

# Kosovo Present and Future

Sarah E. Archer

RN, DrPH, Indianapolis, Indiana



**T**HE MAJORITY of Kosovars are of Albanian origin and speak Albanian, a unique language not related to other European languages. Kosovar Serbs speak Serbian, a Slavic language. Kosovar Albanians and Serbs find each other's languages incomprehensible, and because Serbs are increasingly using the Cyrillic alphabet, unreadable as well. Smaller Kosovar ethnic groups such as the Ashkalia, Gorani, and Turks, speak their own languages and either Albanian, Serbian, or both. According to UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1244, "On the Situation Relating to Kosovo" (adopted on 10 June 1999), Kosovo remains a province of Serbia.<sup>1</sup> The Serbian name for the area is Kosovo; the Albanian majority call it Kosova.

Since Serbian forces withdrew from Kosovo after the NATO bombing campaign in 1999, the UN Interim Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has administered Kosovo. The Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG), Kosovo's emerging elected government, and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) have set forth the following objectives for Kosovo:<sup>2</sup>

- Consolidation of democratic structures.
- Increased administrative transparency and efficiency.
- Improved education standards.
- Better health quality.
- Economic development.
- Increased employment.
- Pension and social assistance for vulnerable groups.
- Integration of all communities.

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The question of Kosovo's final status—whether it will become an independent nation or remain a province of Serbia—casts a shadow of uncertainty across every effort to achieve these objectives.

## Consolidating Democratic Structures

UNMIK is currently transferring its responsibilities to the PISG elected in November 2001. UNMIK expects the PISG to become fully functional by the end of 2003. The PISG has 120 seats: election by popular vote fills 100 seats; 10 seats are reserved for Serb representatives; and 10 seats are for representatives of other minority groups, including Roma, Ashkalia, Turks, Goranis, Egyptians, and Bosniaks. International observers scrutinized Kosovo's elections and judged them to be acceptably free and fair.

One Kosovar Albanian academic observed, "We Kosovars don't know how to handle freedom; we are used to being told what to do. So we are having a lot of trouble adjusting to democracy."<sup>3</sup> This is a common problem for citizens of former socialist

countries. While they strive to democratize, they must struggle against increasing corruption and crime, kleptomaniacal leaders and businessmen, rising unemployment, and vanishing social supports.<sup>4</sup> Author Marina Ottaway points out, "In the Balkans, the Communist regimes have disappeared, but despite much international support, most governments

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are semi-authoritarian, with only Slovenia and—more recently and tentatively—Croatia, moving toward democracy.”<sup>5</sup> Slovenia has had a decade of independence and peace in which to make this kind of progress. Kosovo is still a province of Serbia, and its conflict ended only 4 years ago.

Kosovo shows some signs of becoming a more democratic civil society, however. The development of local nongovernment organizations (NGOs) is one such sign. In May 2003, 2,331 NGOs operated in Kosovo, of which 1,939 were local NGOs; only 392 were international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs).

INGOs flocked by the hundreds to Kosovo following the conflict, but have been steadily leaving for other priority areas (Afghanistan, Iraq, and Sub-Saharan Africa). Local NGOs, often started with help from INGOs, have taken their place. The great increase in the number of NGOs is a positive development.

Former socialist governments did not permit grassroots civil society organizations such as NGOs, much less register and recognize them. Kosovo’s Ministry of Public Services’ Registration Services Division and Civil Status Section now registers NGOs. Registration is voluntary, but a big incentive to register is access to technical assistance. NGOs retain their independence in funding and choice of activities and venues. A shift from emergency humanitarian assistance and relief work to development projects such as gender and youth issues, democratization, sports, and nurturing a civil society has occurred, with many NGOs choosing to focus on multiethnic reconciliation. The Mother Teresa Society and the Kosovo Red Cross continue to provide

humanitarian assistance to returnees and others in need throughout Kosovo.

## Transparency and Efficiency

In most postsocialist societies the socialist tendency continues for leaders to make decisions without public scrutiny, much less public involvement. Transparency is a scarce commodity, although political parties, particularly Albanian parties, are active in the electoral process. The majority party in the PISG is the Albanian Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK). Other Albanian parties are the Democratic Party of Kosova (PDK), and the Alliance for the Future of Kosova. Serb parties include the Democratic Party of Serbia and the Party for Serbs Survival. In their socialist past, Kosovars had little experience forming political groups to raise their voices against government policies, so the creation of legitimate, effective opposition parties has been difficult for them. Kosovar Serb political parties seem to wait for instructions from Belgrade for their participation in the governance of Kosovo.

Friction is increasing within some Albanian parties, and as a result, they fail to speak in harmony, much less with one voice, on major issues. An elected member of the PISG said the lack of transparency within the majority LDK party illustrates the problems in an emerging democracy. “Without inner democracy in the parties, there cannot be democracy in anything else, including general elections.”<sup>6</sup> As the transition from UNMIK to PISG continues, democracy within the political parties will be an area of great concern. Other former socialist countries’ track records in transparency are mixed to weak. UNMIK’s *Focus Kosovo* reports, “None of the political parties has declared where its money comes from, as the law requires.”<sup>7</sup> This is not an encouraging sign.

The Transfer Council, whose objective is to transfer the governance of Kosovo from UNMIK to PISG, met for the first time in April 2003. PISG and UNMIK have an equal number of representatives on the council; its co-chairmen are Kosovo’s elected prime minister and the UN Secretary General’s Special Representative (SRSG). As Kosovo government officials gain skill and experience, UNMIK will turn over more functions to them until ultimately UNMIK and its international staff leave.<sup>8</sup> Kosovars and colleagues in UNMIK and other international organizations differ in their views of how long the transfer process will take and how successful the process will be, but all agree that it must proceed. This transfer process is also influenced by the uncertainty about Kosovo’s final status.

Judging from the comments people made to me and from my own observations, Kosovo police ser-

vices (KPS) provide one bright spot. Confidence in the local police, who are often part of the problem in countries emerging from autocratic rule, is another sign that a civil society is developing. In UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's report on Kosovo to the Security Council on 26 June 2003, he noted that UNMIK had turned over four police stations to the KPS and will turn over eight more before the end of 2003.<sup>9</sup> This process is continuing.

The KPS is increasingly multiethnic. Although 84 percent of KPS personnel are Kosovar Albanian, 10 percent are Kosovar Serb, 6 percent are non-Serb minorities, and 15 percent are women.<sup>10</sup> I saw many KPS teams of men and women in the streets everywhere; they appear to be taking community policing seriously. I observed them on the street in all of the towns we visited, talking to people, answering questions (including mine), and being quite visible. In some instances, the KPS provides security for minority returnees, which is a positive step, because the KPS is the security unit that will remain after UNMIK and the Kosovo Enforcement Force (KFOR) leave. Without a safe, secure environment, sustainable progress in the development of a civil, politically mature, and economically healthy society cannot occur.

### Improved Education Standards

Parallel health and education systems existed in Kosovo for over a decade before NATO intervened in 1999. The Kosovo Serbs ran the public system, using public and municipal facilities and following orders from Belgrade. The Kosovar Albanians ran the private system essentially underground in their homes or in Mother Teresa Society ambulancias or clinics. One young taxi driver told me that most of his elementary and all of his high-school classes took place in private Albanian homes because the government would not allow Kosovar Albanians to teach in government schools. They also banned the Albanian language after Yugoslavia repealed Kosovo's quasiautonomous status in 1989. When I was in Kosovo in 1998, a small Albanian school met in one room in the home of neighbors of the Albanian family with whom I stayed.

Kosovar Albanians, Kosovar Serbs, and some other minority groups still choose to emphasize their cultural, linguistic, religious, and historical differences. The educational system must address these challenges. The two universities in Kosovo epitomize the situation. The University of Pristina teaches in Albanian for Albanian students; the University of Mitrovica teaches only in Slavic languages for Serb and other Slavic-speaking students. The University of Mitrovica refuses to recognize the authority of Kosovo's ministry of education, and the ministry re-

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Kosovar civil authorities, various NGO representatives, and KFOR personnel at a groundbreaking ceremony in Gnjilane, Kosovo.

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fuses to recognize the university. This battle has stalled adoption of the law on higher education, but even if the law is successfully adopted, the challenge of educational systems teaching in different languages and resisting ethnic and linguistic integration will remain. Neither the University of Pristina nor the University of Mitrovica can guarantee a secure study environment for students of another ethnicity.<sup>11</sup>

The educational system also suffers from corruption. Teachers are so poorly paid that many of the best-educated teachers work as interpreters for international organizations because the salaries are so much better. Students have to pay to register in the universities, regardless of their grades in secondary school. Because the best students often do not have the money to pay the registration fees, the universities admit those with poorer academic records who have the money. Students must also pay "under the

Kosovo Police in Zhegra, 16 June 2002.

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table” to take their examinations, and paying under the table is a growing industry. As a result, many outside of Kosovo are beginning to question the legitimacy of educational certificates from Kosovo institutions.

### **Better Health Quality**

Completely reliable demographic data are lacking in Kosovo because most of the majority Kosovar Albanian population boycotted the last census, which was held in 1991. Nevertheless, my colleagues in the medical profession are certain that both Kosovars and their health care system are sick. The following excerpt from the article “Condition Stable, Prognosis Uncertain” illustrates just how sick.<sup>12</sup>

“Recent statistics show that one person in four suffers from cardiovascular disease and one in five either from lung or kidney disease. Every second hospital death is because of heart disease, stroke, or cancer. Every eight hours a newborn baby dies in Kosovo, yet many would survive in better conditions.

“With an infant mortality rate (children up to 1 year of age) of 35 per 1,000 (live births) and a newborn death rate of 29 per 1,000, Kosovo ranks lower than anywhere else in Europe, lower even than some

developing countries. Major contributing factors to the poor state of health include postwar-related trauma (25 percent of all Kosovans are still believed to suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), severe environmental hazards (Pristina is synonymous with pollution), and other old and new public health threats, such as tuberculosis, smoking, alcohol abuse, and HIV/AIDS.”<sup>13</sup>

In a health-needs assessment I did for an INGO in Kosovo in 1998, I found that water and sanitation infrastructures were marginal to inadequate in many cities and most rural areas. The situation is even worse now because of damage to facilities during the conflict and the influx of rural people to the cities, which has overloaded already inadequate facilities. In many areas, electric power is intermittent and unpredictable, subsequently

reducing the availability of clean water and sanitary waste management. As a result water-borne illnesses are prevalent.

To address these major health needs, Kosovo's health policy working group, aided by World Health Organization (WHO) consultants, wrote a health policy for Kosovo in January 2001 and submitted it to the PISG for action.<sup>14</sup> The policy emphasizes primary health care (PHC). The entry point to the health system is the PHC physician at one of three types of family health centers: puncta, small outreach units in rural communities staffed by nurses and regularly visited by PHC doctors; family health centers in larger villages staffed by PHC doctors; and family health centers in the main towns of municipalities that provide medical and dental services and emergency care 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Specialists in district hospitals provide secondary care on an in- and outpatient basis. The University of Pristina (UP) Hospital provides all tertiary care. Except for emergencies, lower levels in the system must refer all patients to facilities that can provide a higher level of care; thus, family health centers refer patients to district hospitals, and district hospitals or family health centers refer patients to the UP hospital. A mental health care system is to be de-

veloped. Kosovo's proposed health system is orderly and clean on paper, but this is seldom the case in implementation.

The health policy for Kosovo addresses the need for doctors and hospitals but barely mentions the need for appropriate support personnel. Some would say this need is understood and goes without saying, but I worked in a number of countries' health systems for WHO and for NGOs training trainers of health care support personnel, and I discovered that the reason government health policies do not address the need for appropriate health support personnel is because they ignore these needs. I believe this is the case in Kosovo's health plan as well. Kosovo needs more nurses, lab technicians, therapists, health educators, and other support personnel. No matter how competent the doctors and how wonderfully equipped the hospitals, without adequate and competent support personnel, people suffer and die needlessly.

Kosovo's health policy is ambitious and should provide the population with sound health and medical care—if fully implemented. This is a big “if.” External funding is drying up rapidly. International funding assistance for Kosovo in 2003 is projected to be \$231 million, a 58 percent decrease from 2001.<sup>15</sup> The government's health budget is inadequate. Many doctors are opening private practices, siphoning off patients who can pay for services. Many qualified doctors and other health care personnel have left Kosovo for employment opportunities elsewhere. Many hospital and clinic buildings are old and suffer from war damage and neglect. Even Pristina University Hospital has a limited supply of clean running water and supplies, and the availability of electricity is unreliable.

Kosovo is located in a region that has one of the fastest growing HIV epidemics in the world. In May 2003, according to the Kosovo AIDS Committee (KOSAIDS), the official count of HIV/AIDS was 45 known cases since 1986.<sup>16</sup> The first known case was a man who returned from working in Germany during the 1980s; he infected his wife, and she, their son. After his death, the woman infected a number of men, and the disease spread. Most new cases are the result of sharing needles while injecting drugs. The disease then spreads through sexual activity to users' partners. This pattern is similar to one found throughout Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Republics. Condom use is not socially well accepted in Kosovo, and therefore, condoms are not readily available or widely used. The Population Services International (PSI) group now working with KOSAIDS is trying to change attitudes toward condom use through social marketing activities. PSI provides HIV/AIDS posters and billboards, which can

be seen throughout the country.

The chairperson of the Kosovo's HIV/AIDS awareness technical group expressed concern that because of multiple risk factors in Kosovo, HIV will spread rapidly unless health officials take serious measures to educate the population about HIV risk factors and prevention. He noted that before the war two or three houses of prostitution existed in the country, but now brothels and roadhouses “are like mushrooms after a rain.”<sup>17</sup>

One local NGO official told me that the situation in Kosovo is worse now than before 1999. “Then,” he said, “the two parallel systems [in education and health] worked better for the people than what we have now.”<sup>18</sup>

### **Economic Development**

A *Focus Kosovo* summary of the issues facing the Balkans and Eastern Europe states, “There are three dynamics unfolding in the region. These will converge in 2004. The first is the inevitable but painful adjustment to the end of reconstruction aid, which has kept Bosnia and Kosovo afloat in the postconflict period. The second is the deepening employment crisis caused by the collapse of the old socialist industries. For much of the region, economic transition has meant deindustrialization, with only a modest response in the new private sector. The third is the growing disenchantment of citizens with the democratic process itself, which they perceive as unresponsive to their needs and powerless to reverse the social and economic decline.”<sup>19</sup>

Kosovo is one of the poorest countries in the Balkans. Various surveys estimate that more than 50 percent of the population is poor, and 12 percent extremely poor.<sup>20</sup> Poverty is most prevalent in rural populations, where many people live in damaged housing, in female-headed households, in households where there are large numbers of children, and in households of the unemployed, the disabled, the elderly, and demobilized war veterans.

One of the major problems UNMIK must address is privatization. In the privatization process, the first 6 of Kosovo's 410 socially owned enterprises (SOEs) are for sale to individuals or corporations. It will be at least a year before any of these SOEs will be able to produce enough goods to increase employment significantly and begin exporting. How to get formerly state-owned industrial property and land into competitive production is a major problem many former socialist states face.

International government organizations (IGOs) and INGOs employ a large number of expatriates who reside in Kosovo, especially in Pristina, and they have created a “false economy,” which is affecting the local population in a number of ways. The amount



Albanian doctors at work in the Vitina Health House, Zitinje, Kosovo, 23 February 2003,

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and types of imported goods have greatly increased to meet the expatriates’ demand. The ratio of imports to exports is 11 to 1.

Rents, taxi fees, and the prices restaurants and other establishments charge their customers have soared because the expatriates are able and willing to pay more for these goods and services. Salaries for Kosovars who work for IGOs and INGOs are several times higher than salaries Kosovars earn working for local governments, organizations, or the private sector. One NGO executive noted, “Now that the international agencies are beginning to downsize, local people who have worked for them and have gained skills are doing everything they can to leave Kosovo to go where they can make a better living. All of the services that have grown to meet the internationals’ demands—housing, restaurants, drivers, imports, and so on—are going to collapse when the internationals leave.”<sup>21</sup>

In the meantime, some economic success stories exist, including auto parts companies and Balkan Rubber, which exports fan belts and conveyor belts to Goodyear. The mushroom export business to Italy

is increasing. Kosovo has abundant coal and mineral resources to mine and export, and Kosovo can use these resources to generate electricity for domestic use and for export to Europe. Kosovo has successfully converted its currency from the German Mark to the Euro rather than to a nonconvertible currency like that of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is another potential economic plus.

Agricultural experts say that Kosovo can meet 70 percent of its food requirements through improved agricultural practices, but the high level of imports of food from Macedonia, Albania, and Turkey is undermining Kosovo’s agricultural base and leading to an increasing dependence on imports. Many farmers who came to the cities during the conflict do not want to go back and work the land. They know that Kosovo imports so much food that they can no longer make a living farming.

One UNMIK official pointed out, “Kosovo is a suburb and will always be a suburb. Much of Kosovo’s economy will continue to depend on the money sent home by Kosovar guest workers living

elsewhere in Europe.”<sup>22</sup> Because over 50 percent of Kosovo’s population is under 25 years old, Kosovo has a cheap domestic labor force available for work in Western Europe where labor forces are shrinking as the population ages. Kosovo has a powerful Diaspora, especially in Germany and the U.S., which can provide capital for Kosovo’s economic development, but this will not occur until crime and corruption abate.

Smuggling, trafficking, bribery, extortion, theft, money laundering, huge gray and black markets, the failure to collect taxes, import duties, and tariffs, and the growing presence of organized crime are undermining legitimate economic development in Kosovo. Recently a unit of the Italian guardia de finanza (financial inspection unit) came to Kosovo to investigate money-laundering, drug trafficking, and smuggling and to prevent money made from illegal activities from leaving Kosovo for use elsewhere.<sup>23</sup>

The rule of law is improving in Kosovo. The local judiciary now deals with 100 percent of civil cases and 97 percent of criminal cases. Of 359 local judges, 4.8 percent are Kosovar Serbs, and 5.4 per-

cent are from other minority groups. Of the 46 local prosecutors, 2 percent are Kosovar Serbs, and 6 percent are from other minorities. Twenty-four percent of the local judiciary are women.<sup>24</sup> Another positive step is the development of the trafficking and prostitution investigation unit set up jointly with UNMIK and KPS to deal with trafficking in humans, particularly women.

Much still needs to be done. Recent international community polls show increasing dissatisfaction with the Kosovar government, which plays into the hands of criminal and nationalistic groups for whom a certain amount of chaos is beneficial. This also improves the climate for the substantial gray economy and black market.

### **Increased Employment**

In Kosovo, as in many other formerly socialist countries, the onset of democracy has led to deindustrialization. The collapse of a socialist system in which virtually everyone had a job (such as it was) has increased unemployment. The facilities and equipment at SOEs were obsolete before the conflict and damaged and looted during the conflict, making it difficult for the SOEs to return to production. Many SOEs are derelict at present. For example, in Peja/Pec, former socialist enterprises employed more than 10,000 people in 1990 and now employ only 1,500.<sup>25</sup> The SOEs' privatization will help employment in the long run when these enterprises return to production, but meanwhile, an exodus of expatriates is causing Kosovo to lose many service-sector jobs and much of its economic base.

In early 2003, as noted, the Kosovo statistics office put the unemployment rate at 57 percent with even higher rates for rural people, members of minority groups, youth, and women.<sup>26</sup> The records of an NGO's prenatal clinic in old Pristina indicate that of the almost 2,000 Muslim women registered, 98.8 percent are unemployed, and 80 percent of their husbands are unemployed as well. Ten percent have had no schooling; 62 percent have had only an elementary school education; 25 percent have had some secondary school education; and only two percent have completed secondary school. Sixty-one percent live in families of 10 or more. Many Kosovars now realize that they must not have children they cannot afford and are seeking contraceptives, many for the first time.

Because industry is still quite limited, the public sector continues to be a major employer. Ninety percent of civil servants in ministries are Kosovar Albanians, 10 percent are from minority groups, and members of minority groups hold only 1.3 percent of management-level positions. Eighty-six percent of municipal workers are Kosovar Albanians, 11 per-

cent are Kosovar Serbs, and 3 percent are non-Serb minorities (Roma, Ashkali, Egyptians, Turks, Bosniaks, and Goranis). Forty percent of municipal civil servants are women, but the percent of women who hold management positions is unknown.<sup>27</sup>

Women make up a large proportion of the unemployed in Kosovo. There are many female-headed households because men are leaving the country for

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employment as a result of the conflict. As a result, many INGOs and NGOs are focusing on helping women develop marketable skills. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) assists many of these NGOs through the Kosovo Women's Initiative. Other NGOs are focusing on helping farmers improve their agricultural and livestock practices to increase production, generate surpluses they can market, and eventually develop an export capability.

### **Pension and Social Assistance**

One of the most frightening aspects of the transition from socialism to capitalism is the loss of socialist safety nets such as full employment, free health care, and pensions, however small and irregularly paid. For older people, the loss of pensions and health care means the loss of security in retirement. For young people, the lack of social supports is yet another incentive for them to leave Kosovo as soon as they can.

In 2001, UNMIK's pensions policy was "to avoid recreating an old socialist pension system; to create a pension system that covers the whole population; to address the needs of all population groups and to seek a comprehensive solution addressing all ethnic groups."<sup>28</sup> Groups eligible for pensions include all persons over 65, whether they contributed to the previous pension system or not; previous recipients of disability and family or survivor pensions; older workers nearing retirement; and even some younger workers.<sup>29</sup>

UNMIK Press Release 794 (31 July 2002) announced the introduction of the basic pension plan at the level of 28 euros per month.<sup>30</sup> The cost of





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Serbian residents of Strpce, Kosovo, at a local middle school where 30 jobs with Brown and Root Services were to be offered, 15 August 2001.

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the average consumer basket of goods for subsistence is 52 euros per month.<sup>31</sup> This shortfall between Kosovo’s basic pension plan benefits and the cost of living is a major problem that the authorities must address, particularly given the current rate of inflation. Clearly, Kosovo has a long way to go to meet the needs of its elderly population, a social group whose numbers are increasing because many elderly in the Diaspora are returning home to Kosovo for their final years.

### **Integration of All Communities**

Although the overwhelming majority of Kosovo’s population is Albanian, significant communities of Serbs, Roma, Ashkalia, Egyptians, Muslim Slavs (Goranis), Bosniaks, and Turks exist. Many in these ethnic groups have experienced harassment and violations of their human rights since the 1999 conflict, and as a result, many have clustered into monoethnic enclaves where they feel more secure. For Ashkalia, Egyptians, and especially the Roma, discrimination in Europe is nothing new. They look physically different from most of the indigenous population. They stand out, which makes discriminating against them that much easier. Often Kosovars and others lump the three minorities together and refer to them as Gypsies—which is not a complimentary term.

In a January 2003 report on minority returnees to Kosovo, UNHCR noted that “to be safe, digni-

with Serbian or Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY)—not Kosovo (KS)—license plates on their vehicles. The Ukrainian KFOR was escorting them. The introduction of neutral KS license plates, which do not identify the owner’s place of residence and thereby in many cases the owner’s ethnicity, has greatly facilitated freedom of movement. KS license plates are legal throughout Europe; however, Serbia has refused to recognize KS plates. Thus many Kosovar Serbs must keep Serbian or old FRY plates on their vehicles all the time or at least when they go into Serbia.

The people with whom I spoke about the future of Kosovo’s minorities had quite different views. Some, including members of minority communities, said that all should learn to live together in peace in a multiethnic society. A multiethnic society, enshrined in UNSCR 1244 and the current Special Representative of the Secretary General’s priorities as a standard for independence for Kosovo, is the objective of the international community.

Others say the Kosovar Serbs should leave because they do not belong in Kosovo after what the Serbs did to the Kosovar Albanians for so many years. The “Serbian occupation of Kosovo,” as Kosovar Albanians refer to the 10 years preceding the overt 1999 conflict, has left an indelible imprint on the majority Kosovar Albanians.

fied and sustainable, the return of members of the Serb, Roma, Ashkaelia, and Egyptian communities can only take place on a voluntary basis and in a gradual manner. The process should allow for careful preparation of the recipient communities including the promotion of tolerance and inter-ethnic dialogue.”<sup>32</sup>

Because of their experiences and fears, minority peoples often have only limited freedom of movement in Kosovo. For example, on the way to Strpce, I passed a convoy of Serbs



I saw the parallel system functioning when I worked in Kosovo in 1998. Serbs ran all of the official institutions. Kosovar Albanians were afraid to go to such Serb-run facilities as schools, hospitals, universities, law courts, and police stations, and they were generally barred from going to them even if they wanted to. Kosovar Albanians have not forgotten their experiences at the hands of the Serbs. No Kosovar Albanian with whom I talked considers reunification with Serbia a viable proposition. Most internationals with whom I spoke also see reunification as impossible.

An LDK member recently noted that young men in Kosovo's majority Muslim population suffer from high unemployment, poverty, and increasing hopelessness and warned that Islamist fundamentalists could take advantage of these conditions. Areas of high unemployment, poverty, and hopelessness are the breeding grounds not only for crime, but also for radicalism. In this regard, I see some worrisome symptoms that were not apparent in 1998 or 2001: Muslims are building many new mosques, although attendance is scant; more men are wearing full beards, not just mustaches; more women are wearing scarves in public; Saudi Arabia is involved in mosque and hospital construction and the purchase of amplifiers for the Muslim call to prayer; and suspect fundamentalist schools or madrassas are developing.

Kosovo has made essentially no progress in developing a viable economy and will not be able to do so until its final status is decided. In its current state of limbo, Kosovo cannot obtain funding from the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank because it is not an independent country. Members of the substantial Kosovo Diaspora in Western Europe and North America who might invest in Kosovo are unwilling to do so because of what might happen to their investment because of Kosovo's current political uncertainties. Many believe that Kosovo could attract such investments and achieve a viable economy if it were independent, but it cannot become viably independent without external investments. Thus, a classic Catch-22 exists.

As one member of the UNHCR staff noted, women are not at the negotiating or planning table despite the fact that women worldwide have demonstrated that they can be key players in peacemaking and peacekeeping. Still, Kosovo requires much more involvement of women in planning and decisionmaking as it goes forward to independence and membership in the European Union (EU). Women can see that critical social needs such as obtaining better schools and health care are objectives of vital importance.<sup>33</sup> These issues are sometimes less of a priority for men. That women must

involve themselves in building a civil society is a fairly new idea in Kosovo, although some Kosovars are receptive to it.

In Annan's report to the UN Security Council on UNMIK in June 2003, he noted, "Unilateral calls from Kosovar Albanians, Kosovar Serbs, and from Belgrade for mutually exclusive approaches to

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Kosovo's future have continued. Such calls do not contribute to reconciliation and interethnic dialogue. On the one hand, the Kosovo Albanian leadership continues to call for an accelerated path toward Kosovo's independence. On the other hand, Belgrade continues to seek co-governance with UNMIK and, in lending acceptance to parallel structures, supports the boycott of UNMIK's policies and programs. Such public positions do not address the practical realities and challenges faced in normalizing the society in Kosovo and providing for the well being of its people. Indeed, they can have a detrimental effect on Kosovo's continued progress forward by entrenching mutually exclusive positions and thus undermining opportunities for dialogue and reconciliation."<sup>34</sup> Talks between Pristina and Belgrade continue, but they are not going well; progress, even on such minor issues as license plate recognition, is not being made.

A UNMIK colleague has described the question of Kosovo's final status as follows: "Final status is a can of gasoline with a tight lid, but a lot of people are playing with matches. Bosnia was exhausted by its war, and few there would want to go to war again, but the war in Kosovo was short and many issues remain unresolved. Therefore, more violence in Kosovo is likely, particularly if independence is denied. The Serbs in Kosovo are still holding out for Serbia to save them. It's a fantasy that Belgrade will save them. Serbia has no moral or viable claim to Kosovo. Many Kosovar Albanians fear the return of Kosovar Serbs means also the return of Serbia. They feel that Europe sold Kosovo out before and will do so again."<sup>35</sup>

Many people with whom I have spoken emphasized the need for the U.S. to take an active role in

***Kosovar Albanians have not forgotten their experiences at the hands of the Serbs. No Kosovar Albanian with whom I talked considers reunification with Serbia a viable proposition. . . . Many believe that Kosovo could . . . achieve a viable economy if it were independent, but it cannot become viably independent without external investments. Thus, a classic Catch-22 exists.***

shaping Kosovo's future. An LDK member of the Assembly said emphatically, "Kosovo will not accept the EU lead here, only that of the U.S."<sup>36</sup> She realizes that the U.S. is preoccupied with the war on terrorism, Iraq, and a peaceful settlement in Palestine, but she believes that U.S. leadership in the transition of Kosovo to independence is essential. She believes Kosovo should wait until the U.S. is ready to take the lead rather than force the issue of independence now.

Kosovo's final boundaries are also an issue. The potential for partition exists, with a portion of the Presevo Valley becoming part of Kosovo in exchange for the mining area north of Mitrovica going to Serbia (which reportedly wants it). But many believe that changes in Kosovo's borders would set a precedent and cause other Balkan states to demand border changes. Attempts to change a number of borders could precipitate a regional war. An LDK assembly member believes Kosovo's and the region's stability depends on maintaining the integrity of independent Kosovo's borders. Concerns about a Greater Albania are unfounded, she believes, since all Balkan states realize that their future is as

part of the EU. She also believes that Montenegro will separate from Serbia in 2006 and seek its independence, which is another reason for Kosovo to seek its independence from Serbia. Again, such a move could open a Balkans' Pandora's box.

## Building a Viable Future

All of the peoples of Kosovo have suffered at each other's hands and at the hands of outsiders. The time for revenge is past; the time to unite to build a viable future in Kosovo is at hand. To paraphrase Mahatma Gandhi, if Kosovar Albanians and Kosovar Serbs and Kosovo's other ethnic groups continue to take an eye for an eye, soon all in Kosovo will be blind.

Resolving the final status for Kosovo in a peaceful, equitable manner for all Kosovars regardless of their ethnicity might yet turn out to be the critical issue in building and maintaining stability throughout the Balkans. The United States and Europe have a vital interest in a stable Balkans.

KFOR commander General Fabio Mini has said that he believes KFOR will continue in its present form for at least 5 years.<sup>37</sup> He said KFOR could hand over its duties one day to troops from Macedonia, Bosnia, Serbia-Montenegro, Albania, and Kosovo, operating under a NATO umbrella. He believes that unification of these armed forces could contribute to unification of the fragile Balkans after a decade of bloody ethnic conflicts. NATO officials quickly emphasized that this is Mini's idea and not NATO policy. The idea, however, is novel, and one that could enable the Balkan states to achieve and maintain their own stability. That would be good news indeed for people who have been through so many traumas. **MR**

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