

Serbia and Kosovo

Between Arms, Paramilitaries and
Discourse

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Issue overview

With a decade gone since the Kosovo declaration of independence, the situation in the Balkans is still not completely quiet. Countries of former Yugoslavia still struggle with legacy of war while attempting to join the European Union, some aiming also for the inclusion in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. Following this tenth anniversary of Kosovo declaration of independence, the current issue of Conflict Report focuses on parts of the aforementioned legacy in order to describe some aspects of the issues the region faces today.

The first article by Ivan Iliev explores the various fates of fighters in the paramilitary groups on both sides of the Kosovo-Serbia war. Alexander Ščerbak and Petra Melová address the question of disarmament of both societies. Finally, the paper by Jakub Kuchar and Kateřina Špalková scrutinizes the discourse created by Russia and the US after the declaration of independence until its tenth anniversary.

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Paramilitary Groups in the Balkans: Where Are They Now?

Ivan Iliev

Introduction

The heyday of paramilitary groups in Balkans can be dated back to the 1990s when nations of the crumbling Yugoslavia were slaughtering each other in ethnic conflicts. Many paramilitary groups operated during the Yugoslav Wars, especially in the regions of Serbia, Kosovo or Bosnia and Herzegovina. This paper works with two examples of paramilitary units, one from Kosovo and one from Serbia. In particular, the Kosovo Liberation Army, and the Arkan Tigers (Red Berets). These groups are examined based on their history and paths of their fighters after 1999, as they played a significant role during the Kosovo War. While these groups are considered freedom fighters in their states, the international community accused some of them of war crimes. The article examines and compares what happened with paramilitary groups from Kosovo and Serbia after the war, and tries to look at the paths of their members.

Context: Kosovo

KLA before and during the war

Origins of the KLA date back to the 1980s, when nationally oriented groups involved in the subversive political activities seeking the establishment of independent Kosovo were

forced to leave the country. Abroad, Albanian and Kosovar fugitives in Germany and Switzerland formed a movement supporting their dream of Kosovar freedom. In the 1990s, the end of the war in Bosnia and the consequent establishment of Bosnian autonomy fuelled the idea that Kosovar Muslims could promote their democracy by armed struggle.¹ The KLA did not commit severe attacks until 1995 when the Dayton Peace Agreement recognized Kosovo as an integral part of Serbia. As a consequence of the disappointment with the outcomes of the Dayton Agreement, the KLA launched a spate of attacks against Yugoslav police forces in Kosovo. At that time, the Kosovo Liberation Army refused to claim responsibility for the attacks publicly. This attitude changed in 1996 when members of the group stepped out from the shadow and openly linked themselves with the attacks against Serbian authorities.

KLA intensified attacks against Serbs between 1996-1998, resulting in overtaking Yugoslav administration in various Kosovo regions. Advancing KLA units started to expel non-Balkan population, Serbs mostly. In 1998, the US ambassador for the Balkans, Robert Gebard and UN Resolution 1160 recognized the KLA as a terrorist organization. In reaction, Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic allowed the Yugoslav

¹ Shay, S. 2007. *Islamic Terror and the Balkans*. The Interdisciplinary Center Herzilya Projects

army to launch an operation to eliminate KLA, and the conflict between Serbs and Kosovars started.² The war in Kosovo, which lasted from February 28, 1998, until June 11, 1999, was marked by ethnic cleansing and war crimes on both sides. The KLA was accused of war crimes such as massacres of civilians or ethnic cleansing.

After the war, the KLA was formally disarmed by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244. Notwithstanding the fact KLA stopped to exist officially in 1999, as international community required its complete dissolution, former guerrilla army's members became active in various areas of Kosovo life. The subsequent chapter explains the paths KLA members followed after the Kosovo War.

KLA after the war – transformed but active

Army, Police, and civil emergency services

UN Security Council Resolution 1244 required to establish a new police force, thus, the Kosovo Police Service (KPS) was founded in 1999, under the control of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo.³ The issue of KLA fighters' reintegration brought an opportunity to join this unit. Statistics claim that out of 7000 KPS members, 25% were also in KLA. However, the KPS was not the only unit that absorbed former KLA combatants.

After the disarmament of the KLA, NATO's plan was a complete dissolution of the

² In Bekaj, A.R. 2010., Moran, M. 2006., Shay, S. 2007., United Nations Security Council. 1998

³ United Nations Security Council. 1999. *Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) on the situation relating Kosovo*. United Nations Security Council

organization without a will to transform KLA into different security force. Although NATO did not count with any of the KLA's successors, the reality proved that a majority of Kosovars regarded the KLA as their national army. Therefore, the population expected the preservation of the KLA in the form of security forces. It was not only because Kosovo public wanted to have somebody to protect them. The KLA, even after the war, was perceived as liberators who symbolized independence of the country. Therefore, opposing the initial NATO plans, the KLA transformation begun in 1999, leading into an agreement called *Undertaking of Demilitarisation and Transformation by the UÇK*, which was signed on 20 June 1999.⁴ Later, the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC) was formed by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo by the Kosovo Regulation 1999/8.⁵ The KPC partially fulfilled Kosovar requirement to continue in the legacy of the KLA. Firstly, it was because the KPC was perceived as a civil organization, and not as a regular army. Secondly, the KPC differed from the KLA in one crucial feature. It was based on a multi-ethnic basis, as also Serbs and other minorities were allowed to join. On the other hand, the minorities were not eager to become members, as they still considered KPC a direct successor to the KLA. Some of the KPC tasks included disaster

⁴ Bekaj, A.R. 2010. *The KLA and the Kosovo War – From Intra-State Conflict to Independent Country*. Berghof Conflict Research. Berlin, Germany

⁵ United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. 1999. *Regulation NO.1999/8 - ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KOSOVO PROTECTION CORPS*. United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

response, demining assistance, search and rescue activities, rebuilding of infrastructure and reconstruction. After the war, 25000 former KLA members were registered. Out of this number, 20000 applied for the positions once the KPC was established. The flow of KLA former members into the KPC influenced the face of the Kosovo Protection Corps. Out of 3000 KPC active personnel, 70% were linked with the Kosovo Liberation Army. Besides, not only the former KLA fighters became officers in the newly formed civil emergency service, the structure was similar to the KLA operational framework.

The situation started to change in 2005 when the former Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari became Special Envoy for Kosovo. In 2007, Ahtisaari in his Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement suggested to guarantee independence for Kosovo, what became a reality in 2008. During the negotiations about Kosovo political status, the individual pressure of the international community was made on the dissolution of the Kosovo Protection Corps. One of the arguments was that KPC is a successor of the KLA which must be dissolved, and, that the organization has fulfilled all of its post-war tasks. Notably, the KPC received recognition from international experts for their contribution to the reconstruction of Kosovo. The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo insisted on the dissolution of the KPC and also demanded the formation of Kosovo Security Force. The mentioned Ahtisaari's Comprehensive Proposal inspired both requirements.

Immediately after the KPC ceased to exist in 2009, The Kosovo Security Force (KSF) became active as a lightly armed security force established to perform "security functions not appropriate for the police or

other law enforcement organisations."⁶ Despite the fact KSF is a multi-ethnic force, with new insignia and symbols, not resembling the ones KLA or KPC used, most of its members were recruited from the KPC. It was so for two reasons. Firstly, the KPC personnel possessed the skills and capacities that KSF needed to function as a protection force. Secondly, the former KPC and KLA members felt an obligation to continue in the protection of the country, based on the legacy of KLA. Due to the fact KLA and KPC played and still play an important role in Kosovo national identity, Kosovo regarded KPC dissolution a hard compromise on the way towards independence. Also, there prevailed public opinion that KPC's complete dissolution would mean a depreciation of KLA legacy. However, the time has shown that the Kosovo Security Force is a symbol of sacrifice, state protection and sovereignty in Kosovo today, the same as KLA and KPC used to be.⁷

Organised Crime

As mentioned, the former KLA fighters were allowed to participate in politics and security sector. Yet, the cases of those who chose the side of organised crime appeared too. After the transition of KLA, there were not enough positions for all the fighters.⁸ Therefore, some of them joined the ranks of organized crime. According to the 2010 Council of Europe Report, certain KLA leaders were

⁶ Bekaj, A.R. 2010. *The KLA and the Kosovo War – From Intra-State Conflict to Independent Country*. Berghof Conflict Research. p.35. Berlin, Germany

⁷ Bekaj, A.R. 2010. *The KLA and the Kosovo War – From Intra-State Conflict to Independent Country*. Berghof Conflict Research. Berlin, Germany

⁸ Stojarová, V. 2007. *Organized Crime in the Western Balkans*. HUMSEC Journal

involved in organ trafficking in the years after the war.⁹ The Report claims about killing Serbs and ethnic Albanians, followed by removal of their kidneys that were later sold. These crimes were allegedly committed by the KLA post-war branch called Drenica Group which is also linked with smuggling arms, drugs and human trafficking.¹⁰

Politics

The KLA members also followed a political way after the dissolution. Parties inherited from the KLA are leading ones in Kosovo today. The Kosovo Liberation Army branch established the Party for the Democratic Progress in Kosovo in 1999, later renamed to Democratic Party of Kosovo (DPK) in 2001. It is the third largest party in Kosovo today, and leading members are the former KLA commanders. The most notable member of the KLA, who decided to participate in politics, is Hashim Thaci, a former DPK leader, former Kosovo foreign minister, former prime minister and the current president. Thaci served as the Political Chief in the KLA. He remains the number one political figure in the state.¹¹ (Delauney, 2006). Another KLA member became a high ranked Kosovo politician - Kadri Veseli, a former commander of the KLA Intelligence Service, later transformed into the Kosovo Intelligence

⁹ Marty, D. 2010. *Inhuman treatment of people and illicit trafficking in human organs in Kosovo*. Council of Europe

¹⁰ BalkanInsight. 2008. *The Drenica Group*. BalkanInsight

¹¹ Delauney, G. 2016. *Kosovo's Hashim Thaci: From guerrilla leader to president*. BBC. Pristina, Kosovo

Service, is the leader of the Democratic Party of Kosovo, and a Chairman of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo. However, the Democratic Party of Kosovo does not remain the only political unit linked with the KLA. In 2000, a former KLA commander Ramush Haradinaj established the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK). Haradinaj faced accusations of war crimes, but was deemed innocent in 2012. In 2017 Kosovo parliamentary elections, Haradinaj's AAK was a part of the winning coalition (AAK, DPK, NISMA). Haradinaj was chosen to create a new government and became the prime minister of Kosovo.¹²

Context: Serbia

Tigers and Berets during the war

Many paramilitary groups formed in Serbia during the Yugoslav Wars. However, this research paper takes a closer look at the Arkan Tigers (Serb Volunteer Guard) and their successors Red Berets (Special Operations Unit).

The Serb Volunteer Guard, mostly known as the Arkan Tigers, was formed in 1990 from football hooligans of the Red Star Belgrade Football Club by Željko Ražnatović. Immediately after the war started in 1991, Arkan and his unit were deployed in Croatia to support the Yugoslav People's Army during the siege of Vukovar. Later, in 1992,

¹² Bytyci, F. 2017. *Former guerrilla coalition gets mandate to form Kosovo government*. Reuters./ National Democratic Institute. (2017). *Kosovo's June 2017 Parliamentary Elections*. National Democratic Institute

the group also joined the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In both countries, Arkan Tigers were feared for their cruelty. International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) accused Tigers under the Ražnatović's command from war crimes including ethnic cleansing, murder, expelling, rape, and torture. The victims were non-Serbian population (Albanian and Bosniak Muslims, Croats) in most of the cases. In 1996, Ražnatović's group was officially disbanded. Arkan became a celebrity and a national hero in Serbia, but most importantly, a mafia leader. Despite the fact ICTY indicted him for crimes mentioned above, he never stood trial in court. Željko Ražnatović alias Arkan was assassinated in 2000, in his hotel in Belgrade. The Arkan Tigers' paths were various. Many of them are dead by now, live ordinary life, some became active as politicians, while others continued in war and criminal activities.¹³

Tigers and Berets after the war

Red Berets

Arkan Tigers were not officially active after 1996, but its members found their place in the Special Operations Unit of the Yugoslav Army, also known as the Red Berets. The Unit existed since 1991 when two founding branches of the Red Berets operated in Croatia and Bosnia. In 1996, the Special Operations Unit (Red Berets) were officially founded and incorporated under the command of Yugoslavian Army. Red Berets could be considered a successor of the Arkan Tigers, as many Tigers joined the unit after 1996. Under the flag of Red Berets, former Tigers fought against the Kosovo

¹³ Dzidic, D. Ristic, M. Domanovic, M. Collaku, P. Milekic, S. 2014. *Arkan's Paramilitaries: Tigers Who Escaped Justice*. BalkanInsight. Zagreb, Croatia

Liberation Army during the Kosovo War (1998-1999). Even Red Berets committed war crimes in Kosovo. For example, in 1999, some wearing the Tiger insignia on uniforms, committed the Meja massacre, leaving 500 Kosovo Albanians dead. After the war in Kosovo, Red Berets were also linked to Ibar Highway assassination, where Special Operations Unit members killed four Serbian Renewal Movement's officials. Unlike the KLA, which was dissolved immediately after the war in 1999, Red Berets operated after the conflict. The belated crackdown by a government came in 2003 as a reaction to the murder of Prime Minister Zoran Dindič, in which some of the Berets were involved. Due to the fact many Red Berets members were former Arkan Tigers, this research paper explains what happened with members of both groups, once the war in Kosovo was over. In the years after 1999, some of the members joined police forces (after 2003), but exact numbers are not available. Others started careers in politics, or were allured by organized crime.¹⁴

Politics

Borislav Pelevič was an Arkan Tigers' commander during the war in Croatia. Later, Pelevič settled in politics, serving as the leader of the Party of Serbian Unity (political Party). What is more, he was a presidential candidate in the 2002 and 2004 elections in Serbia. Pelevič died in 2018.

Organised crime

Milorad Ulemek (Milorad Luković), a former Arkan Tigers' commander and Red Berets leader formed a mafia group called Zemun Clan. The group was involved in various activities (arms trafficking, drug smuggling,

¹⁴ Purvis, A. Anastasijevic, D. 2001. *The Bloody Red Berets*. Time. Belgrade, Serbia

murders etc.) and was considered a leading crime group in the Balkans. Ulemek was sentenced to forty years in prison for the organization of assassination of Serbian PM Zoran Dindic and assassination of former president Ivan Stambolič.¹⁵ The group became a workplace for other Arkan Tigers and Red Berets veterans. Also, Zvezdan Jovanović, Zemun Clan's member sentenced to 40 years in prison for Dindic's assassination, was a former member of the Arkan Tigers and Red Berets. In 2012, Luka Bojović, former Arkan Tiger and a boss of Zemun Clan was arrested in Valencia due to accusations of twenty murders in Serbia, Spain, and the Netherlands.¹⁶ Since 2012, other Clan members were arrested around Europe. It is a proof that Zemun Clan is still active, yet its power has weakened throughout the years.

Conclusions

All in all, it appears that areas of civil life where Tigers, Berets, and KLA settled in after the war are very similar. However, the members of these groups differ in the level of involvement in the security sector and politics.

Both groups were involved in the security sector of their countries after the war. In Serbia, Tigers and Berets found a place within Serbian police, but data on this topic is scarce. Exact numbers and units where Serbian paramilitaries operated

after the war are not available. Therefore, it is only possible to conclude that some fighters continued working in security forces of the country. In the case of Kosovo, a substantial amount of the KLA former fighters joined security forces after the war, and even today, they are an ordinary part of the Kosovo Security Force. The legacy of the KLA is present in Kosovar security units today. It shows how important the protection of the country for the former KLA fighters is, but also, that Kosovars consider continuation of the KLA legacy an essential part of national security.

Moreover, politics became another field where former paramilitaries established themselves. However, the KLA former members became more active in politics than their foes from Serbia. In Serbia, just a few former members joined politics. Today, Serbian politics is not occupied by a significant number of former fighters, nor by political parties established by them. This situation may be caused predominantly by two alternatives. The first possibility is that Arkan Tigers and Red Berets were not considered essential figures who should run politics. Secondly, it is also possible, that Serbian paramilitary fighters were attracted by other areas of civil life, thus did not join the political ranks. On the other hand, taking a look at a number of the KLA members active in politics, it is possible to conclude that Kosovo paramilitary fighters play a crucial role in running the country. 2017 parliamentary elections in Kosovo proved the KLA legacy continues in politics, as the former soldiers are

¹⁵ BBC NEWS. 2004. *Profile: Milorad Lukovic*. In BBC NEWS

¹⁶ Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project. 2012. *Serbian Fugitive Mafia Boss Arrested in Spain*. In Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project

considered pivotal figures of Kosovo statehood.

Last but not least, organized crime allured Serbian and Kosovar paramilitaries as well. Be it Zemun Clan or Drenica Group; both are comprised of former Serbian or Kosovo paramilitary fighters involved in illegal activities. Former members of both groups were and still are involved in various types of organized crime, be it organ smuggling, drug and gun smuggling, murders or human trafficking.

Disarmament in Serbia and Kosovo

Alexander Ščerbak & Petra Melová

Introduction

The batch of socio-economic problems, ethnic conflicts and strategic interests that emerge on the territories of the countries of post-Yugoslavian region has become a complex area for both illustration and analysis of actions of multiple global actors. This article aims to analyse the problem of armed violence on the territory of Kosovo and Serbia and its relations to the attempts at disarmament.

Armed violence and the post-Yugoslavian region

Question of armed violence in Kosovo mostly circulates within the frame of three main actors – NATO Kosovo Force, UN Mission in Kosovo, and Kosovo Police Service responsible for addressing weapon issues, which has since 2001 worked together to confiscate illegal SALWs.

Since the end of the Yugoslavian conflict, the international forces have attempted to solve the problem with illegal weapons and their distribution and have tried approaching the issue through multiple ‘search operations and measures’ (checkpoints, house searches and on-the-spot searches) and amnesties.

During the years 2001 and 2002 there were two amnesties, that were organized

jointly by KFOR and UNMIK. During these amnesties, people were able to hand back weapons anonymously. Authorities claimed that there were also more ‘causal findings’ which suggested that people do not trust the promise of anonymity but still, they were willing to hand the firearms over. Result of the weapon amnesties was a total submission of 777 firearms in 2001 and 1391 weapons in 2002.¹ In September 2003 another collection campaign was organised but its outcome turned out to be a failure since only 155 weapons were collected.² In addition, throughout these years there were seizure operations by KFOR which had been ongoing since the end of the conflict. All of the collected arms were disposed of and up to June 2003, 18 000 was the total amount of weapons destroyed.³

¹ Khakee, Anna, and Nicolas Florquin. 2003. *Kosovo And The Gun: A Baseline Assessment Of Small Arms And Light Weapons In Kosovo*. Online. United Nations, pp 22. <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/C-Special-reports/SAS-SR03-Kosovo.pdf>.

² Sokolova, Juliana et al. 2006. *Salw Survey Of Kosovo*. Online. SESAC, pp 9 <http://www.seesac.org/f/docs/SALW-Surveys/SALW-Survey-of-Kosovo-EN.pdf>.

³ Khakee, Anna, and Nicolas Florquin. 2003. *Kosovo And The Gun: A Baseline Assessment Of Small Arms And Light Weapons In Kosovo*. Online. United Nations, pp 24. <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/C-Special-reports/SAS-SR03-Kosovo.pdf>.

In June 2003, UNDP estimated that there were between 333 000 to 460 000 civilians in possession of weapons in Kosovo, where only about 20 000 of them were held legally.⁴ The authorities proceeded with the collection initiatives and Kosovo Police seized a total of 4 026 weapons between the years 2004 and 2005 with an average seizure rate of 167 weapons per month. However, it is impossible to come up with an overall number of SALW seizures during those years as KFOR did not make the data available for public. Although, the number is assumed as constantly rising, since KFOR has been regularly involved in seizure operations.⁵ Furthermore, 2006 survey found out that the number of firearms that were illegally owned was still above 300 000 pieces, which was critically acclaimed as showing the need for stronger arms control measures in Kosovo. Despite the ongoing collection initiatives and demilitarization SALW was still widely available in the country.

In the beginning of the weapon collection initiatives, arms control was handled by the UNMIK which in 2001 introduced a new regulation for controlling civilian possession of

weapons. The regulation prohibits civilians from owning weapons other than hunting and recreational weapons, except in special cases where a Weapons Authorisation Card must be obtained.⁶ Projects on illicit arms control were introduced by UNDP first in 2002 - the ISAC, and later in 2007, it came with a more ambitious KOSSAC project which sought to be more comprehensive and inclusive with the local actors highly included.⁷

In order for arms control to be efficient, Kosovo also had to adopt specific strategy apart from the international initiative. In 2008 Commission of the European Communities concluded that Kosovo has no proper strategy for the collection of weapons and that the legislation is incomplete and ineffective.⁸

Kosovo has so far come with three strategies addressing SALW. In 2008 Kosovo issued the first integrated response, which developed the institutional and legal framework. In 2013 it published another strategy which

⁴ Perry, Jennifer. 2004. *Small Arms And Light Weapons Disarmament Programs: Challenges, Utility, And Lessons Learned*. Online. US Defense Threat Reduction Agency, pp. 7 <https://fas.org/asmp/campaigns/smallarms/SALW Paper.pdf>.

⁵ Sokolova, Juliana et al. 2006. *Salw Survey Of Kosovo*. Online. SESAC, pp 9 <http://www.seesac.org/f/docs/SALW-Surveys/SALW-Survey-of-Kosovo-EN.pdf>.

⁶ Davis, Ian. 2002. *Small Arms And Light Weapons In The Federal Republic Of Yugoslavia*. Online. Saferworld, pp. 52. <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/124881/SALW%20Yugo.pdf>.

⁷Tholens, Simone. "Winning The Post-War: Norm Localisation And Small Arms Control In Kosovo And Cambodia". *Journal Of International Relations And Development*, pp. 13. doi:10.1057/s41268-017-0098-9.

⁸ Grillot, Suzette R. 2010. "Guns In The Balkans: Controlling Small Arms And Light Weapons In Seven Western Balkan Countries". *Southeast European And Black Sea Studies* 10 (2): 147-171. pp. 156 doi:10.1080/14683857.2010.486945.

aimed to have full control over SALW in accordance with international standards and in 2017 Kosovo has adopted its five-year strategy to diminish the presence of illicit SALW.⁹ Additionally, it approved Law on weapons in 2009. In the matter of arms control it is more complicated as Kosovo has not been fully recognized by all members of the international community and therefore, it is not possible for Kosovo to join arms agreements. Although, Kosovo seeks to follow international standards and has already accepted full responsibility for fulfilling them.

Nevertheless, the availability of illegal weapons is still high and Kosovo Police is implementing the enforcing legislative framework and are confiscating weapons with an average of 1 400 per year. Despite the high presence of SALW within the public and ongoing problems with the implementation of law there was a 34% decrease in illegal weapons up to the year 2017. The number of illegal weapons in Kosovo was believed to be 260 000 in 2015.¹⁰

⁹ *Small Arms, Light Weapons And Explosive Control Strategy And Action Plan 2017 – 2021*. 2017. Kosovo Ministry Of Internal Affairs. http://www.seesac.org/f/docs/Kosovo-1/Small-Arms-Light-Weapons-and-Explosive-Control-Strategy-and-Action-Plan-2017---2.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0gqwFQffRVYG1T1q9Ywqul26BYitDEsu82i6zc_PFL2F2LizPe6K80Zuk.

¹⁰ *Kosovo Safety And Security Project Brochure*. 2018. UNDP. http://www.ks.undp.org/content/dam/kosovo/docs/KSSP/KSSP%20Brochure_Final%20ENG%20sz.pdf.

Admitting that existing framework for control of SALW has many gaps and the ability to enforce the law is insufficient, Kosovo Police continues with the activities, where they show the effectivity of 1211 weapons being confiscated in year 2017 alone.¹¹ Furthermore, every year the International Gun Destruction Day is organized by UNDP/SEESAC and since 2010 also supported by the EU. In the last three year, approximately 4 281 pieces of SALW were destroyed during this event by Kosovo.

Armed violence in Serbia

In 2005, SALW survey of Serbia estimated that there are nearly two million weapons held by private citizens of where approximately 940 000 are illegally held weapons¹², which means that almost half of the weapons in the country are of illegal descent. Despite this unquestionably high number of weapons, Serbia had been trying to address the problem of illicit weapons since the end of the Yugoslavian conflict. Until 2005 Serbia has executed three weapon amnesties and collections. The first two which were held in 2001 and 2002 together collected between 10 000

¹¹ *Kosovo Police Annual Report*. 2017. Kosovo Police. http://www.kosovopolice.com/repository/docs/RAPORTI_ANGLISHT_2017.pdf.

¹² Taylor, Zachary et al. 2005. *Living With The Legacy - Salw Survey Republic Of Serbia*. UNDP. <http://www.seesac.org/f/docs/SALW-Surveys/Living-with-the-Legacy--SALW-Survey-Republic-of-Serbia-EN.pdf>.

– 15 000 firearms with no exact figures available or published. The third amnesty coincided with the state of emergency declared after prime minister's assassination, hence only 2 046 weapons were collected. Therefore, a voluntary amnesty followed which resulted in 47 853 weapons being delivered to the authorities.¹³ In the following years, 2004 and 2005 around 14 900 weapons were seized. The weapons were being destroyed continuously as the state capacity appeared to be good, but these destructions were in a large part financed by international donors and so the SALW policy in post-Milosevic era was based on foreign initiatives and financial support, mainly from Berlin and Washington.¹⁴

Although, to clarify the situation in the further past - Serbia has taken a number of steps in addressing the SALW control and regulation and has always claimed the interest to conform with international standards. The first step in regulation of civilian possession of weapons was made in 1992 with Law on Weapons and Ammunition, however, it was not been updated until 2015 when the new law was adopted.¹⁵ In 2004 a National

Strategy for the control of SALW was created, at this time still within the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, but until Montenegro declared its independence it had not been ratified. This was time of institutional paralysis which caused delay to the implementation of much-needed measures for SALW control.¹⁶ Since then, Serbia has come up with only one strategy on the control of SALW and one additional Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy. Serbia adopted the strategy in 2010 for the period 2010-2015.¹⁷ Although expiring in 2015 a new strategy has not yet been adopted. In 2018 Serbia prepared a draft of a new strategy and together with other Western Balkan countries it adopted a Roadmap for resolving the issue of illegal SALW.¹⁸ Unlike Kosovo, Serbia is also part of larger group of international and regional SALW agreements and is also involved in international information exchange.

¹³ Taylor, Zachary et al. 2005. *Living With The Legacy - Salw Survey Republic Of Serbia*. UNDP. <http://www.seesac.org/f/docs/SALW-Surveys/Living-with-the-Legacy--SALW-Survey-Republic-of-Serbia-EN.pdf>.

¹⁴ Griffiths, Hugh. 2008. "Serbia: Choosing Between Profit And Security". *Contemporary Security Policy* 29 (1): 175-201, pp. 191. doi:10.1080/13523260802131244.

¹⁵ Đurđević-Lukić, Svetlana, and et al. 2015. "Targeting Weapons" *Misuse Of Firearms In*

Serbia. Online. SEESAC. <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/193227/948.pdf>.

¹⁶ Richardson, Anna et al. 2006. *South Eastern Europe Salw Monitor 2006*. SEESAC. <http://www.seesac.org/f/docs/SEE-SALW-Monitor/South-Eastern-Europe-SALW-Monitor-2006-EN.pdf>.

¹⁷ *Serbia Adopts The Salw National Strategy Action Plan*. 2013. SEESAC. <http://www.seesac.org/News-SALW/Serbia-Adopts-the-SALW-National-Strategy-Action-Plan/>.

¹⁸ Stojanović, Filip. 2018. *Western Balkans United Against The Proliferation Of Firearm*. Public Policy Research Center. <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2018/06/21/western-balkans-united-proliferation-firearms/>.

Serbia also participates in the Gun Destruction Day and has destroyed a total of 110 000 SALW between the years 2003 and 2012.¹⁹ It has continued with this activity and eliminated around 18 000 pieces of weapons in the last year (2017) alone. Nevertheless, it is necessary to say that the strategy to eliminate the illicit SALW is still needed as it is estimated that there is still an amount of about 220 000 illegal weapons circulating within Serbia.

Conclusions

Although there has been a decrease in the number of illicit SALW in both Kosovo and Serbia and a positive trend is definitely present, the number of illegal weapons in circulation is rather plentiful. Through the years both countries organized collections and amnesty periods where people could surrender their weapons. On multiple occasions, such campaigns were not of a great success as people were not willing to surrender their weapons either because of the instability of the region, lack of trust in security authorities and law enforcement or the tradition of keeping the guns at home or because of connection to the criminal elements. In addition to these voluntary collections, regular seizure operations by the police

or international authorities helped to confiscate many illegal weapons.

Both countries have introduced SALW strategies and implemented laws regarding weapons and their civilian possession, however these regulatory frameworks are still far from peak efficacy and have many gaps, its implementation and enforcement is weak, which mostly rises from the problematic of enforcement of law in general. Again, it is important to note that both countries are procuring steps against illicit SALW, are continuously adjusting to the international norms, where they are strongly supported by the international community. Granting all this, one must understand the complexity of the general regulations of the following discourse and understand that such transitions require larger timespan to display major changes.

¹⁹ *Another 17,000 Small Arms And Light Weapons Destroyed In Serbia - A Total Of 110,000 Since 2003.* 2012. UNDP. <http://www.rs.undp.org/content/serbia/en/home/presscenter/articles/2012/12/20/another-17-000-small-arms-and-light-weapons-destroyed-in-serbia-a-total-of-110-000-since-2003.html>.

Superpowers at the Helm: A Decade of Independence from the Discursive Vantage Point

Jakub Kuchar & Kateřina Špalková

Introduction

Balkans as a region have had a troubled past not only from the perspective that takes into the account the 20th century Europe, but also from the historiographical viewpoint of modern and medieval European history. The so-called “powder keg of Europe” is, unfortunately, not a proverb reserved solely for the past or for the historical research analyses of a descriptive nature. As shown by the recent (and not-so-recent) troubles surrounding the geographical region of Kosovo, current struggles echo those of the past, and vice-versa.¹ A different result would come out from an analysis of Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman relations, than from the one analysing the relations between central government authority and freedom fighters in the 1990's. However, discursive analysis possesses tools to navigate through these difficulties successfully, as will be discussed in the following chapter. The Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement (CSP) - also known as the Ahtisaari plan - and the subsequent negotiations following this diplomatic initiative will serve as a background on which our study is drawn. General cessation of hostilities and return to negotiating tables is an approach that is shared by all sides, even though an occasional unrest may disrupt this general approach. In the following text we would like to put forward an analysis of the

events of the last decade related to Kosovo from the discursive vantage point.

Method

Two selected actors will be analysed, through the channels of their official means of communication. The changes in the attitude regarding the Kosovo issue will be highlighted and through these the discourse will be reconstructed. General findings will be addressed as well. The scope of the analysis will be the Kosovo Declaration of Independence (KDol) of 17th February 2008, until its 10th anniversary, at 17th February 2018. This entails days and events leading up to and directly connected to the declaration and also days and events directly connected with the anniversary. The entirety of the analysed speech acts, with all the necessary references can be found [here](#).

The issue of timeframe has been already touched above. Lengthy conflict that has currently taken the form of the discussion around the KDol can be seen in various stages throughout the past centuries. From this arises a substantial analytical obstacle. Since the conflict is so deeply historically embedded that the different periods contain different fragments of the discourse, the timeframe and timeframe selection for the analysis may very well set the outcome of the analysis itself. When thinking about the problem through the optics of discursive analysis, it is paramount to make sure the

¹ In the sense of interpretation, not chronology.

selected segment does not sway the narrative into a subjective interpretation of reality proposed by one, or multiple actors. It is our firm belief that by focusing selectively on the KDol, such subjective interpretation can be avoided. What this approach also provides is an in-depth take on an issue which is rarely interpreted without regard to the historical developments, and as such our argumentation in support of chosen approach arrives at full circle.

Actors and channels

The selected actors analysed by this article are the Russian Federation (RF) and the United States of America (USA). The reasons for this selection are following: firstly, RF and USA can be objectively assessed as *de-facto* representatives of interests of the Republic of Serbia (RoS) and the Republic of Kosovo (RoK), respectively. This is proven to be true by RF actively taking part in Serbian diplomatic preparations during the build-up to the KDol and by USA's swift recognition of Kosovo as an independent state, fixing the positions of both actors in the proposed timeframe. Secondly, regional issues are often contextualised in a way that marginalizes them through the optics of global politics. We would like to avoid this tendency by choosing the two global actors as the creators of the complex narrative, hoping to arrive at an objective but also useful output. Lastly, we would like to establish a connection between this research and research concerning the chemical weapons proliferation in Syria, published a year ago, thus creating a broader interpretation of current relations between RF and USA. Both actors have proven to be driving factors in both of our selected researches and we believe that through better understanding of their relationship a

comprehensive heuristics towards understanding various global political issues may be established. Impact that the chosen actors have on the issue of KDol is illustrated by their veto-powers and by USA military presence in the region in the form of NATO led Kosovo Force (KFOR). United Nations (UN), namely UN Security Council (UNSC), will be considered as an arena which facilitates the exchange of speech-acts, and as such, the verbatim records of UNSC will be considered to be a specific channel used by both of the actors. In some occasions, the utterances made by the permanent representatives are released through the official channels as well and for the purposes of this study we assume that their importance in the discourse shaping is significant enough to be considered a part of the official communication. Following is a brief assessment of selected actors and their official channels:

Russian Federation

Russian diplomacy relies on two independent information pillars: the Kremlin and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Both use their servers for publishing transcripts and announcements, while MFA also publishes reactions and policy positions that explicitly refer to developments in the matters of interest. Kremlin acts as an outlet for the President, while MFA presents wider scope of foreign policy citing the Minister, Deputy-Ministers, Ambassadors, and Spokespersons.

United States of America

United States have very similar structure to that of RF established. White House represents an information hub for agenda connected to the President and the Vice-President, where Spokespersons and press

department officials often fill-in as conveyors of the message. Department of State ...

Discourse reconstruction

The discourse surrounding the KDol does not start on the 17th of February 2008, as we already stated. On 12th of February, Permanent Representative of RF to the UN Vitaly Churkin called for the UNSC to convene extraordinarily, citing “the dangerous developments in Kosovo (Serbia) caused by the preparatory activities of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government for a unilateral declaration of independence.” A closed meeting occurred on 14th of February, which was followed by an open meeting on 18th of February. Before this meeting, a statement from the RF MFA, and USA recognition by the President George W. Bush have already been issued. Vitaly Churkin referred to KDol as a breach of the Security Council resolution 1244 and the Helsinki Final Act, while the Permanent Representative of USA to the UN Zalmay Khalilzad labelled the KDol as an act in full accordance with Resolution 1244 and as a step suggested by the former UN Special Envoy on Kosovo Status Martti Arthisaari as the only viable solution to the problem of Kosovo-Serbian relationship. These different interpretations of the Resolution 1244 will continue to be the centre-point for disagreement about KDol and its legality in the scope of international law. USA Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice referred to the case of Kosovo on multiple occasions explicitly as a *sui generis* - a special case which is unable to be a subject of precedent - while RF kept cautioning against allowing such a precedent to happen, soon incorporating the issue of Abkhazia and South Ossetia into the broad argumentation around DKol. Major in this regard was the

release of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), to which both actors reacted, while managing to follow their narratives. For USA, the issue remained to be basically a decided matter, while RF kept reiterating its commitment to inviolability of Serbian territorial integrity. The next landmark was the announcement of the International Steering Group (ISG) of the end of the supervised independence of Kosovo on the 10th of September 2012, which the White House congratulated on and heralded as another proof of factual independence of the RoK, while RF responded to the announcement with a discredit of the legitimacy of the ISG, reiterating the stance presented on 3rd of March 2008 by the MFA Spokesman Mikhail Kamynin. Brussels Agreement of 2013 was cited by the USA as an important step towards the reconciliation, while the RF entered the reconciliation discourse vehemently in 2015, when the subsequent agreement on the Association of Serb Municipalities failed to be implemented.

RF kept vigilantly responding to any recognition of RoK by international institutions they held as a subject of interest, such as the Permanent Court of Arbitration, during the entire time span of our analysis, while only supporting the reconciliation efforts green-lighted by the RoS. RF and USA both tried to assert their perception of Kosovar society through humanitarian initiatives, which could not be seen as a violation of Resolution 1244 or other agreements. For example, RF has aided in the reconstruction of orthodox places of worship in the region through an initiative in the UNESCO, while USA dedicated its representatives to the Balkans Breast Cancer Initiative, which aims to raise the breast cancer awareness. Transfer of competences

and the entry of European Union through the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) mission have been supported by the USA, and while RF voiced reservations towards specific steps that the EULEX have taken, it has accepted it as a legitimate actor in the field of Kosovo reconciliation process and as a broker of the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. The pattern on which RF recognizes the institutions as legitimate or illegitimate can be roughly determined by their approval in the UNSC.

On a presidential level, after George W. Bush the Obama administration referred the bulk of the Kosovo agenda to the Vice-President Joe Biden, with the President only issuing regular status reports regarding the deployment of troops in the contingents and renewals of the state of emergency with regards to Balkans. Trump administration followed suit with the President not putting further emphasis on the issue. Kremlin, on the other hand, supported the argumentation of RF more avidly and on various occasions, whether these were answers to the questions of media or agenda referrals during press statements, KDol was a reference point for the logic behind the steps of the country. Differences between the administrations of Dmitry Medvedev and Vladimir Putin are miniscule, however, President Putin proved to be way more enthusiastic in communication with the media, which may be well illustrated by his lengthy annual press conferences.

Both actors decided for their postures towards the KDol and subsequent events to be primarily in the competence of their foreign policy institutions. US Department of State and MFA of RF were the most active, regularly answering media questions, creating press availabilities, issuing

statements, and procuring transcripts of interviews and speeches. Their roles remained unchanged throughout the analysed years and in the case of USA across the changes of administration as well.

Conclusion

The vague nature in which UN Resolutions are drafted allows for interpretations that do not support clear solution when parties find themselves pitted against each other. In the case of the Resolution 1244, stress might be put on the territorial integrity clause, or at the safety of population, while downplaying the other one, without the need to yield the preferred position.

The positions of the selected actors with regard to the KDol in the selected timeframe have not changed over time. While USA refers to the RoK in the sense of state-building, RF kept ignoring the administration of the RoK completely and affirms its position as a reflection of the decisions made by the RoS. To put it simply, the practical reality is interpreted by the USA merely as a lack of development in an area with a clear political status, whereas RF interprets it as a development of the province whi status will be ultimately decided by the RoS.

Lastly, one controversial thing kept re-emerging in the analysis. After the unsuccessful pleas to not allow a dangerous precedent, the RF went forward and enacted the vision of this dangerous precedent on its own. Kosovo became more frequent as an example and argument when defending the policy towards Crimea, rather than a stand-alone issue. RF presented the events of unilateral declaration of independence exactly the way the ICJ put them forward as legal, almost as if there was a point to prove. The question whether RF would act with

regard to Crimea the way it did if the Kosovo question would have been handled differently is the question we found looming over our research section. If we really believe that words convey true meanings, such a thought will continue to exist. Thought that is pondering towards political liability and consequence as cornerstones of the international relations. And in the end, it may not be such a bad idea to follow those principles, even more so if we look at the international relations from the vantage point of Visegrad.

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A Decade of Independence From the Discursive Vantage Point

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