
<b>ICTY</b>	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
<b>IOM</b>	International Organisation for Migration
<b>KFOR</b>	(NATO) Kosovo Force
<b>KPC (TMK)</b>	Kosovo Protection Corps ( <i>Trupat e Mbrojtjes së Kosovës</i> )
<b>KPS</b>	Kosovo Police Service
<b>KP</b>	Kosovo Police
<b>KVM</b>	(OSCE) Kosovo Verification Mission
<b>KLA (UÇK)</b>	Kosovo Liberation Army ( <i>Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës</i> )
<b>KSF</b>	Kosovo Security Force
<b>LBD</b>	United Democratic Movement ( <i>Lëvizja për Bashkim Demokratik</i> )
<b>LDK</b>	Democratic League of Kosovo ( <i>Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës</i> )
<b>LKÇK</b>	National Movement for the Liberation of Kosovo ( <i>Lëvizja Kombëtare për Çlirimin e Kosovës</i> )
<b>LPK</b>	People's Movement of Kosovo ( <i>Lëvizja Popullore e Kosovës</i> )
<b>LRBSH</b>	Revolutionary Movement for Albanian Unification ( <i>Lëvizja Revolucionare për Bashkimin e Shqiptarëve</i> )
<b>OMiK</b>	OSCE Mission in Kosovo
<b>OSCE</b>	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
<b>PDK</b>	Democratic Party of Kosovo ( <i>Partia Demokratike e Kosovës</i> )
<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
<b>SFRY</b>	Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
<b>SRSG</b>	Special Representative of the Secretary General
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Fund
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNMIK</b>	United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo
<b>UPSUP</b>	Independent Students' Union of the University of Prishtina ( <i>Unioni i Pavarur i Studentëve të Universitetit të Prishtinës</i> )

## Annex II: Chronology

- 1912/13** The Ottoman Empire withdraws from the Balkans. Serbia occupies Kosovo. The Ambassadors' Conference in London in December 1912 recognises the new Balkan frontiers. Several armed struggles erupt in Kosovo between the two world wars, led by “*kaçaks*”, or Albanian outlaws rebelling against Serbian/Yugoslav rule.
- 1943/44** The Declaration of the Conference of Bujan, signed by Kosovo's representatives, envisages unification with Albania after the end of World War II. An armed uprising by 5000 Albanians is quashed by the Yugoslav partisans.
- 1950s** Thousands of Kosovar Albanians face death, persecution and forced exile. The “arms collection” campaign and the rigged trials of Kosovar Albanian communists add to this toll.
- 1968** The first student demonstrations are held in Kosovo's capital Prishtina. Slogans such as “Kosovo – Republic” are chanted by the demonstrators.
- 1974** The new Yugoslav Constitution gives Kosovo equal rights with other entities of the SFRY. However, Kosovo continues to have the status of a province, not a republic.
- 1981** Massive student demonstrations take place in Prishtina, demanding equal rights for Kosovo. The Yugoslav forces retaliate, killing tens of the students, wounding and imprisoning hundreds.
- 1982** On 17 February, the organisation that came to be known as the People's Movement of Kosovo (LPK) is created. This is a clandestine political and military organisation that maintained its operations throughout the 1980s and 1990s in Kosovo and the West. Its leadership played a key role in establishing the KLA. When the latter was created, several of its leaders had been or continued to be members of the LPK.
- 1989** Following the ascent to power of the Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević, Kosovo's autonomy is unconstitutionally annulled. More than 100,000 Kosovar Albanians are expelled from their jobs, while university and most secondary schools are closed to Kosovar Albanian students. In effect, Kosovo enters into an apartheid system. The Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) is formed, led by Dr. Ibrahim Rugova.
- 1990** On 2 July the deputies of the Assembly of Kosovo approve the Constitutional Declaration. On 7 September in the town of Kaçanik, the deputies of the Assembly of Kosovo adopt the new Constitution and proclaim Kosovo a republic. Neither of these acts was recognised by Yugoslavia or the international community.
- 1991** In September, the referendum on Kosovo's independence is organised. 99% of the 87% who voted were in favour of independence. The referendum was not recognised either.
- 1992** In April, the first multi-party elections are held in Kosovo. Winning by a landslide, the LDK forms a government that would oppose Belgrade through non-violent means of resistance, thus ushering Kosovo into a parallel system of governance and life. Neither the elections nor Kosovo's government is recognised by Belgrade or internationally. However, the government enjoys the legitimacy of the predominantly Albanian population of Kosovo.

- 1993** In March, the National Movement for the Liberation of Kosovo (LKÇK) is created. As a clandestine organisation, their programme emphasises mobilising the population for war through propaganda and training, before entering into armed conflict. The fund “Homeland Calling” is opened in Switzerland by the Kosovar Albanian diaspora. Its assets are dedicated to the war in Kosovo.
- 1994** The first documented evidence of the existence of the KLA comes in the form of a communiqué on 17 November. In the letter, its combatants take responsibility for several actions taken against the Yugoslav/Serb forces and their collaborators.
- 1995** Under the auspices of the US administration, a peace agreement is reached in Dayton, Ohio, to end the war in Bosnia. The agreement is signed by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia. The situation in Kosovo was not discussed.
- 1997** On 1 October, the Independent Students’ Union of the University of Prishtina (UPSUP) organises massive non-violent protests against the forceful usurpation of university premises by the Serbian regime. The protest, and others that followed, are crushed by the police. The protests are a simultaneous manifestation of the popular growing frustration with LDK’s passive pacifist resistance. On 28 November, the first public appearance of the KLA occurs during a funeral in the region of Drenica. Until the end of this year, the army numbers just under 200 volunteer fighters, in addition to logistical and operational support.
- 1998** In February the Yugoslav/Serb forces retaliate on civilians in the villages of Qirez and Likoshan, killing twenty-four of them. The massacre is condemned strongly by the international community. On 5 March the Serbian heavy artillery surround the family compound of the KLA’s moral leader, Adem Jashari. In the three-day siege, fifty-six members of the extended family are killed, together with Adem Jashari, his brother Hamëz and his father Shaban. The massacre sparks international outrage. It also triggers unprecedented support for the KLA. Within a short time, 10,000 Kosovar Albanians volunteer to join the guerrilla army. On 11 May, the LKÇK signs an agreement with the KLA, merging its military capacity under the command structure of the KLA’s General HQ. Towards the end of the year, the KLA create their Political Directorate, which is tasked to act as its political wing and interlocutor with international mediators and media. By October, more than 1,500 Kosovar Albanians are killed, and more than 300,000 are displaced, raising fears of a pending humanitarian catastrophe. The American envoy Holbrooke mediates a ceasefire between the KLA and the Serbian forces, which proves to be short-lived. However, it paves the way for the deployment of the OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) in Kosovo.
- 1999** On 15 January, the Serb forces retaliate and kill 45 civilians in the village of Reçak. The KVM Ambassador condemns the operation strongly, calling it a massacre on civilians. Between 6 and 23 February, negotiations on the “Interim Agreement for Peace and Self-Government in Kosovo” between the Kosovar Albanian and Serbian sides are held in Rambouillet, France. The talks are sponsored by the Contact Group, comprised of the US, UK, France, Germany, Italy and Russia. From 15 to 16 March, the peace negotiations recommence in Paris. The Kosovar Albanian delegation signs the peace document, whilst the Serbian side refuses to sign. On 24 March, the NATO Alliance launches a bombing campaign against Serbia, to stop the escalating humanitarian catastrophe in Kosovo. The campaign lasts 78 days.

On 9 June in Kumanovo, Macedonia, NATO and Serbia/FRY sign a Military Technical Agreement, which sets the term for the latter's immediate withdrawal from Kosovo.

On 10 June the UN Security Council pass Resolution 1244, providing the legal framework for the establishment of UNMIK and KFOR in Kosovo.

On 12 June, NATO troops begin entering Kosovo from the south, as Serbian/FRY forces leave northwards to Serbia.

By this time, around 12,000 Kosovar Albanians are killed; around 3,500 are unaccounted for; 120,000 homes are burnt. Almost 900,000 Albanians are forced to flee Kosovo, and in addition hundreds of thousands are internally displaced. Upon NATO's entry into Kosovo, they begin their swift return home.

On 20 June, KFOR and the KLA sign the Undertaking of Demilitarisation and Transformation by the UÇK. The KLA is expected to complete this process within 90 days. This target is accomplished successfully.

On 20 September, UNMIK promulgates Regulation 1999/8 on the Establishment of the Kosovo Protection Corps. Out of over 20,000 KLA members, around 5,000 are recruited to the KPC, and a similar number to the KPS. The rest of them are gradually integrated into private security companies, politics etc.

Two political parties emerge from the "war wing": the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) and the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK).

- 2005** The UN Secretary-General appoints Martti Ahtisaari as his Special Envoy, charged to lead negotiations between Prishtina and Belgrade on Kosovo's future political status. Negotiations are held in Vienna during 2006 and 2007.
- 2007** In March, Ahtisaari submits his Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement to the UN Secretary-General. The Proposal recommends independence for Kosovo, and the UN Secretary-General endorses it.
- 2008** On 17 February, Kosovo is proclaimed an independent country by its elected leaders.
- 2009** In January, the KPC is dissolved and the KSF is established.
- 2010** On 22 July, the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion on the legality of Kosovo's declaration of independence is clear-cut: the declaration of independence of Kosovo did not violate international law.

## Annex III: Map of Kosovo



Source: International Crisis Group (19 May 2010). *The Rule of Law in Independent Kosovo*. Pristina / Brussels. Europe Report No. 204.

## About the Author

Armend R. Bekaj has been cooperating with the Berghof Conflict Research project “From War to Politics: Non-State Armed Groups and Security Transition Processes” since 2009. He is currently working for a donor institute supporting civil society organisations in Kosovo. From 2007-9, he worked as a political advisor for the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo on matters pertaining to parliamentary oversight on security. In this capacity, he contributed to drawing up the security-related legal framework, and cooperated with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and international organisations based in Kosovo. For several years he also worked in the UK, in the civil society sector and humanitarian assistance area. He holds a masters’ degree in Conflict Resolution from the University of Bradford.