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The DDR in Kosovo: collision and collusion among international administrators and combatants

Nathalie Duclos

Introduction

Since the 1990s, contemporary post-conflict situations have inspired an abundant literature on the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants (DDR). The grey literature is almost exclusively top-down, more or less completely disregarding the role of receiving societies. Rather than examine Western interventionism from above, I prefer to look at how it is integrated into the history of the targeted society and to sociologically

approach interventionism in dialectic terms.[1] It supposes to engage in empirical approach.[2] In this connection, recent studies have emphasised the capacity of local actors as agents faced with Western intervention and drawn attention to the hybridisation that results from liberal peace.[3] This issue of resistance is at the heart of recent 'non-linear' approaches and deserves particular attention.[4] Indeed, once implementation has begun in the field, it is necessary to focus on the transactions between 'promoters of peace policies' and the populations targeted by these policies. The 'strategic interactions'[5] of these two groups should be analysed to show to the degree to which international action is interpreted, appropriated and/or rejected by recipients – that is, the degree to which the latter perceive it in terms of opportunities to promote their own agendas or, more generally, as a sort of gamble entailing the use of strategies of influence and orientation that result in adaptations of peace policies. The ex-combatants considered here resisted international action as it was conceived in diplomatic circles. They did not, however, necessarily reject the international policy offer wholesale, accepting those portions of it that reflected their own 'interests, identities and projects'.[6] The result was a hybrid policy rooted in 'local' historicity and the actors' imagination.

This, however, is not evidence of a fundamental antimony between local and international actors. Indeed, as we shall see, the latter actually depend on the former in the same way that 'colonial power […] could only govern local societies efficiently thanks to the mediation of native helpers whose prestige and power were thus enhanced.'[7] International and local actors thus find themselves in a relationship of interdependence, with the former needing local allies to legitimate their action and the latter attempting to transform 'their dependence on outside forces into an advantage in local conflicts'.[8] Even in Kosovo, a peace mission characterised by very broad prerogatives, an 'alliance' was established between the UN administrators and combatant leaders who had been called upon to act as intermediaries.[9] The latter, however, were not just any local actors. They were 'secant' actors: on the one hand, they were sufficiently 'western' to pass muster as intermediaries for the UN representatives; on the other, they possessed 'local' legitimacy in the recipient society, which lent credibility to the options they were defending. Likewise, in order to receive credit for showing a 'sense of responsibility' – a supposedly indispensable trait among intermediaries – these actors had to display a propensity for compromise permitting international representatives to save face, even if only at the cost of a post-conflict policy that deviated from its initial objectives. On the UN side, the only representatives liable to accept such an arrangement were those

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[1] See Berit Bliesemann de Guevara, ed., *State Building and State Formation: The Political Sociology of Intervention* (London: Routledge, 2012).

[2] This article is based on frequent research trips to Kosovo since 2001 and on a variety of first-hand sources: IOM archives as well as interviews with international administrators and ex-combatants – soldiers and commanders. Thirty-nine interviews have been carried out in 2009 and 2010 with foot soldiers, particularly in Drenica, historical bastion of the armed movement.

[3] Roger Mc Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance: Hybrid Forms of Peace* (New York: Palgrave, 2011); Oliver Richmond and Audra Mitchell, eds., *Hybrid Forms of Peace: From Everyday Agency to Post-liberalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012).

[4] David Chandler, 'Peacebuilding and the Politics of Non-linearity: Rethinking "Hidden" Agency and "Resistance"', *Peacebuilding* 1, no. 1 (2013): 29.

[5] Michael Barnett and Christoph Zürcher, 'The Peacebuilder's Contract: How External Statebuilding Reinforces Weak Stateshood', in *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding*: *Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations*, eds. Roland Paris and Timothy Sisk (London: Routledge, 2009): 24 sq.

[6] Ole J. Sending, 'The effects of Peacebuilding: Sovereignty, Patronage and Power', in *A Liberal Peace?* eds. Susanna Campbell et al. (London: Zed Books, 2011): 64.

[7] According to the analysis of Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley* (London: James Currey, 1992), presented by Romain Bertrand, 'Politiques du moment colonial', *Questions de recherche* 26 (Octobrer 2008): 11.

[8] Jean-François Bayart, 'Africa in the World: A History of Extraversion', *African Affairs* 99, no. 395 (2000): 217 sq.

[9] See also Alex Veit, 'The Paradox of Intermediary Rule', in *State Building State Formation*, ed. Bliesemann de Guevara: 41.

prepared to deviate from the mission of fully implementing the liberal policy that had been defined for them.[10] For it was assumed that any agreement reached with ex-combatants would at least temporarily abandon the (liberal) objective of justice and state-building and prioritise issues of security and post-conflict stabilisation.[11]

International policies should therefore be understood as co-productions. This has consequences for the social and/or political rearrangement of post-war societies: the negotiations between the UN administrators and 'intermediate agents' contribute to rearranging the positions of local actors and redistributing their symbolic and material resources.[12] By virtue of the power relations governing their adoption, DDR policies contribute to legitimizing and even promoting certain actors in post-war societies (thanks to their new status as intermediaries) and at the same time weaken other social or political groups.

This article addresses the post-conflict situation in Kosovo and, in particular, the implementation of the UN Security Resolution 1244, which was adopted on 10 June 1999. This resolution was adopted the day after Belgrade accepted the ceasefire agreement that had been drafted in the wake of the bombing campaign launched by NATO on 24 March 1999. The resolution provided for the deployment of KFOR, a military force under NATO command, upon the retreat of Serbian troops and the establishment of a civil administration tasked with securing 'substantial autonomy', for the 'province of Kosovo' (i.e. broad administrative autonomy in the framework of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia). The NATO intervention put an end to the armed conflict that had since 1998 opposed the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA/UÇK) and Serbian forces. As we shall see, it was only after intense negotiations that a demilitarisation agreement was reached with the UÇK. Far from being a unilateral decision on the part of the international administration, DDR policy was a matter of long, hard bargaining and resulted in a totally unexpected outcome: the creation of the KPC (Kosovo Protection Corps), an organisation designed to 'recycle' former combatants. This co-production of DDR policy greatly contributed to political rearrangement in Kosovo.

UÇK resistance to demilitarisation and the advent of a hybrid organisation, the KPC

When KFOR troops took possession of Kosovo in June 1999, the aim was to dismantle the UÇK. Article 9 of resolution 1244 stipulated a pure and simple demilitarisation of the UÇK. The arrival of international actors, however, was accompanied by a few surprises. The soldiers of KFOR, who were the first to enter Kosovo after the departure of Serbian troops, did not find the 'virgin territory' they were expecting but rather a space already conquered by those who had been their 'partners' during the NATO intervention – the combatants of the UÇK. This initial situation was the source of the 'collision-collusion'[13] dynamic that was soon to be established.

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[10] Because of internal disparities within the international staff, local actors can take advantage of the situation of 'conflictual heterogeneity'.

[11] On the contradiction between these two objectives, see Alpaslan Özerdem, *Post-War Recovery: DDR* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009): 201 sq.

[12] For an analysis in this sense, see Lee Jones, 'Statebuilding versus Stateformation in East Timor', in *State Building State Formation*, ed. Bliesemann de Guevara: sq.

[13] Xavier Bougarel, 'Dayton dix ans après: Le leurre des bilans?' *Critique internationale* 29 (December 2005): 13.

By means of this 'demonstration of force' (or at least this strategy intended to underscore its presence on the ground), the UÇK meant to show that it was not to be disregarded.[14] The aim was to recoup a place on the international agenda in a context in which the course of events tended to exclude them. The strategy deployed by the UÇK combatants[15] can therefore be understood in relation to the Western 'dismantlement' approach: what they wanted was to convince their NATO interlocutors that their demands did not pose a threat to the peacemaking process and that they were not to be seen as simple spoilers. One of the main defenders of this line of action was Agim Ceku, military commander of the UÇK, who rapidly became a major intermediary for NATO delegates, in which capacity he enjoyed the backing of the main political leader of the UÇK, Hachim Thaçi. Contacted by members of NATO, it was in these terms that Ceku presented the discrepancy between the 'Western' post-war vision and his own:

> A group of NATO Officers came to my headquarters (…) and they asked me to inform Kosovo Albanian armed groups that (…) every uniformed man had to give up all arms. (…) I was very disappointed by such an approach. That was a critical moment. I said: 'I don't accept it. (…). We need to negotiate (…) we are not groups, gangs, we are an organised army.' And then we started a negotiation. We wanted demilitarisation, yes, but also transformation (…) 'We need to have a force to win the peace (…) former combatants cannot just disappear and go home.' (…) And we came up with undertaking for demilitarisation *and* transformation of UÇK after a week of negotiation.[16]

Faced with this rather unexpected resistance on the part of UÇK combatants, international administrators were forced to reconsider their basic premise. In particular, the prospect of demilitarising the UÇK soon appeared too far from the reality on the ground, obviously under the control of its combatants. This approach seemed at once unrealistic and (more than a little paradoxically) a potential cause of new trouble. As a member of the UNMIK (United Nations Mission in Kosovo) staff explained:

> To be honest, when we arrived, I'm not certain we were aware of the extent to which the security issue was absolutely central. (…) We realised there was a problem, that of the transformation of former combatants. (…) People who have fought, especially when they believe they have liberated their country, want political compensation for it. (…) So naturally they had constituted a government (…) at the time with 80% of the population behind them (…) So we had two options. Either we said: 'We have international legality, the presence of an armed UÇK in the streets is unacceptable,' and we engage in direct confrontation with them. Second option: we'll compromise and make a political deal. The first option was doubtless the legal one but it was totally unrealizable. (…) No country was ready to fight the UÇK after having fought against the Serbs. No one![17]

Thanks to the presence of armed combatants on the ground, UÇK leaders were able to put their organisation – which had been completely neglected in discussions of the matter – on

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[14]It is impossible to say whether this presence, which was sufficiently large to prompt numerous reactions and receive wide press coverage, was the result of a spontaneous movement on the part of combatants no longer relegated to the surrounding mountains following the withdrawal of the Serbian army or rather of a command given by UÇK leaders hoping to influence the future course of events. In any case, it was an important argument in negotiations with KFOR.

[15]It goes without saying (but it is always better to be clear) that not everyone agreed with this line of action. As I will show below, the political projects of some combatants in the immediate aftermath of the war were significantly more radical and less amenable to compromise with international administrators and their attempts to promote new equilibriums in the region. The strategy that I present here, resulting in the creation of the KPC, won out at the end of the negotiations engaged with international actors. It is this strategy that ultimately won the support of most former combatants.

[16]Interview with Agim Ceku, military chief of the UÇK, Pristina, July 5, 2010.

[17]Interview with Eric Chevallier, political advisor to Bernard Kouchner, head of UNMIK from 1999 to 2001; Paris, September 3, 2004.

the West's agenda. But the UÇK did not merely impose itself as a partner in negotiations. It also obtained official recognition in a text signed by the main actors in the Kosovo mission – General Mike Jackson on behalf of the military party (KFOR) and Special Representative of the Secretary General Bernard Kouchner on behalf of the civilian party (UNMIK). This took place in the framework of the 'Undertaking of demilitarisation and transformation by the UÇK', which was signed on 20 June[18] and became the point of departure for the DDR co-production dynamic in Kosovo. It consisted of a reciprocal commitment of 'demilitarisation for recognition' (i.e. of the UÇK). The result ran contrary to the initial aim: instead of dismantling the UÇK, the agreement lent it a form of institutionalisation.

The first articles of the 'Undertaking' contain the guerrillas' consent to the international civilian and military presence. This represented a success for international administrators, who saw it as a guarantee of the effectiveness of their deployment. In exchange, however – and, here, the international concession was enormous – article 25 of the agreement provided that:

> The international community should take due and full account of the contribution of the UÇK during the Kosovo crisis and accordingly give due consideration to:
>
> a. (…) it is committed to propose individual current members to participate in the administration and police forces of Kosovo (…)
>
> b. The formation of an Army in Kosovo on the lines of the US National Guard.

This second element is the key point of the agreement since it was the condition sine qua non were the Kosovo side to sign off on the accord. In the terms of the agreement, the UÇK appears like a Sphinx reborn from the ashes for the 'Undertaking' at once confirms that it will be stripped of its main military attribute via demilitarisation and reconstituted as an army (!). For the West, this was indeed a major concession – all the more so given that Resolution 1244 indicates that Kosovo should be maintained under Yugoslav sovereignty. This in fact explains why the KPC ultimately became no more than a civil security force.

This first agreement was of crucial importance for DDR policy in Kosovo as it ushered in a phase of close negotiation between representatives of the UÇK, KFOR and UNMIK. In September 1999, these negotiations resulted in a second agreement outlining the contours of a new institution that had been demanded by former combatants, the KPC (Kosovo Protection Corps). In the three months of bargaining that followed the 'Undertaking', DDR policy was thus co-produced with UÇK leaders.

The co-production of DDR policy

The KPC was the main element of DDR co-production policy. But bargaining was not limited to the KPC; the influence of UÇK leaders was also felt when it came to establishing a new local police force (Kosovo Police Service).

Constitution of the Kosovo Protection Corps

The many aspects that make up the KPC attest to the fact that the rationale of compromise presided over its creation – compromise between the West's determination to treat

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[18]See: www.nato.int/kosovo/docu/a990620a.htm

the KPC as a civilian organisation and guerrilla leaders' desire for it to pick up where the UÇK left off, retaining as far as possible its military attributes following what was no more than a 'surface demilitarisation'.[19] The KPC was defined as a 'civilian emergency service agency' with the following tasks: 'Provide disaster response services; Perform search and rescue (…)'.[20] While unequivocally described as a civilian organisation operating under the authority of the special representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations, on an everyday basis the KPC was to be supervised by KFOR. Here, we encounter an initial ambiguity resulting from the insistence of the Kosovo party and its strong attachment to military management. And there were many more besides for, apart from its stated missions, all of the KPC's attributes tended to be military in nature. On this point, UÇK leaders systematically defended measures that increased the KPC's standing as a quasi-army. First and foremost among these concerned the martial appearance of KPC troops, who closely resembled UÇK troops after winning permission to continue wearing the uniform. At the organisational level, the KPC is a replica of the UÇK; like the UÇK, it is divided into six zones, each of which is overseen by the former commanders of UÇK zones.[21] Likewise, overall command of the force was entrusted to Agim Ceku, the former UÇK military chief.

The institution's name was also a salient issue, Kosovar negotiators again showing their attachment to 'military display'. International actors proposed naming the organisation Kosovo Corps but in the end the Kosovo Protection Corps was chosen under heavy pressure from the Albanian party. The name had symbolic value for them. In Albanian, the name of the organisation is *Trupat Mbrojtëse të Kosovës* (TMK). 'Mbrojtje' can mean both 'protection' and 'defense' – the 'M' of the organisation's acronym thus seems to bestow upon it an attribute of sovereignty. The KPC, in other words, was used by UÇK leaders to further their project of independence.

The KPC recruitment mechanism was largely designed by international actors to allow them to 'save face', as if the selection were fully taking place under their control.[22] In reality, however, recruitment remained in the hands of the UÇK leadership. Indeed, the 56 highest-ranking UÇK leaders were not even obliged to formally apply to the new force.[23] And, while the selection of all other recruits was entrusted to the KFOR, it took place in close consultation with UÇK commanders, who heavily influenced the 'choice' of KFOR soldiers.[24] This is confirmed by examining the composition of the KPC. Access to the KPC was formally opened to all Kosovo citizens. In fact, however, recruitment almost exclusively took place among ex-combatants. It seems to have been an appealing prospect: with 4552 positions open (i.e. not reserved for minorities), 15,269 ex-combatants applied, of whom 4446 were ultimately recruited.[25] Fully 97.67% of the new force's members, in other words, were drawn from the ranks of the UÇK. UÇK commanders were thus quite successful at influencing KFOR's final selection and at provoking concrete mechanisms of cooperation

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[19] Isabel Ströhle, 'The Politics of Reintegration and War Commemoration: The Case of the KLA', *Südosteuropa* 58 (2010): 500.
[20] Regulation no. 1999/8, September 20, 1999.
[21] International Crisis Group, *What Happened to the KLA?* Report 88 (3 March 2000): 6 sq.
[22] As is evident by the care taken by IOM reports writers to show the seriousness of the selection and the control over the procedure by international organisations, particularly underscoring its very selective character (84% of candidacies were rejected). ICRS Second Quarter Report (November 1999–January 2000): 14.
[23] Andreas Heinemann-Grüder and Wolf-Christian Paes, *Wag the Dog: The Mobilisation and Demobilisation of the KLA* (Bonn: BICC, 2001): 22.
[24] This contribution on the part of ex-combatant leaders is obviously never mentioned in the official reports!
[25] IOM, *Thirty months in Kosovo*, 2002, 88.

in the making. The percentage of ex-combatants in the KPC is confirmation of the extent to which it was in institutional continuity with the UÇK.

Further, more detailed analysis of the composition of the KPC shows that its structure preserves former chains of command and contributes to the consolidation of allegiances.[26] If we examine the distribution of KPC members by reference to organisational ranks, it is clear that, the greater one's seniority in the UÇK, the more likely one was to be given a high-ranking position in the new force. Recruitment and internal promotion in the KPC were thus ultimately a type of reward for militant/military engagement. This is confirmed by examining the various hierarchical strata of the KPC from the point of view of average seniority in the UÇK. Among members of the supreme command, a large percentage (33%) joined the UÇK before 1998. By contrast, barely 2% of the ex-combatants recorded by the IOM fall into that category. Among mid-level commanders, only 9.3% were late-comers to the UÇK – that is, joined in 1999 – as compared with 38.68% of all ex-combatants.[27] The first cohort of UÇK combatants was thus disproportionately represented among members of the KPC.

From this, one can conclude that KFOR military staff had little influence over the selection process. Doubtless, they lacked the means for screening applications. Had KFOR effectively intervened, it would certainly have prevented UÇK commanders from becoming involved in the DDR and pacification process and worked against the aim that had in fact been assigned to the KPC: to become an instrument of social control. If international actors ultimately accepted the KPC, it was because they saw it as contributing to pacification in the short term. Once they grasped that the most extreme members of the UÇK threatened to destabilise the peace mission, international administrators decided it was preferable to: (1) take advantage of the situation to observe those considered the most extremist (since they were present in the KPC under international supervision)[28]; and (2) avoid provoking mobilisation among the most radical ex-combatants by excluding them from the KPC and/or exercising thorough oversight over it. This served to strengthen the alliance with some UÇK leaders.

Although hardly any ex-combatants initially supported the demilitarisation proposed by NATO's leadership, the fact that some UÇK leaders supported the amended process (which included provision for the creation of the KPC) played an essential role in winning acceptance for the peace mission and securing Kosovo. By co-opting some UÇK leaders, the creation of the KPC allowed international actors to delegate some responsibility for the peace process since these leaders would be assigned the job of exercising social control over ex-combatants.

Recycling ex-combatants in the police

The compromise reached between international civil and military administrators and UÇK leaders also rested on integrating a certain number of ex-combatants into the new police, the KPS. As we have seen, this possibility was stipulated by the 'Undertaking'. It remained to

[26] Not that this was a factor that impeded DDR policy, contrary to the opinion of J. Spear, 'Disarmament and Demobilisation', in *Ending Civil Wars*, eds. Stephen Stedman et al. (USA, GB: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002).

[27] IOM, *Thirty months in Kosovo*, 98–9; 'Socio-economic and demographic profiles of former KLA combatants registered by IOM', 21 January 2000, Unpublished document, Appendix.

[28] The risk of an underground Kosovar organisation was taken very seriously by international actors, who were aware that, in the late 1980s, an analogous organisation had been created.

be seen, however, how this would be done. As with the KPC, the conditions for joining the force were the subject of intense negotiations between recognised leaders of the UÇK and international administrators, once again contributing to the DDR co-production process. The negotiations mainly concerned the number of ex-combatants who would be accepted in the KPS and the manner of their recruitment:

- (UÇK leaders) had told us there were 20,000 (…) Thaçi heavily pressured (us) to integrate former UÇKs into the KPS (…)
- Question: (Thaçi) had fixed a percentage?
- If I remember rightly, he first asked to integrate 2000 then 1000 since 2000 didn't work. (…) He wanted 50% so as to hold the majority. (…) We imposed an individual entry process (contrary to the KPC). (…) What was most important was to avoid being given a list of people by Thaçi, that's what we didn't want. (…) That was the toughest stumbling block (in negotiations). It was extremely difficult to make them accept it.[29]

Finally, an agreement was reached to set the proportion at 40%, given its initial aims, a concession on the part of the UÇK. However, the agreement allowed the UÇK a significant presence in the police force – a quite advantageous result that should once again be put in the context of the post-war prominence of the security issue. UÇK leaders were able to exploit the risk of dissatisfaction among ex-combatants and further on, of destabilisation, if there weren't enough opportunities for reintegration. The KPC had itself of course absorbed nearly 5000 ex-combatants. Yet, according to the IOM, the UÇK had more than 25,000 members. The future of the remaining four-fifths of its members was thus very much up in the air. Betting on the real fear of being outnumbered by hardliners, UÇK leaders were here playing a sly game aimed at consolidating their post-war position. There can be no doubt that they had to 'reward' those who had been loyal to them, even if it was only for clientelist reasons relating to the prolongation of their leadership.

Yet, at the political level – which it was from then on – emphasising the threat of dissatisfaction and excess enhanced their bargaining power and allowed them to obtain more concessions. This task was made all the easier by the fact that their foreign interlocutors were not very familiar with the terrain, for it is particularly difficult to gauge the real scale of a threat when one is an outsider.[30] Ultimately, the argument emphasising the risks of destabilising the peace process won the day and international administrators came to see the integration of ex-combatants into the KPS – like their integration into the KPC – as a tool of social control:

> 'These 40% (…) if they are former mercenaries or bloodthirsty warriors (…) if they're on the inside they're under control.' 'We bought social peace (…) Better to have them inside than outside (…) That's part of acceptable and accepted risk.'[31]

Though they were obliged to make major concessions, international administrators were not entirely without resources in constructing the power relationship with UÇK leaders. They attempted to reduce the latter's control over the recruitment process by rejecting the principle of pre-selection, according to which UÇK leaders would have been allowed to

[29]Interview with Eric Chevallier, political advisor to Bernard Kouchner, head of UNMIK from 1999 to 2001; Paris, September 3, 2004.
[30]And moreover, rarely knowing local languages.
[31]Interviews with the head of the human resources service, UNMIK Police; Pristina, October 1, 2001 and July 16, 2002. In fact, international policemen launched investigations into local policemen whose integrity had been called into question.

certify the service records of ex-combatants and thereby control access to the police force by choosing which of them would be recruited. The UN administrators instead imposed an 'undifferentiated' selection process in which ex-combatants would apply in the same way as any other candidate. In this way, international policemen were able to choose those to be recruited from the population of ex-combatants. Having effectively given up any say over recruitment in the KPC, they thus sought to keep a hand on the helm by rejecting certain demands on the part of the UÇK leadership. In the case of the police – a civilian institution, in contrast to the KPC, which everyone recognised as a future army – it was possible to more effectively resist the pressures of UÇK leaders, particularly by insisting upon the non-military character of the new institution.

The above analysis has shown that little is to be gained from considering DDR policies from a strictly procedural angle or, for that matter, simply on the basis of results since such approaches neglect the 'strategic interactions' that developed between international personnel and local actors and formed the basis for the co-production of these policies. Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration are not merely technical matters; above all, they are political, a fact that favours the repositioning of existing forces in anticipation of post-war political competition. By virtue of their role in DDR policy, international administrators were able to significantly influence the redeployment of post-war resources, thereby influencing the political landscape of Kosovo.

Remodelling post-war political forces

In the immediate aftermath of the war, two main currents competed for legitimacy in Kosovo's political arena. On the one hand was Ibrahim Rugova, the leader of a non-violent movement in the late 1980s who had been secretly elected President of Kosovo in 1992. On the other hand were the leaders of the UÇK, in particular Hashim Thaçi, who took over as head of a government that originated in the armed movement of 1999. Thaçi's aim was of course to replace the historic leadership of Rugova and his party, the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK). In the summer of 1999, with most of the LDK's leadership abroad and UÇK combatants occupying strategic positions, the latter's representatives latter clearly enjoyed the upper hand in this power struggle.[32]

The bargaining that took place between the UN mission administrators and UÇK leaders had an impact on internal power struggles among Kosovars. The effects of negotiations, however, cannot merely be reduced to a strengthened role for spoilers.[33]

Consecration of 'pragmatic' leaders in the armed movement

In 1999, the UÇK was far from being a monolithic entity; in fact, it was thoroughly composite in nature. By accepting the principle of disarmament (if not really the fact thereof), Thaçi and Ceku defended what seemed to international actors a rather moderate line. Compared with certain ex-combatants on the fringes, whose calls for immediate independence or the unification of all territories peopled by Albanians challenged the sacred principle of the inviolability of borders, their stance did not threaten to upset the regional balance of power. Keenly aware of the distinction between these groups, international administrators hoped

[32] Rugova was in Rome, his Prime Minister, Bujar Bukhosi, in Germany.

[33] A claim defended by Jens Narten, 'The Case of Postwar Kosovo', in *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding*, ed. Paris and Sisk, 270 sq.

to use the 'undertaking' – which in truth, sealed an alliance between themselves and certain combatant leaders – as a way to marginalise extremist partisans of a 'Greater Albania' while legitimising those who seemed to them the most pragmatic – because they accommodated themselves to the power relations of the international scene – and thus the most likely to compromise with them.

In June 1999, the cessation of combats and along with it, the laying down of arms, were a concession that did not seem acceptable to the whole of the UÇK. For most rank and file combatants, the deployment of a UN mission did not necessarily entail the demilitarisation of the UÇK and a large majority of them hoped their organisation would be transformed into a sovereign army. Almost all of those interviewed expressed regret about demilitarisation, even if many subsequently accepted it on the grounds that, in point of fact, the KPC was little more than a prolongation of the UÇK and would almost certainly become the future army of the territory. As the interviews reveal, the order from UÇK leaders to lay down arms was to prove crucial, underscoring their ability to exercise social control. As one combatant put it, 'I didn't agree but the commanders told us to give up our arms, so I did'.[34]

But more radical and less pragmatic positions were also expressed. For some elements of the UÇK, notably those drawn from the National Movement for the Liberation of Kosovo (LKCK), which had significantly contributed to the armed movement, 'victory' over Serbian troops and their withdrawal from Kosovo was not the culmination of the struggle. Rather, it should have been pursued until all territories with large Albanian populations were united.[35] Indeed, upon enlisting with the UÇK, many combatants had taken an oath to this effect: raising their right hand, fist clenched, they had kneeled before the 'national' flag and pledged themselves to 'driving away the Serbs'.[36] This pledge was understood to apply, not just to Kosovo, but also to Southern Serbia and Northern Macedonia. From the perspective of this irredentist vision of armed struggle, disarmament was thus something of a betrayal.

In the absence of statistical data regarding former combatants, it is impossible to precisely measure the intensity and extent of support for a 'Greater Albania'. However, given the frequency with which those interviewed denounced the demilitarisation – which at the very least indicated a desire for immediate independence and the maintenance of an army in 'liberated' Kosovo – it can be supposed that the UÇK leaders who defended it before their troops were taking a risk. Indeed, such was the opposition to demilitarisation that KFOR members feared a split within the UÇK, the most extreme members of which seemed ready to secretly pursue their action in parallel. Because of this, the recognised leaders of the UÇK were able to point to the danger of destabilisation and win their case with the KPC.

By settling on this in-principle agreement with international administrators, UÇK leaders were confirmed as priority interlocutors. This enhanced their legitimacy in the eyes of a large number of combatants and strengthened their claims to post-war political leadership. This was doubtless the gamble taken by UÇK leaders such as Ramush Haradinaj, who had initially expressed reluctance with regards to demilitarisation. For it allowed them to take a hand in the establishment of new political parties. Of these, two in particular deserve mention: the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) and the Kosovo Alliance (AAK). Respectively, headed by Thaçi and Haradinaj, in the years to come these parties were to assume a leading role in

[34] Interview with an ex-combatant from Drenica, member of the KPC. Pristina, April 3, 2009.

[35] Interview with the former President of the LKCK, Pristina, April 2, 2009.

[36] Interview with an ex-commander, former KPC, now retired, Drenica, June 29, 2009. He admitted his disappointment with the decision to demilitarise, noting that he had 'taken an oath not to lay down arms until Albania was reunified'.

post-war political life, rivalling to Rugova's historic LDK.[37] It was also a gamble for the UN administrators, who hoped that the armed movement would find a peaceful prolongation in the political struggle.[38]

UNMIK administrators were widely reproached for having favoured the most radical Kosovar leaders. This criticism usually took the form of denouncing the alliance between the Americans and the UÇK's political leader, H. Thaçi. However, well founded it may be, this criticism lacks nuance. By emphasising the political support given the ex-combatants who promoted the creation of the KPC, it neglects the fact that the ex-combatants who were promoted were those most inclined to compromise as well as the fact that, during the negotiations, international administrators attempted to again involve Ibrahim Rugova. Seen as the movement's most moderate political figure, Rugova had been sidelined by the military turn events had taken.

Putting 'non-violent' resistance leader Ibrahim Rugova back in the saddle

International administrators took advantage of internal divisions in the Kosovar political arena to resist some of the demands made by local interlocutors associated with the armed movement. In doing so, they sought to satisfy the claims of some unarmed actors who, partly as a result of the rising power of the armed movement, had been marginalised by the wartime context. This was the case in negotiations regarding the number of ex-combatants to be recruited by the KPS, during which international actors defended the position of the 'non- violent' leader who '(…) opposed (UÇK demands). He hadn't been able to do it for the KPC because the UÇK was very popular, but (for) the police (…) it was no longer possible. (…) There, we said "No!"'.[39]

The issue of place to be accorded ex-combatants in the KPS can therefore be understood in relation to the struggle for influence between Kosovo's two main political currents – a struggle in which international administrators had a say thanks to their role as arbitrators. Ensuring that one's partisans were heavily represented in the new force was obviously to score a point in the context of this internal rivalry. Rugova therefore insisted that the number of UÇK ex-combatants should not reach the symbolic threshold of half the new police; anything more than that would be tantamount to handing control of the new institution over to them. To counterbalance their influence, Rugova sought to increase the representation of his own partisans – namely, 'former policemen'[40] (i.e. the Kosovar Albanians who had held this job before being removed from their posts with the nationalist turn of the late 1980s). Most of them consisted of past supporters of Rugova's 'non-violent resistance' movement.

Question: Where did the idea come from for staffing the KPS on the basis of quotas? Quotas of former policemen …

E. Chevallier: It was Rugova's request. It was a generational thing, former policemen were closer to the LDK and they had experience. It would've been absurd not to take advantage of it. There were political and operational reasons. (…) There was

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[37]Since 1999, these three parties shared government power and successive prime ministers had almost always issued from their ranks.

[38]Bernard Kouchner, *Les guerriers de la paix* (Paris: Grasset, 2004): 160–1.

[39]Interview with Eric Chevallier, political advisor to Bernard Kouchner, head of UNMIK from 1999 to 2001; Paris, 3 September 2004.

[40]Before Milosevic became President of Serbia, the majority of the Kosovo police staff was Albanian. 90% of them were dismissed between 1990 and 1992. See Joël Hubrecht, *Kosovo: Etablir les faits* (Paris: Esprit, 2001): 26.

> debate over the former policemen because Thaçi saw clearly that Rugova was trying to get control over things again (…) the two big debates were around former combatants/former policemen, because it was a Thaçi/Rugova debate (…).[41]

In the end, the decision was taken to recruit approximately one quarter of the new police force from the ranks of former policemen. In this way, UNMIK administrators attempted to halt or at lease curb the decline of the movement embodied by Rugova and the LDK.

By granting certain demands and rejecting others, international administrators contributed to remodelling the post-war political landscape, allowing some parties to consolidate their positions while helping others remain viable. As demonstrated with the installation of the KPC and the concomitant 'dubbing' of certain UÇK leaders, international actors gave their blessing to the leadership of a Thaçi. But in the context of negotiations regarding the composition of the KPS, they also gave a leading role to Ibrahim Rugova, who had been considerably weakened by the rise of the armed movement and his absence from the country when the peace agreement was finalised and international troops moved in. In short, the actions taken by international actors were not neutral. Indeed, they contributed to the redeployment of post-war leadership resources, albeit in limited fashion given the strong leverage enjoyed by armed groups relying on the power of coercion.

Conclusion

The above analysis has illustrated how an approach based on strategic interactions between international actors and combatants in Kosovo led to the co-production dynamic of DDR policy. Rather than a top-down approach, it seems absolutely essential to closely pay heed to the transactions that take place when policy is implemented on the ground. Since the interests, agendas and representations of the two parties at times converged, at others diverged, negotiations alternated between confrontation and complicity. The fact that such transactions took place is clearly due to the interdependence of international actors and combatants. Whereas the former needed the support of intermediary agents to guarantee the stability of the peace mission, the latter sought to use these exchanges to capture the material and symbolic resources required to pursue their aims in the context of internal conflicts. Addressing these actors in sociological perspective also helps to break with approaches that tend to reify them. Only the most 'pragmatic' actors from either side took part in the dynamic of collusion – among international actors, those willing to deviate from the aim of liberal peace and prioritise security and, among their Kosovar interlocutors, those amenable to modifying their agenda to bring it into line with international power relations. DDR policies have ultimately a profound effect on the recipient societies: they contribute to decisively remodelling them via the symbolic and material resources that were distributed in the course of transactions between international actors and combatants as well as via the benefits of the DDR programme itself. DDR policies therefore promote certain groups and sideline others.

Since 1999, the KPC has played an essential role in maintaining the balance of the post-conflict arrangement in Kosovo. As a proto-army, the KPC has in the eyes of most Kosovars lent body and soul to the independence project. To believe the polls, the KPC

[41] Interview with Eric Chevallier, political advisor to Bernard Kouchner, head of UNMIK from 1999 to 2001; Paris, September 3, 2004.

has always been the most appreciated institution in Kosovo. For a time, however, the prolongation of the UN presence seemed to push back this perspective for independence, with the 2004 riots demonstrating the relative impatience of the population, especially among former combatants. In the report he issued following these riots, the UN's Special Envoy, Mr Ahtisaari, recommended both independence for Kosovo under international supervision and the transformation of the KPC into the KSF (Kosovo Security Force). These recommendations were acted upon in 2008 and 2009, respectively. Kosovo's newly independent government has subsequently created a Ministry of Security Forces. With this move, a defence architecture is slowly taking shape. The KSF's transformation into an army, at one time projected for 2013, has been pushed back, but nevertheless appears inevitable. As with the creation of the KPC in 1999, the prospect of a Kosovo Army surely remains a (paradoxical?) factor of stability.