

IMPACT OF THE REINTEGRATION OF FORMER KLA COMBATANTS ON THE POST-WAR RECOVERY OF KOSOVO

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Abstract

This article examines the impact of the reintegration of former Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) combatants on the post-war recovery of Kosovo. The exploration is conducted through a micro- and macro-security perspective. The analysis focuses on the three main issues: preferential treatment of former KLA combatants, identification and utilisation of KLA resources, and the long-term implications of reintegration on the peacebuilding process in Kosovo and regional security. The findings from this analysis are presented in the form of a list of general conclusions and lessons that can be applied by those agencies involved in the reintegration of former combatants in Kosovo and other similar circumstances.

Introduction

Post-war recovery is a long-term task in which success depends on the holistic and integrated implementation of various post-war recovery programmes from mine clearance, physical rebuilding, and economic revitalization to institutional strengthening, reconciliation, and development. Each of these post-war activities has its own significance in the establishment of peace that can only be sustained by addressing the root causes of the conflict. It is in conjunction with this context that the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants also play an imperative role for the sustainability of the peacebuilding process.

Experience of this close-woven relationship shows that without successful demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants, it would be far from realistic to expect that a sustainable recovery after the war would be achieved. However, conversely without successful post-war recovery in general, the viability of a DDR process would be questionable (Özerdem, 2002). The implementation of the Information Counselling and Referral Service (ICRS) is aimed to provide support mechanisms for demobilised Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) combatants in their return to post-conflict society since July 1999; this offers a good example of this interaction and will be used as a primary case

study in this paper. In order to analyse the relationship between the post-war recovery and reintegration of former combatants in the context of Kosovo, this paper will attempt to answer two major questions. First, whether the reintegration strategy in Kosovo has really had any positive impacts on ensuring gainful and sustainable employment opportunities for former combatants. Second, what were the overall implications of the reintegration strategy in the establishment of peace in Kosovo and general stability in the region?

These questions parallel Collier's (1994) framework of macro- and micro-insecurity for possible threats presented by combatants. At the micro-insecurity level he argues that without gainful and rewarding employment or means of livelihood, and a sense of community, former combatants present a threat to society. Giving the definition of micro-insecurity as "...a fear that the individual will be the victim of crime", Collier (1994:343) urges the importance of successful demobilisation and reintegration in order to prevent the problem of insecurity being compounded in society.

Meanwhile, Collier (1994) also states that unsuccessful reintegration presents a threat at the macro level, as former combatants may decide to remobilise and resume warfare, if their dissatisfactions, grievances or the imbalance in socio-economic and political structures that led them to take arms and fight in the first place, continue to be neglected or ineffectively dealt with and unresolved. The fear of macro-insecurity, which is defined by Collier (1994:343) as "...the state will be overthrown by insurrection", can be exacerbated by an unresolved conflict. Demobilisation and reintegration can effectively pre-empt such fears by reducing former combatants' desires and needs to be involved in armed conflict for the resolution of conflicting interests. The possible implications of a successful DDR process would also be felt in the maintenance of regional stability and security. The reintegration of former combatants should be considered as a process that would have impacts not only at local and national levels but also at regional ones.

Supporting this view, it is stated, "...poorly planned, ill co-ordinated and inadequately funded programmes can exacerbate the political tensions that inevitably characterise any post-conflict situation" (Berdal, 1996:73). According to Colletta et al. (1996:18), successful reintegration of former combatants "...can make a major contribution to national conflict resolution and to the restoration of social capital". Furthermore, in the case of failing to achieve reintegration, there would be "...considerable insecurity at the societal and individual levels, including rent-seeking behaviour through the barrel of a gun" (Colletta et al., 1996:18).

Kingma and Grebrowold (1998:12) identify a number of situations in which the reintegration of former combatants and displaced populations might have an impact on the recurrence or development of conflicts. The absence of a functioning state and legal system plays a detrimental role in the confidence and perception of security of the population, including former combatants. As mentioned earlier, without economic opportunities, former combatants are likely to use their military skills and available

weapons to make a living through illegal activities. Kingma (1999) gives the examples of Mozambique and South Africa where some of demobilised combatants turned to banditry. Similar to these experiences, in countries such as El Salvador, Cambodia, Mozambique and Nicaragua former combatants were disposed to make their way through banditry after demobilisation (Weiss-Fagen, 1995). The reintegration process should also be coupled with a reform process in order to ensure increased involvement of former combatants in decision-making at all levels, as otherwise frustration may result in the regrouping of armed factions.

There are also a number of issues related to social and cultural norms and psychological impact that should be borne in mind here. First, social reintegration is the process through which former combatants and their families feel part of and are accepted by the community, and if this cannot be achieved successfully then risks of violent conflict may develop (Kingma, 2000). Second, armed conflicts also affect cultural norms and reciprocal relationships in a society. For example, women both as a fighter and a war-affected civilian acquire new roles during the war. However, as they are often expected to return to their traditional roles after the war, it is likely that this change would have negative impacts on family structures (Tegegn, 1992; de Watteville, 2002, Babiker and Özerdem, 2003). Finally, the traumas of war can have profound psychological impacts on the population, particularly on children, both as soldiers and civilians, affecting their social and emotional development (World Bank, 2002).

It is in conjunction with this understanding of the relationship between the DDR process and peacebuilding that this article will explore former KLA combatants' views of the reintegration strategy from the Collier's (1994) micro- and macro-security perspective. In this exploration, the theory of human resource will be utilised as an "appropriate and useful concept"; in a DDR context it "...refers to the effective deployment of existing skills, qualifications and competencies of ex-combatants for the maximum achievement of individual, social, organizational or national goals and objectives of demobilization" (Nubler, 1997:8). Therefore, the analysis will focus on issues of giving former KLA combatants a preferential treatment, identification and utilisation of their resources, and the long-term implications of reintegration on the peacebuilding process in Kosovo and regional security. However, before undertaking this analysis, a presentation of field research methodology and basic demographic and employment data on former KLA combatants is given in the next two sections.

Methodology

The data for this article was collected between October 2000 and September 2001, during the Post-war Reconstruction and Development Unit's (PRDU) one year research

programme. The main source of information for this research programme was in-depth interviews carried out with three groups of interviewees:

- representatives from international funding and implementing agencies involved in the reintegration process such as the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the international military force KFOR;
- former KLA combatants assisted by the Reintegration Fund of the Information Counselling and Referral Service (ICRS);
- former KLA combatants working for the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC).

The 80 structured interviews, which lasted around an hour and half each, were undertaken to develop a ‘conversational partnership’ in order to obtain qualitative and detailed information.¹

Demographic and Employment Data on Former KLA Combatants

The data on demographic and employment characteristics was compiled by the ICRS during the registration of 25,723 former combatants in the 49 officially designated KLA Assembly Areas and later in the seven IOM Sub-Offices. On the basis of the demographic and socio-economic data, it is possible to establish an overall profile of a ‘typical’ former combatant in Kosovo.

Male Albanian Kosovar combatants form the majority of the caseload in Kosovo, as only 3% of the caseload is female. The caseload is clearly much better educated and has relatively good skills levels, as there was only 25 percent chance of not having a high school education. A great majority of former combatants have a settled family life, as there is 50 percent chance of being married and 80 percent chance of having children. They have close links to their extended families and local communities in general. Their armed group was the ‘victorious’ side at the end of war, so they are likely to be welcomed as ‘heroes’ by their communities. The caseload has no problem with child soldiers, as the majority are between the age of 20 and 40 years. The great majority of former combatants fought only for one year, so they were away from their families and communities for a relatively short period of time.

On the other hand, the employment and housing characteristics can be considered as areas of possible concern. With respect to employment there are two facets. First, the majority of them were either unemployed or did low paid jobs before the war. They need to support a large number of dependants, as there is 50 percent chance of having six to 15 dependants. Second, the largest share prefer a military job after the war. For a ‘typical’ former combatant, there is also only 30 percent chance of wanting to return to their

former occupations, while there is 60 percent chance of having training needs. In addition to gaining meaningful employment they need to deal with their housing problems, as there is 60 percent chance of having a heavily damaged or destroyed house. Complicating employment and housing issues the 'victorious' side is likely to predicate their demobilisation and reintegration on a number of demands.

However, these characteristics should be considered within the socio-economic realities of Kosovo, and only after that would the real picture of possible challenges for reintegration start to emerge. Kosovo is a low-income country with a number of economic and industrial production disproportions and ineffective financial mechanisms inherited from the pre-war era. It has a high level of unemployment. The socio-economic development of the majority of the population was negated by the discriminatory laws and regulations, which were imposed by the Serbian regime for a decade (RIINVEST, 1998, 2001). The physical infrastructure is damaged or severely neglected; 120,000 houses were destroyed. The province has substantial environmental problems such as landmines and unexploded ordnances (UXOs), misused land, and polluted water resources. More than half of the population were either internally displaced or became refugees during the war. The ethnic tensions between Albanian Kosovars and the minority groups, particularly Serbs, are still very tense. It is a province where most governmental functions are carried out by an interim United Nations (UN) administration, as the state system in the province has completely collapsed. There are problems with law and order as the judiciary, police and corrections services are being structured from scratch. Black market and regional mafia networks are widespread and strong. The ethnic problems between Albanian and Slav Macedonians in neighbouring Macedonia resulted in the outbreak of an armed conflict. More importantly, the UN resolution, which gave the mandate of governance to the current UN administration, is vague concerning the political future of the province. The Former Republic of Yugoslavia, which consists of Serbia, Montenegro, and Kosovo, at least according to the Resolution 1244, is likely to experience further structural problems in its state system.²

Investigation of the Reintegration Process at the Micro Level

The ICRS is composed of the Reintegration Fund (RF) and Service Referral (SR) arms, while the training of the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC) has been the other major aspect of the reintegration strategy. At the request of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the Kosovo Force (KFOR), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has undertaken the implementation of the ICRS. The initial estimate of KLA combatants was 8-10,000. However, by November 1999 the number of registered combatants was more than 25,000. After examination of the caseload, 16,229 were expected to require social and economic reintegration support through the RF of the

ICRS. The main two components of the Fund are 'Employment through Vocational Training and On-the-Job Training' and 'Employment through Livelihood and Enterprise Development' programmes. In the latter part of 2000, ICRS also started to include the 'Psycho-social Therapy' category. In addition, 4,552 former KLA combatants, 90 percent of the KPC's 5,052 members, were selected and trained for 12 months in order to respond to disasters affecting the population of Kosovo. Starting in April 2001, 40 percent of the entire KPC membership was supposed to become reservist. However, for various political reasons the de-induction of around 2,000 was delayed considerably and did not start before Autumn 2001. In total to date, 15,596 former combatants, 61 percent of the ICRS registered caseload, have received and are receiving long-term reintegration assistance in one form or another from IOM (ICRS, 2000, 2000a, 2000b; KPCT, 2000, 2001; IOM, 2002).

Targeting Former KLA Combatants as a Specific Beneficiary Group

The DDR literature shows that there is an ongoing debate on whether former combatants should be targeted as a specific beneficiary group or not (Berdal, 1996; Kingma, 1997; Last, 1999). However, as other DDR experiences illustrate there are often a number of reasons for the specific targeting of former combatants in this way. In the context of Kosovo, as required by the UNSCR 1244 (paragraph 15), the 'Demilitarisation and Transformation by the UCK' (signed on 20th June 1999) drew up the overall framework of the DDR process. It states that former KLA combatants would be given preferential access to available places in KPC and KPS. In order to carry out such a transformation former combatants have inevitably become a specific beneficiary group. More importantly, one would need to consider the possible implications of not targeting them specifically. It was clear that the KLA would only agree on its demobilisation and transformation into a civil protection corps if at least some of the reasons that led them to armed conflict were addressed in the post-war recovery process.

Dr. Pasquale Lupoli (28 September 1999, interview), the then Chief of IOM Mission in Kosovo, rightly claimed that any delay in addressing the needs of former KLA combatants would have had severe consequences in the establishment of peace in Kosovo. According to Lupoli, considering that the summer and autumn of 1999 witnessed a high level of volatility in the province as a result of the huge number of returnees, heavy war damage inflicted on the physical environment, approaching winter, and Albanian revenge attacks on the minority groups, the protection and continuation of security and stability were of the utmost importance. In such an environment Lupoli identified the immediate engagement of former combatants in the rebuilding of their lives and livelihoods as crucial for ensuring their support of the peace process. The interviews with various IOM local and international staff who were involved in the reintegration programme from the beginning also referred to major difficulties in dealing with some former combatants who were 'demanding' an immediate assistance to their needs. It

seems that immediately after the peace agreement the presence of KLA combatants all around Kosovo, and the issue of whether they could be persuaded to disarm, may have been used as a bargaining tool for the demands of KLA. Therefore, the targeting of KLA combatants as a specific beneficiary group was a well-justified approach. It should also be noted that due to their large number of dependants the reintegration of former combatants in Kosovo might have affected the lives of as many as 225,000 people, which is 10 percent of the population.

Identification and Taxonomy of Skills

The need and importance of taking a broad view of the skills and human competencies in the process of assessing former combatants' skills is imperative for the targeted planning of reintegration. During the registration process in Kosovo between 23rd July and 30th November 1999, former KLA combatants were asked to complete a questionnaire which included general questions on their personal and employment characteristics. However, the reintegration programme has not carried out any further skill assessment in order to provide a better baseline for various micro-enterprise and training programmes implemented within ICRS and KPCT initiatives.

After the registration survey in Kosovo each individual initiative (such as vocational training courses, Reintegration Fund projects and the training of KPC members) should have made greater use of skills assessment. The decision-making process for designing such reintegration projects did not have the chance to utilise any information on former combatants' capabilities at the cognitive, affective and psychomotor levels (Nubler, 1997). The questionnaire survey's results provided some cognitive information as it enquired on former combatants' formal knowledge and skills, but idiosyncratic experience could not have been assessed by this methodology. On the other hand, the way that micro-enterprise development projects were planned, in close collaboration between IOM field staff and former combatants, meant that such idiosyncratic experiences may have been assessed by allowing for the design of tailor-made projects.

More importantly, the assessment of such capabilities should have been an integral part of vocational and KPC training courses. As well as the testing of learned formal knowledge, these training courses should have had mechanisms for assessing idiosyncratic knowledge and improved capabilities at the affective and psychomotor levels. Considering human resource formation comprises of emotions, attitudes, values and norms at the affective level, these training courses could have deliberately targeted improvement of the former combatants' punctuality, respect for authority, self-reliance, attitude towards work and the ability to make decisions (Nubler, 1997). There is no doubt that some of the former combatants may have acquired such skills as part of their training courses. The lack of practice and hands-on experience opportunities at the training

courses was a major obstacle for the development of manual skills as part of the psychomotor area.

The reintegration strategy has not provided a clear taxonomy of skills according to different labour markets and occupations. It was important that the skills and competencies of former KLA combatants were classified as vocational, management and entrepreneurial. First of all, this would have avoided the ad-hoc organisation of vocational training courses. For example, there was no particular logical argument for organising all vocational courses for three months. For those former combatants who had already acquired skills in the subject area of their courses, a three-month training may have been adequate, but as the field research findings indicated that was not the case for those at beginners' levels. More importantly, the logic for organising all types of vocational training courses (from plumbing and electrical installations to computing) to be of the same duration is particularly questionable. The argument for treating all former combatants equally can be put forward here, as the payment of stipends has been a part of vocational training courses. However, it is also probable that such reasoning may have resulted in a big sacrifice in the overall quality of learning. The possibility of unequal treatment could have been avoided through the development of appropriate response mechanisms (Özerdem, 2003).

The programmes implemented by IOM have indeed provided appropriate fora for the effective allocation of various competencies. For example, the micro-enterprise development aspect was an ideal mechanism for the utilisation of entrepreneurial and management skills. The establishment of vocational training courses in a wide spectrum of subjects has also provided opportunities for former combatants to develop new or existing vocational competencies. It is therefore praiseworthy that the IOM's strategy has managed to adopt a great level of flexibility in responding to the changing and varying needs of former combatants. Apart from catering to different types of competencies and skills with its different ICRS programmes, it was clear that the IOM has managed to renew its approach, according to the information accumulated, with the development of the reintegration strategy. It is due to this ethos of flexibility that the IOM's strategy has been able to show a high degree of agility in order to increase the level of its programmes' appropriateness to the needs of former combatants. It has been a strategy that attempted to regenerate itself on the basis of an increasing understanding of the context throughout the implementation.

On the other hand, the lack of an overall assessment of the economic context, with a particular emphasis on the analysis of the labour market in Kosovo, has resulted in negative implications for the planning and implementation of the process. The ILO (1997) explains that promoting employment for former combatants requires analysis and understanding of the functioning of the labour market. In their manual on *Training and Employment Opportunities for Ex-Combatants*, the ILO (1997:49) recommends labour market information (LMI) analyses which "...constitute an appropriate approach to address employment questions for general economic development as well as for sector-

specific post-conflict rebuilding”. As emphasized by the ILO, the lack of an effective LMI mechanism inhibits the planning, implementation and evaluation of employment programmes for former combatants. It was also clear that the reintegration strategy in Kosovo could have benefited greatly from information on existing markets, future potential markets, the needs of people to be reintegrated and employed, and the possibilities for education, vocational and business training (Özerdem, 2003).

Application of Skills and Utilisation of Human Resources

The reintegration strategy implemented by IOM has clearly experienced major difficulties in meeting the needs of a larger caseload than initially expected within the limits of its programme budget. The figures on Reintegration Fund (RF) projects, the average project per capita cost and beneficiary per capita cost, have shown that the strategy had a decreasing trend in its spending throughout its implementation. For example, while the total RF expenditure per project in the first (July to October 1999) quarter averaged US\$ 13,227 per project, it was only \$ 8,813 in the seventh (January to March 2001) quarter (ICRS, 2000, 2001). No matter how carefully reintegration programmes are designed, if the projection of the caseload is not properly done or the registration process is open to manipulation, then it is still likely that the implementation process will experience finance-related challenges.

In addition to such financial challenges, the reintegration strategy seems to have experienced some coordination problems. The involvement of different agencies in the same task naturally brings different agendas, mandates, and modes of operation. Although the reintegration strategy was designed and implemented by the IOM at the request of UNMIK and KFOR, some coordination problems have occurred even in a carefully designated working relationships framework like this. For example, the six-month staff changes at KFOR caused some difficulties in programme continuity. The KFOR officers interviewed explained that a careful hand-over process mitigated the possible negative impact of staff turnover. However, the interviews with UNMIK and IOM staff have shown that working with a new officer every six months meant that they had to establish their working relationships from the beginning each time. Considering the decisive role that human relationships play in whether programmes are successful or not, the likelihood is that KFOR staff changes will have only increased the possibility of such problems.

It is also crucial to consider the underlying reasons for designating the structure of the reintegration strategy. The issue of keeping former combatants ‘busy’ as an overarching aim seems to have been a strong argument, if one starts to consider the way that some training programmes were planned and implemented. Various ICRS projects and the KPCT were under pressure to keep former combatants busy in order to reduce the possibility of them becoming a security risk in Kosovo or becoming involved in regional

conflicts such as the one in Macedonia. Therefore it would not be too unrealistic to assume that the IOM as the main implementing agency was probably under pressure to ensure that former combatants were provided with various training and enterprise development programmes. This may have been one of the reasons why some training courses, such as firefighting were persistently made part of the overall KPC training structure, even though there would not be a major need for large numbers of firefighters in the corps. It was perhaps this similar perception that also formed the underlying reasons for various VTCs (Özerdem, 2003).

In other words, the economic recovery of Kosovo was not probably the main or only motivation for training so many former combatants in different sectors of the reintegration strategy. The aim of keeping former combatants busy was as important as economic considerations. For the importance of maintaining local and regional stability, this may have been considered as a well-justified objective. However, when it starts to overcome the objectives related to economic recovery, then the reintegration strategy also starts to lose its principal vision. The objective of keeping former combatants busy should be appreciated, but the apparent indifference to the way in which this is done should certainly be reconsidered. If security concerns start to overcome the reintegration strategy's economic objectives, then it is likely to result in ad-hoc initiatives with unsustainable consequences. After all, the dissatisfaction, which may result from the economic outcomes of a reintegration programme, can also turn into security risks (Özerdem, 2003).

Policies for Effective Utilisation of Human Resources after Demobilisation

The effective utilisation of human resources requires supportive policies and complementary measures for both the supply and demand side of the labour market, and the provision of employment and livelihood development programmes as part of the reintegration strategy should be an integral part of the overall reconstruction process. However, the strategy in Kosovo did not utilise any type of labour market assessment; therefore it is difficult to claim that any targeted planning was carried out toward this aim. On the other hand, the economic reintegration of former combatants can be analysed in terms of their involvement in the reconstruction process.

It is clear that those former combatants who have been assisted through enterprise development projects have had a good opportunity for a sustainable livelihood, although that still depends on a number of overall economic market factors. For many former combatants these enterprise projects were a life-time opportunity, and most of them were not only breadwinners for their immediate family but also to their extended families. These projects have meant employment to other former combatants and civilians too and their positive implications on the regeneration of the economy can easily be estimated. The provision of employment in certain sectors would also have a trickle-down effect in other related areas. Therefore RF projects have proved themselves to be an appropriate

way of responding to the needs of the economic environment in Kosovo, and it can be claimed that small enterprises (created or supported through the ICRS' RF programme) will certainly play a significant role in the rehabilitation of the economy in Kosovo.

Meanwhile, technical VTCs provided as part of the ICRS programme can also be considered as an important step in creating a pool of trained people who are now much more likely to secure employment or establish their enterprise than before. On the other hand, no matter how carefully these VTCs have been planned and implemented, unless there is a fast rate of employment creation in Kosovo, most of these trained people are unlikely to find gainful employment. It is true that after completion of these vocational courses, the former combatants have a better chance to develop their own enterprises, but in certain sectors they will find themselves facing tough competition. They would also need further financial assistance for starting their businesses. The ICRS's on-the-job training seems to be a more targeted approach for the needs of the labour market in Kosovo. The existing medium-size manufacturers in Kosovo will form the main source of employment in the medium term. As part of the on-the-job training initiative the service providers had to be supported, and this is an innovative and targeted approach. It responds to the demand side of the labour market but also the supply side (Özerdem, 2003).

In regard to involvement in the reconstruction of Kosovo, most of the respondents from KPC did not feel actively involved in the reconstruction process. Although there were various environmental cleaning, shelter and school rehabilitation, and infrastructure reconstruction projects, the real capacities of KPC do not appear to have been utilised effectively. It was pointed out that they would need training, machinery, equipment and financial resources for further involvement in the reconstruction process. More importantly, it seems that the way that the international community perceives KPC is in drastic need of change. Most of the respondents felt that the international community did not take them seriously. This may be a matter of misconception of reality. This dependence between the international community and the KPC inevitably creates an environment in which KPC tries to find a balance between its 'pride' and its needs.

Investigation of the Reintegration Process at the Macro Level

The preceding discussions have shown that the reintegration process has been crucial for the post-war recovery process in Kosovo due to two overall implications. One relates to its impact on the labour market and the economy of Kosovo in general, which were explored under the concept of micro level insecurity. The second implication is due to the interaction between the reintegration process and security at the provincial and regional levels, which will be explored in this section.

It is clear that the former combatants' aspirations for the future of Kosovo include full independence. It is in the same context that KPC is inevitably considered as the future army of Kosovo. However, in order to make some projections about the future impact of the reintegration process on the post-war recovery of the province and the Balkans in general, it is important to have a clear understanding of whether an independent Kosovo can realistically be envisaged. It is accepted that sooner or later the issue of independence will need to be dealt with by the international community. Resolution 1244 postponed this question for the time being, but the interviews with former combatants have shown that it features prominently in their desires and future aspirations. An unwillingness to solve it will not result in the Kosovars forgetting it.

Although the KPC is far from being a satisfactory structure for former combatants, it seems that they have accepted its main characteristic of being a civilian protection corps for the time being. The possibility of becoming an army in the near future seems to be the main motivation point for many KPC members. In contrast to other former combatants, KPC members were selected not only because they passed the KPC Recruitment Battery Test, but also because of their relatively long-term loyalty to the KLA. For example, in terms of their length of time with the KLA, only 25 percent of respondents who were assisted by the ICRS programme had an involvement of over 12 months, while 85% of KPC members interviewed said that they had spent more than 12 months with KLA. Therefore, it would not be too unrealistic to claim that these referrals had perhaps aimed to provide a gainful employment for those former combatants who had formed the 'hard core' of the KLA.

It was also essential that KPC members would not desert their forces in order to join the fighting in southern Serbia or northern Macedonia. Some KPC members did leave the corps in order to support the armed conflicts of Albanians in neighbouring countries; however it seems that their numbers were limited. The interviews with former combatants have shown that the conflict in Macedonia was not considered as a 'motherland' duty for the majority of them. They certainly sympathised with the Albanians in Macedonia over the causes of their fighting, but this did not seem to be a strong enough reason to cause large desertions from the KPC. On the other hand, no matter how comprehensive and responsive the reintegration strategy had been in Kosovo, it would not have been able to prevent all former KLA combatants from joining in these regional conflicts. There may be various reasons for this. Some may feel that their loyalty or obligation to other Albanians in the region is much stronger than any economic incentives that could be provided for them. Some may consider fighting as the only way of sorting out differences, and for some fighting may be the activity they feel best qualified to engage in. Furthermore, considering that the registration process of former KLA combatants is itself open to speculation, then it is very hard to claim whether those who joined in the regional conflicts are really former KLA combatants or not (Özerdem, 2003a).

For the future of Kosovo, the Independent International Commission on Kosovo (2000) presents four essential elements to be borne in mind: the relationship of the province to the FRY; the relationship of Kosovar institutions of self-government to any continuing UN administrative presence and to the KFOR security presence; the nature of Kosovo's borders and its relationship to neighbouring states; and the definition of Kosovo as an entity within the international community. The Commission's report (2000:259) presents five possible options for Kosovo's future, and one of those is full independence. It states that after the province-wide elections an eventual demand for an independence referendum by elected Kosovar officials would be legitimate, and it should be "...granted as expeditiously as is prudent" (2000:259). In the context of deciding what precise form of independence, the Commission (2000:259) recommends 'conditional independence' as the best possible option for Kosovo. Furthermore, a conditional independence is considered as a necessity, because as it is claimed that Kosovo lacks "...the means to defend itself against external attack" and "...the ability to guarantee internal order, domestic safety and inter-ethnic-peace" (Independent International Commission on Kosovo, 2000:59).

It was also the concept of 'conditional independence' that General Agim Ceku (12 July 2001, interview) considered as a suitable path for Kosovo and explained that the international community could set conditions in terms of human rights, democracy and multi-ethnicity for the Kosovars. According to him these conditions would be seen as challenges to be overcome for the Kosovars' long-awaited independence of Kosovo, integration with Europe, establishment of good relationships with its neighbours (including Serbia), and collaboration with the international defence forces in Kosovo. This is the vision of Kosovo given by the Commander of KPC, which was pointed out by many other former KLA combatants during the interviews. It can be summarised that a vision of independence, conditional or not, is considered as the most important desire of former KLA combatants, and probably by a very large percentage of the population. As long as this vision is provided with clear conditions to be met, Kosovars would be willing to cooperate with the international community and take the necessary steps to become an independent state. However, if the international community makes an indefinite deferral of Kosovo's political future as an independent country, then the UN administration and KFOR will find working in the province increasingly difficult (Özerdem, 2003a).

Considering the views of former combatants interviewed on the reconstruction of Kosovo, which were also echoed at the interview (12 July 2001) with General Ceku, there is a strong perception that the international community has largely failed in the reconstruction process. Although there is an overall appreciation for the presence of the international community, particularly its military presence, their efforts for reconstruction have not met the expectations of former combatants. This view can obviously be challenged, but it is clear that the way in which the role of KPC in the reconstruction process has been kept within very limited margins also means that they rightly consider

the reconstruction of Kosovo to be the responsibility of the international community. The opinion 'if Kosovo has made any progress in its reconstruction process it has been due to the efforts of Kosovars but not the international community' is quite common among former combatants, but the reconstruction of Kosovo is still seen as the responsibility of the international community. Adjusting the process by giving further responsibility to KPC would require three prerequisites in order to expect any substantial and effective involvement from it: first, the provision of training to improve human resources of KPC in the areas of construction and programme management; second, the provision of the necessary equipment and machinery to take an active and efficient role in the reconstruction; and finally, the improvement of coordination and trust between KPC and the international community (Özerdem, 2003a).

The interviews with KPC members have shown that there is a strong desire for active involvement in the reconstruction process. The pride and patriotism of former KLA combatants can easily be harnessed for building schools, roads, houses and hospitals. Rather than a security risk, they are a resource that can work towards the recovery of the 'motherland'.

Summary and Conclusions

The knowledge acquired and discourses presented within this paper have shown the international community's strategy for the reintegration of former KLA combatants in Kosovo, to be innovative, flexible and ambitious in character, providing gainful employment and a livelihood framework for the majority of assisted former combatants. The Kosovo case study supports the view that there is an important linkage between the successful reintegration of former combatants, and the protection and strengthening of security environment at both micro and macro levels during a war-to-peace transition. Collier's (1994) framework of micro- and macro-insecurity for possible threats has been an effective framework for the analysis of this case study. It was difficult to assess whether former KLA combatants had a direct and widespread involvement in the regional conflicts in Macedonia and Southern Serbia due to speculative nature of information. Nevertheless, it can be claimed that without the reintegration strategy in Kosovo there would have been a wider involvement of former KLA combatants in those regional conflicts. Meanwhile, it is due to the reintegration strategy that former combatants in Kosovo were given an effective alternative in the re-establishment of their lives in the post-conflict environment. Consequently, this has certainly played a significant role in the maintenance of security at the micro level.

It should also be noted that the caseload in Kosovo in comparison to other DDR caseloads in different African and Central American countries (Colletta et al., 1996; Kingma, 1997; Spencer, 1997; Kingma and Grebrewold, 1998) posed many fewer challenges due its demographic, social and economic characteristics. For example, the

caseload in Kosovo was mainly from one ethnic group who was the ‘victorious’ side. The majority of former combatants had a short period of involvement with the KLA and had relatively good education levels with strong family ties. Nevertheless, within the socio-economic and political realities of Kosovo, the challenge of reintegration has been enormous. This was particularly the case with the provision of meaningful employment opportunities in an environment where the unemployment rate in general is as high as 70 percent. Bearing in mind the realities of such an environment the following issues can be identified as lessons learned from the Kosovo reintegration process.

The Kosovo experience shows that targeting former combatants as a specific beneficiary group is important and necessary for security considerations. However, the biggest mistake to make in the design and implementation of reintegration strategies would be to consider former combatants from a purely security risk perspective and so adopt the approach of keeping them ‘busy’ as an over-arching aim. In other words, the process needs to consider its caseload from a human resource development perspective. More importantly, it is necessary to provide a consistency in the provision of reintegration benefits in order to avoid some former combatants being left unassisted due to financial limitations. This can itself pose the highest security risk to the peace process.

An effective allocation of human resources to vocational, management and entrepreneurial areas, as well as an overall assessment of the economic context (with a particular emphasis on the analysis of the labour market) should be carried out before completing the framework of the reintegration strategy. This would provide a better understanding of the reintegration challenge in general and identify possible opportunities that can be utilised in due course. Therefore, in terms of most suitable type of programmes for employment opportunities, vocational training courses should not be seen as a cheaper alternative to micro-enterprise development programmes. Vocational training is only effective in its true meaning if there are adequate employment opportunities in the local labour market for the graduates of such courses. More importantly, training programmes should consider the importance of improving affective and manual skills as part of their implementation programme for the provision of technical knowledge. Teaching skills ranging from punctuality and self-reliance to the ability to make decisions should be considered as important as teaching the repair of broken pipes, the installation of electricity systems, or the way to paint a car. The reintegration strategy should also contain complementary measures for the supply side of the labour market. The provision of incentives to employers through on-the-job-training schemes is a good example of such a measure to be incorporated into the supportive policies for the demand side.

Enterprise development programmes should acknowledge that those former combatants who embark on a new occupation are likely to be much more vulnerable to market forces since by contrast with former combatants who were involved in the same occupation before joining the armed forces, they will not have an established client base.

The provision of enterprise development schemes should bear in mind the possibility of over-saturation of the local market; therefore the type of projects supported should be decided according to the market thresholds for the need of that particular product or service. Micro-enterprise schemes are likely to have substantial knock-on impacts on the local economy through the provision of not only a regular income, but also employment opportunities to former combatants' extended families.

The KPC members' pride in being a member of their organisation should have been recognised as an important factor in the way the international community conducted its relationship with KPC. It is not possible to ignore the fact that only a couple of years ago they were 'allies' with the international community and fought together against the Serbian regime; so they clearly need time for the adaptation to their civilian identity. It should be borne in mind that although the KLA did not have a proper military structure and necessary resources, after their 'transformation' to the KPC they acquired a hierarchical organisational structure with a large pool of trained members of staff. In other words, KPC is much nearer to an army in character and resources than the KLA ever was before its demobilisation.

The further involvement of KPC members in the reconstruction process can be an excellent vehicle for building up strong relationships between them and the international community. In order to ensure the effective involvement of KPC in the reconstruction of Kosovo, the international community should meet the KPC's training, machinery, equipment and finance needs. Through an effective involvement in the reconstruction process KPC members would not feel totally dependent on the international community but would share in the rebuilding of their 'motherland'. Overall, it seems that a 'conditional independence' option, as designated by the Independent International Commission on Kosovo, provides the most appropriate framework in which the positive contribution of former combatants in the post-war recovery process can be ensured.

Notes

1. The research programme was funded by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP). The first phase of the fieldwork took place in October 2000 during which the primary aim was to gain a clear understanding of the reintegration process with its main programmes and actors. The representatives of international agencies formed the target group for interviews. As was the case during the first phase of the fieldwork, the second phase in May 2001 was also conducted for a period of three weeks. Four out of seven International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Sub-Offices, namely Pristina, Prizren, Peja and Mitrovica, were selected as the areas of focus. The main purpose was to assess the initial impacts of the IOM's Reintegration Fund programme. The interviewees in this phase were mainly those former combatants who have benefited from the Reintegration Fund of the Information Counselling and Referral Service (ICRS) aspect of the reintegration strategy. The third phase of the field research was conducted in July 2001. The target group for interviews during this phase was those former combatants working for the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC). All six KPC Regional Training Groups (RTGs) as well as KPC Headquarters and the Guards Section were covered during three weeks of field research. At each RTG, the aim was to interview at least one 'Senior Manager', two 'Middle Managers' and two 'Field Members'.

2. The Former Republic of Yugoslavia became defunct in 2003 and it is now called 'Serbia and Montenegro'.

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