The process of demobilization and integration of former Kosovo Liberation Army members – Kosovo’s perspective

Introduction

The question of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) has undergone different stages. As a matter of fact, when war ended and the deployment of NATO forces in Kosovo completed, one of the main challenges in the country was the total demilitarization of Kosovo. The conflict ended with the signing of the Kumanovo Agreement between NATO and the Yugoslav Army, which was taken into consideration when the UNSC approved 1244 Resolution on Kosovo. This resolution explicitly called for the demobilization and reconstruction of Kosovo. Moreover, KLA demobilization was referred to in a document titled “Undertaking for Demilitarization and Transformation by KLA”, signed by NATO and former KLA on 20 June 1999, immediately after the conflict in Kosovo and the deployment of NATO troops in Kosovo. This document takes into account the contribution of KLA and foresees that in the future, following the conclusion of a political process resolving the country’s status, Kosovo will have a military formation based on the model of US National Guard. Indeed the model of National Guard was never implemented, but another agreement paved the way for the transformation of KLA into a civil force for rapid reaction: the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC).

The sensitivity of the KLA demobilization issue did not take into consideration the integration of minorities within the new force. Furthermore, in the immediate post-war stage the gender balance was at some acceptable level, but was far from the desirable goal. Having in mind the unique position of Kosovo and the specific process of democratization, Kosovo did not undergo the stages of Security Sector Reforms (SSR) but the process was focused on the Security Sector Building (SSB). The reason was that the country’s security institutions had to be built from the scratch and there was no institutional correlation with the former socialist system of ex-Yugoslavia.

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2 For more details about the Military Technical Agreement see http://www.nato.int/kosovo/docu/q990609a.htm
5 KCSS, Context Analyzes of SSR in Kosovo, p.5.
This assessment aims to conduct a brief analysis of the context of demobilization and reintegration of former KLA members since 1999. The holistic approach was used, starting from the post-war period until these days. There are references to different institutional and academic documents, necessary for the preparation of this assessment. Moreover, this assessment reflects the personal experience of both authors of this paper.

The first part discusses the demobilization and reintegration of KLA members in the KPC, other security institutions and the civil life. Then the paper pays special attention to the process of KPC’s consolidation. The process of SSB will be reviewed in the part dealing with the development in post-independent Kosovo and finally we shall present our conclusions.

Demobilization and reintegration of KLA members

The process of demobilization in Kosovo was difficult and complex. The legacy of wars in the former Yugoslavia made the demobilization of KLA formations difficult because the new reality was hard to accept. The imperative need for establishing peace and order in Kosovo led the international community to insist in the implementation of this process, which was based on the following legal documents:

- Undertaking for Demilitarization and Transformation by the KLA, 21 June 1999.
- Statement of Principles by the KFOR Commander, 20 September 1999.
- Constitutional Framework of Kosovo.

However, the actual implementation of these agreements faced obstacles due to the limited opportunities for integration in the new force as well as because of the dire socio-economic conditions, which reflected limited opportunities for the reintegration of former fighters in civil life. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) was assigned with the responsibility by the international community to lead this process and was committed in a re-systemization programme of these members. This programme was appraised as quite successful in the registration, demobilization and reintegration of 10,000 former KLA fighters within the KPC, and other programmes which were offered in the
civil life. Some former KLA fighters were integrated in the new police force, which was formed immediately after the war. In general, the goal of many former KLA members was to continue their life within the new security institutions and only few of them were interested to return to civil life.

On the other hand, their inclusion in the social life was achieved to some degree by offering them financial support and training opportunities for their involvement in the country’s various social and economic sectors. This was considered as necessary because the limited positions in the new force - KPC\(^8\) - and the police were not sufficient to absorb all the needs of former KLA members.

In the immediate post-war stage, the criteria for inclusion of minority members were not respected and as such these conditions were not taken into account. The many demands by the majority community for employment within the new security structures made the question of minority integration impossible to address. In addition, there were problems of gender representation in the security institutions even though compared to the representation of minorities, the representation of women was significant. While the participation of minorities and women in the formation of KPC was more difficult to be achieved, the criteria set for the selection of Kosovo Police members’ called for mandatory representation of these categories.

**Transformation of KLA and consolidation of Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC)**

KPC was the direct successor of the war formation: the KLA. KPC was established based on UNMIK Regulation 8/1999 and under the authority of the United Nations Special Representative of Secretary-General, with an entirely civil mission and tasks based on the French model of *Security Civile*. Nevertheless, the population viewed this organization as military formation or a predecessor of Kosovo’s army, regardless of the fact that KPC was a reserved power and completely operational only under the authority of UNMIK. Even though a special study on the subject is more than necessary, it is sufficient to state that the reserved powers by the UNMIK rendered impossible the local ownership in the

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\(^6\) IOM, Kosovo KPC, 2000.  
Up to 20,000 persons applied for position in the KPC. Out of a total 27,000 registered, 17,000 were former KLA fighters.

\(^7\) For more information about Kosovo Police and its history see [http://www.kosovop Police.com](http://www.kosovopPolice.com)

\(^8\) No more than 5,000 members.
demobilization process, by imposing foreign practices from the SSR.\(^9\) This situation was confirmed as unfavourable.

In addition to the registration and integration of former KLA members, IOM was trusted with the task of developing capacities for KPC in the area of civil protection. The training was designed to promote personal responsibility, discipline, basic individual skills, organizational skills, and specialized training for civil protection. Beside the provision of training, the IOM programme was to ensure and train the KPC members based on their practical experience for training activities through civil and humanitarian projects.

It is important to emphasize that the structure and the organization of KPC was not different from that of KLA. The majority of the commanding staff were KLA fighters and held new positions within the KPC. For example, in five out of six Protection Zones, the Commanders’ were from the same geographical area, which proved to be an inefficient way for the functioning and discharging of responsibilities that they as top leadership had. If we were to take all circumstances into account then the result is that the KPC was a small organization of men in uniform with an unnecessary senior ranks structure. Various reports addressed weaknesses such as nepotism and the family ties between KPC members, which hindered the successful functioning of the chain of command from top to bottom.\(^10\)

On the other hand, the KPC’s consolidation was evident based on the fulfilment of international standards set by the international community, also known as standard number 8.\(^11\) This standard embodied the criteria which had to be fulfilled and mainly dealt with the fulfilment of the KPC mandate, and specifically the representation of minorities.\(^12\) This made the SSB process more comprehensive by paying special attention to the integration of minorities and addressed the question of gender equality. The fulfilment of these conditions was appraised by the domestic and international opinion, and resulted in the following composition:\(^13\)

- Positions assigned: 5052
- Active members: 3052
- Reserve members: 2000

\(^9\) KCSS, Context Analyzes of Security Sector Reform in Kosovo, p.12.
\(^10\) ISSR, p.102.
\(^11\) UNMIK, Standards for Kosovo, p.15.
\(^12\) Ibid, p.16.
\(^13\) Data from year 2006.
The representation of minorities in KPC required their recruitment in the key commanding positions. However, the Kosovo’s political position and the refusal by the Serbian minority to become part of this structure stalled their appointment in senior commanding positions. On the other hand, the representation of women in senior posts increased by recruiting women as department and section heads in KPC.

One of the main challenges was the democratic oversight of KPC since the legal framework did not envisage such oversight and that the reserved powers by the UN mission rendered impossible the so-called horizontal oversight of security mechanisms.\textsuperscript{14} The parliament’s role was limited\textsuperscript{15} even though some oversight was exercised by the Parliament Committee for Emergency Readiness. This state of affairs hampered the empowerment of democratic oversight in the following period.

The post-independence period: the dissolution of KPC and establishment of Kosovo Security Force (KSF)

The declaration of independence on 17 February 2008, resulted with a proposal for a new security architecture in Kosovo, based on the comprehensive proposal for Kosovo’s status, also known as the Ahtisaari plan.\textsuperscript{16} This architecture had a twofold purpose: (1) the establishment and development of KSF; and (2) the establishment and development of Kosovo Intelligence Agency (KIA), which was consistent with the SSB on the one hand, and the police and civil emergency reforms in line with SSR, on the other hand.\textsuperscript{17}

This structure of the security sector excluded the legacy of the war segments, which were strengthened within the KPC. The UN comprehensive proposal prescribed the dissolution of KPC with dignity, which then paved the way for the establishment of Kosovo Security Force. This meant that the development of KSF would have no institutional correlation with KPC and that the new force

\begin{itemize}
\item Civil official: 100
\item Percentage of minorities: 10%
\item Women: 3.2%
\item Profile: Multiethnic, non-religious, apolitical
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{14} DCAF, Democratic Control of Armed Forces, p.1.
\textsuperscript{15} KCSS, Context Analyzes of Security Sector Reform in Kosovo, p.9.
\textsuperscript{16} For more information about this plan see http://www.unosek.org/unosek/en/statusproposal.html
\textsuperscript{17} KCSS, Context Analyzes of Security Sector Reform in Kosovo
would be built from the beginning.\textsuperscript{18} Even though there was no association between the two organizations, it was acknowledged that at least 50 percent of the 2,500 active and 800 reserve KSF members would come from KPC ranks\textsuperscript{19}, the majority of whom were former KLA fighters.

The dissolution of the direct successor of KLA caused different reactions from former KLA members and the civil society. This resulted in violent protest that ended without major consequences. The process of reintegration of former KPC members went through different stages of training and employment programmes in the private sector. It must be emphasized that the contribution of the international community for the reintegration of these former members was assessed successful.

\textbf{Conclusions}

The process of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) of former KLA members, even though too complex under circumstances in Kosovo, was considered a success. The devastating wars in the former Yugoslavia made the ex-fighters feel reluctant towards the processes for establishing peace and order, which resulted in difficulties for accepting the new reality. The establishment of a direct successor of KLA met, to some degree, the aspirations of ex-fighters to keep ‘the uniforms on’ albeit within a civil organization with specific tasks for emergency reaction and civil protection.

The consolidation of KPC was considered a success, despite many weaknesses.\textsuperscript{20} The results of this consolidation process were evident few years after the war and which consisted in the integration of minorities and better gender balance within this institution. In general, the democratic oversight remained an issue of concern and marked bad impressions on the following processes for SSB.

The new security architecture in Kosovo was established from the beginning, mainly based on the SSB concept and partially based on the SSR concept. This resulted in the dissolution of direct successor of KLA and reactions against this process were present. However, notwithstanding the difficulties and the dilemmas whether this course of the process should have been undertaken, the end results of SSB in Kosovo are unquestionable.

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  \item \textsuperscript{19} Ibid, p.22.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} KCSS, Establishment, Operability and Democratic Functionality of the Kosovo Security Force, p.3.
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