

# Post Conflict Peacebuilding in Kosovo<sup>1</sup>. Milestones, Actors and People.

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## Abstract

This article presents and analyses the postconflict peacebuilding actions in Kosovo. It aims to bring a picture of external and internal actors involved in such a process from the end of the conflict up to date. The article challenges peace process in Kosovo through the issues emerging in the Society due to the unsettled status enduring as of Security Council Resolution 1244. It is structured into three sections. The first section analyses the postconflict peacebuilding and statebuilding actions undertaken by external and internal actors right after the conflict. The second section deals with the issue of transitional justice as a key element on peacebuilding and how it was addressed. Whereas the third section analyses the current situation of the population with the issues inherited from the conflict and others emerged due to undefined actions of external and internal actors.

**Keywords:** peacebuilding; external actors; statebuilding; UN; EULEX; citizens; transitional justice

## Introduction

Kosovo is an adventurous tale to hear about, a sad poem of mothers and lovers, a very rich land of peaceful people that of such peace and richness have enjoyed little. The black birds of her skies are witness of old battles with Ottoman Empire, new ones among Serbians and Albanians and everything in the between. Kosovo is a sacred grief, a chosen trauma<sup>2</sup>. Yet is a country which has been subject to all sorts of (neo) imperial interventions and experiments<sup>3</sup>. In Kosovo the cold war has not ended US and Russia continue to show their power struggle and play their political games. Whereas EU governs in a democracy without people and makes rule of law without justice.

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<sup>1</sup> It is used in this work the form Kosovo as it is the English form of the name. For other places within Kosovo are used both forms in Serbian and Albanian according to the "Law No. 02/L-37 on the use of languages" of the country. When the name has the same form is written only once; e.g Prizren.

<sup>2</sup> In 1389 the Balkan coalition lead by Serbian Prince Lazarus was defeated by the Otoman Empire on the field of Black Birds, Kosovo. The myth build upon that battle is of importance for the Serbian Nation. Political scientist Marko Marković states that for Serbs the memory of Kosovo is a "sacred grief" and that "mere mention of that name suffices to shake a Serb to the depths of his soul". Cit Dennis J.D. Sandole, "Untying the Gordian Knot in the Balkans", Oct 2008, pg 177

<sup>3</sup> Žižek, Slavoj and Hamza, Agon, "From Myth to Symptom: the case of Kosovo" Prishtinë 2013, pg 13

## Post Conflict Peacebuilding Actions

The post conflict peacebuilding in Kosovo needs to be seen in relation to the statebuilding process and the issue of the political status of Kosovo. In these terms post conflict peacebuilding emerges into two main phases; first phase from 1999 to 2008 when UNMIK had the main role on leading and governing the country. The second phase is that from 2008 marked by the proclamation of independence and the increase role and influence of the European Union in the country to our days. There have been important milestones throughout both phases indicating how fragile peace on the ground is.

### *First phase*

While UNMIK was set to govern Kosovo in the form of the four pillar protectorate in end of 1999, in 2000 KFOR started the demilitarization of KLA<sup>4</sup>.

The text of Resolution 1244 through United Nations Interim Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK)<sup>5</sup> established the Provisional Institutions for Self Governance (PISG), comprised of four pillars of civilian activity, overseen by one single international Special Representative (SRSG);

- Pillar I: Humanitarian affairs, led by the UNHCR
- Pillar II: Civil administration under UNMIK itself
- Pillar III: Democratization and institution-building, led by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)
- Pillar IV: Economic development, managed by the European Union

Kosovo Serbs boycotted the new International governing system from 2003 till 2007 and established their own parallel system particularly in education and health.

In early 2000s UNMIK was caught into the increasing pressure of the Kosovo Albanian population for independence and trapped by Russia blocking the Security Council on giving a solution to the status of the region. In 2004 three Kosovo Albanian children drowned in the Ibar/ Ibër River in north Kosovo. It was said that had been chased into the river by Kosovo Serbs but nothing had been proven. However, such incident was enough for bringing back the violence. In the following few days' violent riots happened when Kosovo Albanian protesters attacked Kosovo Serbs. The reports count 19 deaths (11 Albanians and 8 Serbs), burning properties and the displacement of some of 4,000 Serbs and Roma people<sup>6</sup>. Such an incident on the frustration of the

<sup>4</sup> KIPRED, "Transitional Justice in Kosovo", Prishtine, 2008, pg 14

<sup>5</sup> See Annex II of UN Security Council, "Resolution 1244 on the deployment of international civil and security presences in Kosovo", 10 June 1999, S/RES/1244 (1999)

<sup>6</sup> Helmut Kramer and Vedran Džihčić, "Die Kosovo-Bilanz: Scheitert die internationale Gemeinschaft?", LIT Verlag, Wien, 2005, p. 37

growing economic crisis, lack of justice on the war crimes and of so much desired status of independence as a final act of justice showed again that the peace in Kosovo was far from being real and settled. After 5 years of intervention, UNMIK, KFOR and other international actors were proven weak on their statebuilding and peacebuilding intervention which needed to address issues properly.

This relapsing of violence pushed the international community to seriously think about a political solution of the situation. Final status talks between Kosovo and Serbia were launched in 2005, initially at a technical working-group level concerning to issues of returns and missing persons, until end of 2007. Not much results was produced on relation to this... such issues to a certain extent are yet to be resolved. The main outcome was the *Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement*, known as Ahtisaari's Plan. The plan embraces the highest level of protection for minorities in Kosovo and draws the reorganization of municipalities based on the ethnic majority population. Ahtisaari's plan<sup>7</sup> is an interestingly important document which laid the way for the Kosovo proclamation of "independence", new constitution (Annex I) and in the same time reinforced the creation of enclaves and the segregation of the minorities (Annex III). Such action seen from the peacebuilding point of view and the need of the communities for interaction seems to have deepened the separations and leading to the "partition" of Kosovo. Under the terms of Ahtisaari's plan, NATO-led troops would stay in Kosovo but supervision of the new state would pass out of the hands of the UN, whose mission would leave 120 days after the passing of a new Security Council resolution "endorsing" or "supporting" it. Such a thing does not appear on the last version of the document<sup>8</sup> though. The idea of Ahtisaari was to pass Kosovo' supervision under EU which was disturbing for Russia as a clear sign to gain independence through this mechanism. Ahtisaari's plan was presented at Security Council where Russia not surprisingly successfully blocked the approval of the new drafted resolution by US and UK which would have cancelled the resolution 1244<sup>9</sup> and given a solution once and for all to Kosovo' political and territorial status.

### *Second Phase*

Kosovo Albanians have well understood that the only choice left was that of acting without a Security Council authorisation. As Tim Judah underlines, it was now, for Kosovo Albanians, not a question of an unilateral declaration of independence as much as a "coordinated" declaration—coordinated with their friends in Washington, Brussels, and elsewhere<sup>10</sup>. Subsequently, in 17 February 2008 the Prishtina/ Pristina

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<sup>7</sup> See Martii Ahtisaari, "*Comprehensive Proposal For the Kosovo Status Settlement*", 2 February 2007

<sup>8</sup> David Crikemans, "*Final Status Negotiations on Kosovo within the UN Security Council*", Dec 2007, pg 19

<sup>9</sup> James Ker Lindsay, "*Kosovo- The path to contested statehood*", New York, 2009, pg 78

<sup>10</sup> Tim Judah, "*Kosovo- What Everyone needs to know*", Oxford University Press, 2008, pg 142

assembly declared Kosovo a *democratic, secular and multi-ethnic republic, guided by the principles of non-discrimination and equal protection under the law* adding;

*"We welcome the international community's continued support of our democratic development through international presences established in Kosovo on the basis of UN Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). We invite and welcome an international civilian presence to supervise our implementation of the Ahtisaari Plan, and a European Union-led rule of law mission. We also invite and welcome the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to retain the leadership role of the international military presence in Kosovo and to implement responsibilities assigned to it under UN Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and the Ahtisaari Plan, until such time as Kosovo institutions are capable of assuming these responsibilities. We shall cooperate fully with these presences to ensure Kosovo's future peace, prosperity and stability"*<sup>11</sup>.

Western countries who have supported the NATO intervention also realized that no solution would be coming from Security Council. Hence, EU was the only power could give a direction to the situation. For Kosovo Albanians accepting Ahtisaari's Plan was the only best option left on the table. Yet, all of this made the governance situation even more confusing. It was unclear who was actually going to be in control and who was leading. According to Resolution 1244, the Special Representative of the Secretary General is the boss. If Kosovo was proclaimed independent, the last word on governing the country should lie within the members of its elected government!!! On the other hand, the declaration welcomed the International Civilian Representative so the European Union, who according to the power receiving from Ahtisaari's plan was the "final authority in Kosovo regarding interpretation" of the Plan.

EULEX mission was approved by the UN Security Council after the proclamation of independence under the overall authority of the United Nations<sup>12</sup> (the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the country), and in accordance with resolution 1244. However, under Russian opposition UNMIK never left the country, there was no full hand over as Ahtisaari has been planned and few years later power tensions were noticed between UN and EU shared responsibilities. EU was now present in the country with EULEX and the European Union Special Representative (EUSR) office which reports directly to the Council of the European Union. Indeed, in a report of SG, the UN expressed such struggles asking clarity with regard to the EU pillar "ownership"; *Furthermore, the EU should seek to consolidate its various presences in Kosovo into a more coherent and streamlined structure, thereby improving its impact on the ground and the coordination with UNMIK*<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> Kosovo Declaration of Independence available here: <http://www.assembly-kosova.org/?cid=2,128,1635>, Last accessed October 2016

<sup>12</sup> Amnesty International, "Kosovo; Time for Eulex to prioritize war Crimes", April 2002, pg 15

<sup>13</sup> United Nations, "Report in the Situation in Kosovo", S/2004/932, 30 November 2004 par 60

Both countries have a long way to the achievement of European Union membership; Kosovo a longer way. Whereas, Serbia is an EU candidate country, Kosovo is a potential candidate country. In September 2012 Kosovo declared the end of the “supervised Independence” by the ICO who was supervising the implementation of Ahtisaari’s Plan<sup>14</sup>. This is another grey zone situation since de facto does not change much the UN, EU and EULEX are still in the country supporting, advising and “supervising” the Kosovo government, on the other hand it gave way to Kosovo to move ahead on its European future. In July 2014 Kosovo entered on the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and the Council of the EU agreed to its signature on 22 October 2015. Due to the Kosovo non recognition of independence by some of the EU members the agreement refers to the country simply as “Kosovo” noting its status under SC resolution 1244 and also International Court of Justice rule on Kosovo’s independence as legal<sup>15</sup>. Meanwhile, On 14 June 2016, the Council extended for the second time the mandate of the EU rule of law mission (EULEX) in Kosovo until 14 June 2018. Can this be seen as a sign of dependence on external help?!

It is well understood from the above analysis that the Peacebuilding process in Kosovo has been leaded and relied on the international community, so the external actors. Under the resolution 1244 external actors still have a leading role on statebuilding and peacebuilding processes. With the time passing more responsibility are being handed over to the Kosovo Government, as Ahtisaari’s Plan foresee until the *UNMIK’s mandate expire*<sup>16</sup>. But can there be an expiration of the UNMIK mandate without cancelation of the resolution 1244? Yet, can it happen the cancelation of resolution 1244 without a final solution of the political status?! The whole situation is a vicious circle which requires political solution. First and above all international political agreement.

International community was/is stuck in the situation of Kosovo not knowing which direction to take and give to it. Everything went beyond of what international law could give solution. What began as a humanitarian mission to stop ethnic cleansing gave way to modern trusteeship experiment in the form of the extensive powers vested with the UN and its SRSG in Kosovo. A role not known before and outside the standard order of international society built on the sovereignty of equal states. UN hadn’t experimented such a mandate before. Later on, such complexity became part of a new balance of power for Europe giving to EU kind of the same role with its EUSR in the country. Things went further than anyone involved or outsider could ever think.

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<sup>14</sup> Corinna Metz “*The Way to Statehood: Can the Kosovo Approach be a Role Model for Palestine?*”, May 2014, pg 58

<sup>15</sup> See Council of European Union, “*Stabilization and association agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community of the one part and Kosovo, of the other part*”, Brussels, 2 Oct 2015

<sup>16</sup> See Martii Ahtisaari, “*Comprehensive Proposal For the Kosovo Status Settlement*”, 2 February 2007, pg 10

## Peacebuilding and Transitional Justice

The political situation that settled after the war, was proved not effective on addressing the massive human rights violations and a number of highly sensitive issues including missing persons. As many local experts agree, justice in Kosovo was sacrificed for the sake of stability<sup>17</sup>. UNMIK administration, EULEX, Serbian government and recently Kosovo government failed to address justice on war crimes. *They have tried so hard to keep the tensions in control, which most of the times has contributed to the deepening of divisions between two ethnicities*<sup>18</sup>, says Loreta Buzhala working as community peacebuilder for the past 5 years, while referring to the external actors work.

UNMIK was mandated to establish a new Emergency Judicial System, develop it into a functioning judiciary and oversee its independence. In addition, OSCE was tasked with the mandate to build the legal institutions and monitor the justice system. UNMIK had also established the Office for Missing Persons and Forensics (OMPF) within its Pillar I on Police and Justice, to help with expertise on examining human remains. Later, UN handed transitional justice responsibility to EULEX which is seen in a very critical way from the local population of all sides. Amnesty International called the taking over of EULEX, the challenge to fix a failed UN justice system. EULEX inherited 1,187 war crimes cases which had not been investigated by UNMIK. *Yet, many of these cases involve multiple victims, given the scale and incidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity reported, and subsequently documented; this number can only represent a minimum number of the crimes under international law which took place in Kosovo*<sup>19</sup>.

EULEX from its side had not prioritized the crimes of war proceeding more cases of corruption and organised crime after the war, this increased the population' frustration versus EULEX also. Amnesty International records that as per year 2011 were recorded as still unaccounted for 1,790 persons, 1,299 are Kosovo Albanians (1134 males and 165 females); and 499 are non-Albanians – Serbs, Roma and other minorities (393 males and 106 females). For more than 1,000 Kosovo Albanian families the failure of the authorities, including EULEX, to find the bodies of their loved ones is one of the most pressing concerns in relation to the role of the international community in Kosovo. In Serbia too, the families of Kosovo Serbs still await the return of the body of their relatives<sup>20</sup>.

While the three main actors (UNMIK, OSCE, EULEX) had/have the mandate and the commitment to restore peace through the justice institutions on their power, little has been done on this direction. The handing over of such issue from UNMIK, OSCE later

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<sup>17</sup> KIPRED, "Transitional Justice in Kosovo", Prishtine, 2008, pg 17-18

<sup>18</sup> Interviewed on June 2016

<sup>19</sup> Amnesty International, "Kosovo; Time for Eulex to prioritize war Crimes", April 2002, pg 16

<sup>20</sup> Amnesty International, "Kosovo; Time for Eulex to prioritize war Crimes", April 2002, pg 16

to EULEX stands as an evidence of failure, being uncomfortable with the issue and unable to handle it.

The creation of a new special court in 2015, despite its need for truth and justice, was another disappointment which for many confirmed again the ineffectiveness of UNMIK, OSCE and EULEX institutions. Serbia's political elite still refuses to identify, admit, or take responsibility for crimes committed in Kosovo. Today governments on both sides, Kosovo and Serbia are described as focusing more on their desire to preserve or strengthen power, rather than confronting the truth, needs and wellbeing of the population.

The absence of transitional justice measures within Kosovo has both prolonged the suffering of victims and shaped the people's understanding of peace first and above all as receiving justice, hearing the truth and having a chance to forgive and being forgiven. Such thing seems have been slow to understand from the external actors, who have been perceived as cold and not empathic while pushing for the acceptance of the "other" without regard for the healing process which comes by facing the truth, taking responsibility of the actions and bringing before justice all malefactors. A former senior advisor on Human Right in UNMIK puts it like this; is it morally right or responsible to expect that Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs reach some accommodation after the horrors of the past years? Is it a "starry-eyed naïveté" or "Western human rights style neo-colonialism" to promote tolerance and respect for diversity?<sup>21</sup>

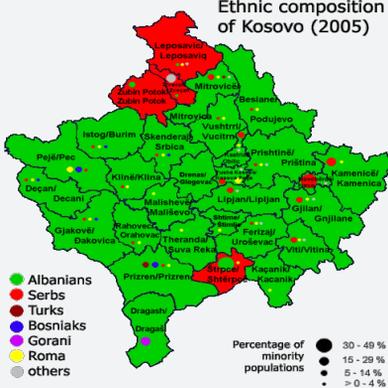
### **Kosovo and its people nowadays**

How is it like to live in Kosovo today? Kosovo today has a population of less than 2 million people with 92% Kosovo Albanians and 8% of other minorities.

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<sup>21</sup> William G. O'Neill "Kosovo- An unfinished Peace", 2002, pg 10

| Kosovo in Statistics Table <sup>22</sup>  |  |  |
|---|--|--|
|  <p>Kosovo flag with six stars representing ethnic groups (Albanian, Serbian, Turks, Gorani, Bosnians, Romani)</p> | Population                                       | 1,739,825 <sup>23</sup>                              |
|   | Urban Population                                 | 38%  |
|   | GDP Annual Growth 2014 <sup>25</sup>             | 1.2  |
|   | GDP per Capita                                   | 3,579 \$   |
|   | Extreme poverty Line, below (1,25\$/ Day)        | 10.2%  |
|   | Pop. below the absolute poverty Line (2,0\$/day) | 29.7%  |
|   | Unemployment                                     | 44.8%  |
|   | Youth unemployment <sup>26</sup>                 | 70%  |
|   | Illiteracy rate                                  | 3.85%  |
|   | Child Labor                                      | 13%  |
|   | Children experiencing violence in schools        | 40%  |
|   | Transparency International Corruption Index 2015 | 103 <sup>th</sup> out of 168 countries <sup>27</sup> |
|   | Global Peace Fragile State Ranking               | 69 <sup>th</sup> out of 162 countries <sup>28</sup>  |



**Ethnic composition of Kosovo (2005)**

Kosovo distribution of ethnicities.

Albanian 92.9%, Serbian 1.5%, Turk 1.1%, Bosnians 1.6%, Gorani 06%, Romani 2.1%<sup>24</sup>

Table 1: Kosovo table of Statistics as per Census 2011

Kosovo’s inhabitants today live in a divided society with problems inherited from before the war and others encountered and created later due to the status issue. Serbian population lives isolated in its own enclaves being guided by Belgrade’s govern on their political and daily life. It has its own schools, university in Mitrovica, hospitals with official being paid by Kosovo government and Belgrade also as an incentive not to leave the country. Most of the Kosovo Serbian populations, for not saying entire do not speak Albanian. Turkish minority lives mostly around the Prizren area, south east of Kosovo. After the decentralization according to Ahtisaari’s plan they have their municipality in Mamusha/Mamuša. Turkish community in most of the cases speaks only Turkish with the old generation to a certain degree speaking also Albanian. Goranis, live around and south of the town of Dragaš/ Dragash in the Gora region, which is a mountainous peninsula south of Prizren. Their language is something between Serbian and Macedonian. They have been following the Serbian schools and many of them were loyal Serbian citizens, serving in the police and as officials until the

<sup>22</sup> The data are provided by the Kosovo Agency of Statistics based on Census done 2011

<sup>23</sup> Kosovo Agency of Statistics “Population by gender ethnicity at settlement level”, Pristina 2013, pg 11

<sup>24</sup> Kosovo Agency of Statistics “Population by gender ethnicity at settlement level”, Pristine 2013, pg 11

<sup>25</sup> See World Bank, “World Development Indicators” here: <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=2&country=KSV&series=&period>, Last Accessed October 2016

<sup>26</sup> See Kosovo Youth Ministry data: <http://www.mkr-ks.org/?page=1,41>, Last accessed October 2016

<sup>27</sup> See Transparency International Index here: <https://www.transparency.org/cpi2015/>, Last accessed October 2016

<sup>28</sup> See Institute for Economics and Peace, “Global Peace Index Report” 2015, pg. 9

end of the war<sup>29</sup>. Other minorities are more spread among the communities and chose to follow the Kosovo Albanian or Kosovo Serbian education system and more likely to speak either Albanian or Serbian apart to their language.

Life in the enclaves is very different from one another. As entering Mamusha/Mamuša is like entering a Turkish city or village and you would need a translator to communicate. The people follow closely the updates of Turkish televisions and political life. Going to Graçanicë/Gračanica or Mitrovica is like you are in Serbia you must know some Serbian and are preferred to pay services with Serbian currency, dinar, even though euro works too. The media followed is Serbian local media and that of Belgrade updating people to all news from Serbia. Kosovo Albanians being majority move more freely within Kosovo even though they avoid crossing the bridge to north Mitrovica or spending time around Graçanicë/Gračanica which is 15 min from Prishtina/Priština. Young generation of Kosovo Albanians do not speak neither Serbian nor Turkish or any other minority language.

Whereas set apart from each other in the same small territory the people of Kosovo share common burdens; as isolation, economical struggles ect. Being Kosovo a non-recognized country, the passport does not grant the right to move as other countries' citizens. It is difficult to get out of Kosovo. Kosovo citizens can travel without a visa only to Albania, Turkey, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and the Maldives Islands<sup>30</sup>. For other destination countries people must apply for a visa which in most of the cases without a good reason to travel and a good bank account as insurance is denied. Kosovo Albanians have also troubles when passing Serbian borders which does not recognizes and accepts Kosovo's passport. This has been a huge problem for Kosovo Albanians emigrant in Germany and Switzerland who for coming back home need to pass through Serbia. Kosovo Serbians have Serbian passport (even though lately some of them are acquiring new Kosovo documents). They cross borders easily and travel to more places with it as Serbian citizens. So the unresolved status has as its consequence also the problem of citizenship<sup>31</sup>. Basically, the all population is an isolated island from the world.

Politics of Kosovo and Belgrade under the pressure of the EU have moved ahead. Serbia seems to have "de facto" accepted the Kosovo government by entering into negotiation with "First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalisation of Relations" on April 2013. The agreement of 15 important points in one of them is explicit about bilateral relations, and states that neither party will block the other's progress toward the EU<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> Tim Judah, *"Kosovo- What Everyone needs to know"*, Oxford University Press, 2008, pg 104

<sup>30</sup> Republic of Kosovo, Ministry of Foreign Affairs available here: <http://www.mfa-ks.net/?page=2,70>, Last accessed October 2016

<sup>31</sup> Gëzim Krasniqi, *"EUDO Citizenship Observatory. Report on Kosovo"*, Firenze, November 2012, pg 8-9

<sup>32</sup> See point 14 here: [http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/repository/docs/FIRST\\_AGREEMENT\\_OF\\_PRINCIPLES\\_GOVERNING\\_THE\\_NORMALIZATION\\_OF\\_RELATIONS,\\_APRIL\\_19,\\_2013\\_BRUSSELS\\_sq.pdf](http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/repository/docs/FIRST_AGREEMENT_OF_PRINCIPLES_GOVERNING_THE_NORMALIZATION_OF_RELATIONS,_APRIL_19,_2013_BRUSSELS_sq.pdf), Last accessed October 2016

In August 2015 on the framework of implementation of this first agreement were signed other four documents; the establishment of the Association/Community of Serb Majority Municipalities in Kosovo; the supply of electricity; telecommunications, and freedom of movement through the Ibër/Ibar river. The first document remains the most debated one since while the aim is to recognise Prishtina/Priština as their “central government” it asks autonomy of the Serbian populated municipalities, being perceived as a partition of Kosovo.

Whereas three years have passed since the first agreement no progress is seen on implementation. The population is sceptical and suspicious on their leaders. Kosovo Albanians fear partition of north and suspect that Serbia is using such change of politics just to accede EU and make things harder to Kosovo once in. Kosovo Serbians feel Belgrade is trading them for acceding to EU. Other minorities find themselves on a process of figuring out what and who would better protect their rights and ensure a prosperous future.

Apart the slow commitment to implement the agreement Serbia with the strong support of Russia is continuously making every attempt for not acceptance of Kosovo on the international organisations and political sphere against to what was agreed in Brussels. It was this, the case of blocking Kosovo adherence into UNESCO in 2015 where Kosovo got 92 out of 95 needed votes. At the occasion Serbian president was expressed for the media; *“This victory was not achieved with money, but through the appreciation Serbia has in the world. This is also a clear sign that we will not give up our southern province<sup>33</sup>.”* Serbia’s lobbying resulted less successful for the adherence in FIFA and UEFA which accepted the membership of Kosovo on May 2016. Different times Kosovo prime minister on the media asked Belgrade to not hinder Kosovo’s path for membership in international organisations and respect the agreement.

All of these tensions continuously affect the peacebuilding work on the grassroots level not helping people to move ahead and clearly position themselves toward a common future. Expressed with the words of a peacebuilder worker:

*“Politics definitely affects a lot the peacebuilding process. The situation in Kosovo is still fragile and people refer to the war as if it happened yesterday. Parents make sure that their children know everything about the war, even if they were not even born that time. Each tension or disagreement between the governments of the two countries, it reinforces the opinion of people that they are still enemies with one another, and as a result they step back<sup>34</sup>.”*

Naturally we’re lead to the question if there is peace in Kosovo today? And the answer requires us to think on the definition and understanding we give to peace. Talking about

<sup>33</sup> See Balkan Insight article here: <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/kosovo-unesco-membership-vote-11-09-2015>, Last accessed October 2016

<sup>34</sup> Loreta Buzhala, grassroots peacebuilder coordinator. Interviewed June 2016

negative peace, lack of violence and war, yes there is peace in Kosovo! No war from the 1999 and no major violent episodes since riots of 2004. Shkumbin Arifi, executive director of "Students Helping Life Kosovo" based on Rahovec/Orahovac says:

"There is a sustainable peace in Kosovo. It is a stable situation; there are no conflicts, either ethnic or other forms of it."

That is satisfying and without doubt to be celebrated after the carnage the country has seen. The people of Kosovo know the value of it much more than any other. But again is there peace in Kosovo?

According to Loreta Buzhala, Community Peacebuilder Coordinator:

"I would rather say there is tolerance but not peace, really. I believe there would be peace if the two communities, Albanian and Serbian would live together, would share the same schools and neighbourhoods etc. In Kosovo today, 17 years after the war, the division between the two communities is very obvious, even though the situation seems quiet most of the time, it is because both sides live their life separately, they are very inferior about each other, isolated and they avoid any relation with the other ethnicity."

What hinders positive peace in Kosovo? Building peace and being a peacebuilders in a context like Kosovo, or at least in Kosovo, it means you have an agenda to follow and that's your priority, especially if you are an outsider. Peacebuilding and peace concept is highly politicised and contaminated with different interests. It is perceived not respectful and artificial process which without dealing with the roots pushes to fix something unknown that need years of healing and much more emphatic efforts; going beyond the idealistic sense of the do-gooders, philanthropist and politicians.

Limbo created due to the unresolved status is perceived as a security threat of communities. Kosovo Albanians see it as a threat of losing their freedom, Serbians in Serbia losing Kosovo and Kosovo Serbians fearing revenge by being a minority in the country. This background of feelings, which dates long century struggle for peaceful coexistence and fear of losing; increasingly finds the population trapped between a fragmented and hegemonic international mission on the one hand, and a weak and corrupted local government unable to answer to the international demands, accommodate its own interest and accomplish its responsibility toward citizens. Peace began to equal stagnation and endless international rule, rather than freedom and the development people craved<sup>35</sup>.

Citizens of Kosovo today are all vulnerable in a way or another. Yet, all tired of politics and long transition of an unknown future. Rather than a vision of peace being owned or determined by local people, peace is a political hostage of the resolution 1244.

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<sup>35</sup> Madeleine Mosse, "The journey to positive peace: grassroots peace building in Kosovo", Coventry University, 2012, pg 132

Now peace can be considered also a condition for the status, rather than the political status a condition for peace. The unresolved question of the status puts in crisis and total confusion the peacebuilding effort. It is a question of where are you headed to. You walk in a direction but you don't really know where you are going and bringing the people of Kosovo. International actors should find out where they are headed with Kosovo.

Economy and high unemployment rate is a burden all ethnicities share, especially the high unemployment of the young generation. Economy struggle is a consequence of the Kosovo status as much as a cause of hindering peacebuilding process. Consequence, since many of its sectors depend on recognition of Kosovo as a state. While World Bank and IMF have recognised and have their programmes of economic assistance in the country, UN non recognition hinders country's access to other economic opportunities. Mentioning here the problem created with telecommunication. Kosovo does not have a phone country code (prefix). After the war it managed to borrow the Monaco's code +377 and later on 2007 Slovenia's code, yet none of its own. This example is important understanding the role it plays on division of people. Kosovo Serbians use the old country code +63 of FRY which pays the taxes in Serbia. So if a Kosovo Albanian in Prishtina/Priština wants to call its Kosovo Serbian friend in Graçanicë/Gračanica or vice e versa need to do an international call.

Indeed economic problems are interconnected as much as with the status, the moderate new corrupted leadership and peacebuilding. Allegations of corruption within the government, and the obvious nepotism amongst government officials giving priority to former KLA members played a role in undermining local development, peacebuilding progress and optimism among people. As per transparency international the level of corruption in the country continue to be high being ranked 103<sup>rd</sup> out of 168 countries in 2015 (see the table nr 1).

All of these factors have contributed to a high level of frustration across all communities in Kosovo, whilst amongst Albanians the sentiment prevailed that following a long struggle, a brutal war, and the initial post-war euphoria, no golden era had arrived<sup>36</sup>. For Serbian population, policies made in Belgrade continue to dominate the daily life in the enclaves, with the education system largely overseen by Serbian institutions, and the existence of "parallel structures". As for the other ethnicities, are trying to find out their space on such a confusion being continuously frustrated on what to do for keeping up with life. Over the years, as the tensions have eased, all communities are continuing more or less to live a parallel life, yet divided existence.

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<sup>36</sup> Madeleine Mosse, "The journey to positive peace: grassroots peace building in Kosovo", Coventry University, 2012, pg 121

## Conclusions

Post conflict Peacebuilding process in Kosovo has been led and relied on the international community and external actors. Under the resolution 1244 external actors still have a leading role. Kosovo's peacebuilding seems to be an abnormal process stuck on the disagreement of the international and internal actors over its political and territorial status. Limbo created due to the unresolved status is perceived as a security threat by different ethnicities having diverse hopes, fears and expectations regarding to it.

Peacebuilding and peace concept is highly politicised and contaminated with different interests. It is perceived not respectful and artificial process which equals stagnation rather than a future for Kosovo's people. As the tensions have eased and Kosovo welcomes increasingly tourists to discover its story, ethnic communities are continuing more or less to live a parallel life and divided existence in their enclaves.

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