



**DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EXTERNAL POLICIES  
POLICY DEPARTMENT**



**THE DECENTRALISATION  
PROCESS IN KOSOVO  
AND THE CREATION OF  
THE NEW  
MUNICIPALITIES  
(a Kosovo-Albanian and  
a Kosovo-Serb minority  
view)**

**AFET**



DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EXTERNAL POLICIES OF THE UNION

**DIRECTORATE B**

POLICY DEPARTMENT

STUDY

**THE DECENTRALIZATION PROCESS IN KOSOVO  
AND THE CREATION OF THE NEW MUNICIPALITIES  
a Kosovo-Albanian and a Kosovo-Serb minority view**

This study was requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs.

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## **SUMMARY ASSESSMENT OF THE POINTS OF CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE BETWEEN THE TWO NOTES ON THE DECENTRALIZATION PROCESS**

The AFET committee has requested two briefing notes (AFET/FWC/2009-01/Lot1/22-23) on the decentralization process in Kosovo and the creation of the new municipalities, one from the Kosovo Albanian angle and the other from the Kosovo Serb-minority angle. The present summary assesses the points of convergence and points of divergence between the two notes. To do so, it follows the set of themes provided by the specifications in order to enable a comparative reading.

Overall, both notes agree on the fact that decentralization is a process still in the making in Kosovo. They however emphasize different issues and problems and they also diverge on solutions to be found, especially when it comes to the Northern part of Kosovo and to parallel structures.

### **Legal framework**

Both notes emphasize that the legal framework on local government is well developed as a result of a number of new laws or amendments to some 35 existing laws.

The notes also indicate that the legal framework takes into account the principles enshrined in major European documents, e.g. the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

The two notes finally converge on the large competencies devoluted to municipalities. Both of them start from the fact that according to the Constitution of Kosovo, municipalities are the basic unit of local government.

Whereas there is no real divergence in this section, the two notes however reflect different analysis grids. The note written under the Kosovo Albanian angle emphasizes the efforts required from Kosovo authorities for decentralizing within a short timeframe and indicates that owing to the tight period in which the legal framework was revised, there are still gaps in the legislation. The note written from the point of view of Serb minorities stresses that even though Serb communities have a privileged status, their competencies are limited by the fact that they are subject to Kosovo Ministry of Local Governance's supervision for checking compliance with legislation.

### **Local Elections**

Both notes agree on the importance of November 2009 elections for the decentralization process; they stress that the participation of Kosovo Serbs contributed to making this test a success.

The note written from a Kosovo Serb angle points to Belgrade and its supported parallel structures as the major losers in this election, owing to the higher turnout than expected.

The note written from a Kosovo Albanian angle puts the emphasis on the responsibility of international stakeholders for the unpreparedness of the Kosovo government which was bound to

made crucial decisions at the last moment owing to the lack of a consensus among international actors.

### **The newly created municipalities and the challenges with which they are confronted**

According to the note written from a Kosovo Albanian angle, elections have produced legitimate local Serb leaderships and assemblies are functioning in all the new municipalities. However, the note emphasizes a lack of political will at a central and particularly at a local level which hinders the transfer of competencies to the new municipalities. It also stresses the obstructive role played by Belgrade and by the parallel structures, both on the functioning of the new municipalities and in the adaptation process of Serb minorities to the Kosovo legal framework.

The note written from a Kosovo Serb angle is much less optimistic in that it highlights the persistence of local divisions and rivalries after the elections which may foster corruption and nepotism, but also partition. As far as Belgrade and parallel structures are concerned, it points to the development of cooperation schemes with the new municipalities, although this is not the case everywhere.

### **Relations with the central government**

Both notes converge on the central government's position vis-à-vis new municipalities being driven by fear and mistrust. Both of them also observe that such fear is not really justified, yet for different reasons (owing to the elections results and SLS' victory which pave the way for a partnership with PDK according to the Kosovo Serb note, and owing to the possibility for central government to dissolve municipal authorities according to the Kosovo Albanian note).

However, the note written from a Kosovo Albanian angle also puts the emphasis on the limited latitude of the Government, in particular on the impossibility for the Government to annul municipal acts even though they do not comply with Kosovo laws. Such observation contradicts the point of view expressed by the note written from a Kosovo Serb angle: in the legal framework section, the latter stressed the limits brought to the competencies of municipalities.

### **Financing**

The note written from a Kosovo Serb angle points out shortcomings in the way in which the decentralization process is financed. These pertain to a lack of coordination between international donors and the Kosovo government. The latter is criticised for not providing a transparent picture of funds allocation and taking advantage of international assistance to reduce its own commitments.

On the contrary, the note written from a Kosovo Albanian angle emphasizes the positive sides of the process, *inter alia* the commitment of international donors and the efforts of the MGLA to assist the new municipalities.

Both notes converge on stressing the lack of human resources in the new municipalities. Yet, whereas for the Kosovo Serb this challenge calls for increased outside assistance, the Kosovo Albanian note indicates that civil servants of the new municipalities are also employed in the parallel structures and should instead be included in the Kosovo system.

## **The Municipalities in the North**

The note written from a Kosovo Albanian angle puts the emphasis on the efforts by the Government for integrating Northern Kosovo. These include drafting a dedicated strategy at the end of 2009 and providing regular financial allocations to the Northern Municipalities. The note points to the international community's responsibility in hindering the integration process, more specifically to its tolerance for the parallel elections in Mitrovica North and to the lack of EU support for the Government's strategy as the main obstacles in its implementation.

The analysis proposed by the Kosovo Serb note is drastically different. It points to the different situation between the Serb enclaves and the North of Kosovo which has much stronger links with Belgrade and therefore is less dependent vis-à-vis Pristina. In this context, the only possible approach for the Kosovo government is to engage discussions both with Belgrade and with parallel structures in the field.

## **Parallel structures**

Both notes converge on the facts that parallel structures constitute a danger for new municipalities and that they may disappear over time, yet they provide different justifications to this diagnosis.

The Kosovo Serb note suggests that staff may work both for newly established municipalities and for parallel structures, thus rendering the latter obsolete. It also puts the emphasis on Serbia's limited latitude vis-à-vis these structures which it cannot extinguish.

The note written from a Kosovo Albanian angle indicates that the Kosovo Government does not have any strategy to dissolve parallel structures and that it relies upon the decreasing financial commitments from Belgrade (in connection with its policy for partition of Kosovo) in order for them to become less threatening. It also argues that the approach adopted with enclaves would also prove successful for the North of Kosovo.

# **THE DECENTRALIZATION PROCESS IN KOSOVO:**

## **A Kosovo-Albanian view**



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Key findings:

The overall Serb turnout was ten times higher in the elections in independent Kosovo than in November 2007, and higher than in Serbia-organized parallel elections of May 2008 and August 2009. Three new municipalities, Gracanica, Ranilug and Klllokot/Vrbovac, were created by a decision made on 15 September 2009, while two others, Mitrovica North and Partes, are due to be created during this year. This process is effectively discrediting the idea of partition of Kosovo, and giving new impetus to a multi-ethnic state-building process.

Most of the legislation has been drafted or amended in a very short period of time, leaving some gaps that are now being identified. The draft-amendments are due to be presented to the Assembly by June 2010. In all three new municipalities Gracanica, Ranilug and Klllokot/Vrbovac, the municipal assemblies are functional. The Ministry of Local Government Administration (MLGA) has initiated a process of transfer of municipal documentation from “mother municipalities” and from the central level. This transfer of files and other data is scheduled to be finished within a period of three months. However, the agreement foresees that in case of any delay, parties will coordinate extension of this timeline, without being obliged to formally sign any additional agreement.

Elected leaders of Kosovo Serb municipalities face pressure from their community for rapid delivery of the promises they made aiming at quick improvement of their lives. The existence of the parallel structures represents another hindering factor for the functionality of the new municipalities. While the parallel structures deliver only financial benefits to the Serbs, they cannot offer development. Kosovo salaries cannot match the high wages in the parallel system. Meanwhile, Serbia has committed 42 million Euros for parallel structures and is not showing any sign that it will change its policy towards participation of Serb communities in political institutions of Kosovo. Moreover, Serbia’s path towards EU is wide open, without being specifically conditioned by a change of policy towards northern Kosovo.

There is a widespread belief that northern Serb-controlled, municipalities of Leposaviq, Zvecan and Zubin Potok, do not cooperate with Kosovo institutions. However, in the budget plan for 2010, Kosovo government has allocated a regular financial amount of €8 million for the functioning of these municipalities. In December 2009, the International Civilian Office (ICO) and the Government of Kosovo presented a strategy for integration of northern Kosovo. On 24 February, 2010, the government appointed Ylber Hysa, former MP and former adviser to the mayor of Mitrovica, to serve as coordinator for implementation of the strategy for northern Kosovo. The biggest problem with the strategy is that the EU does not officially support it. The problem lies in the lack of political support coming from Brussels for the implementation of the strategy and effective operations of EULEX to provide the necessary level of rule of law in the area.

### Conclusions and recommendations:

The process of decentralization marks a consolidation of co-existence between the Albanians and Serbs in independent Kosovo. Decentralization is proving to be the most successful tool for preserving and developing the multi-ethnic character of Kosovo.

The transfer of competencies from the central level and "mother" municipalities is being implemented but is facing serious difficulties. These difficulties stem from the lack of political will from the Pristina authorities to rapidly strengthen the new municipalities. This must change in order to maintain the confidence of the Serbs in the process in which they have significantly participated. The success of decentralization south of the River Ibar will also show that it can be successful in the north.

The international presence in Kosovo should have a coherent policy towards northern Kosovo. The "Strategy for the Integration of the North" provides a comprehensive approach, which guarantees the territorial integrity of Kosovo. This strategy applies the Ahtisaari package as a whole and excludes possibilities to implement this package selectively. In addition, it creates the basis for democratisation, introducing a market economy and the rule of law in this area. Therefore, the strategy needs more substantial support from the international community, specifically the EU.

The disabling and withdrawal of the parallel structures of Belgrade in northern Kosovo depends on the political will in Brussels and EU member states. EULEX has failed to introduce itself and exercise the rule of law competencies in the northern Kosovo. The lack of performance of EULEX questions the strength of the EU and the future of the ESDP missions.

## **1 DECENTRALIZATION PROCESS: A FABRIC FOR RENEWED CO-EXISTENCE**

Kosovo is entering a new phase of development concerning inter-ethnic relations with the implementation of decentralization, which derives from the Comprehensive Status Proposal (CSP). The participation of Kosovo Serbs in the municipal elections on November 15, 2009 has created a convenient climate in Kosovo for co-existence between the two main communities – Albanians and Serbs.

The overall Serb turnout was ten times higher in the elections in independent Kosovo than in November 2007, and higher than in Serbia-organized parallel elections of May 2008 and August 2009.

Creation of new municipalities across ethnic lines, which would bring the power closer to communities living in Kosovo, has been part of this plan. So far, three new municipalities, Gračanica, Ranilug and Klllokot/Vrbovac, were created by a decision made on 15 September 2009, while two others, Mitrovica North and Partes, are due to be created this year. In addition to this, Kosovo authorities have created two new municipalities in areas inhabited by Albanians, Junik and Hani i Elezit, and a municipal unit in Mamusha, a settlement inhabited by Kosovo Turks.

The Kosovo Serb majority municipalities have constituted municipal assemblies and local governments in these municipalities. The process of making these municipalities fully functional is ongoing, with a gradual transfer of powers from the central level and strengthening of capacities for execution of local powers. The new administrations are faced with high demand for services from their local population.

This indicates a success of the decentralization process, showing that Serbs are willing to integrate within the Kosovo legal and institutional framework. This process is effectively discrediting the idea of partition of Kosovo and giving new impetus to a multi-ethnic state-building process.

The success of decentralization provides the strongest institutional and legal framework within which the Albanians and the Serbs have a historic opportunity to work together. This improves the opportunity for co-existence given two decades of institutional separation and armed conflict.

## **2 THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

According to the Constitution of Kosovo, Municipalities are the basic units of self-government, executing their exclusive and delegated powers. The list of the exclusive powers has been expanded with the new Law on Local Self-Government<sup>1</sup>. This law, together with the Law on Administrative Municipal Borders, and Law on Local Government Finances, regulate local governance in Kosovo.

This framework determines that municipalities shall exercise their competences in accordance with the principle of subsidiary. It also takes into account the principles of local self-government enshrined in the European Charter of Local Self Government and its Protocols, the Framework

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<sup>1</sup> The new Law on Local Self-Government, which entered into force in June 2008, defines that municipalities have full competencies in all local issues, including local economic development and taxation policies.

Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the European Outline Convention on the Trans-frontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities and its Protocols.

While implementing the decentralization plan, in accordance with the CSP, Kosovo authorities had to initiate changes in some 35 laws, in order to descend the decision-making process from the central government to municipal governments.

The last round of legislative changes that will affect the decentralization process and the municipal governance in general, has to do with laws that will increase the quality of municipal services. The main law in this group is the Law on Civil Service due to be adopted by the end of April 2010.

The Ministry of Local Government Administration (MLGA) sees the legislative framework for the decentralization process almost complete. Most of the legalisation has been drafted or amended in a very short period of time, leaving some gaps that are now being identified. The MLGA aims to present the draft-amendments to the Assembly by June 2010, thus completing the legislative framework on decentralization. However, the completion of legal framework does not guarantee that the current dynamics of transfer of powers to the new municipalities will be accelerated.

### **3 LOCAL ELECTIONS: PREPARATIONS, TIMING, CHALLENGES AND RESULTS**

Kosovo elections of 15 November 2009 were crucial for the success of decentralization. A satisfactory participation of Kosovo Serbs in these elections has legitimised the creation of new municipalities, and has produced legitimate local Serb leaderships. The Serbs won in three new municipalities – Gračanica, Ranilug, Kllokot/Vrbovac; lost in the enlarged Novo Brdo and won in Strpce. There was virtually no participation in the three municipalities in the north – Zvečan, Zubin Potok and Leposavić. Elections in Partes and Mitrovica North were not organised, as these two municipalities had not been created at that time.

Most of the decisions regarding the creation of the new municipalities for the 15 November elections were made at the last moment. The lack of a consensus between international stakeholders in Kosovo regarding the creation of the new municipalities paralyzed the Government of Kosovo. Furthermore, the collision within the international community presence in Kosovo almost brought the entire decentralization process to the brink of failure.

The final list of municipalities where elections would be held was decided just a few hours before the deadline of the Central Election Commission (CEC) for certification of candidates that would run in these elections. Some Serb candidates complained that they could not apply for certification, as they were not aware whether there would be new municipalities to run in or not.

Participation of Kosovo Serbs in these elections was ten times higher than the participation in the elections of 2007, which were organised by the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). In both rounds on 15 November and 13 December 2009, over 10,000 Serbs cast their ballots, up from roughly 1,300 in 2007. The overall Serb electoral body in Kosovo is estimated to be around 85,000.

The most dominant Kosovo Serb political force emerged to be the Independent Liberal Party (SLS), which participates in the institutions of Kosovo. SLS won in Gračanica, Kllokot / Vrbovac, Ranilug and Strpce. The Serbs lost in Novo Brdo despite the fact they constitute roughly 75% of the total

population in the municipality. The turnout was low due to extreme pressure from the parallel institutions and Belgrade.

The Serbs in the north fully boycotted the local elections. Citizens of Mitrovica North and Partes were eligible to vote in their mother-municipalities - Mitrovica and Gjilan/Gnjilane - as these municipal units were not ready for elections. The Serbs did not vote in Mitrovica North, while in Partes roughly 700 Kosovo Serbs participated in the elections.

The municipal preparatory team (MPT) that will work on the creation of the municipality of Partes was formed in December 2009, whereas the one for Mitrovica North was only established in February 2010. The elections in Partes will be held on 20 June 2010, while there is still no date for Mitrovica North.

#### **4 THE NEWLY CREATED MUNICIPALITIES: CURRENT DYNAMICS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS**

In all three new municipalities Gracanica, Ranilug and Klllokot/Vrbovac, the municipal assemblies are functional. The Municipal Assembly of Gracanica was constituted on 29 December 2009, the one of Ranilug on 4 January 2010, and the Municipal Assembly of Klllokot/Vrbovac on 8 January 2010. These assemblies have adopted the necessary legislation for their work. The assemblies also set up the mandatory committees, committee for budget and finances and committees for communities, which are required by law. Municipalities have also initiated building up the administration and recruiting staff. The staff-hiring process has progressed to some 50% level.

The MLGA has initiated a process of transfer of municipal documentation from "mother municipalities" and from the central level. This transfer of files and other data is scheduled to be finished within a period of three months. However, the agreement foresees that in the case of any delay, parties will coordinate extension of this timeline, without being obliged to formally sign any additional agreement. The data that will be transferred to new municipalities include all the files in hard copies and electronic format; municipalities have already appointed key officials to deal with the transfer. The government ministries and the Kosovo Cadastral Agency (KCA) are supervising the transfer.

The transfer of competencies from central to municipal level was formalized on 31 March 2010. Three memoranda of understanding (MoU) have been signed between the new municipalities, "mother" municipalities, the MLGA, the Ministry of Economy and Finances (MEF), the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), and Kosovo's Cadastral Agency (KCA).

To date, the transfer of municipal files and competences has been delayed. This delay has been caused by "mother" municipalities, which have failed to proceed with the agreed timeline. This lack of political will, is present both at the central and local level. Also, the "mother" municipalities did not prepare in time for the process, given the late announcement date for the creation of new municipalities (15 September 2009). This creates tension between the institutions and the newly Serb elected leaderships.

With all the obstacles to the process, the MLGA opts to consider the process as successful if by the end of the year, the new municipalities are fully operational with no dependence whatsoever on the old municipalities.

## **5 CHALLENGES OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS**

Leadership of Kosovo Serb municipalities face pressure from their communities for rapid delivery of promises they made aiming at rapid improvement in their lives. The new mayors understand this, and they will be inclined to push for fast constitution of municipalities and implementation of municipal developmental and infrastructural projects.

The government of Kosovo, on the other hand, is working under the assumption that years will pass before the new municipalities will be fully functional. If full support for the new municipalities is missing by the Government of Kosovo, it will endanger the confidence of Serbs and their accommodation within Kosovo's legal and institutional framework.

The existence of the parallel structures represents another hindering factor for the functionality of the new municipalities. While the parallel structures deliver only financial benefits to the Serbs, they cannot offer development. Kosovo salaries cannot match high wages in the parallel municipalities. However, the role of these structures will diminish if the new municipalities begin providing tangible improvement to the quality of life of the local Serbs.

A day after submitting the application for EU Membership in Stockholm, Serbia committed 42 million Euros for parallel structures and is not showing any sign that it will change its policy towards participation of Serbian communities in political institutions of Kosovo. Moreover, Serbia's path towards EU is widely open, without being specifically conditioned by a change of policy towards northern Kosovo. Despite the widespread belief that northern municipalities do not cooperate with Pristina, they keep receiving regular financial assistance from the government of Kosovo. The newly created municipalities will, on top of this, continue to face basic challenges, such as lack of infrastructure.

Despite these challenges, the Government of Kosovo believes that the three new municipalities will be a "success story" by the end of the year, when the transfer of power is expected to be completed. Pristina believes that the influence of parallel institutions in these municipalities will fade during an unspecified time.

## **6 RELATIONS WITH THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT: LEGALITY AND LEGITIMACY**

Municipalities are autonomous in exercising their exclusive and delegated competences. The MLGA is the overall supervisory authority of municipalities' acts.

The Government of Kosovo cannot annul municipal acts - legislative or executive - even if they are not in line with Kosovo law or with the Constitution. In such cases, the Government may request that the municipality re-examines such decisions or acts. The request shall state the grounds of the alleged violation of the constitution or law and shall not suspend the execution of the municipal decision or other act at issue. Municipalities are then, obliged to respond to such requests for re-examination within 30 days of notification. If municipalities do not respond within the given timeline, or respond negatively regarding reconsideration of a particular act, the Government can only bring the issue to a competent court or to the Constitutional Court.

This lack of possibility for governmental intervention is the single factor behind the central government's fear of fully functioning new municipalities. They fear that in a few years time the new municipalities will take action in violation of Kosovo's Constitution and other laws. However, this fear is false. The Government has the full legal authority to dissolve municipal assemblies and call for new municipal elections. This irrational fear has become a "political driver" for slowing down the transfer of competences.

There is no policy objective behind this obstruction. There is also no coordination between MLGA, "mother" municipalities and the new municipalities about the transfer of the required powers. Currently, the "mother" municipalities keep maintaining executive municipal authority in the new municipalities, such as management of local public land and tendering various local infrastructural projects. Furthermore, the Government has not taken any steps to address the issue of inclusion of the representatives of new municipalities in the Boards of regional public companies, as required by law.

These obstructions, tensions and frictions are to be understood given the political, economic and social circumstances under which decentralization is implemented. These include the uncertainty over the fate of northern Kosovo, the influence of parallel structures, lack of cohesiveness within the international presence in Kosovo and the scarce financial and human resources of the Government of Kosovo.

## **7 THE PARALLEL STRUCTURES**

Together with infrastructural and economic issues, one of the biggest challenges both for the new municipalities and for the existing ones is of a political nature. Existence of parallel political and administrative structures, but also those of interior and intelligence, will cause unavoidable clashes with policies and governance of the newly elected municipal authorities, creating political and social turmoil.

New municipal governments will face unavoidable clashes with parallel structures first of all in the field of education and health, which, according to Kosovo's Law on Local Self-Government, are exclusive competences of municipalities. It will be a major challenge for the new municipalities to put these institutions under their control, bearing in mind that they have been operating under Serbia's government for a decade now. The challenge is higher in the education system, as schools operate under Serbia's curricula, and in many cases reject any kind of assistance from the Kosovo authorities, apart from financial assistance and salaries.

The Kosovo government, through the budget allocated to the ministries in central level, will invest more than €2 million in these three Serb majority municipalities, not counting the investments that are foreseen to come through municipal authorities. However, neither the Kosovo government, nor the international community, have any strategy on how to deal with the parallel structures.

On 16 January 2010, the mayor of Strpce, Branislav Nikolic, elected in Kosovo elections, expelled the parallel structures from the municipal premises. The parallel leadership complied and did not create any problems. There were also no problems from the local Serb population. Nikolic won against the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) candidate, and is considered the legitimate leader of the municipality by both the Albanians and the Serbs. Half of the Serb electorate in the municipality voted for him, which effectively de-legitimized the parallel leadership.

The Government does not have a strategy about how to dissolve the parallel structures, while it remains committed not to use force even in cases when parallel elections are organized and held south of the River Ibar. Nevertheless, there is a growing belief in the Government that parallel structures in the new municipalities do not pose a constant threat, and that with Serbia's policy for partition of Kosovo, Belgrade will gradually withdraw financial support from these structures.

## **8 THE MUNICIPALITIES IN THE NORTH**

There is a widespread belief that northern Serb-controlled, municipalities of Leposaviq, Zvecan and Zubin Potok, do not cooperate with Kosovo institutions. However, in the budget plan for 2010, Kosovo government has allocated a regular financial amount of €8 million for the functioning of these municipalities.

Authorities have not allocated the budget for the municipality of Mitrovica North, which is due to be created sometimes during the year, but continue to finance the UN administration in Mitrovica (UAM) which serves as a municipality for the northern part of the city. UAM receives €2, 5 million from the Kosovo budget and has approximately 170 staff.

In December 2009, the International Civilian Office (ICO) and the Government of Kosovo presented a strategy for integration of northern Kosovo. On 24 February, 2010, the government appointed Ylber Hysa, former MP and former adviser to the mayor of Mitrovica, to serve as coordinator for the implementation of the strategy for northern Kosovo. His role is to coordinate the work of both Kosovo and international stakeholders in the implementation of the strategy. To date, neither the government nor the international presence has provided tangible and rapid support for the coordinator.

The biggest problem with the strategy is that the EU does not officially support it. Instead, the EU has appointed a Special Envoy for northern Kosovo, Italian Ambassador to Kosovo Michael Giffoni. He has opened the "EU House" in the north and there is a budget for the EU activities in the area. Nevertheless, the EU political efforts in the North and the strategy for the integration of the northern Kosovo are not in collision with each other. The problem lies in the lack of political support coming from Brussels for the implementation of the strategy and for the effective operations of EULEX to provide the necessary level of rule of law in the area. Also, EULEX tolerates the operations of Serbia's parallel security apparatus in the North, despite the fact that the mission considers these illegal.

Another hindering factor is the scheduled parallel election in Mitrovica North. The international community's tolerance for holding these elections raises fears in Pristina that there are states within the EU which would compromise the territorial integrity of Kosovo or would be willing to selectively apply the Ahtisaari plan in order to satisfy Serbia at the expense of Kosovo. But, Pristina's position on the north is the same and depending on the one of the "Quint" member states (USA, UK, France, Germany, Italy).

## **9 IMPLEMENTING AND FINANCING CHANGE: CONSTRAINTS, CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES**

There are more opportunities than challenges for implementing and financing decentralization. The newly created municipalities have been allocated a total budget of more than €3.2 million, based on

the population that lives in these municipalities. Gracanica has an annual budget of €1,791,035, Klllokot/Vrbovac a budget of €719,602, while Ranilug's budget is €693,636. Also, the Republic of Albania has pledged financial support of €400,000 to Gracanica and the European Commission Liaison Office in Pristina (ECLLO) with other international donor organizations (DFID, USAID, SDC, UNDP) have pledged financial and technical support to the new municipalities.

The new municipalities will have full competences to establish and operationalise mechanisms to increase their budget from their own income. In addition, the MLGA has a reserve fund of €2.4 million which will be used to assist the newly created municipalities when such assistance is needed. So far, the donor community has also shown interest in investing particularly in these municipalities. The Government of Kosovo has allocated over €2 million for construction of two hospitals – one in Gracanica and one in Strpce.

The number of staff in the new municipalities is very low, as it only calculates administrative personnel of the municipality. The budget line for "goods and services" in the new municipalities is very high, while the budget line for "wages and salaries" is very low. Municipal governments, according to the law, are in charge of executing wages and salaries for all the personnel in the public sphere, including teachers, doctors and nurses, as well as the whole public administration. This is not the case in the new municipalities, as public servants are also employed in the parallel system of Serbia and are part of the parallel institutions. It will be up to the municipal governments to see how to include these public servants in the Kosovo system. Municipal governments, however, must respect the budget grants in terms of expenditures dedicated for health and education, based on the grants given by the central government.

The main challenge is Serbia's committed €42 million for parallel structures for 2010. Belgrade is not showing any signs that it will change its policy towards participation of Serbian community in political institutions of Kosovo. It is using international financial support to strengthen the parallel institutions in Kosovo.

## **10 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The process of decentralization marks a consolidation of co-existence between the Albanians and Serbs in independent Kosovo. Decentralization is proving to be the most successful tool for preserving and developing the multi-ethnic character of the country.

The transfer of competencies from the central level and "mother" municipalities is not being prepared properly and is facing serious difficulties. These difficulties stem from lack of political will from the Pristina authorities to rapidly strengthen the new municipalities. This must change in order to maintain the confidence of the Serbs in the process into which they have significantly participated. The success of decentralization south of the River Ibar will also show that it can be successful in the north.

The international presence in Kosovo should have a coherent policy towards northern Kosovo. The "Strategy for the Integration of the North" provides a comprehensive approach, which guarantees the territorial integrity of Kosovo and does not open Ahtisaari's package. In addition, it creates the basis for democratisation, introducing a market economy and the rule of law in this area. Therefore, the strategy needs more substantial support from the international presence, specifically the EU.

The disabling and the withdrawal of the parallel structures of Belgrade in northern Kosovo depend on the political will in Brussels and EU member states. So far, EULEX has not been successful in creating a role for itself in northern Kosovo. The lack of performance by EULEX questions the strength of the EU and the future of the ESDP missions.

## **THE DECENTRALIZATION PROCESS IN KOSOVO:**

### **A Kosovo-Serb minority view**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Key findings:

- Elections are just the **beginning in the decentralization process**. The Ahtisaari Plan foresees wide-ranging competences which present the most progressive local self-governance in the region. What must not be forgotten is that this is being **implemented in poor, undeveloped rural areas which lack infrastructure, human resources and finances**.
- Equally important, **all decentralization legislation is fully in line with European standards** and as such deserves full European support as it develops the local level as the pinpoint of democracy.
- Newly elected municipal structures have to **consolidate their legitimacy by working in the interest of the people they represent**. This will require a firm **overview of their activities, especially in regard to how the capital investments budget is spent**.
- **Special attention needs to be given to the mainly rural municipalities**. Voter turnout there was low and the current administrations have a hard job with local legitimacy. Commitment to an **inclusive approach** in the new municipalities would **lead to more internal integration and prevent the emerging splits along localised lines which are reinforced by political rivalries**.
- As regards the **parallel structures, the more effective the official municipality is in providing for the needs of the people, the less relevant will the parallel municipalities become**. Important steps were taken for example in Štrpce to remove the parallel municipality from the official municipal building.
- The problems faced by people in the North Kosovo are not the same as those faced in the enclaves. Attempts to replicate the **method used south of the Ibar in the North will not work**.

### Main recommendations:

- Municipal competences need to be passed on a case by case basis. **Rushing with the transfer of competences will create chaos in municipalities which are still not operating in full capacity**. Municipalities like Štrpce, which has a strong institutional history, or Gračanica, which has a bigger pool of human resources, **need to lead the way and set a positive example for others**.
- **The EU should support decentralization, no matter how the Member States see the status of Kosovo**. Decentralization is a process entrenched in European values and it offers important mechanisms for Kosovo Serbs to stand on their own feet.
- As regards **rural municipalities, the primary goal** needs to be **to establish an institutional framework which would make these municipalities functional**.
- **New municipalities** need to be **encouraged to enter into partnerships as foreseen by the Ahtisaari Plan**. This would allow them to enter into joint projects and improve cooperation while also bringing the Serbian communities across Kosovo closer to each other.

- On **parallel structures**: as long as **these structures do not interfere with the work of official structures**, there should be **no direct confrontation with them**. Belgrade needs to abide by UNSCR1244 and **cease support for parallel municipal structures across Kosovo**.
- Kosovo authorities **need to coordinate actions which deal with Kosovo Serbs with the new local municipal authorities**. Recent developments dealing with mobile phones and transport **damaged the reputation of new municipal authorities as they too were caught off guard**.
- With regard to the **municipalities in the North, a different approach** is needed which will require **contacts with relevant political actors in the North, including parallel structures, without preconditions**. People there need to be given a chance to choose between becoming a **political elite and centre of the Kosovo Serbs or remaining an extended hand of Belgrade**.

All sides need to show clear commitment that they **will not use force in the North**.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The process of decentralization is important as it presents the local Kosovo Serbs with the mechanisms to run their own lives in a manner which will ensure their continued existence in Kosovo, while for the Prishtina authorities it offers the sternest test as to how they are ready to treat their minority communities. The question of decentralization has been central to Kosovo since 1999 and was a topic which was discussed at all levels, from local town hall meetings to international conferences<sup>2</sup>. The decentralization which took place in November 2009 was a process with strong international support, limited Prishtina and local support and was officially boycotted by Belgrade. In order to work, this process needs support from all the actors and the task in front of us is not to ignore this fact but rather to continue emphasizing to everyone involved that decentralization is the foundation stone for a sustainable Kosovo Serb presence across Kosovo.

## 2 THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK: FROM THE AHTISAARI PLAN TO KOSOVO LEGISLATION

The Kosovo Constitution states that *“the basic unit of local government in the Republic of Kosovo is the municipality”*. Municipalities enjoy a high degree of local self-governance and encourage and ensure the active participation of all citizens in the decision-making process of the municipal bodies. Additionally, the adopted legislation takes into account the principles of local self-government enshrined in the European Charter of Local Self-government and its protocols, the framework of the Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the European Outline Convention on the Trans-frontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities and its protocols. The Prishtina authorities adopted the following vital laws related to decentralization in accordance with the Ahtisaari CSP : **Law on Administrative Boundaries of Municipalities, Law on Local Self government, Law on Local Elections, Law on Financing Local Governance**, and amended accordingly a large number of laws, such as : **Law on Public Finance Management, Law on Primary Education, Law on Secondary Education, Law on Higher Education, Law on Primary and Secondary Health Care, Law on the Police**, and a number of other laws, regulating the three categories of competences for the municipalities. These are:

- a) **Own (full and executive)** competencies, applicable to all municipalities, which include most notably: local economic development, urban and rural planning, land use and development, local environmental protection, provisions of public services (water supply, waste management, local roads, local transport), local emergency response, provisions of public pre-primary and primary schools, public primary health services, provisions of family and other social welfare services, public housing, licensing of local services and facilities etc.
- b) **Delegated competences** include: civil registry, voter registration, business registration and licensing, distribution of social assistance payments and forestry protection including the granting of licences for tree-felling and other timber activities.

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<sup>2</sup> See Crisis Group report, *Toward the Final Status*, 2005; Crisis Group report, *No good alternative to Ahtisaari Plan*, 14 May 2007.

c) **And enhanced competences:**

- Provisions for **secondary health care**, including registration and licensing health care institutions, recruitment, payment of salaries etc for **Gračanica, Štrpce and North Mitrovica municipalities**.
- Provisions for **higher education**, including registration and licensing of educational institutions, recruitment, payment of salaries and training of instructors, for **North Mitrovica municipality**.
- Authority and responsibility in **cultural affairs**, including protection and promotion of Serbian and other religious and cultural heritage within the municipal territory for all Serb-majority municipalities.
- In accordance with the police law, the municipal assemblies of Serb-majority municipalities have an enhanced participatory right in the **selection of the local police station commander**.

The enhanced competences make decentralization asymmetric and grant significant autonomy particularly for North Mitrovica, Gračanica and Štrpce. The municipalities are also given a right to form partnerships in the areas covered by their competences. The enhanced competences establish a special and privileged status for the Serb communities. They are permitted to establish executive bodies comprised of seconded municipal executive officials for this purpose. However municipal assemblies are not allowed to delegate authority or competences. Equally these municipalities can, individually or through partnerships, seek support in the form of financial and technical assistance, human resources, expertise personnel and equipment from Serbian institutions in the areas of their own and enhanced competences to the extent necessary to implement their practical activities. Neither partnerships between municipalities nor with Serbian institutions can be exercised in the areas of the delegated competences, nor take on and amalgamate competences fundamental to the sovereignty of Kosovo such as elections of municipal organs, appointment of municipal officials, municipal budgeting and issuance of regulatory acts enforceable upon citizens. During the Vienna talks, Belgrade wanted a Serbian entity (Partnership Plus) to run education, healthcare, social security and cultural heritage with Belgrade, completely bypassing Prishtina. However, according to the Ahtisaari CSP provisions, reflected accordingly in Kosovo's legislation, the Kosovo Ministry of Local Governance (MLGA) will play the role of the supervising authority over municipal (and the partnerships of municipalities) compliance with legislation. Municipalities or partnerships are obliged to submit draft cooperation agreements to the Kosovo MLGA which has a broad prerogative to amend such agreements or suspend them if there is a serious breach of law that cannot be remedied otherwise. In case of non-compliance with legislation, the MLGA can take the case to what is currently a district court but which in the future will be an administrative department of the Prishtina-based court. Similarly the municipalities can dispute the MLGA decisions at a competent court. The law does not clarify the appealing process but as the Ahtisaari CSP states, the ICR has the final authority to interpret the disputes.

Finally, taking into account, that Prishtina has endorsed all the European principles of self-government including the European Charter of Local Self Government and all its protocols, the European Union should be more supportive of decentralization as a principle of local governance reforms, regardless of final status. EU involvement on the development of decentralization and

reform of local governance, including the development of a legitimate and accountable local government in the North, is crucial for the northern Serbs to exercise their basic rights of democratic elections and an accountable local authority. Once this is achieved further development of partnerships can take place to accommodate the additional needs of the communities in that area. Local governance reform has nothing to do with the status issue and as such it should be strongly endorsed by the European Union.

### 3 THE 15 NOVEMBER 2009 LOCAL ELECTIONS

#### 3.1 Pre-Election

The 15 November 2009 local elections were an important milestone for Kosovo. Not only did they present the first instance of elections in an independent Kosovo but they were also the elections which were to mark the start of the decentralization process in Serbian areas. Optimism in this regard was cautious at best.

Barely two years have passed since the November 2007 local elections which saw various methods of Belgrade-orchestrated intimidation limit Kosovo Serb participation to just a couple of dozen voters. With the declaration of independence in February 2008, Serbian participation seemed even less likely. However, several key events happened, both on the ground and in Belgrade itself, which seemed to indicate that this would not be so.

First of all, independence passed off without any major incidents. There was no Serb exodus as predicted by some, nor was there a strong reaction from Serbia in the form of an economic embargo or even worse, a military intervention. Life went on as normal for the Kosovo Serbs as Prishtina was careful not to ram independence down their throats.

- **Belgrade:** The removal of PM Kostunica's DSS from power in the May 2008 Serbian parliamentary election saw a new approach to "on the ground policy" in Kosovo. Parallel institutions were no longer used to spy on citizens willing to cooperate with Prishtina and there was no intimidation of Kosovo Serb parties who participated in Kosovo institutions. When local elections were announced, President Tadic issued a statement in July saying that conditions for Serbian participation had not been met and that they should not vote. The DS-led government was in favour of decentralization but wanted the fig leaf of "status neutrality" over the process. This would mean having elections under the umbrella of the OSCE or UN as they were afraid that endorsing Republic of Kosovo elections would amount to implicit recognition of Kosovo. These proposals for "status neutral decentralization" were rejected by both Prishtina and the international community. Belgrade's opposition towards elections was different compared to 2007 - there were no town hall meetings across Serbian enclaves in Kosovo to deliver that message to locals with threats and intimidation. This approach from Belgrade was seen by the international community in Kosovo and local Serb parties as tacit approval of Kosovo Serb participation.
- **Kosovo Serbs:** Local leaders like Rada Trajkovic and Randjel Nojkic continuously and publicly asked for clarification from Belgrade as to what the official position is while at the same time establishing unofficial contacts with the ICO about running in the elections. However, while Belgrade was ambiguous at best, the local Kosovo Serb elite was indecisive – they wanted to participate but were unsure whether that would mean them losing their influential posts in

the Serbian institutions (e.g. Rada Trajkovic runs the Gračanica medical centre, Randjel Nojkic runs the Gračanica/Gračanica post office). Their flirtation with participation was not appreciated by Prishtina/Priština and the ICO who wanted commitment to the process instead of opportunism. It also angered local Kosovo Serb parties who confirmed their participation – they saw the ‘bigger names’ as a threat to their positions and were happy when they decided not to run in the end. Indecisiveness was widespread and several officials in parallel municipalities south of the River Ibar were thinking of organizing lists for the Kosovo elections as well in the hope of being legitimate for both Belgrade and Prishtina/Priština. This thinking went as far as having a high ranking official in the Ministry for Kosovo and Metohija organizing a list of close allies to participate in the Gračanica/Gračanica elections which his government and he himself dismissed as illegal. Once this became public, more people decided to go ahead and vote in the elections since it became clear that Belgrade’s intentions were not uniform, neither were they clear or honest. The Kosovo Serbs, who had been used to receiving clear instructions from Belgrade, found themselves torn between the advantages of decentralization and the ambiguity coming from the Serbian government. However, what needs to be understood is that the criticism aimed at Belgrade from the Kosovo Serbs does not automatically mean that they want to turn towards Prishtina. Kosovo institutions are still deeply mistrusted by the Kosovo Serbs – they are seen to take just a superficial interest in the Serb community in order to impress the international community<sup>3</sup>. It is often heard from the Kosovo Serbs that Prishtina’s only aim is a Serb-free Kosovo and that "multi-ethnicity is just a bridge towards Albanian mono-ethnicity". Thus, even those who supported decentralization in principle and who were willing to defy Belgrade’s position on the elections chose not to take part because of Prishtina’s insistence that Albanian-majority areas such as Hajvalija/Ajvali next to Gračanica/Gračanica also be included within the new municipality. These attempts to influence the ethnic structure of new municipalities is seen by the majority of Kosovo Serbs as confirmation of their fears regarding Prishtina’s true intentions.

- **The Participants:** Given that the situation was more relaxed than expected, some well known politicians submitted their lists for the elections, with the most notable being Momcilo Trajkovic in Gračanica/Gračanica and former mayor Sladjan Ilic in Shtërpca/Štrpce. They gave an important stamp of credibility to these elections as they were well known and experienced politicians who participated in the Kosovo politics not only before the 1999 conflict but before Kosovo was stripped of its autonomy in 1989. Unlike the previous local elections, the international presence in Kosovo, and especially the US Embassy, provided strong support for the Kosovo Serb lists that were submitted. This support included training and capacity building. Special focus was given to the Independent Liberal Party (SLS) and their candidates. The SLS was seen as a reliable partner given their presence in the governing coalition at central level even though they had no experience in running local affairs. The Municipal Preparatory Teams, established in all newly created municipalities, worked without infringement and the campaign from political parties was open and included several debates, some of which were broadcast on national TV. These debates unfortunately showed a worrying trend – the candidates did not fully understand what decentralization is about. For example, the municipal competence to appoint the local police station commander was seen

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<sup>3</sup> See Crisis Group report *Taking the Plunge – Serb integration in Kosovo*, 14 May 2009

by the majority of mayoral candidates as *carte blanche* to appoint a 'personal sheriff'. This is understandable given the fact that most of these candidates and parties had no experience and this was their first shot at governing.

### **3.2 Elections**

The elections produced a much higher turnout than expected. The parties managed to animate hundreds of voters but it must be said that some tactics were unscrupulous. Given the fact that Belgrade-ran schools refused to allow their premises to be used for the election, the polls were held in makeshift booths which allowed for numerous irregularities while vote buying was also common. Parties and lists were unhappy at what they saw as preferential treatment of the SLS by the internationals in general and the US Embassy in particular and raised several concerns. The truth is that most of those participating engaged in irregularities within their own means and their biggest complaint against the SLS was that they had more financial resources at their disposal. It is unfortunate that the complaints, which came from all municipalities in which more than one Serb party or list participated, were not taken more seriously as this will impact on their further participation in local politics. Formerly important political figures like Momcilo Trajkovic and Sladjan Ilic were openly critical of the ICO and Prishtina institutions as they felt that they were tricked into giving legitimacy to a process in which the winners were pre-determined. Hopefully, their experience will not discourage others from participating in future elections.

Belgrade for its part also tried to delegitimize the elections, claiming large scale fraud and vote rigging. Despite irregularities at various levels, the local Serb participation must not be underestimated. It is especially important to note the high level of young voters who participated in the elections as a sign of real enthusiasm to improve conditions at local level and take advantage of the competences foreseen by decentralization. The vote was largely boycotted by those employed in Serbian institutions such as schools and medical centres – they not only wanted to show loyalty but also wanted to avoid any potential penalties for going against official state policy. It can be stated that the intellectual elite of the Kosovo Serbs in the enclaves boycotted the elections.

The SLS won victories in the most contested municipalities of Graçania/Gračanica (Bojan Stojanovic elected mayor) and Shtërpce/Štrpce (Bratislav Nikolic elected mayor) who make up for as many as 30,000 Kosovo Serbs. In the more rural new municipalities, Klokot/Vrbovec, Ranilug/Rani Lug and Novobërdë/Novo Brdo, there was less competition – the SLS had the only candidate in Klokot (Sasa Mirkovic elected mayor), a local initiative was the only one on the ballot in Ranilug/Rani Lug (Gradimir Mikic elected mayor) and Serb turnout in Novobërdë/Novo Brdo was very low and resulted in an Albanian getting elected as mayor in the second round with 25.5% turnout. Some 23% turned out in Graçanica/Gracanica and this was enough to secure the SLS a first round victory. In Shtërpce/Štrpce 27% turned out in the first round while almost 40% came out in the second round to elect a Serb mayor. The figures were slightly lower in Klokot/Vrbovec, where 25.2% voted, and especially Ranilug/Rani Lug, where 12.4% voted.

### **3.3 Post Election**

The elections generated a lot of enthusiasm across the board. At local level, leaders felt vindicated and were happy that their legitimacy is no longer in question as after some previous elections. Internationals in Prishtina also had reasons to celebrate as the Ahtisaari Plan was finally taking shape on the ground. Although everyone declared that this was just the beginning and that the hardest

part still lay ahead, it was clear that the main actors wanted to bask in the limelight for a while first. Thus, a bevy of high level figures began visiting these newly created rural municipalities, not only regular guests in the shape of Prishtina's diplomatic core but also including such high level dignitaries as State Department's James Steinberg or the French FM Bernard Kouchner. Given the fact that most analysts were pessimistic about the prospects for successfully implementing decentralization according to the Ahtisaari Plan the Serbs reject, such behaviour is understandable. However, due to the challenges these new municipalities face, it is important not to waste any time and to ensure that municipal officials deal with the issues they were elected to deal with instead of with high level foreign delegations. The priority for all is to ensure that capacity building produces able municipal administrators and officials in areas where none existed before. Given the relatively high age and low average education levels in these areas, this will be a difficult task which needs immediate attention, especially as the parallel municipalities offer larger salaries and thus secure more desirable candidates. Local governance is crucial to making these new municipalities a success and at this time, it is clear to observers on the ground that the jury on the new municipalities is still out among the locals.

The six months since the election have presented us with the following trends which require attention.

- **Reaction from Belgrade:** Serbia was seen as the biggest loser of the 15 November elections, with the higher than anticipated turnout often analysed as proof that the parallel system supported by Belgrade does not meet the needs of the local population. However, despite this setback to its 'on the ground' Kosovo policy, Belgrade did not respond harshly against the new municipalities. It tried to undermine the results presented and despite internally blaming certain officials for the boycott being a failure, there were no personnel changes. Its response varies from place to place but it is clear that in larger areas, like Shtërpçë/Štrpce and Graçanica/Gračanica, it has adopted a common-sense approach aimed at preventing any potential tensions between the newly elected officials and the existing parallel authorities. Indirect and unofficial contacts were established and important positive steps were made. For example, behind the scenes negotiations in Shtërpçë/Štrpce led to the political wings of the parallel municipality being peacefully 'kicked out' of the municipal building to make way for the new administration – this was long identified as a potential flashpoint and a similar scenario in 2001 led to large daily demonstrations and a lot of tension. This time around, Belgrade, the parallel municipality and the new Shtërpca/Štrpce municipality administration struck a behind-the-scenes deal which allowed for coexistence with tacit acknowledgement of the new municipality's right to the building. Similarly in Graçanica/Gračanica, the parallel and official municipalities held meetings at which it was agreed not to obstruct each other's work and to consult each other in order to avoid doubling up on projects and investment. To many this may seem to be a sign of responsible local politics by the parallel municipalities rather than any Belgrade influence. This argument is however proven wrong just 20 miles away from Shtërpca/Štrpce and Graçanica/Gračanica in Kllokot/Vrbovec and Rani Lug/Ranilug respectively. Being less populated, less developed and more rural, these newly formed municipalities are subsequently less important for Belgrade. Thus, the parallel structures there were not encouraged to be constructive towards the new municipalities and tensions between them remain high. Since these municipalities are little more than a collection of villages, a geographical split is emerging – in the new Rani Lug/Ranilug municipality, the

villages of Rani Lug/Ranilug, Kormijan I Epërm/Gornje Korminjane and Kormijan I Ulët/Donje Korminjane seem loyal and committed to the parallel structures while Ropotovë e Madhe/Veliko Ropotovo and Domorovc/Domorovce are behind the new municipality while Kllokot/Klokot sees the new municipality based in Kllokot/Klokot while the parallel structure is based in Vërbovc/Vrbovec. Belgrade likes to point out that the new municipalities are nothing more than ikebana decorations which are powerless to have any influence in the way Prishtina/Priština treats the Kosovo Serbs – the removal of Serbian mobile phone operators in April 2010, which left the Serbs in new municipalities without phone signals, is the latest example being cited by Belgrade.

- **Local Divisions:** The geographical split mentioned above is a good introduction to a phenomenon which should not be underestimated and overlooked – local rivalries and divisions. Handing over such extensive competences, as foreseen by the Ahtisaari Plan, in such underdeveloped areas while under the glare of international attention, reinforces local divisions which at first may seem petty but are deeply rooted and are already beginning to manifest themselves. For example, the new Gračanica/Gračanica municipality is not appealing to many people in the area because of the fact that the majority of people employed in the new administration are coming from the same village as the mayor himself. The administration of the Rani Lug/Ranilug municipality also favours former Serb members of the multiethnic Kamenica municipality. While it is understandable that mayors are selecting people they can trust, such moves are doing little to show to those who favoured the boycott that the new municipalities are any different from institutions dominated by local cliques and the extended family members of local leaders. It is important to insist on an inclusive approach as this will not only make more people aware of the importance of these institutions but it will also prevent the spread of a closed-circle mentality which, in such circumstances of local power, fosters corruption, cronyism and nepotism. Local divisions also manifest themselves at other levels – for example, the largest village in the Rani Lug/Ranilug municipality, Rani Lug/Ranilug, almost completely boycotted the elections. The new mayor got the bulk of his votes in his home village of Ropotovë e Madhe/Veliko Ropotovo some 2km down the road. Ever since the election, he has been lobbying ICO officials to give him permission to construct the new municipal building in Ropotovë e Madhe /Veliko Ropotovo (where he has already set up his temporary office). The Rani Lug/Ranilug village decided to stand behind the parallel municipality and the new mayor is not welcome there at all. Kllokot/Klokot faced similar problems, only from a more central level – the PDK-ran Vitina/Viti municipality, within whose borders Kllokot/Klokot was formed, for months refused to allocate land on which the new municipality was to build its municipal building. Pressure from the ICO and other international actors had to focus on high levels of the central government in Prishtina before this problem was overcome but it was yet another clear sign of how Albanians in areas affected by decentralization feel about the process. This ‘lack of legitimacy’ at local level needs to be overcome slowly, although neither side seems eager to do so. It is wrong to underestimate these differences for the sake of establishing the symbolic presences the internationals want. Given the fact that Belgrade itself is taking a more hard-line position in these more rural municipalities through its parallel municipality proxies, it is important not to allow these municipalities to be ‘partitioned’ before they even reach full capacity.

- **The Novobërdë/Novo Brdo Mystery:** Apart from creating new Serb-majority municipalities across Kosovo, the Ahtisaari Plan also foresaw the expansion of the existing Serb-majority municipality of Novobërdë/Novo Brdo. The aim of this expansion was to incorporate several more Serb villages which are found in eastern Kosovo, including Kufce e Epërme/Gornje Kusce. This was problematic for several reasons. First of all, Novobërdë/Novo Brdo was one of the most sparsely populated areas of Kosovo. It was not only underdeveloped but it was also the municipality with the highest average age in Kosovo. It was also unclear whether it had a Serb majority in the first place – the Serbian victory in the 2001 local elections was secured thanks to Belgrade’s efforts in organising the IDP vote across Serbia. On the ground, the numbers would indicate a slight Albanian majority. By expanding the municipality to include Serbian villages 25km away, the inhabitants of Novobërdë/Novo Brdo were unhappy that the municipality was shifting away from its natural centre and shape. More importantly, Kosovo Albanians were unhappy that the resized Novobërdë/Novo Brdo not only stretched almost into Gjilan/Gnjilane city centre but it also linked the central and eastern Serbian enclaves into an ‘entity’. The expansion of Novobërdë/Novo Brdo led to regular demonstrations from Albanians. The problem was given an extra dimension by the fact that Serbia and the Serbs largely boycotted the elections. Belgrade’s boycott meant that there was no organized IDP voting which tipped the balance in 2001 while the boycott of the most populated villages like Kufce e Epërme/Gornje Kusce, which is run by the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) and Serbian Radical Party (SRS) parallel officials, meant that what was supposed to be a Serb-majority municipality ended up having an Albanian mayor. The paradox thus is that Albanians have won a municipality whose borders they dispute. The question therefore is – does Novobërdë/Novo Brdo exist and in what shape? The fact is that such a municipality would struggle to get by even with the full support of Belgrade, Prishtina and the international community; and this is not very promising. Recent developments, which saw the Albanian mayor Ymeri appoint two Serbs as deputy mayor and deputy mayor for communities, offer some hope that the people of Novobërdë/Novo Brdo will do their best for the municipality. The question is whether this will be enough to gain support from an uninterested Prishtina/Priština and the hard-line Kosovo Serbs within the municipality.
- **Promises and Projects:** As with every Balkan election, over zealous and bombastic promises were made during the 15 November local elections. Even though the new municipalities were set up primarily to allow local Serbs to feel comfortable where they live and to more smoothly integrate themselves into the overall Kosovo society, the mayoral candidates focused on different issues. With most of these areas rural and quite backward, the necessities are better water supply, new roads connecting villages, sewage systems and legalizing small business. Instead, the focus was quite different – citizens of Graçanica/Gračanica were promised all-seater football stadium and tennis courts ; people in Kllokot/Klokot, who lack a proper road between their two villages, were constantly told that once they become a municipality, water springs in the area will be used to develop a world class spa resort ; in Shtërpçë/Štrpce, the main talk focused on turning the Brezovica mountain complex, whose ownership status has been bitterly disputed since 1999 by Belgrade and Prishtina/Priština, in the ‘new Bansko’. The new municipality of Graçanica/Gračanica announced its urbanism plan in April 2010 which foresees 78 projects this year worth a total of 8 million Euros. These include water fountains and quayside pedestrian zones. Given the fact that capital investment budgets for each of the new municipalities was 556,000 Euros, it was clear that such projects were impossible to carry

- out any time soon despite donations from the government and international donors. In fact, it is becoming clear that none of the new municipalities will become fully functional before 1 July 2010 and that construction of new municipal buildings in either Rani Lug/Ranilug or Gračanica/Gračanica or Kllokot/Klokot will not take place before 2012. Some municipalities are trying to refocus – Štrpce has announced that its capital investment budget will go towards a new sewage system. However, the main focus of other actors is still on issues mentioned during the election campaigns – thus in Shtërpce/Štrpce, both Prishtina/Priština and Belgrade are trying to privatize/delay privatization of the Brezovica complex<sup>4</sup> even though the municipality itself came out with a clear statement that nothing will be done until a comprehensive master plan is drawn up. We are also seeing a return to common sense in Gračanica/Gračanica, where talk of state of the art stadiums has switched to something more useful – the foundation stone for a new kindergarten was laid towards the end of March.
- Worrying trends are however seen elsewhere. In Rani Lug/Ranilug, the most talked about project is the clean up of the Morava river basin. This project will require an extra donor as the overall cost is in excess of 2 million Euros. Those with experience when it comes to projects in Kosovo, be they Belgrade, Prishtina/Priština or internationally funded, know that environmental projects most often lead to corruption as they are rarely followed up by inspections. Those overseeing the new municipalities need to be firm when it comes to cases like this and the new administrations need to be told that infrastructure projects are a priority if these municipalities are ever to become fully functional. It is important to encourage the new municipalities to participate in projects through partnerships as it appears that this mechanism is not being utilised at the moment. It is also of utmost importance to ensure that the municipalities with most potential in terms of experience and human resources, Shtërpce/Štrpce and Gračanica/Gračanica, function in a successful, responsible and transparent way as they can be the model the more rural areas will look towards. They need to lead the way in every department.
  - **Partesh/Parteš** - With the spotlight on the North, the May elections in the newly formed municipality of Parteš/Partesh are not getting as much attention as they should. The small rural municipality is important because its delayed election allows us to see just how much the situation regarding decentralization has changed since the November 2009 elections. First of all, we have a local Serb population which does not have a strong parallel political presence close by – the parallel municipality of Gjilan/Gnjilane under which they fall is some 20km away in Kufce e Epërme/Gornje Kusce. Secondly, having seen that no extreme action has been taken by Belgrade against those who participated, the population is in general more relaxed about the process and do not feel that they will bear any penalties. Thirdly, Belgrade itself seems to have realised that it cannot expect a full boycott based just on loyalty – unable and unwilling to take more drastic measures; the prevailing opinion at the moment seems to be to quietly ensure people that they have links to also participate and gain a victory which would ensure some sort of indirect control in the future. These three factors combined have led to the Partesh/Parteš election being contested by the strongest field possible by local standards. Accusations are already being exchanged – the Prishtina supported SLS list is unhappy that

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<sup>4</sup> See Crisis Group briefing *Strpce: A Model Serb Enclave*, September 2009

there is more involvement as they would have preferred the Kllokot/Klokot scenario in which they were the sole candidates. A strong turnout is expected in Partesh/Parteš and the competitiveness of the race will mean that there will be fewer irregularities as there will be more scrutiny from the participants.

## 4 PARALLEL STRUCTURES

In the North, these municipalities operate pretty much as elsewhere in Serbia, except that they do not have access to a police force and a judiciary which would enforce their rules. Despite having all the departments a municipality needs to function and relatively experienced and qualified officials, their efficiency depends mostly on the goodwill of the people to obey the rules. Those who refuse to allow health inspections in their restaurants for example cannot be forced to do so.

South of the River Ibar, the municipalities were much less effective. They lacked cadres and even basic equipment to perform municipal duties such as garbage collection trucks or snow-ploughs. Their main duty was to be the link between the locals and Serbia – providing and validating documents, helping out with health, education, pension and social welfare. They not only lacked police and judiciary access as in the North, they also had no access to cadastral records.

The future of these institutions is uncertain. Serbia is spending a lot of money on them but the Serbian constitution and labour law are such that they cannot simply be extinguished nor can the officials just be fired – the state could face multi million lawsuits. Therefore, the only weapon they had at their disposal against extremely corrupt or politically uncontrollable municipality was the imposition of extraordinary measures which are followed by new elections three to six months later. This already happened in Gračanica/Gračanica and Goraždevc/Goraždevac in 2009 as well as Leposaviç/Leposavić and Mitrovica in 2010. However, with cuts in funding and no political support to act against newly established municipalities, the parallel structures are turning slowly into local consulates which allow Kosovo Serbs to obtain the papers and documents necessary for them and their children to use Serbian health and education facilities as well as receive Serbian pensions and welfare. Serbia can also use these parallel municipalities to make life difficult for newly created municipalities as we have already had at least two cases in Gračanica/Gračanica of poaching of cadres thanks to promises of better salaries (despite recent cuts, parallel officials, be it in local governance, healthcare or education, receive 150% of the salary their colleagues earn in Serbia plus various benefits, per diems etc). With official municipalities struggling for employees both in terms of quality and quantity, this presents a real setback. The political aspect of the parallel municipalities is diminished but pressure needs to be put on Serbia to get rid of it for good. The non-political departments, which deal with areas the Ahtisaari Plan foresaw as having some links between the local Kosovo Serbs and Belgrade-led institutions, need to be incorporated into the newly established municipalities. This has already happened de facto in Shtërpçë/Štrpce, where the same municipal building houses the new administration and the non-political departments of the parallel municipality. Common sense dictates that Kosovo Serbs will try to position themselves in such a way to receive the maximum they can from Prishtina and Belgrade. The future of the parallel municipalities system needs to be seen from this angle – in Novobërdë/Novo Brdo for example, we already have people who work for both institutions. Parallel municipal structures will only become obsolete when the official municipalities reach full capacity and start reaching the potential offered to them by the Ahtisaari Plan.

## 5 NEW MUNICIPALITIES AND THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

The creation of new municipalities was met with a mixed reaction in Kosovo. The majority of Kosovo Albanians view decentralization as a process which gives too much to the Serbs, both in terms of territory and competences. Many in the NGO sector warn that the new municipalities are a prelude to a Kosovo Serb entity akin to the Republika Srpska in BiH. However, the overall consensus is that this was a price worth paying for independence. The political elites are mostly not interested in the process and personally probably share most of the reservations mentioned above. Nevertheless, they realise that Kosovo's legitimacy in the eyes of the international community largely depends on its treatment of minorities and thus government support, both political and financial, was never lacking when it came to the process of decentralization. Indeed, since the elections, Prishtina has enjoyed the plaudits of the international community and many hope that this will put the issue of Kosovo Serbs on the backburner for a while.

Of course, the election results also helped with such an attitude. The Serbian Liberal Party (SLS) has been a close partner of PM Thaci's PDK and is considered their most loyal minority coalition partner. Having won in three of the five Serb-majority municipalities, including the key ones of Graçanica/Gračanica and Shtërpçë/Štrpce, the SLS increased its domestic political value. However, the closeness of the two parties and their importance in making decentralization work did not guarantee that things always went smoothly. As we have seen above, Vitia/Vitina mayor Arifi, despite being a relatively high profile PDK cadre, refused for months to grant building permission for the new Klokot/Klokot municipal building, despite the fact that the new mayor there is SLS' Sasa Mirkovic. The central levels of each party still need to be on their toes to put out any potential ground fires across Kosovo.

The architect of decentralization, Minister for Local Governance Sadri Ferati, deserves recognition for the patience and commitment he showed throughout the process. Being from the LDK, he had to very often deal not only with problems like Serb participation and voter intimidation, but also with elements from other parties in the government. Just how sensitive is the issue is again best exemplified by Klokot, where the minority Albanian partner in the local municipal coalition is from the LDK : he survived a car bombing just before the election and it is rumoured that it is actually his presence which led to the above mentioned problem of providing land for the municipal building as the PDK would like to see one of its own in his place. The situation in Novobërdë/ Novo Brdo can be viewed across the same lines as the ruling multiethnic coalition there is made up of the LDK and local civil initiatives and this does not please the PDK or the SLS. Rumours persist that that is the key reason this extended municipality is struggling to come to life far away from the mainstream political radar.

Another issue that needs to be addressed is better coordination between the government and the new municipal structures for issues taken at central level which influence the lives of Kosovo Serbs. All the new mayors campaigned on a promise of maintaining a Serb way of life in Kosovo but in the 6 months since the elections, the local Serbs found themselves in the middle of events which greatly influenced their lives. Almost overnight, Serbian mobile operators, which are predominantly used by the Kosovo Serbs, were cut due to not being registered by the Kosovo authorities while minibus transport from Kosovo Serb enclaves to central Serbia also started experiencing problems due to registration issues. A lot of the blame on the ground, especially in Graçanica/Gračanica, has been laid at the door of new municipal structures which not only had no solution to the problem but were

caught by surprise as well. The Kosovo government should take greater care to coordinate its efforts with local institutions in order to ensure that the local population is aware of what is going on and that local political figures are in the loop.

## **6 FINANCING**

The financing of these new municipalities is being taken care of by the government in Prishtina /Priština and various international donors. However, there is a lack of coordination between the two and this lack of organization is not helping.

Having seen that international donors are interested in making the new Serb-majority municipalities a success, Prishtina sought ways to reduce the amounts it was supposed to allocate to the project. Thus in 2008, it allocated only 3.2 million Euros for decentralization while the European Commission Liaison Office (ECLLO) pledged 8 million Euros through IPA over a three year period. After the success of the November 2009 elections, Prishtina/Priština allocated a further 2.1 million Euros for Strpce and Gracanica in 2010.

In late 2009, the MLGA launched a project whose aim was to establish a database of all donors and donations in order to coordinate these efforts better. It was supposed to register all implemented and future projects, investors and donors. However, this still has a long way to go – donors such as ECLLO, USAID, UNDP and OSI pick projects up when and how they wish without consultation with the government. There is no transparent overall picture and it is thus very hard to determine where the money goes, how many projects have been completed and who financed them. The situation is made even more confusing by the presence of Serbia-funded projects in the same areas and it has been a common practice since 1999 to take credit for projects funded by someone else.

Given the lack of human resources in the new municipalities, outside help is crucial. UNDP has taken over the drafting of urban planning in Kllokot/Klokot and Rani Lug/Ranilug and is likely to participate heavily in financing some of the projects in these areas in the future.

## **7 NORTH**

The Kosovo government as well as certain international organizations such as the ICO keep repeating that integrating the North is a key challenge for Kosovo. The biggest step would involve organising Kosovo local elections which would create legitimate municipalities. This task cannot be fulfilled in the current circumstances. First of all, the people in the North, unlike those in the enclaves, do not depend on interaction with Kosovo institutions or even Kosovo Albanians in their day to day lives and this allows for a more militant approach towards anything resembling integration. Given the small population of the area, which is certainly less than 50,000 inhabitants, Serbia is not finding it hard to produce adequate financing and even after dramatic cuts from the highs of 2006/2007, the money provided by Belgrade is bigger than anything Prishtina/Priština offers. This comfortable position vis-à-vis Prishtina/Priština allows the Northerners leverage in their strong rejection of Kosovo's independence and institutions. Plans to carry out decentralization in the North are buoyed by the successful elections carried out in the enclaves in November 2009 but that approach is unlikely to work in the North. The immediate problem is finding candidates – unlike in the enclaves, Kosovo Serb parties like the SLS do not have a presence in the North and attempts in the past to create local branches have failed amid threats and a lack of interest among the locals. The creation of

the Municipal Preparation Team, whose aim is to create conditions for the new municipality of Mitrovica Veriore/North Mitrovica to take shape, was undermined by low levels of interest, inexperienced candidates and threats against those selected by local power figures. The North already has an established political elite and a new one cannot be created from scratch as in the enclaves.

The approach with the enclaves worked because they wanted to live a normal life without feeling isolated. They were also fed up with what they saw as Belgrade's more favourable and generous approach to the North compared to them. These factors are simply missing in the North. The only way any progress can be made in the North will involve some sort of discussion with Belgrade but also with existing parallel structures on the ground. The local political elite in the North, which Belgrade does not want to see grow beyond anything other than an obedient local political class, needs to be approached, without any preconditions. That is the only way that real issues which are important to the North can emerge. As long as the North is considered a no-go area for large swathes of the international presence in Kosovo, this cannot be achieved and neither can decentralization if only the model that worked in the enclaves is applied. It is important to rule out the use of force in achieving any progress in bringing the Northern municipalities under Prishtina/Priština's fold.

## ANNEXES

### Annex 1: Decentralization Background

The long-term goal of the international community was to achieve a multiethnic Kosovo. This goal was re-affirmed in every document dealing with Kosovo, including the Rambouillet accords, UNSCR 1244, the UN Standards for Kosovo and successive Contact Group statements between 2004-2006 that gave UNOSK Marti Ahtisaari the framework on which to base his proposal. However, developments on the ground turned out differently.

In fact, unlike Bosnia for example, Kosovo was never one society and Serbs and Albanians never together but alongside each other. These divisions culminated with the 1998/99 conflict and were consolidated by the political struggles between Prishtina/Pristina and Belgrade since. While Prishtina's aim was to create a unified and centralised state, Belgrade sought a loose, decentralized Kosovo which would allow the Serb society to be fully dependent on Belgrade for its healthcare, educational and other needs. Since 1999, Serbia has pursued this policy – under Nebojsa Covic and the Coordination Centre for Kosovo and Metohija (CCK), it reached compromises with UNMIK which saw a greater presence of Serbian institutions on the ground in Kosovo in return for political participation of the Kosovo Serbs in Kosovo provisional Institutions of self-government (PISG); while under DSS rule, Belgrade focused more on unilateral moves to strengthen its position. No matter what the strategy however, talks with the international community were always used to stress that decentralization was crucial to the survival of the Kosovo Serbs. Differences were not limited only to strategy – some wanted to create a Kosovo Serb 'entity', with decentralized municipalities linked by territory, while others wanted to focus on creating as many municipalities as possible without focusing solely on territorial continuity. During the Vienna negotiations, Belgrade asked for 11 new Serb-majority municipalities, even though some like Osojane barely had 1,000 inhabitants.

The Kosovo Serbs themselves, especially the small intellectual elite, are unanimous that decentralization is a priority. They participated in various efforts sponsored and supported by the OSCE, the Council of Europe and several NGO's. However, the Ahtisaari Plan linked decentralization with independence and this put them in a real dilemma and this is reflected by their different responses to the process.

As the final status talks got underway, the term "co-existence" replaced the word "multi-ethnic" in the vocabulary of the international community, although the Ahtisaari proposal begins with the premise that *"Kosovo should be a multi-ethnic society"*. However, the rest of the text avoids referring to minorities in Kosovo and the definition of 'community' used in the CSP comes close to fulfilling the Serbian demand of being a "constituent people" in Kosovo. According to one Western diplomat, the Ahtisaari plan *"provided extraordinary protections for the Serbs, which are quite necessary, but it also ended any prospects of the two communities coming together any time soon"*. This division was consolidated by Kosovo's declaration of independence in February 2008 as well as by Belgrade organizing parallel local elections across Kosovo in May 2008 in order to provide a tangible political presence at local levels. This division has since then been enhanced in the North but as we will see in this paper, it could not be maintained, for several reasons, south of the River Ibar. It is clear that the Kosovo Serbs south of the Ibar want to live in their own world, with close links to Belgrade but also with some institutional ties with Prishtina/Pristina which make their daily lives more functional.

Decentralization, the backbone of the Ahtisaari CSP plan, was designed to give to the Serb-majority municipalities a significant measure of autonomy. Having introduced the whole CPS document into the Kosovo constitutional order and approved legislation, the Ahtisaari plan is no longer mentioned. All talk now is about the implementation of Kosovo legislation. Out of dozens of laws derived from the CSP, a significant proportion was related to decentralization. All were passed during the transition period of 120 days after the declaration of the independence.

## **Annex 2: Background Information on Parallel Structures and the North**

Serb parallel structures have existed in Kosovo since 1999. Politicians in Belgrade like to say that wherever the Serbian education and health systems survived in Kosovo, so did the local Serbian population. This is to a large degree true and these institutions are the mainstay of the Kosovo Serb population. This has been recognised by the Ahtisaari Plan as well which allows for these institutions to continue functioning, although their financing would be a lot more transparent.

Despite being in clear violation of UNSCR 1244, Belgrade organized local elections across Kosovo on 11 May 2008. Elections were not organized only in areas where Kosovo Serbs lived but across the territory, using votes of IDP's to determine who is elected in places where Serbs no longer live. Thanks to this attempt to create an illusion of a Kosovo-wide presence, Serbia elected and financed mayors of Malishevë/Malisevo, Prizren and Gjakova/Djakovica, areas in which no Serbs live. They went even a step further, appointing people to municipal positions such as Urbanism Director despite them being several hundreds of miles away from the municipality they were supposed to represent and not having any effective power. It was a futile and expensive exercise as it did nothing to improve the lives of people on the ground. It did however drive a further wedge between the have's and the have not's in the Kosovo Serb municipalities, with several hundred new municipal officials receiving large salaries from Belgrade.

The downfall of PM Kostunica and his DSS party from power in 2008 left the new, pro-European DS government in a difficult position. They were originally against parallel municipalities. There are several reasons for this but the main ones are that they did not want to irritate the international community in Kosovo nor did they want to spend millions of Euros on a system that was largely cosmetic. More importantly, so low was their influence on the ground in Kosovo that they failed to receive more than 10% of the vote on average and did not win a single municipality (this changed when a DS-led coalition won the extraordinary local elections in Leposaviç/Leposavic in 2010). This left political rivals in positions of 'official' power in Kosovo. These local authorities, in particular in the North, were not afraid to voice their displeasure against President Tadic and the DS and demonstrations against them were quite frequent. However, since Belgrade controlled the purse strings, it managed to slowly get a level of control over these municipalities and since mid-2009 they have been able to exert control over them.

The North continues to be one of the major problem areas facing not only Prishtina/Pristina and the international community but also Belgrade. Since 1999, the North has been a thorn in the side of Prishtina/Pristina, the 15% of Kosovo's territory which is not under its control. For the Kosovo Serbs, it was an oasis in what they saw as a ruthless Albanian takeover as it remained the 15% of Kosovo where the Serbian population and institutions continued to function and even develop. The international community constantly had to seek unconventional forms of functioning in an area whose *de facto* status was always at odds with the *de jure* status; Belgrade tries hard to distance itself from the criminal activities and lawlessness which occur in the North while at the same time providing support and finance to on the ground institutions, even though these two aims at times clash with each other. As stated above, the municipalities in the North (Zubin Potok, Kosovska Mitrovica, Zvecan and Leposavic) function as any other municipality in Serbia except that they do not have access to a police force or a criminal court. The difference is that unlike similar sized municipalities in Serbia, they receive substantial funding from Belgrade. This has seen these mostly rural municipalities undergo large scale makeovers which have produced new schools, IDP housing

blocks, new administrative buildings, sport halls and infrastructure. With so much money coming down to such a small area which is over flooded with political parties, corruption was inevitable and soon became very well developed. It centred not only around mismanagement of funds but also on smuggling activities which were made easy because of a lack of any effective policing. The development of the North is linked to the area's unclear status – many on the ground fear that if the situation was clear and resolved, in whichever way, the benefits enjoyed from Belgrade would cease and the Northern municipalities will no longer enjoy such high budgets. Thus the status quo suits the municipalities which operate in the North.

**Annex 3: Acronyms**

CSP	Comprehensive Status Proposal (Ahtisaari Plan)
DSS	Democratic Party of Serbia, led by Vojislav Kostunica
DS	Democratic Party of current Serbian President Boris Tadic
ECLO	European Commission Liaison Office
ICR	International Civilian Representative, designed by the Ahtisaari CSP
ICO	International Civilian Office designed by Ahtisaari CSP
LDK	Democratic League of Kosovo of President Fatmir Sejdiu
MLGA	Ministry of Local Government Administration of Kosovo Government
OSI	Open Society Institute
PDK	Democratic Party of Kosovo of PM Hashim Thaci
PISG	Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of Kosovo under UNMIK
SLS	Serbian Liberal Party of Kosovo Serbs
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNMIK	UN Mission to Kosovo mandated under UN Resolution 1244

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