



Shaping post-conflict democracies: the political transformation of ex-combatants in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia

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Abstract

The proactive inclusion of ex-combatants in politics is a common practice for post-conflict, transitory societies. Such inclusion is advisable given the necessity to create durable peace that accommodates the interests of ex-combatants and their constituencies, as well as to prevent spoiler effects that could arise should they feel aggrieved at the lack of political representation. Politics in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia is populated with parties emerging from armed groups, while their leaders are in decision-making positions in state institutions. But democratic consolidation in both countries has been a frustrating process undermined by the prevalence of state capture, clientelistic relations, and the encroachment of informal networks in politics.

This thesis undertakes a comparative, qualitative study of the cases of Kosovo and FYR Macedonia, and explores the linkages between their institutional deficiencies and the systemic influence of ex-combatants. It offers a contribution to political science and democratisation studies by focusing on the scarcely-researched long-term political transformation of former combatants and their impact on democracy. It deconstructs their war legacy *vis-à-vis* democracy, the creation of new political classes emerging from conflict, predation and clientelist practices, and explores the novel concept of democracy spoilers. The findings concur that keeping ex-combatants out of post-war political arrangements runs counter to the spirit of inclusion. However, when the political establishment is pervaded by ex-combatants turned politicians, the clientelistic and predatory practices tend to spoil institution-building and democratic consolidation.

This comparative study is led by first-hand data from semi-structured interviews with ex-combatants turned politicians, civil society and academia, conducted in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia during 2015. The secondary literature on the topic of political transformation of combatants is buttressed by a decade of the author's active participant observation in Kosovo, FYR Macedonia and the wider Western Balkan region.

Keywords: democratisation, political transformation, Kosovo, FYR Macedonia.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS	1
I. INTRODUCTION	3
1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. GENERAL OVERVIEW	3
2.1 <i>From international to intra-state wars</i>	3
2.2 <i>From intra-state wars to political transformation</i>	5
3. FOCUS AND RELEVANCE OF THE THESIS	6
3.1 <i>Addressing gaps in literature and contribution</i>	7
4. TWO CASE STUDIES: COMPARATIVE ANGLE.....	9
4.1 <i>FYR Macedonia</i>	10
4.2 <i>Kosovo</i>	12
5. RESEARCH QUESTION	13
5.1 <i>Structure and findings of the thesis</i>	15
II. LITERATURE REVIEW	20
1. INTRODUCTION	20
2. DEFINING THE CONCEPTS	21
3. THEORIES AND PRACTICES ON DDR AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION	24
3.1 <i>DDR as a technical and immediate post-conflict change</i>	24
3.2 <i>Political transformation and longer-term post-conflict change</i>	30
4. DEMOCRACY AND PEACEBUILDING	36
4.1 <i>Democratisation</i>	36
4.2 <i>International community and the peacebuilding paradigm</i>	45
5. CORRUPTION, CLIENTELISM AND POST-CONFLICT PREDATION.....	54
5.1 <i>Grievance leading to conflict, followed by predation</i>	65
6. CONCLUSION	68
III. RESEARCH METHODS	74
1. INTRODUCTION	74
2. EPISTEMOLOGICAL QUERIES LEADING TO CONCEPTUALISATION OF RESEARCH QUESTION.....	74
3. RESEARCH STRATEGY	77
4. CONCEPTUALISATION AND CASE STUDY CHOICES	79
5. DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND RESEARCH	83
6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS DURING FIELDWORK	95
7. GROUNDED THEORY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH	100
8. ANALYTIC PROCEDURE	104
8.1 <i>Category diagram - Assessing impact of former combatants on democracy outcomes in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia</i>	108
8.2 <i>Category diagram – Assessing political transformation and reintegration outcomes in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia</i>	109
8.3 <i>Concept diagram – Evaluating democracy quality in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia</i>	110
9. CONCLUSION	111
IV. HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF CASE STUDIES	112
1. INTRODUCTION	112
2. THE YUGOSLAV EXPERIMENT.....	113
3. THE RISE OF ARMED GROUPS AND THE MILITARISATION OF SOCIETIES	119
4. KOSOVO – OVERVIEW.....	123
4.1 <i>From random spots of resistance to a unified clandestine movement</i>	128
4.2 <i>An accelerating crisis leading to full-fledged war</i>	130

4.3 <i>International tutelage and independence</i>	136
5. THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA - OVERVIEW	140
5.1 <i>The inter-ethnic conflict</i>	144
5.2 <i>Intra-Albanian political rivalries, the armed conflict and the peace agreement</i>	149
5.3 <i>Power-sharing arrangements in today's FYR Macedonia</i>	151
6. CONCLUSION	154
V. PRESENTATION OF EVIDENCE AND FINDINGS FROM THE FIELD	157
1. INTRODUCTION	157
2. ILLEGALITY, IDEOLOGY AND THE INTRA-STATE ARMED GROUPS EMERGENCE	158
3. KOSOVO	167
3.1 <i>The integration and political transformation of former combatants</i>	167
3.1.1 The persistence of war experiences and relationships, and the decision to enter politics	167
3.1.2 Push-pull factors influencing entry into politics, and impacts of entry into politics on post-war opportunities	173
3.2 <i>Nature and duration of state capture by former combatants</i>	178
3.2.1 The rise of the new masters	178
3.2.2 Client-patron relationship	183
3.2.3 The culpability of the international community	189
4. FYR MACEDONIA	191
4.1 <i>The integration and political transformation of former combatants</i>	191
4.1.1 The persistence of war experiences and relationships, and the decision to enter politics	192
4.1.2 Push-pull factors influencing entry into politics, and impacts of entry into politics on post-war opportunities	194
4.2. <i>Nature and duration of state capture by former combatants</i>	196
4.2.1 The rise of the new masters	196
4.2.2 Client-patron relationship	198
4.2.3 The intricacies of a power-sharing agreement	200
5. CONCLUSION: SYNTHESIS OF THE TWO CASE STUDIES	203
5.1 <i>The integration and political transformation of former combatants</i>	203
5.2 <i>Nature and duration of state capture by former combatants</i>	211
5.3 <i>The emerging grounded theory</i>	219
VI. CONCLUSION	223
POSTSCRIPT	227
REFERENCES.....	231
BOOKS AND BOOK CHAPTERS	231
JOURNALS, REPORTS AND ARTICLES	239
WEBLINKS, VIDEOS, DOCUMENTS AND ARCHIVES	252
INTERVIEWEES AND TRANSCRIPTIONS	256
<i>Former military commanders and activists – coded FMC</i>	256
<i>Opposition political representatives – coded OPP</i>	256
<i>Civil society organisation representatives – coded CSO</i>	257
<i>Members of academia – coded ACA</i>	257
APPENDIX I: TIMELINE – JAN 2012 TO DEC 2019	258
APPENDIX II: LIST OF SUPPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTATION	259
OPEN (SEMI-STRUCTURED) INTERVIEW	259
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET	261
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM	263
APPENDIX III: MILITARY TECHNICAL AGREEMENT.....	264
APPENDIX IV: UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1244 (1999)	270

APPENDIX V: UNDERTAKING OF DEMILITARISATION AND TRANSFORMATION BY THE UCK	278
APPENDIX VI: REGULATION NO. 1999/8 ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KOSOVO PROTECTION CORPS ...	285
APPENDIX VII: REPORT OF THE SPECIAL ENVOY OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON KOSOVO'S FUTURE STATUS	287
APPENDIX VIII: INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE: ACCORDANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL LAW OF THE UNILATERAL DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE IN RESPECT OF KOSOVO	292
APPENDIX IX: OHRID FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT	293
APPENDIX X: PRESPA AGREEMENT	299

Abbreviations

AAK	Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (Aleanca për Ardhmërinë e Kosovës)
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CoE	Council of Europe
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DUI/BDI	Democratic Union for Integration (Bashkimi Demokratik për Integrim)
EU	European Union
FYRoM	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
KFOR	NATO Kosovo Force
KLA/ UÇK	Kosovo Liberation Army (Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës)
KP	Kosovo Police
KPC	Kosovo Protection Corps
KSF	Kosovo Security Force
LDK	Democratic League of Kosovo (Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës)
LPK	People's Movement of Kosovo (Lëvizja Popullore e Kosovës)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NLA/UÇK	National Liberation Army (Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare)
OFA	Ohrid Framework Agreement
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PDK	Democratic Party of Kosovo (Partia Demokratike e Kosovës)
PDP	Party of Democratic Prosperity (Partia për Prosperitet Demokratik)
PDSH	Democratic Party of Albanians (Partia Demokratike Shqiptare)
SDSM	Social-Democratic Union of Macedonia
SHIK	Information Service of Kosovo (Shërbimi Infomativ i Kosovës)
SRSg	Special Representative of the Secretary General
UÇPMB	National Liberation of Presheva, Medvegja and Bujanoc (Ushtria Çlirimtare e Preshevës, Medvegjës dhe Bujanocit)

UN United Nations

UNMIK United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

VMRO-DPMNE Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation – Democratic Party of
National Unity

I. Introduction

1. Introduction

The first chapter of the thesis begins by introducing the subject matter. Structurally it starts with a succinct account of the intra-state wars and the role of insurgency or rebel movements during and after conflict, leading to their political transformation. Further, the Introduction explains the relevance of the thesis and, having noted some of the literature on the subject, sets an argument about the contribution it claims to make to the field. Further, as a way of understanding the empirical context, the Introduction provides a glimpse into the political developments in the two case studies. Finally, the research question and the sub-questions are set out, the gaps in literature are identified and a theory is suggested, followed by a short description of the overall structure of the thesis.

2. General overview

2.1 From international to intra-state wars

The predominant number of armed conflicts and wars in the post-Cold War era has occurred within the borders of an existing state. As a result, inter-state and conventional wars have seen a decrease, while intra-state armed conflicts have experienced an upward trend, particularly since the end of Communism (Olser and Aall 2001; Duffield 2014). This trend coincided with the dawn of the post-bipolar world and the reawakening of nationalist movements across the world (Ignatieff 1993). Usually, such movements were spurred on behalf of certain ethnic, religious or national communities, claiming to fight for equal rights that were supposedly being violated by the state. Sometimes these movements were transformed into rebel groups claiming to fight internal repression and aiming to reach greater autonomy for their community, to impose an inclusive power-sharing arrangement, or even to achieve complete secession from the existing state. Regardless of the motive of such movements, their common denominator is a marked departure from the more conventional methods of waging wars, i.e. inter-state or international wars. In parallel with the increase of intra-state wars and the end of Communism, the late 1980s and early 1990s heralded the beginning of the third wave of democracy (Huntington 1991) in many parts of the world, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe and, within it, in the Western Balkans.

Literature is rife with synonyms trying to capture the essence of these new wars. Because of their internal character, they have often been referred to as “intra-state conflicts” (Crocker, Hampson and Aall 2001; Dudouet 2012; Dudouet, Giessmann and Planta 2012), “civil wars” (Stedman 2001; Stedman, Rothchild and Cousens 2002; Kalyvas 2006; Kalyvas and Kocher 2007; Kalyvas, Shapiro and Masoud 2008), or “new wars” (Kaldor 2001). Apart from being internal in character, another common denominator of such conflicts was the rise of nationalism that gave fuel to insurgencies across the world. For that reason, they have also been often termed “nationalist” or “inter-ethnic” conflicts (Ignatieff 1993), with insurgents claiming to represent a specific national, ethnic or religious group within an existing state (Glassmyer and Sambanis 2008; Koktsidis and Dam 2008; Dyrstad 2012; Koktsidis 2013a; Koktsidis 2013b).

Examples of such conflicts could be drawn from various cases in Africa (South Africa, Namibia, Sudan, Burundi), Latin America (El Salvador, Colombia), Asia (Nepal, East Timor, Sri Lanka, Aceh/Indonesia), and Europe (Northern Ireland, former Yugoslavia). Although admittedly the wave of Arab revolutions from Tunisia to Syria and Yemen contain their own specificities, including a religious undertone, they do point to some similarities with the above conflicts in so far as seeing that the latter insurgents were also fighting to tackle an existing political situation occurring within the confines of existing state borders. Since the end of these revolutions we have witnessed the unfolding of tragic and grotesque events in these countries. Libya is still grappling with the essential challenges of building a viable state with meaningful institutions; Egypt is now controlled by a former General who is closely aligned with the army; Syria has for years been marred in an all-out-war between government forces and terrorist organizations – to name but a few of the factions – that has left tens of thousands dead, millions of refugees and internally displaced persons, and a ruined country. Yemen currently poses the greatest humanitarian catastrophe, with various armed factions fighting for control, and assisted by differing regional powers. To date, only Tunisia proves to be the exception, having managed to achieve a certain level of democratic progress since the revolution (Amnesty International 2018; Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue 2018; Michaelson 2019).

2.2 From intra-state wars to political transformation

Although a truism, it should be stated that each intra-state armed group has its specificities. Nevertheless, the empirical evidence still suggests that their trajectory seems to follow some common identifiable patterns. After a conflict has been waged, and following a mutually hurting stalemate, it will eventually come to an end. The way that it usually comes to an end is through the signing of peace accords. Notwithstanding the recidivist tendency of many of these accords, the leaders of insurgency movements or intra-state armed groups normally move on to become key actors in post-conflict peace processes. Far from being just passive recipients of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) and other transformation benefits, their leaders tend to become part and parcel of political processes, often perceived as offering a much-needed contribution towards stability and democratic transition in their societies (De Zeeuw 2008; Jarstad and Sisk 2010; Ishiyama 2016).

Of course, whether theirs is a “much-needed contribution” to post-conflict democracy, peace and stability remains to be discussed below. However, as conflict intensifies and intra-state armed groups garner strength and support, their role tends to become indispensable in either continuing with the conflict, or in bringing it to an end. Subsequently, that role is bound to continue following peace accords, as their leaders quickly turn to politics. It is at this juncture that their contribution to peace, security and democracy becomes intriguing. Normally, they continue to enjoy widespread support from the electorate, either through their camaraderie links or because of their legacy as war heroes. They often even win free and fair elections, which puts them in powerful positions to steer their countries towards democratic consolidation.

However, as this thesis’ case studies attest, the post-conflict times are usually fraught with many challenges that, amongst others, also relate to democratic reversal, corruption, state capture and predation. Those representatives of armed groups who entered politics have a direct responsibility for the state of democracy in their countries after the war. The greater their decision-making power as politicians, the greater their responsibility for the successes or the failures of democratic consolidation. When glitches to this democratic trajectory are identified, the culpability of the leaders and political parties that derive from conflict tends to manifest through the perpetuation of predatory practices and the maintenance of a clientelist

network that corrodes formal democratic institutions. This last point brings me to the aims of this thesis, which is to examine the constructive *versus* the obstructive role played by leaders and political parties that derive from armed conflict.

3. Focus and relevance of the thesis

This thesis tackles a topic which, with its relevance and comparability, echoes a universal appeal. It is universally relevant and comparable because, as explained above, most armed conflicts waged today are intra-state. From Sudan and South Sudan, Libya and Yemen, to Colombia and Nicaragua, to Sri Lanka and Nepal, to Indonesia and East Timor, the empirical data is rife with cases of armed groups waging wars within countries, which are followed by peace accords, and eventually followed by their integration in post-war politics.

Marshall and Ishiyama (2016) claim that while we should recognize that ample attention was placed on the short-term inclusion of combatants in politics, this attention was mainly focused on the negotiating process that seeks an end to the armed conflict. However, by focusing on the immediate and short-term gains, the literature has fallen short of studying the long-term inclusion of combatants into politics. This is identified as a gap in literature, which is particularly serious considering that the longer-term transformation of combatants has direct ramifications for sustainable peace and democracy. “This involves the inclusion of former rebel parties in the process of governance after the peace process concludes, which involves winning electoral office and governing” (Marshall and Ishiyama 2016, p. 1010). They continue their argument by suggesting that “including relevant rebel groups (and perhaps more importantly not excluding significant groups) reduces the likelihood of civil war and conflict resumption”, and that “the key factor is the non-exclusion of major former rebel parties from representation in governing institutions” (Marshall and Ishiyama 2016, p. 1020). While I concur with the above statements that the inclusion of former combatants in governance and peace processes reduces the likelihood of conflict resumption, in this thesis I focus on the impact that their inclusion has on the long-term consolidation of democracy. On precisely this point – the long-term impact of former combatants turned politicians on democracy - literature is rather scarce, a point which I now discuss.

3.1 Addressing gaps in literature and contribution

Literature has responded accordingly to the intensification of civil wars, new wars or intra-state wars. There are ample sources that examine the relationship between the state and the intra-state armed group during the conflict as well as after it, utilising different areas and disciplines such as peacebuilding, conflict resolution and human rights, DDR and security sector reform (SSR), political science and democratisation.

Authors such as Berdal and Malone (2000), Collier and Hoeffler (2004), Collier, Hoeffler and Söderbom (2008), or Keen (2012), have mainly focused on the greed *versus* grievance aspects of civil wars. The academic discussion amongst them has primarily revolved on ascertaining the true motives behind the emergence of armed groups. The issue of political economy is interwoven in such discussions, as well as the issues of the propensity for the monopolization of riches and resources by armed groups *versus* the state. On this latter point, Olser and Aall (2001), or Ballentine and Nitzsche (2003 and 2005) have also contributed with their respective work. Secondly, literature has come of age on the issue of the role of armed groups' combatants in peace processes and the immediate aftermath of their demobilization. It has come of age because authors such as Barakat and Özerdem (2005), Humphreys and Weinstein (2007 and 2008), Curtis and de Zeeuw (2009), or Dudouet (2012) do not take a state-centrist perspective on such armed groups but build their arguments by viewing them as equal, constructive and indispensable actors in overcoming conflict and achieving peace. Along this vein, De Zeeuw (2008), Jarstad and Sisk (2010), Marshall and Ishiyama (2016) have elaborated on the DDR and SSR components following conflicts, examining the contribution of armed groups in these processes. McMullin (2013a) discusses the stigmatization of war veterans experienced through DDR, arguing for a more equitable and fairer treatment by the society. Then, within a peacebuilding framework authors have also examined the issues of including former combatants in political processes as a way of avoiding a potential relapse into conflict and neutralizing eventual peace spoilers (Hoddie and Hartzell 2003; Glassmyer and Sambanis 2008). Lastly, in the last few years literature has been enriched with a few sources on the inclusion of war veterans in politics. For example, Joshi (2010), Kovacs Söderberg and Hatz (2016) focus on the creation of political parties by former rebel leaders and elaborate on the sustainability of their transformation from "bullet to ballot box" (Ishiyama 2016).

Notwithstanding this impressive body of literature, however, there are very scarce sources that analyze what the political transformation of war veterans has meant for the long-term impact on institution-building and democratization. Kuehn (2017) touches upon this issue but looks at the general democratic performance of countries in Latin America and Central and Eastern Europe. Some of the few authors who discuss the political transformation of combatants and the meaning this has for democracy are Manning (2004 and 2007), and Manning and Smith (2016).

Upon this review, I have surmised there is a clear gap in literature that focuses on the long-term nature of democracy as a result of the transformation of combatants in politics. There is very little data that looks beyond the immediate DDR and SSR processes, or the short-term inclusion of combatants in politics, with discussions mainly revolving on the pros and cons of this act of inclusion. My thesis, building on a field-based comparative analysis between Kosovo and FYR Macedonia, examines precisely the long-term political transformation and the subsequent effects on democracy. By “political transformation” I refer to the act of former combatants of intra-state armed groups entering politics either by joining an existing political party or forming a new one. This act entails a definitive and irreversible departure from the past life as a combatant and the opening of a new chapter as a politician. Further, the thesis differentiates between short-term and long-term impact on democratization. As per the interviews conducted, the key difference between the two is that, while short-term transformation and short-term impact normally entail one election cycle only, the long-term impact on democratization as a result of political transformation will require at least three election cycles (10 or more years). I submit that this timeframe is a sufficiently sound determining factor to ascertain whether the impact of political transformation is short-term or long-term. The likelihood is that if a former combatant has been active in politics for three election cycles or more, he or she will have left consequential trails upon the democratic trajectory in the politics of the country.

The thesis examines issues of the war legacy vis-à-vis democracy, the creation of new political classes emerging from conflict, predatory behavior, and clientelist practices in fledgling democracies. It acknowledges that the risk of peace spoilers is potentially neutralized by including former combatants in post-conflict political space. However, the novelty aspect of

my research finds that the long-term ramifications for democracy resulting from the combatants' inclusion in politics are not critically examined. My grounded theory claims that the new political elite rising from war is likely responsible for the maintenance of clientelistic networks which corrode democracy, and for the perpetuation of illicit activities which undermine formal democratic institutions. Therefore, while their inclusion may have avoided the risk of peace spoilers, former combatants turned politicians, when left unchecked, can become democracy spoilers in the long-term. In other words, the inclusion of former combatants in politics may have been decisive to closing the conflict chapter in a country's history. The peacebuilding liberal practices may have helped along the way by emphasizing political inclusiveness and representation, but they would have also appealed as means for the appeasement of restive groups of former combatants, and as a way of buying peace. However, in the end, those groups who were included in every pore of political life, by wanting to maintain their clientelistic networks that profit a few but suppress the majority, became spoilers of democratic consolidation instead. The two case studies are prime examples upon which to base my empirical findings, since both share a war to peace trajectory, with their war veterans continuing to have a key role in politics. This is the contribution that I make to political science, and particularly to the area of democratization studies.

4. Two case studies: comparative angle

Following a series of wars during the 1990s, the political map of former Yugoslavia has undergone a complete change. The former internal administrative boundaries of Yugoslav entities have been elevated to international borders, thus creating independent states out of them. Slovenia and Croatia have both joined the European Union (EU) and they are both full-fledged members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Alliance (Djokić and Ker-Lindsay 2011). It is safe to conclude that they have both concluded their post-conflict transition period and have made a definitive departure from the tumultuous past. The third constituent Yugoslav republic – Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) – was marred in a tragic war that finally ended in 1995 following heavy-handed diplomatic intervention by the US (Holbrooke 1999). But since then, BiH continues to be a somewhat dysfunctional state with two parts of the confederate operating almost like private fiefdoms. The country still grapples with multi-layered levels of governments, with its Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina being

predominantly Bosniak (Muslim) and Croat, and the Republika Srpska dominated by Serbs. The forces of nationalism, division and break-up continue to hamper its democratic and civic progress forward. South of BiH, Montenegro became independent in 2006, having managed to secede peacefully from the post-Yugoslav Union of Serbia and Montenegro by a narrow win in a referendum (Bešić and Spasojević 2015; Ramet, Hassenstab and Listhaug 2017).

Despite the tragic past, today all the countries in the region hold free and fair elections with minor incidents. It is fair to say that each of the former Yugoslav entities – including Kosovo and FYR Macedonia – are now democracies, albeit unconsolidated and quite fragile ones. This is confirmed by most organisations that conduct research on democratic performance such as International IDEA (2019a and 2019b), Freedom House (2019b) or the Economist Intelligence Unit (2019). The consensus of such sources is that, while the democratic quality of the above region remains considerably lower than that of consolidated democracies in North and Western Europe, the region has made substantial progress in its democratisation trajectory, particularly when one considers its bloody past. Having said that, much more work is still required, especially around the quality of democracy.

4.1 FYR Macedonia

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYR Macedonia¹) also gained independence in 1991, right at the beginning of the Yugoslav dissolution. However, unlike the tragedies

¹ Although its constitutional name when it declared independence was “Republic of Macedonia”, the UN formally recognised the country as ‘the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia’ (UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/47/225 (1993)) pending settlement of disagreements over its name with Greece (see <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/47/a47r225.htm>). Despite various efforts and initiatives to resolve this issue, the impasse lasted for almost thirty years. The impasse was, however, finally overcome in the first half of 2019 when the governments in Skopje and Athens reached an agreement to change the country’s name to North Macedonia. (I will provide the latest updates on the name agreement in the Historical background of case studies). However, since this thesis began before the governments’ agreement on the name issue, and following consultations with my supervisors, we agreed that I would stick to the term agreed with them right from the start. I shall therefore continue to apply the term “FYR Macedonia” throughout this thesis to indicate both its constitutional name till recently and the title as was recognised by the UN. The country’s new name “North Macedonia”, or any other denominations (“Macedonia”, “FYRoM”) will be employed in this thesis only when citing directly other sources.

unfolding in Croatia and BiH at the time, FYR Macedonia escaped the embers of war quite remarkably. Having enjoyed the status of a republic within former Yugoslavia, coupled with the fact that there was a very small Serb minority in the country, resulted in Serbia being more resigned to letting it go (Petkovski 2015). That is why compared to the bloody wars in other parts of former Yugoslavia, the secession and the first steps at democratic reform in FYR Macedonia seemed nothing short of a miracle.

However, a decade after independence the country experienced its own internal conflict. The new country that was being built rested on rather unjust foundations, seeing as it recognized the majority Slav Macedonians as the constitutive nation, while other communities – including ethnic Albanians which number around 25% of the overall population - were relegated to ethnic minority status. Because of such discriminatory practices, the ethnic Albanian part of the population felt increasingly marginalized and alienated from the new state, which caused grievances that triggered an armed conflict with Macedonian security forces. The ensuing fight with the ethnic Albanians' National Liberation Army (NLA – in Albanian: Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare - UÇK) in 2001 proved quite traumatic for the already-frail inter-ethnic relations between Albanians and Slav Macedonians. However, this paved the way for an agreement which aimed to bridge the ethnic gap and create mechanisms for co-governance at municipal and national level (Daskalovski 2004b; Gromes 2009; Demjaha 2012).

The main party from the Albanian side involved in power-sharing arrangements with Slav Macedonian parties was the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI – in Albanian: Bashkimi Demokratik për Integrim). DUI was created after the conflict by the same people who had led the armed resistance against the state. However, since the end of the conflict there has been significant progress in reconciling inter-ethnic relations and bringing Albanians closer to power-sharing arrangements. Every government since 2001 has contained an ethnic Albanian political party in its midst (to date that party always being DUI, apart from one mandate). However, numerous criticisms continue to be voiced over the unfinished implementation of the post-conflict agreement. Moreover, concerns over the client-patron nature of power-sharing institutions – involving Slav Macedonians and Albanians alike – have given rise to

criticisms on the frustrated democratisation processes in the country (Reka 2011; Petkovski 2015).

4.2 Kosovo

The former Yugoslav province of Kosovo, with its predominant Albanian population, was the last one to declare independence in 2008. Whilst being the last to secede, most authors would agree that the Yugoslav crisis began exactly there back in the early 1980s (Banac 1984; Little and Silber 1995; Kraja 2003a). After many years of state repression and civilian unrest, Kosovo exploded into an armed conflict in 1998/99, precipitating international diplomacy and armed intervention by NATO. The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA – in Albanian: Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës - UÇK) was the armed group that emerged attracting a huge following among Kosovo Albanians.

The post-war transformation of its combatants, especially its leadership, into security and political structures, has given them space to be at the forefront of major political changes since 1999. Indeed, it is hard to conceive of any important milestone in post-war Kosovo without the impact given by former combatants in almost every pore of political life. The two political parties that emerged from the war are the Democratic Party of Kosovo (in Albanian – Partia Demokratike e Kosovës - PDK), and the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (in Albanian – Aleanca për Ardhmërinë e Kosovës - AAK). A third one, called Nisma Social-Demokrate, or just Nisma (The Social-Democratic Initiative), was created in 2014 by disgruntled members of the PDK, who had themselves been KLA combatants during the war. Known as the “war-wing” parties, each of them has taken part in coalition governments ever since Kosovo’s liberation in 1999.

In addition to the domestic political players, any examination of post-war Kosovo is not complete without considering the role of the so-called international community. Beginning in 1999, Kosovo became a *de facto* international protectorate up until it declared independence in 2008. Whilst a protectorate, Kosovo was administered by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in collaboration with a wide array of other international organisations. The impact and influence of international institutions on Kosovo’s political landscape was omnipresent (Tansey 2009). Although an independent country,

Kosovo's institutions and legal framework are built upon the foundations laid by the international community. Since independence, such organisations, including the UN, continue to have a presence in the country, but their role has largely shifted onto monitoring, reporting and technical assistance (Austin 2018; Distler 2018). Kosovo's institutions (comprised to a comparatively great degree by former combatants turned politician and civil servants) are now in the driving seat of the country's institutions.

5. Research question

This thesis aims to understand the depth of interaction between former combatants, which is often based on commander-soldier loyalty, war camaraderie, family relations, or financial incentives. Doing so will help build a picture of informal networks which continue to survive in times of peace. For example, a former commander who has made a successful transition into politics will most likely foster relations with his former soldiers. At first sight, these are legitimate relations which could reflect deep-seated emotional connections forged during the war. However, what begins making such relations corrosive for democracy is when they become a *carte blanche* for favouritism, nepotism and greed. Consequently, I will analyse the impact that such informal networks have had on consolidating formal democratic institutions.

The thesis seeks to look at how newly emerging democracies are being set up in the aftermath of armed conflicts. By providing a comparative perspective between Kosovo and FYR Macedonia, it will examine the role of armed groups and their legacies in contributing to, or hindering, democratisation processes. Both case studies provide for an intriguing comparative study because: both armed groups represented the ethnic Albanian population, and they both claimed to fight for equal rights of their ethnic groups; both armed groups had links, similar objectives, ideologies, manpower and strategy; they both originated from the same clandestine movement of the 1980s and '90s; their leaders have turned to politics and have had direct impact on state-building and democratisation processes in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia respectively.

What both cases have also in common is a very minor role played by women during the armed conflicts but also in their aftermath. Women constituted a very small minority in either of the armed groups; even when they were present, their role was to assist as medical staff, or

provide shelter for wounded rebels. It was also difficult to find women interviewees who were actively involved in combat. Out of a total of 26 interviews conducted I managed to interview 8 women, out of which only one was a former combatant.

Under conditions of democratic incrementalism, the thesis will explore issues of legitimacy, patronage or clientelism, informal entrenchment and capture of institutions. Given the democratic deficits that are easily recorded (and will certainly be invoked in this thesis) facing these two countries, I aim to analyse the role that the former combatants have had in this midst. I also aim to examine the predatory practices used as a way of personal or group enrichment and empowerment which have detrimental effects on democratisation processes.

In order to help me answer the queries raised in the immediate paragraphs above, the overarching research question of the thesis will ask:

- To what extent does the integration of former combatants in political structures contribute to, or inhibit, democratisation processes in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia?

The research question is further supported by four sub-questions that each are meant to address certain aspects of the overall political integration of former combatants and their impact on democracy. They form pieces of the puzzle which, when placed together, help create a full picture of the research question. Those sub-questions are:

- 1. How have former combatants been integrated into society?*
- 2. More specifically, how have former combatants been engaged in politics and decision-making positions across institutions?*
- 3. What sets apart the former combatants' political engagement from that of other politicians?*
- 4. What is the relationship of former combatants turned politicians with each other and with their electoral base?*

The main research question has a two-pronged mission behind it:

1. to look at the act of the integration and political transformation of former combatants;

2. to examine what their involvement in politics has meant for the quality of democracy and the state institutions.

The sub-questions allow for a closer look at the world of former combatants by asking questions that shed light on the circumstances leading to their decisions to enter politics, the uniqueness of their political contribution, their relations with their kin as well as with others and, lastly, their impact on democratisation processes.

When referring to the (re)integration of former combatants, the thesis will inevitably mention the DDR and SSR processes, but this is not the focus. The thesis will delve on the longer-term, political transformation of former combatants. The latter point is crucial for this thesis because its exploration aims to contribute to the academic debate by divulging the contribution of a group of people to fledgling democracies and, more to the point, discerning what makes their contribution so specific.

My research on democracy and democratisation is based on academic and policy literature that assess and provide scores on the quality of democracies (Morlini 2011; Freedom House 2019a, International IDEA 2019b). Such data is useful when assessing the kind of democracies encountered in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia. This in turn helps to identify the role that former combatants turned politicians have in their democratic systems.

5.1 Structure and findings of the thesis

The topic that I address in this thesis investigates the lives and actions of a very specific community of people in a very specific time period of a country. That community of people is represented by combatants who organise themselves around an illegally created armed group whose task it is to engage in combat against the state security apparatus. By an interesting twist of circumstance, those same combatants will eventually sit around a negotiating table with their former enemies and strike a peace deal. Not only that, but the long-term success of that very peace deal is mostly dependent on the political good will and cooperation between former warring sides. This thesis studies precisely this trajectory of former combatants and their subsequent long-term impact on their countries' democracy and formal institutions.

In tackling this topic, the consulted literature offered me an in-depth overview of cases of armed groups around the world, their role during the conflicts as well as after them. Most such cases will have gone through a DDR process, and some combatants will have even been integrated in political structures after the war. This was certainly the trajectory of both cases studied here – that of Kosovo and FYR Macedonia. However, the data from my fieldwork, and especially the semi-structured interviews I conducted, provided me with a more complex and nuanced understanding of the interests, ambitions, goals and aspirations of these former combatants. It taught me that being a combatant of an armed group is in a way a blessing as well as a curse: on one hand, one is likely to be revered for their contribution during the war and perhaps even be treated as a hero. But, on the other hand, there is almost an unspoken rule in society that having belonged to an armed group will forever place you in that box. Once a soldier, always a soldier. When the war is over, ideally the soldier is expected to go home and somehow lead an insulated life from the society at large. Their integration in politics is somehow considered an aberration, an exception to the unspoken societal rule.

And yet, this is exactly what happened in both case studies examined here (and in fact happens with most such similar cases around the world). Former combatants of intra-state armed groups, especially those in decision-making positions, decided to enter politics by forming their own parties and running in elections. The objective of this thesis is exactly to shed light on the multi-layered characteristics of former combatants, emphasising their mixed legacy comprised of war engagement and post-war political activity. The fieldwork made it clear for me that when these individuals set out to engage in combat and join armed groups, they did not and could not have planned to have a political career after the war. Their concerns back then were more immediate, primordial and existentialist: how to win a battle, how to survive, what tactics to use. However, when conflict came to an end, the option of entering politics presented itself as a natural progression for this next stage of their lives. They engaged in politics primarily for two reasons: firstly, there was a clear demand coming from the electorate who saw them as political leaders, and secondly, politics as a career choice was a natural decision for them as it would be for anybody else. “We were an anathema right from the beginning”, said to me a former combatant coded FMC 02, who after conflict went on to occupy various political positions including member of parliament and minister. Being an

“anathema” for others, former combatants judged that no one else but themselves would defend their interests and those of their constituencies. Besides, if they contributed to the freedom of their country by fighting in war, surely it was expected of them to do the same in times of peace. It is this aspect of their contribution, with an emphasis on long-term impact on democracy, that this thesis will explore below.

Following the Introduction (which is also Chapter One), Chapter Two reviews the literature and examines the academic debate on DDR and political integration and transformation of former combatants, on democratisation and the international community’s peacebuilding paradigm, as well as the predation-associated phenomena of corruption, greed and clientelism. It will discuss the disciplines consulted for this thesis, ranging from international relations, security and securitization, human rights, peacebuilding and democratisation. In the end, the chapter will explain the literature direction undertaken herewith and the conceptual framework. The chapter will conduct a general map of DDR processes and, ultimately, of the theories of political transformation of armed groups. The description of DDR processes is meant to set the scene for the longer-term transformation of military leaders into political figures. For this reason, the transformation theories will be juxtaposed to the democratisation theories in post-conflict settings. By doing so, the literature review aims to examine the role of former combatants in times of democratic transition, with a focus on the predatory practices that hinder that transition.

Chapter Three – Research methods - will set the theoretical framework and elaborate on the methods used for this research. It will provide an explanation as to why I have chosen the inductive-based, grounded theory as the basis on which to elaborate on the data from the fieldwork. The chapter will also contain information, including tables, of the theoretical models of categories which will help explain the arguments made in the field data chapter. Under methods, I will explain the comparative nature of this research, taking two case studies which are quite different, but simultaneously have many similar trajectories. This research is based on desk research, buttressed by a vital aspect of fieldwork, i.e. semi-structured interviews, and participant observation of almost ten years in the field.

Chapter Four – Historical background of case studies - will describe the cases of Kosovo and FYR Macedonia and their respective recent histories. This will enable us to bring the theoretical framework into a perspective. The objective of writing this chapter is not to play the historian, or to get side-tracked in the Balkan mist of differing historical narrations. However, it is important that a not-too-burdensome empirical account is offered as a way of setting the scene for the field chapter. In addition, an historical account helps the reader track the origins of the armed groups, their ideology, or family background. Therefore, without drowning in historical narratives, I judged it important to offer a concise descriptive background in order to enable the reader to understand today's context better.

Chapter Five – Presentation of evidence and findings from the field - will present the empirical data of my research and fieldwork. There will be a part on the findings from Kosovo, followed by another one on FYR Macedonia, summarised by a synthesised analysis of their common denominators in the end of the chapter. Based on the data from the field, this Chapter will discuss the gradual integration of combatants in post-war politics and what this has meant for the quality of nascent democracies. It will set arguments forward that speak in favour of their inclusion in politics as a prerequisite for a richer and more diverse democracy. This certainly proved to be the case in both case studies discussed here – Kosovo and FYR Macedonia. However, as also proven by the two case studies, the chapter will also underline the dangers of clientelism, corruption and greed that emanate from war-wing political parties and their leaders. The chapter argues that while the danger of peace spoilers is removed with the inclusion of former combatants in politics, their omnipresent dominance of the political system risks turning them into democracy spoilers instead.

The Conclusion will summarise the thesis by revisiting key parts from each chapter. At the macro level it will remind us how in the last three decades international wars have witnessed a decline while intra-state conflicts have intensified. With the intensification of intra-state conflicts the emergence of intra-state armed groups has increasingly become a subject of study in literature. This thesis has a similar objective in so far as examining the political transformation of former combatants, necessitated by bottom-up requests for representation, their war legacy, and a web of strong regional and family ties and alliances. In the end, the Conclusion reiterates what this political transformation has meant for the

quality of democracy in the long-run. By examining the long-term behavioural patterns of politicians coming from war, there is evidence of strong correlations between their role in politics and the embattled state of democratic institutions and democracy.

II. Literature Review

1. Introduction

As stated above, the overarching question of this thesis is to assess the extent to which the transformation and integration of former combatants in politics have contributed to democratisation processes. The thesis is a comparative and qualitative analysis of Kosovo and FYR Macedonia, both of whom share many commonalities but who also possess unique political trajectories in the aftermath of the Yugoslav breakup. Literature recognises similarities between the cases of the KLA and NLA in that they have both “managed to put Kosovo and FYR Macedonia under foreign probation and control. The KLA succeeded in releasing Kosovo from Serbian dominance and the NLA succeeded making FYR Macedonia the state of both Albanians and Slavic Macedonians” (Koktsidis and Dam 2008, p. 179). Moreover, both Kosovo and FYR Macedonia were part of former Yugoslavia; both armed groups were composed of ethnic Albanians and, moreover, both originated from the same illegal movement called the People’s Movement of Kosovo (in Albanian: Lëvizja Popullore e Kosovës (LPK)) that operated during the 1980s and 1990s in Kosovo, FYR Macedonia, and among the ethnic Albanian diaspora (Elshani 1998; Shala 2003; Bechev 2009; Babler 2015). At the same time, the two case studies are sufficiently different – particularly after their respective conflicts - so as to provoke an intriguing analysis that warrants consultation from a wide array of sources, as described below.

Literature reviewed for the topic of this thesis draws from an eclectic number of multi-disciplinary sources. Theories and practices on DDR and political transformation of combatants rely to a considerable degree on international relations, security and securitization studies (Buzan 1991; Ball 2001; Paris 2001; Zedner 2003; Kaldor 2007; Dudouet 2009; Kilroy 2009; Waever 2011). The theories of post-war peacebuilding and democratisation borrow from political science, democratisation studies and the fields of conflict transformation/resolution and peacebuilding (Mansfield and Snyder 1995, 2001 and 2002; Sisk 2001; Curtis and de Zeeuw 2009; Zürcher 2011). In addition, literature from human rights and development fields will also be consulted, particularly when shedding light on the nexus between peace, democracy and human rights, and the predation theories (including the debate on post-war grievance *versus* greed) that aim to explain some of the corrosive

phenomena inhibiting peacebuilding and democratic consolidation (Berdal and Malone 2000; Collier 2001; Keen 2012; Duffield 2014).

This chapter will conduct a thorough mapping of the literature consulted for the thesis. The literature content will be set out and will explain how the referenced sources speak to the subject matter of the thesis. The immediate part below will explain some of the key notions encountered herein, as referred in literature. The chapter will continue by delving into the academic debate surrounding DDR and political transformation of combatants, followed by the debate on post-war peacebuilding and democratization, with a focus on the former combatants' role in the process. Empirical evidence from both case studies will be evoked whenever necessary and will be applied to the academic debate. After setting out the literature direction, the chapter will explain the preferred conceptual framework within which I intend to build my theory, and which sits in the nexus between political science in general and democratization theories.

2. Defining the concepts

The review of literature for this thesis has looked at several case studies around the world that examine rebel or guerrilla movements, or liberation and resistance movements (depending on the source referred). For instance, the Berlin-based think tank Berghof Conflict Research (now known as Berghof Foundation) has produced a series of publications on such armed movements, like the case of Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) in the Basque country (Aiertza and Zabalo 2010), that of Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) in El Salvador (Álvarez 2010), the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Ireland (De Brún 2008), the Movimiento 19 de Abril (the 19th of April Movement - M-19) in Colombia (Durán, Leowenherz and Hormaza 2008), the African National Congress in South Africa (Maharaj 2008), the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka (Nadarajah and Vimalarajah 2008), the Maoists and the Communist party in Nepal (Ogury 2008), or the Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (Free Aceh Movement – GAM) in Aceh, Indonesia (Wandi and Zunzer 2008). Other cases, examined by other sources, include the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) in Namibia, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) in Rwanda (Curtis and de Zeeuw 2009), or various rebel groupings in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Manning 2007). More recently, Colombia's former rebel force, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) has been transformed into a

political party called the Common Alternative Revolutionary Force, thereby ending more than fifty years of bloody conflict with government forces and submitting themselves to the force of the ballot box (Isacson 2018). Some recent examples of the challenges related to the demobilisation and reintegration of armed groups may be witnessed in Afghanistan, Iraq, and even Syria and Yemen (Rotmann 2019).

There is a wide array of terms used in literature when describing armed groups that fight within a state. As cases mentioned above indicated, terminology such as “non-state armed groups”, “rebel movements”, “insurgents”, “resistance/liberation movements”, or “freedom fighters”, may indicate a superficial semantic difference, but may also carry a deeper, more substantial, or even politically biased meaning, depending on one’s point of view (see among others: Manning (2004); De Zeeuw (2008); Dudouet (2009); Curtis and De Zeeuw (2009) Hansell and Gerdes (2017)). For example, De Zeeuw (2008) offers the following definition on a “rebel movement” as being,

(...) non-state organization with clear political objectives that contests a government’s authority and legitimate monopoly of violence and uses armed force in order to reform, overthrow, or secede from an existing state regime or control a specific geographical area (De Zeeuw 2008, p. 4).

Depending on the political bias that sides may bring onto the table, such armed groups may be referred to as terrorist organisations or criminal groupings. The states against whom such armed groups may be fighting would usually take such a stance. However, I make a clear differentiation between intra-state armed groups as being politico-military organisations *versus* extremist, terrorist, or criminal enterprises. Literature tends to make a similar differentiation in so far as making deliberate emphasis on the “politically instrumental use of violence” as a means of excluding other non-state groups from the definition such as criminal gangs or terrorist networks. The armed groups, which are the object of this study, are also portrayed in literature as “guerrillas”, “armed opposition or resistance groups”, “non-state armed actors”, or “insurgents” (De Zeeuw 2008, p. 4). They might be “liberation movements”, “separatist / secessionist groups”, “reform movements”, “warlord insurgencies” (De Zeeuw 2008, p. 7).

For the purposes of this thesis, I will use the terms “non-state armed groups”, “guerrillas, rebels or rebel movements”, and/or “insurgencies” interchangeably. These terms denote that the conflicts these groups were involved in were waged within states. For all intents and purposes, both the KLA and the NLA were armed groups created within the confines of borders of internationally-recognized states. As the case is with all these armed groups when they are initially created, both the KLA and the NLA were illegal organizations whose aim was to fight the state apparatus. However, while they emerged with the aim of fighting the state, their end objective differed: the KLA fought for complete secession from Serbia and eventual independence for Kosovo, whereas the NLA’s purported objective was equal rights for ethnic Albanians within the existing FYR Macedonia. The members of both armed groups were indeed guerrillas, or rebels, in that they often employed guerrilla tactics of hit and run against state-orchestrated armies. In the end, the term “insurgency” also describes them well, as they did indeed lead popular revolts or uprisings against their respective states.

One of the main aspects of the thesis is to examine the act of transformation of former combatants into politics. The vehicle through which this is done is the political party. Creating a party or becoming a member of an existing party continues to be the main avenue for the former combatant’s integration into politics. That is why at this stage it is important that I offer a clear definition of what is meant by a political party. For the purposes of this thesis, I borrow Sartori’s (1976) well-known definition of a political party, meaning “any political group that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections, candidates for public office” through nonviolent political means (Sartori 1976, p. 57). In other words, once combatants give up arms, they must be prepared to completely relinquish violence as means to fighting for their objectives. Instead, they must be willing to run as candidates of political parties and, in a level-playing field shared with their political rivals, submit themselves to the will of the people in a ballot box. Political parties are therefore the necessary vehicle which are supposed to replace armed groups and through which former combatants turned politicians will fight peacefully to get into power. But while the parties are a vehicle, the destination for these new politicians will be the state institutions from where they will be able to wield that political power. These explanations fit perfectly well with the trajectory of the KLA and the NLA stories. After their respective conflicts, the leadership of both armed groups

were expedient in creating their own political parties, known as the war-wing parties, with which they agreed to yield themselves to the will of the people in elections.

3. Theories and practices on DDR and political transformation

3.1 DDR as a technical and immediate post-conflict change

While the background theme of this thesis explores some of the causes for the eruption of armed conflicts in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia, the focus of its analysis is on the aftermath of those conflicts. As is usually the case, the conflicts in both case studies came to an end following peace accords. The armed groups which had fought their respective state institutions – the KLA in Kosovo and the NLA in FYR Macedonia – were partially to be accredited with the achievement of peace accords. However, ironically, with the end of conflicts their *raison d'être* ceases to be of relevance, and they must disband. Consequently, both the KLA and the NLA underwent a DDR process which entailed employing a percentage of them into security structures (the police, the state army, protection corps, or private security companies), or facilitating a return to civilian life. Still for others, DDR was not the solution to their ambitions, which is why they began exploring ways of engaging politically as soon as conflicts came to an end. This was the case with a large percentage of leaders and commanders from both the KLA and the NLA ranks. This trajectory of intra-state armed groups seen with the KLA and the NLA is well documented in literature, as will be described below.

In the last couple of decades, a growing volume of literature has expanded its scope of analysis on armed conflicts by also paying attention to actors other than states. For example, literature on international relations, security and securitization studies have progressively acknowledged that states are no longer exclusive players in the international scene. Wars are increasingly fought within states, while they are waged less and less between states (Buzan 1991; Crocker, Hampson and Aall 2001; Kaldor 2007). In addition, the nature of conflicts and wars has become more complex, involving actors that until recently were undefined entities in international relations. National boundaries are increasingly porous when governments are faced with modern threats such as cyber groups that utilise information and communications technology, and social media to pose threat to social order as we know it (Diamond 2019; Deibert 2019). The so-called “war on terror” (Boyle 2008) has further contributed to the

changing patterns of conflicts in the present day. In short, nowadays wars are rarely a clear-cut affair that develop between two (or more) states.

There is a plethora of non-state actors that act as real adversaries with whom states are forced to enter in conflict. Armed groups, rebel groups, or insurgencies that operate within those states are such actors. Usually, it is with those very armed groups that states, once conflict nears the end, engage in peace accords with the view of reaching a peace deal. From adversaries in war, intra-state armed groups become potential partners with whom the state must make peace and endeavour to build joint democratic institutions thereafter. One of the first steps to building peace is DDR of the armed groups' combatants, followed by their political engagement. Along the journey of the political transformation of former combatants is, unavoidably, the immediate challenge of relinquishing arms and embracing post-conflict peace processes such as democracy, justice and the rule of law. Literature is rich with cases of combatants undergoing DDR processes, followed by another spell of joining the reformed army or police forces of their country, only for some to shed the uniform for a life in politics (Spear 2002; Glassmyer and Sambanis 2008; Humphreys and Weinstein 2008; Dudouet 2012; Dudouet, Giessmann and Planta 2012; Blease and Qehaja 2013). This process is normally examined within the fields of international relations, security and securitization studies. More specifically, this part of the chapter will delve into the academic debate on DDR, coupled with the combatants' integration in politics.

In a way, once conflict comes to an end, DDR is the first point of call in the long and final transformation from combatant to politician. For this reason, the examination of DDR literature represents an element of this research. Literature recognises former combatants as "peacebuilding partners, rather than as mere recipients of reintegration assistance or as spoilers to be disarmed and demobilised as quickly as possible" (Dudouet, Giessmann and Planta 2012, p. 3).

To deconstruct the technical jargon, *disarmament* refers to the process of collection, control and disposal of weapons; *demobilization* is another stage in the process with a focus on the complete disbandment of armed forces; finally, *reintegration* refers to the process whereby former combatants are integrated back into social, political and economic life. The impetus

to reintegration can be humanitarian, in the sense that there are genuine efforts to lessen the suffering of former combatants after conflict. But the principal motivation for reintegration assistance is strategic: “(...) reintegration programs, along with sibling programs for soldiers’ demobilization and disarmament, are crucial to maintaining peace and security during the unstable transition from war” (McMullin 2013a, p. 2).

However, the reintegration of former combatants takes a more holistic meaning in the social context. It refers to the transformation of former combatants in a post-conflict environment; in other words, reintegration is a “social contract” between them and the society at large (Knight and Özerdem 2004). Reintegration is “civilianisation of demobilized soldiers” (McMullin 2013b, p. 17). Additionally, in order for DDR to work, the society as a whole needs to stand ready to overcome past animosities and to offer space for reintegration to former combatants. The latter, too, need to be fully prepared to integrate back into society, without recourse to past rivalries. And for it to work, the “social contract” needs to be maintained and promoted by a political agreement that is supported by the widest possible political spectrum. The whole process, too, needs to be underpinned by justice, truth and reconciliation efforts that are meant to provide a healing ground for peace and democracy to take root.

The term “reintegration” is itself a debatable concept. Reintegration into what? Surely not into a societal oppressive pattern that existed before the conflict, but rather into a new political reality that accounts for the representation of former combatants and their electoral base. So, with reintegration also comes the gradual inclusion of those combatants into political life. Therefore, reintegration also means a gradual transformation of former combatants, particularly of the leaders of the rebel group, into political actors. Some of them will want to continue to play a role in public life by joining political parties, or even creating them from scratch. The likelihood is that they will enjoy a constituency base which may likely consist of the ethnic or religious community that they fought for. These former combatants turned politicians will have to yield to the power of the ballot box and thus play a role in post-conflict democratization processes. By doing so, they will have made that transition from “bullet to ballot box” (Ishiyama 2016), which is an all-important prerequisite for post-war democratization to commence in earnest.

Once post-war political democratisation (or self-governance) and security sector integration options have been clarified, the demobilisation of non-statutory security forces should be accompanied by the consolidation of civilian entities – be it in the form of political parties or former combatant associations and other support structures (Dudouet 2012, p. 3).

Literature increasingly views DDR processes as partnership endeavours involving former combatants and the state in a relatively equal footing. These processes are increasingly less state-run or top-down impositions. Instead, for peace to have a chance to triumph, there needs to be a level-playing field in which both the state and the representatives of the armed group (in other words, yesterday's enemies) recognize each other's contribution to post-conflict peace and democracy. They each possess unique pieces of the puzzle which, when brought together, come to form a wholesome picture of what we might call representative democracy. This recognition then serves as a premise upon which to build the DDR processes. In other words, members of intra-state armed groups are not treated (or at least should not be treated) as rogue elements of society that are coerced into correction and that should be dictated how to reintegrate. By the same token, the government should not be treated as the possessor of all that is moral, because the likelihood is that they, too, were culpable for the violent conflict which the society is trying to put behind. In fact, the government will likely bear a significant part of the responsibility for the conflict's eruption, being that it was likely sprung out of horizontal disparities, or socio-economic injustices - real and perceived - perpetrated by it against a part of the country's population. On the other hand, while they might have been culpable of past abuses, the intra-state armed group might have legitimately fought to protect the rights of a specific ethnic, religious or national group. Therefore, the government does not have outright moral or even *de facto* authority to conduct a unilateral oversight of DDR but should instead do this in partnership and in collaboration with former intra-state armed group representatives.

Consequently, in a post-conflict society DDR and transformation processes are more inclusive and empowering for former combatants, viewing them not just as "mere recipients" of assistance, but as active players in public life. Otherwise, there is always a possibility for post-settlement tensions to arise, which might threaten an already fragile democratic transition.

Below is a convincing case of why the state should not be the only actor to provide security when in fact it has proven to be a source of insecurity:

From the point of view of resistance and liberation movements, the recognition of 'state security' of a regime that they consider to be illegitimate is a contradiction in terms. In fact, if their main motivations for engaging in armed activities are rooted in structures that are conducive to an endemic climate of insecurity, then their continued willingness to participate in constructing a peaceful and legitimate post-war political order is inherently conditional upon the transformation of the (security, political and/or socio-economic) structures of oppression and inequality that caused the conflict in the first place. For its part, the concept of DDR is considered deeply flawed because it implies that non-state actors represent the only threat to security. From the perspective of these actors, however, the renunciation of force is interdependent with, and hence cannot precede, [...] the transition of power towards more accountable and legitimate state institutions that can provide a more secure environment for all. (Dudouet, Giessmann and Planta 2012, p. 7).

The Stockholm Initiative on Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (SIDDR) strengthens these arguments by stressing that,

(...) taking up arms is an indication that governance has failed. The politics of exclusion in one way or another has already manifested itself at an extreme level and many in society see war as the only recourse for dialogue and change (SIDDR 2006, p. 19).

It is therefore not right or conducive to peace to view intra-state armed groups as rogue or terrorist elements that should be quashed by the state by any means. Their rebellion might be a manifestation of a "failed governance" or deep-seated injustices in society. It might be that the state is the one to bear the brunt of responsibility for the escalation of a societal crisis that in the end erupted into an open armed conflict. Therefore, once war is over and a peace process is under way, one of the main priorities of a post-conflict society is for "DDR to provide a space for the parties to realise that the military option is no longer legitimate or necessary" (SIDDR 2006, p. 19). The peace accords and the follow-up steps to their implementation can provide such a space. However, for the peace process to work, it ought to be inclusive, transparent and representative, with some sort of power-sharing arrangements that bring together the threads of all society around a decision-making process. Former combatants will play, and should play, their share of the role in security and political structures, too.

The aspect of inclusion of combatants is key for a successful DDR process. Inclusion needs to come from two sources, however: from the state, as discussed above, but just as importantly, it needs to derive from the society at large, too. The society must accept former combatants into its midst for the DDR to work in the long run. That is why DDR in the framework of peacebuilding is meant to be conducted in a way that does not stigmatise former combatants for having partaken in conflict. It aims not to put them in a box that differentiates them as a special social category which requires a different degree of attention from everybody else. McMullin (2013a) explains the social stigmatization of former combatants in a peacebuilding framework by breaking it down into two narratives:

- a. The threat narrative: according to which former combatants are portrayed as inherently threatening to post-conflict peace; and
- b. The resentment narrative, according to which the community will likely resent the assistance provided for former combatants, thereby portraying communities as more deserving of aid than, and fundamentally distinct from, former combatants (McMullin 2013a, p. 386).

Both narratives emphasise an “essential excombatant otherness” that distinguishes them from the society at large and implies a “unique ex-combatant culpability” for the violence perpetrated during the conflict. As such, this is not just a matter of language, but the stigmatisation of former combatants has a direct influence on the DDR programme, and the future relations between former combatants and the society (McMullin 2013a, pp. 412-413).

Paradoxically, even though reintegration programs aim to make ex-combatants as unemployed and marginalized as ‘everyone else’, reintegration discourse simultaneously implies that ex-combatants can never, and will never, be ‘like everyone else’: they are destined to remain menacing, separate from their communities, unintegrated after their return from war (McMullin 2013b, p. 233).

That is why for the DDR process to be successful authors emphasise the importance of an overall “security transition” (Dudouet, Giessmann and Planta 2012) and a rebalancing of forces between the state’s mechanisms representing the status quo, and the new forces that have sprung up from intra-state armed groups. In its narrow sense of the word, this is an essentially technical and logistical undertaking, but with long-term political and security

ramifications. It is technical and logistical because it refers to the actual handing over of the weapons and to the act of abandoning uniforms. If there is good will and political agreement between parties involved, there should be no reason why the process, as a logistical and technical undertaking that it is, cannot be accomplished according to a set timetable. In the long-run, though, the DDR process has security and political ramifications because, if executed correctly, it will likely ensure a greater security balance representing the interests of all communities concerned. This will subsequently contribute to post-conflict sustainable peace and democratic reforms.

The end of conflict and the disbandment of armed groups goes hand in hand with an offer for economic prospects for the future. DDR represents a commitment to, and faith in, the short- and long-term creation of an environment where the economic and security value of a weapon is gradually eliminated (Willibald 2006). In other words, for weapons to be means that have outgrown their usefulness, former combatants need to be shown a clear path to economic recovery. However, the economic and security devaluation of weapons can only happen if there are real and sustainable reintegration opportunities for combatants, including those in politics. And this is a longer-term goal which surpasses the challenges of technical and logistical aspects of DDR. This in fact refers to the authentic and sustainable transformation of former combatants, including the political transformation of their leadership, into future stakeholders of the country's peace and democratisation processes.

3.2 Political transformation and longer-term post-conflict change

In a study on an armed group's political mobilization in Colombia, Söderström (2016) notes that the political integration of former combatants involves not just a mutation into political parties but a profound transformation of the organizational culture. She goes on to describe three paths to political mobilization:

- The Resilient: defined by a sustained or increasing political mobilization post-disarmament;
- The Remobilized: defined by decreased political participation at some point after disarmament followed by a re-mobilization in politics up until today;
- The Removed: defined by a decrease in political mobilization sometime after disarmament lasting until today (Söderström 2016). Therefore, former combatants may not only undergo

a profound political and organizational transformation after the war, but their paths to political mobilization may vary greatly, too.

De Zeeuw (2008) breaks down the transformation of soldiers to politicians into structural and attitudinal. The structural transformation consists of:

1. The demilitarization of the army's organizational structure, which translates into the technical aspects of disbandment or the DDR process;
2. The creation of a party organization, which is conditioned upon the former combatants' ability to represent popular interests convincingly, to organize election campaigns and, ultimately, to take governance responsibilities. This points to the longer-term political transformation of former combatants and to their ability to govern while respecting, adhering to, and advancing democratic norms of accountability and transparency.

Apart from the structural transformation of armed groups (i.e. its short-term, technical transformation, followed by the longer-term, political transformation), there also has to be an attitudinal transformation. Namely,

1. Democratization of decision-making: how does an armed group, which by definition is a non-democratic, dictatorial entity, become a representative, inclusive and consensus-oriented party? The main challenge here is to be able to democratize decision-making from an authoritarian, top-down hierarchy as required and practiced by armed groups, into a more horizontal, consensus and dialogue-based structure.
2. Adaptation of strategies and goals: here the challenge is simple but fundamental at the same time. It has to do with reorienting strategies and goals from war to peace, doing away with the former as means to achieving goals, and embracing the latter as the only option available.

When the conflict ends through negotiations, the warring parties, including former rebel movements, are usually able to reach some form of power-sharing deal or peace agreement in which the political legitimacy of each party is formally acknowledged. This then creates opportunities for establishing a relatively open political arena in which elections can become the primary tool for selecting and legitimizing the new government and party representatives who, alone or in coalition with other parties, will implement the peace agenda (De Zeeuw 2008, p. 19).

This takes us beyond the DDR act as a technical and logistical undertaking and into the longer-term transformation of combatants into political players which will give them a real stake into the realm of governance in times of peace. The political integration or transformation, therefore, is a political process just as much as it is a technical one. “The power dynamics of finding a social and political role for former combatants in post-conflict environments is if not more, at least as important as the opportunities of employment and education” (Özerdem and Podder 2011, p. 75). Such long-term transformation processes are considered key to helping a country make a decisive leap from war to peace. With reintegration and political transformation comes democratisation, which involves a series of military, social and economic interventions (Humphreys and Weinstein 2007). Former combatants – those who had in the past waged war against the state – find that in times of peace and as politicians often become key players of democratisation processes. One of the first tests to the political integration relates to the legitimacy of elections in which former combatants participate. The electoral legitimacy is assessed based on the former combatants’ interaction with the institutional landscape, and their perception of the integrity of the electoral process (Söderström 2013, p. 429).

The successful completion of a civil war and the subsequent leap to a sustainable and enduring peace is contingent upon the successful transformation of rebel movements into “normal” political organizations. This transformation, however, is perhaps the most challenging part of this transition. It requires that former combatants should not only lay down their weapons and their military fatigues, but more importantly it demands of them to “change their military struggles into political ones and to reorganize their war-focused military organizations into dialogue-based political entities (De Zeeuw 2008, p. 1). For this to happen, and for peace and political transformation to be seen as luring prospects, armed groups must be convinced that peace offers a comparative advantage, which outweighs war as an option. Armed groups and their successor political parties must believe the opportunities offered to them as democratically-elected representatives. Otherwise, they will likely not give up weapons unless forced to do so. Or, even if they do decide to disband, they might consider rearming again in case they do not gain satisfactory representation in post-conflict political arrangements. Such a scenario of “recidivism” (Kaplan and Nussio 2018) will remain a realistic prospect for quite some time after conflict, particularly when a critical mass

of former combatants is left disgruntled after peace accords. As the case of Colombia has shown, recidivism of former combatants might be induced by three context-related factors:

- economic conditions: when a former combatant's relative economic prospects worsen, participation in illegal activities is likely to increase;
- security context: in conditions of insecurity former combatants are pushed toward joining violent organizations and participating in illegal activities;
- criminal opportunities: ex-combatants may be pulled towards illegal opportunities where there is demand for their specific skills and networks of former comrades (Kaplan and Nussio 2018).

De Zeeuw's focus is on analysing what happens with rebel movements in the period after the war. Indeed, the term "transformation" might assume "a certain direction and inevitability or organizational change – from an armed rebel group towards an unarmed political party" (De Zeeuw 2008, p. 3). But transformations can be successful (FMLN, SWAPO), or they can be partial (Hamas, SPML/A, CNDD-FDD), or they can fail completely, with resumption of armed hostilities. In this respect my thesis is in line with De Zeeuw's focus. However, his and other scholars' attention is to examine the degree of success of the rebels' transformation from armed formations into political parties (De Zeeuw 2008; Collier, Hoeffler and Söderbom 2008; Gurses and Rost 2013). The success of this transformation is the act of transformation itself. However, little focus is given to the long-term impact of these political parties and their leaders onto the political scene. My thesis looks exactly into the impact of these combatants, turned into decision-makers of their political parties, in the state's political institutions.

Suazo (2013) has written on the effects that the long-term inclusion of former combatants may have for sustainable peace. Long-term inclusion "acknowledges the need to account for warring parties' roles in post-conflict societies by considering their political participation after the peace process" (Suazo 2013, p. 8). His hypothesis is based on the premise that when the rebel groups are offered the opportunity to influence the political system through legitimate and legal means, that will decrease their incentives to take up arms again (Suazo 2013, p. 8). In other words, if the route to political participation, joint decision-making or even power-sharing, is open, the need for rebel forces to fight will inevitably recede. The prospect of having a seat at the table increases chances for peace. Suazo further explains his hypothesis

by recalling a few relatively successful examples of such long-term inclusion. El Salvador is one of those examples where, after a decade-long conflict, FMLN was reintegrated into civil and political life in the early 1990s. Consequently, FMLN as a political party, has been a participant in each legislative election that has taken place in El Salvador since 1992 (Suazo 2013, p. 12).

Political transformation of former combatants is seen as key to a successful implementation of peace accords. Instead of being viewed as a drawback and a threat to security, the political involvement of former combatants ought to be considered as an opportunity to transform the relationship of former enemies (the state *versus* the armed group) into one of partnership. It follows that the success of post-conflict peace accords depends on the commitment of former warring parties to tackle “issues of representation, equality, association, and reconciliation”, which by default require the former combatants’ sense of inclusion and post-conflict polity (McMullin 2013b, p. 34). In practical terms, political transformation means that former members of armed groups either join existing parties or, what is more likely to happen, form new ones. Indeed, the “successful transformation of rebel organization into parties is critical to post-conflict peace and democratization”, and “the creation of durable peace settlements requires the active involvement and cooperative engagement of these political groups” (Ishiyama 2016, p. 969).

The peace duration and the quality of democracy that takes shape depends to a large degree on whether former rebel groups decide to adapt to, evade, or exit the post-war political arena (Ishiyama 2016). Therefore, one of the imperatives of post-war politics is to accommodate and give voice to those political parties that represent the interests of former guerrilla groups. However, giving former combatants a voice also means potentially entering a battle of competing historical narratives. Together with their inclusion in politics, former combatants will be eager to ensure that their war legacy – the way that they see it – is imprinted on the country and its future generations. This is how Metsola (2010) describes this race for a dominant narrative on post-independence Namibia:

Such historical interpretations are not merely a matter of abstract national imagery. They are highly significant to current socio-political relations, defining terms for inclusion or exclusion from the Namibian nation and for granting entitlements. References to the liberation struggle keep recurring in

debates over land, jobs and education. Similarly, the actors involved in Namibian ex-combatant 'reintegration' have appropriated and contested Namibia's violent past in negotiating the status and entitlements of excombatants (Metsola 2010, p. 590).

However, the transformation of such groups into parties does not guarantee peace and democracy. But their leap from being an armed group into registering as a political party, willing to compete in elections and place forward eligible candidates, is the first step towards accepting political competition and supplementing violence with political means (Manning and Smith 2016, p. 973). As political party representatives, former combatants will submit to the system of checks and balances, of conducting campaigns and offering pledges that promise to improve the livelihoods of their constituents. Instead of bombs and military tactics, their fight will shift to winning the vote of the people they seek to represent. Instead of seeking to win military battles, they will look for ways to increase the number of jobs in health and education, to improve welfare services for the elderly, or to pass anti-corruption legislation. This is an entirely new game which former combatants need to muster in order to succeed, and one which replaces bullets for ballots. And the vehicles through which this is done are political parties.

It is therefore no coincidence that in many countries coming out of armed conflict, the political institutions are populated by former combatants. This is very much the case with the two case studies chosen for this thesis: both in Kosovo and in FYR Macedonia political parties have helped former combatants get elected to positions of mayors and assembly members at the municipal level, or members of parliament, ministers and deputy ministers, prime ministers and presidents. They can be found throughout the state civil service, too, as well as in most independent institutions and public enterprise boards.

Political transformation does not necessarily lead to peace and democracy. Indeed, caution should be placed against a linear understanding of post-conflict transition and political transformation. That is because the journey from war to peace and democratic consolidation is not bound to be a one-way street. Often, in order to reach their objectives these groups may combine violent and non-violent strategies, formal and informal mechanisms that may have detrimental effects on democracy (Dudouet 2009). This means that, although the

transformation of armed groups has been completed, and their leaders have been turned into political actors, the democracy that is built is vulnerable and erosive.

4. Democracy and peacebuilding

4.1 Democratisation

The consequences for democracy should figure more prominently in our analysis of armed groups.
(Sindre and Söderström 2016, p. 115)

One of the areas of focus for democratisation studies relates to the emergence of multi-party democracy which aims to be inclusive and representative of various constituencies of the country in a post-war setting. Provided that intra-state armed groups agree to a ceasefire, the multi-party democracy will likely make room for the “organisational transformation of insurgencies, from underground guerrilla movements to conventional political parties” (Dudouet 2009, p. 8). The path from war to peace, or from communism to a capitalist, multi-party system with open markets, is examined in democratisation studies. More poignantly for the purposes of this research, such studies aim to intercept the role played by former combatants turned politicians in their country’s path to becoming a consolidated democracy.

In a scenario in which former combatants and the government try to overcome past animosities by building democracy, democratisation is defined as a “process of recovery and maintenance of human security during the period running from the negotiation of a peace agreement between a state and its challengers up to establishment of democratic governance” (Dudouet, Giessmann and Planta 2012, p. 7). The desired outcome of a successful process of armed groups’ transformation, and the society’s democratisation, is a transformed security and justice system controlled by democratically-elected and accountable political institutions. The challenges facing armed groups regarding this long-term task relate to the “institutionalisation of cohesive and effective political structures” (Dudouet, Giessmann and Planta 2012, p. 39). In other words, the successful leap from war to peace, from weapon to ballot paper, and from combatant to politician, is a prerequisite for a democratic transition to take place. Indeed, years and sometimes decades of exile or underground operations ought to be unlearned and translated into full-fledged participation in post-war state-building and democratic transition. This certainly rings true of both the KLA and the NLA. The origins of both armed groups can be traced back to the clandestine

movement of the early 1980s which operated mainly in the diaspora. The end of conflicts represented for them the first time in their existence when they could safely emerge from the shadows and onto mainstream public and political life.

Literature on democracy explains that power-sharing arrangements are often a mechanism used to offer former combatants some incentives to be part of governance structures, thereby making return to armed conflict less and less likely. When discussing the “institutions of government” Gromes (2009) underlines state-building as an integral part and a subtask of democratization. It should be recalled that the aim of democratisation after conflict is to create inclusive institutions that would break the cycle of discrimination. Consequently, democratization requires that such structures be made available where all parties to the conflict would operate. To this end, power-sharing institutions must be re-established or at least altered (state-building).

Democratization in ethnically divided post-civil war societies faces the challenge of creating a modicum of mutual recognition so that common institutions can function. It requires that enemies start to regard each other as political opponents and a sense of belonging emerges to overarch or reduce the weight of the forcibly cemented particularist identities (Gromes 2009, p. 2).

In theory, the concept of power-sharing denotes inclusivity, transparency, and the rectification of past wrongdoings by bringing previously-marginalized communities into decision-making processes. But what literature seems to focus less on is the devious or aberrant aspects of power-sharing arrangements. As an idea, power-sharing is a noble notion that signifies equality, justice and representation for all regardless of ethnic, religious or other backgrounds (Hoddie and Hartzell 2003). But in practice power-sharing may degenerate into a scheme whereby power and the government institutions that wield that power are perceived as a pie that needs to be shared into mutually-agreed pieces among stakeholders as a means of preserving an artificially-patched peace. In FYR Macedonia, there are certainly concerns that power-sharing arrangements between Slavic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians are artificial set-ups whose main function are to maintain power for the incumbent parties and their elites, and not to serve equitably to all citizens regardless of background. In the name of representative democracy, the pie of power-sharing is cynically shared, and each

stakeholder can have complete autonomy over their share of power, and in so doing will use the means of power for personal gains.

Such an artificially-induced power-sharing scheme has direct repercussions on democracy. This leads to a mutant kind of democracy which, for reasons stated above, shows clear signs of fragility and has recidivist tendencies. It is a sort of democracy that may be subjected to compromising and *ad hoc* solutions by new elites that primarily attend to the interests of their own clientelistic base. Various scholars have recently detected such worrisome tendencies in democratizing societies. For example, Diamond (2015) has warned that in the last decade or so the number of democratic regimes seems to have come to a standstill, oscillating between 114 and 119 respectively. In addition, there has been a trend of declining freedoms in several countries during the same period. This “democratic breakdown” or a “decisive reverse wave” is attributed to many factors, some of which have to do with the executive abuse of power, or “power aggrandizement” (International IDEA 2017, p. 75).

Power-sharing arrangements in less consolidated democracies are often subject to abuse of power, because each political entity that represents a constituency tends to have relative autonomy over their portfolio in power-sharing constellations. In other words, in fragile democracies a government comprised of two or more parties may not function in coordination and with a single clearly delineated programme. Instead, each party may tend to perceive the ministries and portfolios that they oversee as their own feuds. If they are not given autonomy over their portfolios they may likely threaten to withdraw from power-sharing arrangements. Being in power, on the other hand, may result in a propensity to indulge on their predatory instincts. The Catch-22 situation in this scenario is that if such political parties are in power they are likely to indulge in corruption and other illicit activities, but if they are left out of power the fragile peace may quickly unravel. In other words, there is a discernible correlation between bad governance and democratic vulnerability (Diamond 2011). The greater the propensity of governments to abuse with power, the bigger the chances of still-fragile democracies to roll back into authoritarian, semi-democratic regimes, or even armed conflict.

This brings us to a paradox: instead of being proponents of democratic consolidation, such political elites – whose mission is supposedly their country’s democratic consolidation – end up establishing regimes that become breeding ground for executive aggrandizement and authoritarian rule (Lyons 2016). From heroes they become gravediggers of democracy (Kuehn 2017).

Leaders who think that they can get away with it are eroding democratic checks and balances, hollowing out institutions of accountability [...], and accumulating power and wealth for themselves and their families, cronies, clients, and parties (Diamond 2015, p. 149).

In a post-conflict environment, the space of the political elite is crowded with former combatants who become the new masters of post-war transition. They are also identified as the main culprits of this executive abuse of power which by consequence has debilitating effects on democracy. On both case studies - Kosovo and FYR Macedonia - a considerable number of authors suggest that efforts at institution-building and democratisation are thwarted by the political elite which is dominated by the war-wing parties. Correlations are made between the longevity of the war-wing parties in power and the beleaguered state of democracy in the country, which produces regimes with authoritarian tendencies or state capture (Daskalovski 2004a; Günay and Dzihic 2016; BIEPAG 2017; Bieber 2018; Foa 2018; Bassuener 2019).

There have been many terms used to describe this shady, indeterminate area between a consolidated democracy and a rollback to authoritarianism. Labels such as “semi-democracies”, “electoral democracies”, “illiberal democracies” or “partial democracies”, or “competitive authoritarianisms” (Morlino 2004, 2011; Freedom House 2019b) have often been used to describe political regimes which have made a clear leap from an authoritarian past towards democracy, but which clearly shows default tendencies. To note this shady area when a country is not fully democratic but at the same time cannot be downgraded to an outright autocracy, Morlino (2011) came up with the notion of “hybrid regimes” described as,

(...) a set of institutions [that] have been preceded by authoritarianism, a traditional regime (possibly with colonial characteristics), or even a minimal democracy, and are characterized by the break-up of limited pluralism and forms of independent, autonomous participation, but the absence of at least one of the four aspects of a minimal democracy (Morlino 2011, p. 5).

In this thesis, one way of ascertaining the level of democratisation is to adopt Morlino's (2004) three different notions of democratic quality, "grounded on procedure, content and result". In order to measure such notions of democratic quality, one can examine indicators deriving from rule of law, accountability, responsiveness, freedom and equality. The result is a colourful spectrum of democratic quality, ranging from low to upper. Its application on a chosen country will show us how "good" that country's democracy is (Morlino 2004).

This notion of "hybrid regimes" is meant to indicate that middle ground of a political system which lies between liberal democracy and outright autocracy. Formally speaking, the institutions – as the legal and legitimate representatives of the people - must be sole players in the political domain. However, what often happens in these hybrid regimes is that those very institutions, fragile as they are, are bypassed for the sake of strengthening informal ties between political, business and other actors. These ties represent that sinister bond between political actors on one hand, and the underground world on the other. This collusion between formal and informal worlds leads to state capture and the rise of authoritarianism, which are phenomena observed in both Kosovo and FYR Macedonia (Keil 2018).

There are ample discussions on the hybridity of regimes, and various organisations and think tanks even score countries according to their democratic performance (International IDEA 2019a and 2019b; Freedom House 2019b; EIU 2019). However, there is not much analysis on the correlation between the fragility of democracies, the hybridity of political systems, and the role of former combatants as a political elite in this midst. To what degree can the fragile or hybrid state of democracies be attributed to a rising political elite that is all but dominated by war veterans turned politicians? Both case contexts feature veterans as rising political elites and can be understood as fragile democracies with hybrid political systems.

In the two case studies, former combatants have traditionally operated in networks that relied on family or clan associations, on ideology, or simply on a pragmatic camaraderie forged by the embers of war. Some of those former combatants go on to enter the formal realm of politics, becoming leaders of political parties and stakeholders in power-sharing arrangements in government. Others may go on to undertake illicit activities related to rent-seeking, patronage and organised crime. They can do this because they have a network of

like-minded comrades, and they have the muscle to achieve their aims. Moreover, because of those networks of camaraderie which grant them access, they can collude with their brethren who sit in the formal sphere of politics. Because they are not necessarily elected by the people, such actors do not have a responsibility towards them; rather, their operations are conducted at the level of “invisible politics” (Morlino 2011). Furthermore, “elections or the other forms of electoral participation that may exist [...] have no democratic significance and, above all, are not the expression of rights, freedom and genuine competition to be found in democratic regimes” (Morlino 2011, p. 4). Elections thus become hollowed-out procedures without meaningful substance; they mainly have a symbolic significance, and are an expression of pre-arranged, clientelistic formulas and behind-the-scenes dealings of who should be elected and by whom.

In a society undergoing transition, such an interplay between formal and informal politics tend to morph into a way of (quasi-institutional) life. They become embedded in public discourse and co-exist side by side with peace and stability. But in actual reality, does stability – and by default, a stable transformation of former combatants into politics - automatically translate into democracy? And if yes, what kind of democracy? What are the obstacles encountered along the way? In the post-war power-sharing constellations, what is the contribution that former combatants turned politicians offer to their societies’ stability and democracy? What do they get in return? Morlino’s (2004) qualifications on democracy (procedure, content and result) provide a sound basis on the nature of new democracies created and enable us to discern possible glitches and downfalls. In new democracies, such downfalls are rather common. It is the task of this thesis to identify correlations between hiccups in democratisation processes in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia and the role of former combatants turned politicians.

In a series of papers, Mansfield and Snyder (1995 and 2002) have made distinctions between a so-called “democratic” regime versus a “democratizing” one. They warn of the “war-prone” nature of post-conflict societies which are on a transition road to full-fledged liberal democracy. According to them, countries do not become mature democracies overnight. More typically, they go through a rocky transitional period, where democratic control over foreign policy is partial, where mass politics mixes in a volatile way with authoritarian elite

politics, and where democratization may easily suffer reversals. In this transitional phase of democratization, countries become more aggressive and war-prone, not less, and they do fight wars with democratic states (Mansfield and Snyder 1995, p. 5).

It seems, therefore, that there are certain dangers in the first several years of a post-conflict society. And the question, pertinent for this thesis, is to what degree are former combatants responsible for the volatile nature of democratization processes. Authors have warned of the “dangers of rapid democratization” (Keen 2012, p. 765) which, when translated into the context of this thesis, the empirical data from the field and the literature, means that former combatants-cum-politicians are prone to resisting deep democratic reform which might undercut their influence. In transitional societies, with fledgling democratic institutions and porous oversight and accountability, the space for corrupt activities underpinned by greed is greater. In such societies where the rule of law is weak, those with guns, power and greed, tend to become champions of corrupt phenomena. They might welcome cessation of hostilities but, if it becomes clear that political power is slipping out of their hands, they might not be entirely happy to yield to democratic norms and practices which may weaken their position.

Yet, democratization is critical to building sustainable peace in post-civil war societies (Joshi 2010). Participation by all political actors, including former combatants, is key. However, all signs show that post-war societies are fragile settings upon which democratization cannot thrive uninhibited. The challenges are manifold, not least the often contentious (political, economic) interests of former rivals. Joshi (2010) therefore argues that for democratization to have a chance to succeed, former rivals ought to agree on terms of a transition toward democracy while having in mind that there is a stable balance of power between the government and rebel groups. Such a balance should stretch to their respective access to political power as well as economic resources. This is another way of saying that power-sharing arrangements between rebels-turned-politicians and non-rebels, are the way forward for transition to peace and democracy (Joshi 2010). However, this argument does not diminish the afore-mentioned challenges to democracy when it comes to power-sharing arrangements, which might come to be viewed as taking one’s share of the pie regardless of the ramifications that such an egotistical approach may have for democracy.

Mansfield and Snyder (2002) explain that establishing viable and effective democratic institutions takes time. There are many reasons for this (also depending on the context and country), but some of the main ones point to the threat that interest groups feel to democratisation.

Where powerful groups feel threatened by democracy, they seek to keep its institutions weak and malleable. Thus the practices of many newly democratizing states are only loose approximations of those that characterize mature democracies. Limited suffrage, unfair constraints on electoral competition, disorganized political parties, corrupt bureaucracies, or partial media monopolies may skew political outcomes in newly democratizing states away from the patterns that coherent democracies generally produce (Mansfield and Snyder 2002, p. 301).

The powerful groups in a post-conflict setting, or in a society in transition, are usually associated with armed groups. The war veterans and their networks, coupled with the war-wing parties, represent such groups in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia. To keep a tight control on power, political elites will restrain democratic consolidation because this is seen as a direct threat to their control.

As regards Kosovo and FYR Macedonia, most of the reports published in recent years from international organisations such as Freedom House (2019), the Economist Intelligence Unit (2019), or International IDEA (2017), highlight the dangers of rollback to authoritarianism or democratic backsliding. This is a clear warning sign that democratisation is far from consolidated, and the possibilities for reversal are real and looming. This phenomenon of a democracy seen to be in retreat, and the tendency of the political elite to tighten grip on power is also known as “democratic backsliding” (Bermeo 2016). Many reasons are given for this backsliding, starting from a weakening of the liberal notion of democracy, to crises of migration and globalisation, to the disenchantment of the electorate with mainstream politics, which in turn makes them turn to populism, nativism and radicalism (Bieber 2018; Krastev 2018; Krastev and Holmes 2019).

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) (2017), in its effort to provide a global state of democracy today, explores issues of “modern backsliding” in countries that are undergoing democratisation processes. One of the dangers

to democracy today, it is claimed, comes from the political elite that becomes adept at playing pretence with democracy, while in fact strengthening hold on power and silently widening their tentacles of authoritarian rule. The trick, however, is that they do this not by breaking laws and using brute force, but by manipulating and bending the constitution and the laws to their interests and those of their cronies. In the last few years we have seen examples of such “backsliding” in countries such as Poland, Romania, Turkey, the US, Thailand, the Philippines etc. The signs are quite common in all of them: authoritarian tendencies, intrusion into the judiciary and the media, executive aggrandizement, populist rhetoric attacking migrants, people of another religion or ethnicity, etc (International IDEA 2017; International IDEA 2019b).

The danger of such democratic backsliding is potentially even greater in countries undergoing transition, or democratisation processes. Such countries may indeed have accrued a relatively praiseworthy record in conducting free and fair elections. Election observers may apply scrutiny to the election process, only to conclude that the elections were free and fair, and in accordance with international standards, and may subsequently praise the country’s leadership for making great strides toward democratic reform. However, most of the backsliding occurs after elections, and they are manifested through behind-the-scene manipulations, political buy-outs and sell-outs, or clientelistic networks of operation (Bermeo 2016).

In general, these countries in transition share three elements which represent a post-election trap whereby the instruments of democracy are used to undermine it from within: a party or leader is elevated to power through elections broadly considered to be free and fair; the institutions and procedures designed to provide checks on executive power are manipulated or captured; the rule of law is used to reduce civic space and political freedoms, crush dissent, disable political opposition and diminish the role of civil society (International IDEA 2017). It follows then that culpable leaders do not abolish democratic mechanisms and institutions *per se*. They manipulate them. If need be, they change electoral laws, or hold off electoral reforms, to hold on to power. So long as modern backsliders are democratically elected and act within the law, they can claim legitimacy for the numbers they have in parliament and are able to form governments because of those numbers (Bekaj 2017).

As seen, the debate around democratic backsliding discusses some of the root causes of its manifestation, and of course highlights the dangers it poses for democracy as we know it. However, the debate lacks focus on another underlying cause for this democratic rollback, which is due to the informal ties and illicit activities associated with members of the political elite, some of which have a war-related past. Drawing cause and effect trajectories between war parties that originate from wars and the current democratic backsliding may offer a fuller explanation on the state of fledgling democracies witnessed in countries in transition such as Kosovo and FYR Macedonia. In other words, in countries with a relatively new democratic tradition, there is a great danger that politicians, once in power, may feel it to be more practical to do away with real democratic reforms and instead keep a democratic façade in place, while simultaneously tightening their grip on power. In some ways, the risk of backsliding may be accentuated with former combatants who have turned to politics, for the simple reason that their informal networks, client-patron relations, and the sheer possession and manifestation of power, will enable this to happen with fewer hindrances in place.

Democracy can be challenged from within. Modern democratic backsliding can take place through the manipulation of democratic rules and institutions. Constitutions and electoral rules can be used to favour a ruling party and limit the independence and power of the judiciary and the media. For a democracy to resist backsliding, the checks-and-balances system must be prepared to counteract the manipulation, abolition, or weakening of existing rules and institutions. A democratic system can recover if one element of the system can react to these dysfunctions, which requires citizens to have the capacity to adapt and respond to changing political scenarios, as well as opposition from the judiciary, the legislature, the media and political parties (International IDEA 2017, p. 71).

Lastly, the correlation between the transformation of combatants in politics and their domination of the political scene, in a democratic system that shows clear signs of weakness or capture, is not complete without examining the peacebuilding paradigm promoted by the UN and its agencies, and other international bodies, to which we now turn.

4.2 International community and the peacebuilding paradigm

Literature on conflict resolution/transformation recognizes the important role played by intra-state armed groups in peace processes, but they also place emphasis on external or third-party engagement. Both the cases of the KLA in Kosovo and the NLA in FYR Macedonia have witnessed third-party involvement throughout the cycle of conflict transformation: from

a latent or structural conflict to nonviolent confrontation, followed by violent confrontation, conflict mitigation, conflict settlement, peace implementation, and finally peace consolidation (Lederach 2002; Miall, Ramsbotham and Woodhouse 2003).

Additionally, peacebuilding literature gives us insight into the evolution of armed movements in post-peace accords. It also offers analysis on the involvement of international interlocutors in peace accords, post-conflict peacebuilding, reconciliation and democratisation (Doyle and Sambanis 2000; Reychler and Paffenholz 2001; Morphet 2002; Annan and Mousavizadeh 2013). Finally, such literature also looks at power-sharing agreements as well as issues of potential “spoilers” in peace processes (Stedman 1997; Curtis and de Zeeuw 2009; Jarstad and Sisk 2010).

Literature on peacebuilding, conflict resolution and democratisation in a post-conflict setting is interweaved with the fields of security and development (Duffield 2014). This is because for a country emerging from conflict the array of emergencies is multi-layered, which itself requires multi-disciplinary approaches. In addition, it requires an understanding that the subject of study is often not the state but actors within the state (such as intra-state armed groups). The field of human rights provides a balance in this regard, as it highlights the internal paradox between two major principles of international relations and international law: on one hand, it is the principle of state sovereignty and non-interference in internal matters of that state by foreign states or other actors, and on the other hand, the respect and promotion of human rights as a universal and inalienable entitlement of any citizen regardless of their country. The literature deriving from such fields such as human rights takes a critical view on the state’s undisputed paramountcy over the fate of its citizens, arguing that when there are grave human rights abuses committed by that very state against its populace, this ceases to be just an internal matter and rather becomes a humanitarian and human rights concern of other states, too. Regional and international organizations find themselves obliged to appeal for adherence of human rights, to mediate, assist economically, and even intervene diplomatically or militarily. The balance in favour of human rights and against non-interference has been tipped, it seems, after the end of the Cold War and following the civil wars in former Yugoslavia, amongst others. This literature, therefore, brings to the fore the

increasing importance of offering space to non-state actors, particularly when the state is seen as culpable of trampling upon human rights of segments of its population.

The DDR process and the political transformation of former combatants does not necessarily just involve local actors of a state. In fact, in most such cases, external actors ranging from the UN and its agencies, various embassies, international and regional organisations, will have a role to play. They will either help in brokering the peace agreement, mediate in talks between warring factions, help oversee the DDR process, or indeed assist in post-war reconstruction and reconciliation, state-building and democratisation efforts after the war.

That is why when examining post-conflict transition societies, one should also address the role of the so-called international community and its paradigm of “liberal peacekeeping” (Collier, Hoeffler and Söderbom 2008). By espousing ideas of liberal democracy and human rights, the application of this paradigm has been exercised in most post-conflict countries in the last two decades or so. For instance, in countries such as Kosovo and FYR Macedonia, the international community has been very active in mediating between warring parties and facilitating an end to armed conflicts (in the former case by even intervening militarily via NATO’s aerial bombing campaign) (Annan and Mousavizadeh 2013). Their engagement continued to varying degrees after the conflict, either by providing technical support to the implementation of peace agreement (such as in FYR Macedonia), or in helping set up institutions from scratch (like they did in Kosovo). International actors such as the UN, EU, NATO, US and other individual (Western) countries have played a key role in post-conflict reconstruction, institution-building and democratic consolidation in both countries. Admittedly, their level of engagement has differed in these two countries, but the challenges encountered have been similar. Therefore, to have a fuller picture of the transformation of combatants into politics and their impact on democratisation processes, one should also take a close look at the role played by international organisations. With their engagement, the liberal peacekeeping paradigm promoted and enacted by such organisations has often had a determining effect on home politics.

This is the kind of international intervention that we have witnessed in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia: one which claims to act on behalf of a liberal peacebuilding and peacekeeping

paradigm, and which supports post-conflict democratisation processes as a central precondition to making a definitive departure from the past. It is an exercise in “pump-priming democracy”, while the post-conflict elections (often managed or overseen by international actors) is viewed as an effort in “pump-priming peace” (Collier, Hoeffler and Söderbom 2008, p. 463).

By way of critically examining peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions, some authors have argued that the international community has faltered in striking a right balance between peacebuilding, democracy and development.

While today’s peace operations complement traditional security priorities with efforts to hold democratic elections and establish good governance and rule of law programmes, strategies to adequately address the specific challenge posed by the political economy of peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction have often lagged behind (Nitzschke and Studdard 2005, p. 226).

Chandler (2006) echoes such sentiments as he reviews the wave of peacebuilding operations that took place in the first few years of the twenty-first century. He critically assessed the concerted efforts by the UN and other organisations in establishing peacebuilding missions in places such as Kosovo, Somalia, Afghanistan, and East Timor. Based on that assessment, Chandler highlighted the precarious balance between the promotion of human rights and the new policy of interventionism in the name of such rights on one hand, and the principle of non-interference in sovereign states on the other. While the UN, NATO and other bodies have a responsibility to act when human rights violations occur, this should be done cautiously for fear that this principle might be abused, and sovereign states might be attacked under the pretext of defending universal human rights (Chandler 2006).

The paradigm of liberal peacekeeping and “liberal peacebuilding” (Le Billon 2008) has guided international efforts to move these societies towards a “democratizing, marketizing break with the past” (Horowitz 2006, p. 96). Essentially this paradigm has dictated that peace is consolidated through democracy and free markets economy, coupled with the creation of a non-ethno-centric civic polity and an overarching civic identity and value system. In the case of Kosovo and FYR Macedonia, this has meant not just a transition from war to peace, but

also a leap from a communist economy into a free market system of capitalism where the privatisation of national assets would lead the way towards economic regeneration.

However, one of the challenges encountered with the implementation of this paradigm is that the international community can become an overpowering and omnipresent actor on the ground, to the point that local partners are side-lined to becoming passive recipients of foreign diktats. In both Kosovo and FYR Macedonia, the transition from war to peace has come as a result of negotiated accords between warring parties, but where the international actors played a crucial role as mediators and even arbitrators to the conflict. But their role did not end on the day of the finalization of peace accords but extended well beyond that point. Especially in the case of Kosovo, the international community went on to play an omniscient role in setting up governance institutions from scratch, with local counterparts tagging along the way (O'Neill 2002). Its peacebuilding mission was in fact an international protectorate, turning Kosovo into an international tutelage.

Another problem identified in this process has been the issue of reconciling the “dual objectives of institution-building and empowerment of local actors” (Lemay-Hébert 2012, p. 465). In other words, what the above paradigm seems to have produced is a strategy of “institutionalization before liberalization”, understood as emphasizing externally-controlled institution-building to the detriment of local empowerment. Such was the case, for instance, with Kosovo (Di Lellio 2006), where the UN established itself as the protectorate authority in the territory and where, to paraphrase its first Chief Sergio Vieira de Mello it exercised powers akin to a “benevolent despot” (Lemay-Hébert 2012, p. 469). It seems that the first objective (that of building externally-controlled democratic institutions) might have taken an upper hand in promoting a procedural kind of democracy (Morlino 2004) without letting the process be taken forward by endogenous factors. Such a top-down approach raised legitimacy issues and demonstrated that “institution-building has significant limits when it is disconnected from the needs and perceptions of the local society targeted by the intervention, encompassed here under the concept of local empowerment” (Lemay-Hébert 2012, p. 476).

It should also be remembered that the “international community” is not one single actor with a unified decision-making structure and a single objective. In her ethnographic work

Autesserre (2014) provides quite a nuanced picture of the multi-nature of the international community and its peacebuilding work. The principle of “do no harm” is constantly challenged in the field, not because of malicious intent but due to the complex environment where peacebuilding missions occur, which involve competing narratives and interests, compounded further by conflicting parties (Autesserre 2014).

Therefore, “far from being a monolithic or united bloc, [the international community] consists of a broad range of bilateral, multilateral, and nongovernmental actors, which all have different mandates, capacities, and interests (De Zeeuw 2008, p. 22). Their involvement is multi-layered and multi-dimensional too, depending on the context and country. In Kosovo, for instance, their involvement was very thorough and all-pervasive, from facilitating a peace agreement, to providing security through its NATO Force, to installing a UN administration. They led the way in organising elections, setting up institutions, drafting the constitutional framework, providing emergency and economic recovery measures, and installing the rule of law. In FYR Macedonia, the international community had a less engaging role because, unlike Kosovo between 1999 and 2008, this was already a state. Nevertheless, they helped broker the Ohrid Framework Agreement in 2001, and have provided technical advice in matters of its implementation over the years. They have also helped political parties reach consensus on early elections in 2017, following a series of scandals of the previous government. In both cases, the face of this “international community” is the West, mainly represented by the US, Germany, France, Italy, the United Kingdom, and their allies, through their embassies, aid organisations, think tanks and institutes. Russia and its satellites provide another layer of this “international community” in the region (Bassuener 2019). However, their many attempts to disrupt the installation of a liberal peacebuilding paradigm in the region have not proven successful so far.

Within the context of a liberal peacebuilding paradigm as promoted by the international community (read: the West), there is a particular set of objectives listed in the rebel-to-party transformation:

- a) Conflict management and conflict prevention: demobilisation of combatants is key to immediate cessation of hostilities;

- b) Motivated by virtues of a liberal multiparty system, the international community will promote a more inclusive political system that entails representation of armed groups or their representatives in politics;
- c) The international community will want to make sure that the former combatants will not retake arms or engage in criminal activities. This would spoil the peace and with it everything that might have been achieved since the end of hostilities (De Zeeuw 2008).

The notion of peace spoilers – i.e. former combatants who might disrupt post-conflict peace through return to violence - has been discussed at considerable length in academic literature (Stedman 1997; Hoddie and Hartzell 2003; Ballentine and Nitzsche 2005; Glassmyer and Sambanis 2008; Dudouet, Giessmann and Planta 2012; Lyons 2016; Hansell and Gerdes 2017). The gist of the argument is that for peace to work, former combatants must not only return to civilian life but that they must be discouraged, disallowed or demotivated to take up arms again. In order to achieve this, former combatants are offered economic incentives, amnesty, or political space. However, while the argument for pre-empting peace spoilers is a valid one, literature has not quite been self-critical and reflective of this argument. That is because what they have failed to examine is the long-term impact of former combatants turned politicians in the democratic consolidation of their countries. By successfully removing the risk of peace spoilers in the immediate aftermath of the conflict, the liberal peacebuilding paradigm has had the inadvertent effect of helping to create democracy spoilers in the long-run. Kosovo and FYR Macedonia are telling examples of this scenario.

The rationale for the international community and the peacebuilding paradigm to avoid peace spoilers is certainly understandable and valid: they wish to achieve long-lasting peace and stability. However, post-conflict peace arrives as a result of a negotiated settlement, which in effect translates into a negotiated democracy between warring parties. War veterans, opposition movements and peace spoilers will inevitably be factored in the new settlement and any negotiations henceforth. It follows that for “war veterans and exiles freshly brought to power, reconstruction can become a pay-back scheme, with wartime ‘sacrifices’ justifying the misuse of newly controlled public offices and positions” (Le Billon 2008, p. 346). In a country with weak political institutions, the political actors with the right predatory instinct

for power and resources will become key players in reconstruction. The international community, on the other hand, tends to tread carefully when counteracting these players, for fear of jeopardizing the peace. The result is a “mix of electoral politics and power-sharing arrangements [that] can undermine institution building and reduce accountability as each faction asserts ‘sovereignty’ over its territorial and institutional turf” (Le Billon 2008, p. 350). Those actors who have the right network of friends and acquaintances, which often go back to alliances forged during the war, are in an advantageous position to compete for resources and power.

For the international community and the local incumbent political elite, the engagement with former combatants is fraught with dilemmas. On one hand, it is the option of cooperating with former combatants who might have been or are still involved in illicit activities, but in return ensuring peace and stability. The other option is to be principled and refuse any cooperation with persons who are suspected of illicit involvement. But the danger here is that the former combatants who do enjoy widespread popular support through their networks, will become dangerous peace spoilers. If left out in the cold they could easily use their networks to cause havoc on a hard-won fragile peace. When put in balance, therefore, it is perhaps better to bring such actors inside the process and work internally to change behaviours and attitudes and maintain peace. That is the reason why the international community actors usually end up cooperating with people that they would not normally cooperate with, as a price to pay for stability and peace. Mozambique, for example, provides a case in point to this inherent dilemma of including or not former combatants in senior positions after the war. In many instances, decisions on reintegration of senior officers there contributed to organised criminality (McMullin 2013b, p. 232).

However, the side-effect of such a practice is that while stability and peace may indeed be maintained, this will be done to the detriment of democracy and the consolidation of institutions that are supposed to be bulwarks of democracy. However, this approach to ensuring stability and peace at all costs, even if it means collaborating with actors involved in illicit activities, has led some to coin the term “stabilitocracy” that is very much applicable for the Western Balkan countries undergoing transition. Where “stabilitocracy” is becoming the norm, countries are shrouded in “weak democracies with autocratically minded leaders, who

govern through informal, patronage networks and claim to provide pro-Western stability in the region” (BIEPAG 2017, p. 7). Under such a system, peace is preserved but at a cost of eroding democratic principles and norms and undermining civil society and the independent media.

Hoddie and Hartzwell (2003) offer an insightful analysis on civil war settlement implementation and stability. In their study they have adopted a comparative angle, which enables them “to identify common patterns in the peace process that might not prove readily apparent when concentrating on the specifics associated with a single state’s efforts to transition from civil war to stable polity” (Hoddie and Hartzwell 2003, p. 311). In a post-conflict setting, stability is key to ensuring implementation of peace accords because stability is a by-product or an integral part of democratisation. Without stability, democracy, the rule of law, and the creation of inclusive political and security structures, are threatened. Kosovo and FRY Macedonia are cases in point about the stability’s importance as a precondition to consolidating democracy and the rule of law. However, in actual practice politicians (and the international community) are often placing indiscriminate emphasis on the importance of preserving stability that democracy and the rule of law take a secondary seat. This is a situation in which one can see how stabilitocracy has taken root.

Further, to achieve stability post-conflict accords usually stipulate power-sharing arrangements that try to ensure that no ethnic, national or religious community is discriminated against. Authors stress the importance of having all sides of warring factions be included in democratic governance as a necessary precondition for peace to hold. In the context of inter-ethnic animosities, the establishment of power-sharing institutions may create incentives for cooperation between different ethnic factors.

These institutions encourage the previously excluded group to work within the existing political system. In this way, the aggrieved ethnic group is brought back into the fold and accommodation may lead to peaceful co-existence (Gurses and Rost 2013, p. 473).

In fact, this has been the mantra propagated repeatedly by all international community actors, which is stability and power-sharing arrangements that will pave the way for peace and democracy. Together with stability, power-sharing institutions that aim to be inclusive of

all ethnic, national and/or religious communities, are then prerequisites for the creation and consolidation of democratic institutions.

In the context of the case studies of Kosovo and FYR Macedonia, this was translated into the inclusion of former guerrilla decision-makers into political players partaking equally with others in power-sharing institutions. In theory, the idea behind such agreements is to offer a democratic formula of fair and direct representation for all constituent (ethnic, religious, national) elements of a country. However, in practice, sometimes power-sharing agreements tend to be another name for a de facto segregated system of representation entrenched along ethnic lines, in which each one takes care of their own kind. Since 1999, Kosovo has had a coalition government comprised of the majority ethnic Albanian representatives, but also of minorities representing Serb, Turkish, Roma and other communities. While they belong to the same government, they tend to rather lead separate lives and serve to their own constituencies. Likewise, since its conflict FYR Macedonia has had power-sharing governments comprised of Slav Macedonians and ethnic Albanians. The agreement between the parties' representatives was that each one would represent their own communities and, by that logic, carve out zones of interest and resources along the same lines. To describe such a deformed version of power-sharing governments, Mansfield and Snyder (2002) have coined the term "log-rolling", meaning "mutual back-scratching among narrowly self-serving interests. In forging a logrolled bargain, each group in the coalition agrees to support the others on the issue that each cares about most" (Mansfield and Snyder 2002, p. 302). Therefore, in practice, power-sharing arrangements and a blind emphasis on stability may be used to reinforce hold over electorates as if they were political feuds, and to maintain clientelistic practices and corruption, which have direct knock-on effects on democracy and a fair and inclusive system of governance.

5. Corruption, clientelism and post-conflict predation

(...) informal practices are not mere 'local' phenomena but inherent in international practices of statebuilding and peacebuilding and therefore co-constitute the socio-economic development of post-conflict societies and their economies of peace (Distler 2018, p. 287).

While the emphasis on peace and stability may ensure that the country does not return to conflict, it does not guarantee a definitive transition to democracy. Also, societies in

transition, or post-conflict societies, almost by definition provide fertile grounds for the enrichment of a handful of people through means of patronage, corruption and crime. Even after conflict former combatants continue to cultivate a tightly knit network of comrades who might have similar objectives in mind. If those objectives relate to extorting and expropriating arbitrarily the state's assets, then a truly democratic peace that ensures the application of norms and rules of good governance may restrict their ability to do that. That is why authors raise the signal that elites that grow strong amid civil war are likely to oppose reforms that could endanger their means of rent-seeking and predation, such as racketeering, smuggling, illegal private taxation, drug cultivation, and, above all, corruption (Zürcher 2011, p. 84). The two case studies of this study provide clear empirical data that support exactly such a claim.

Belloni and Strazzari (2014) go a step further when they claim that in the post-conflict political system, natives and internationals alike cohabit and collude with corruption and crime, as an acceptable *modus operandi* that preserves peace and stability. The lack of formal structures in the war period, they argue, leads to the emergence of political leaders who did not have democratic credentials but whose legitimacy derived from sources like violence and patronage. "In this politico-economic system corruption is not an aberration caused by the presence of a few dishonest public officials: it is structural, and becomes standard operating procedure" (Belloni and Strazzari 2014, p. 857).

In such settings, formal state structures continue to grapple with weakness and inefficiency. A part of the reason for this fragile situation derives from the "strategic behaviour [of] elites who are involved in a predatory project of extracting resources from the state" (Krastev 2002, p. 50). According to this claim that looks sceptically at the international community's good intent on leading peacebuilding missions, the international actors are themselves involved, together with the local counterparts, in the underground world of corruption and conspiracies. The real objective, according to this scenario, is to maintain stability while extending the predatory reach for plunder and preaching the language of peace and democracy for the masses. The line between formal practices and informality become quite blurred (Distler 2018). The local politicians (in this case, former combatants) are more than willing to collude, being as they already are involved into illicit activities such as corruption, money-laundering and organised crime.

Corruption works as a 'compensation chamber' that enables power relations to be reproduced, despite formal constraints and rules; indeed, it can be a way to speed the achievement of formalised deals, endowing them with an informal substantial dimension (Belloni and Strazzari 2014, p. 868).

In both case studies, particularly in Kosovo, there is evidence to suggest that the international community is partly responsible for allowing corruption and crime to thrive. This was done either because certain individuals of the international community benefited themselves from illicit transactions, or because the preservation of peace and stability, as they saw it, required a certain degree of laxness in the face of underground activities taking place.

Despite empirical evidence pointing to the expansion of democracy in conflict-ridden countries - former Yugoslav countries are cases in point, having all made a relatively successful transition to democracy today - there are authors who highlight the negative aspects of this transition. Authors such as Proksik (2013) take an uncompromising view, stating that there is a potential for crime elements to penetrate every pore of institutional life. According to this view, the process of democratic consolidation is constantly frustrated by crime elements in politics and society. In the case of Kosovo, he lists the international community whose mission it has been to install democracy and build institutions from scratch. On the other side, it is the "organized structures" deriving mainly from the KLA who have managed to impose themselves on those emerging democratic institutions. Since immediate stability is the focus of the international community, so the argument goes, criminal elements have been allowed to consolidate their structures further.

The NATO-brokered demilitarization granted the former power structures of the KLA with a dominant role in Kosovo's future security architecture and thereby endowed Kosovo Albanian (para)military elements frequently linked to violence and organized crime with disproportionate political influence (Proksik 2013, p. 288).

However, I submit that the picture is more complex, and not quite as portrayed by Proksik (2013). The author does not seem to differentiate between crime elements in war-wing parties and those representatives who have made a relatively successful career as politicians. In other words, not all combatants-turned-politicians are crooks, and it is our job as researchers to break down generalisations and identify the nuances in the quest for truth.

Therefore, drawing a clear line between the international community operating in a post-conflict zone, and the national institutions, where one has altruistic objectives and the other one is corrupt, is simplistic. In an area where such actors are involved, the spheres of responsibility are more complex than that. The so-called “global peacebuilding industry” (Lindberg and Orjuela 2014, p. 726) coupled with the “global reconciliation industry” (Wilson 2003, cited in Eastmond 2010, p. 4) in post-war countries has become amenable to living with corruption and crime for the sake of overall stability. In fact, “turning a blind eye to various types of corruption is sometimes seen as necessary to sustain a fragile peace, while the influx of foreign funds in support of reconstruction may further extend the opportunities for corruption” (Lindberg and Orjuela 2014, p. 724). It follows that predatory behaviour cannot exist in a vacuum: while local leaders (who often derive from intra-state armed groups) may indeed be culpable of corruption, organized crime or patronage, international actors often turn a blind eye to these phenomena. Worse still, they may be complicit in covering up predatory behaviour, underlining the need for social stability as of paramount importance. Such literature offering a critique on the liberal peacebuilding paradigm has enabled me to critically assess the long-term role of former combatants-turned-politicians in democratisation processes. This has led me to coin the term “democracy spoilers” to illustrate their corroding impact on democracy as a result of crime and corruption.

Other authors have drawn attention to the criminalised aspects of intra-state groups, to those individuals who will use war efforts, as noble as they may be, for personal enrichment during and after war has ended. They are the war profiteers, human and arms traffickers, and smugglers who seem to be able to infiltrate and/or hijack the causes of war. Taking Bosnia and Herzegovina as an example, Andreas (2004) notes how these actors do not just profit from the war but are seldom in key and decisive positions following the armed conflict. By being integral elements to the very conduct of conflict, “these actors emerge from the devastation of war as part of a new elite with close ties to political leaders and the security apparatus, often impeding reforms and complicating post-war reconstruction efforts” (Andreas 2004, p. 31). The chapter of the field findings echoes such findings when discussing the rise of an economic and political nouveau riche that is responsible for throwing the old order and imposing a new one dictated by them.

When we realise the depth of interaction between criminal elements and politics, there is no longer a clear-cut case of predation as an activity on one hand, and politics on the other. Indeed, in post-war times the level of illicit collaboration with crime elements is so pervasive that it is difficult to distinguish politics from crime, and *vice versa*. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, many aspects of the “criminalized conflict are state-sponsored and directly serve political interests, such as when political leaders subcontract out key tasks to criminals and smugglers, because they either cannot or prefer not to perform these tasks themselves” (Andreas 2004, p. 32). It follows that politics in a post-conflict country may often take the form of clandestine interaction between formal institutions and the informal, underground world. Corruption and predation have to do with “the emergence of different power constellations and of a distinctive form of the state, characterised by hybrid systems of accountability, discontinuous forms of regulation and control, and pervasive extra-legal governance structures” (Belloni and Strazzari 2014, p. 868).

How to cut the formal *versus* informal ties of power relations without affecting the fragile stability of a country coming out of conflict? Informality equals corruption, and corruption corrodes stability and democracy. So how does one appease former combatants in return for them handing out weapons and going home? More importantly, their leaders’ buy-in in democratic processes is essential for democracy, peace and stability, but at what price?

In countries in transition corruption has often been viewed as a necessary evil which helps preserve stability. How can corruption “buy peace”? It can in situations when peace is “purchased through the integration of a restive competitive elite or large-scale redistribution to the restive masses” (Le Billon 2003, p. 421). This claim applies quite well to the two case studies discussed here. In Kosovo this “restive political elite” came in the form of PDK and the smaller AAK as direct descendants of the KLA. In FYR Macedonia it came in the form of DUI which was a direct descendant of the NLA. What became obvious very early on is that their political inclusion in post-conflict accords was necessary to maintaining peace and stability. This process of buying peace by accommodating the restless elements of an armed group can be interpreted as a corruptive one. But, as paradoxical as this might sound, as much as it is corruptive, it is also conducive to a stable political environment. And therein lays the paradox: attempting to do away with corruption in one instant may be detrimental to the fragile

stability of the country, which can potentially deal a blow to democratic institutions and rule of law. Corruption, in other words, “is part of the fabric of social and political relationships”. It is endogenous in character, which means that “conflicts may arise more from changes in the pattern of corruption, than from corruption itself. Domestic or external shocks affecting the pattern of corruption may therefore contribute to conflict, particularly when corruption is pervasive” (Le Billon 2003, p. 414).

What is usually evidenced in countries affected by war is the class and social impact it has on the society. “War not only involves military confrontation, but also a radical social transformation. As part of this transformation, many who lived on the margins of society experience rapid upward mobility that would have been inconceivable in peacetime” (Andreas 2004, p. 49). As both cases of Kosovo and FYR Macedonia show, combatants who joined intra-state armed groups are more likely to come from impoverished and rural communities rather than urban and affluent ones. They are more likely to have been cast at the margins of society, facing discrimination at school, at work or in everyday life. Joining the armed movement is therefore transformed in a quick way to turn some life corners and reach for the economic and societal affluency that would have otherwise been impossible for them to achieve.

Smuggling and criminal actors can contribute to the outbreak and persistence of war, but also to its conclusion. Smuggling and criminal actors can contribute to the looting of the country, but also to its survival. [...] Smuggling and criminal actors can stymie and complicate international conflict resolution initiatives, but international interventions can also fuel smuggling and enrich criminals. Postwar reconstruction is hindered and distorted by a criminalized smuggling economy, but such clandestine commerce is also an essential survival strategy for many people in the face of dire economic conditions. (Andreas 2004, p. 49).

Following the same logic, the post-war era brings with it a great many opportunities for combatants to climb the social ladder rapidly. A new social class is thus born, which overthrow the old and imposes itself upon society, as elaborated in the chapter on the field findings.

International organisations themselves are not immune from corrupt practices. In fact, empirical evidence suggests that they are just as culpable in condoning corrupt practices as their local counterparts. Experience tells us that international community representatives

have knowingly involved themselves in corruption as a way of buying political stability or buying off political opponents or restive groups. “This strategy has even been used, with some measure of success, in conflict resolution and peacekeeping initiatives” (Le Billon 2001, p. 7).

Corruption becomes a means to satisfy post-war predation and address grievances of restive groups. It corrodes transparent democratic principles and practices and undermines the formality of elected institutions and structures. It is maintained through the extension of clientelistic circles, accommodating into its bosom any new dissenting voices that are prepared to provide credible opposition to the establishment. They may come from opposition political parties, or they may be journalists, civil society activists, students’ associations. But regardless of their background, the recipe is the same: when dissention becomes visibly threatening to the established political order, they are offered a prize – a position in government, a tender or a stake in a business – which usually silences them. And often, they accept the offer. This culture of political corruption “can be conducive to social and political peace as the pattern of co-optation is used throughout the structure of society – from upper to lower classes – therefore be broadly legitimated, given acceptance of social order and the existence of coercive forces” (Le Billon 2001, p. 7). This quote is completely applicable to my case studies because in a situation of poor economic development and high unemployment such as in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia, the chances of silencing dissent through corruption seem to be greater. In other words, it is harder to stick to some pure ideals when one’s very existence is doubtful due to lack of jobs and prospects for a better future.

In post-war divided societies where the “centrifugal tendencies of ethnic politics” (Hislope 2005) are still at play, corruption can offer rival parties a proportionate stake in the system. Corruption may even serve as an antidote to nationalism, and “corrupt exchange among ethnic party elites fosters durable multiethnic coalition government and, thereby, reduces the possibility of interethnic violence” (Hislope 2005, p. 12). Every government in Kosovo from 1999 onwards has had representatives of ethnic minorities in its ranks, and not just Serbs but also Turks, Roma etc. Their inclusion in government is to this day taken for granted, and indeed they are ensured a quota of representation in parliament. Likewise, every government in FYR Macedonia from its independence in 1991 to this day (including the time of the armed conflict in 2001) has had an ethnic Albanian party in its coalition. An inclusive government

which ensures that minority members are adequately represented should be applauded, one could say. That is correct, and it is true that in this respect both countries' legislation after their respective conflicts has been favourable to equal representation, and even to positive discrimination. The issue is, though, that governance, be it at central level or at municipal level, still seems like an artificially enforced business. It resembles a marriage of convenience whereby parties coalesce with the aim of forming a coalition, motivated primarily by their interest at gaining access to the riches of government. "When political dissensus defines interethnic group relations, corrupt exchange among rival ethnic elites can purchase peace by giving each side a stake and personal interest in the system" (Hislope 2005, p. 17).

Regardless of who is behind them, illicit activities play a detrimental effect on post-war democratisation processes. A country conducting relatively free and fair elections may be considered to have made a departure from its conflict past and to have become a democracy, but a more basic or electoral kind of democracy as opposed to a liberal democracy where there is a wide application of civil liberties (EIU 2019; Freedom House 2019). But how inclusive, participatory and transparent is the regime which still fulfils only the basic requirements of a democracy? In countries facing transition today, we see the rise of the new elite that has the power, the network and the money to influence politics, to shape institutions, and to control the media and civil society. By doing so, they exert an undeniable influence in the process of transition, leading to warnings of a case of "state capture", defined here as the "capacity to influence the formation of the basic rules of the game (i.e. laws, rules, decrees and regulation) through private payments to public officials" (Hellman, Jones and Kaufmann 2000, p. 4). This definition perfectly fits the profile of the political systems in both Kosovo and FYR Macedonia. This hampers democratic consolidation, prompting several authors to highlight the "war-prone" or fragile nature of "democratizing societies" (Wolf et al 1996; Mansfield and Snyder 2002).

When faced with state capture, high levels of corruption and predation, democratic institutions grapple to exert formal influence. As nascent as they may be, they are left underdeveloped and vulnerable to political intrusion, which has a damaging impact on their independence, neutrality and overall performance. Meanwhile, the political elite concentrates their power in the hands of a few, while intimidating opposing voices.

Space for opposition parties, civil society, and the media is shrinking, and international support for them is drying up. Ethnic, religious, and other identity cleavages polarize many societies that lack well-designed democratic institutions to manage those cleavages. State structures are too often weak and porous – unable to secure order, protect rights, meet the most basic social needs, or rise above corrupt, clientelistic, and predatory impulses (Diamond 2015, p. 149).

What the above author neglects to mention explicitly is that at times state capture does not necessarily entail a visible curtailment of civic space and the media. The sinister ploy of politicians responsible for state capture is to allow space for opposition to take place; however, the dissent is carefully controlled and allowed to take place only so as to give people the illusion of genuine political pluralism.

Larry Diamond (2008; 2015) offers insightful analyses on how democracies, particularly young ones, can be subjected to serious challenges today. He explains that poor governance is a constant plague that threatens democracies everywhere. Those most at risk appear to be “trapped in patterns of corrupt and abusive rule that it is hard to see how they can survive as democracies without significant reform” (Diamond 2008, pp. 42-43). In the absence of serious and meaningful reforms, this may easily lead to a “predatory state”. In such states, democracy and democratization are façades that embellish a cynical and opportunistic behaviour by the political elite. Yes, elections may well be held, and yes, they may appear to be competitive, fair and democratic. Further, elections may even pass the test of legitimacy in the eyes of election observers who will report that they have met certain international standards. But, in fact elections become “a bloody zero-sum struggle in which everything is at stake and no one can afford to lose” (Diamond 2008, p. 43). The state is thus turned into a predatory, clientelistic enterprise in which people are not citizens and real sovereigns of the country but are instead turned into clients of powerful local bosses (read: patrons).

Stark inequalities in power and status create vertical chains of dependency, secured by patronage, coercion, and demagogic electoral appeals to ethnic pride and prejudice (...) The most egregious predatory states produce predatory societies. People do not get rich through productive activity and honest risk-taking; they get rich by manipulating power and privilege, by stealing from the state, extracting from the weak, and shirking the law (Diamond 2008, p. 43).

This corresponds with the data from the field of my case studies: the political regimes there are not outright authoritarian. In fact, they are democratic, however fragile. But the long-term danger to the system is the almost undetectable perpetuation of clientelist networks that are hard to break.

In his seminal book on patronal politics, Hale (2015) provides a detailed account on the formal realms of politics *versus* the informal mechanisms that can dominate public discourse. In fact, he argues that corruption, predation and patron-client relations cultivate such strong bonds that the very system may be maintained by them. When corruption and informality are so pervasive and endemic, they are not simply a “tumor on the body politic”, they are rather “the body’s lifeblood” (...) “Not only do they course throughout the whole of society (...) but they deliver vital nourishment that keeps society functioning and growing” (Hale 2015, p. 19). This argument points to the vicious cycle, maintained by informal relations, that may be created between politicians who adopt a patron’s role *versus* the voters who are placed in a client’s role. The phenomenon of clientelism is thus installed which feeds off informal exchanges of favours and bribes, and which is deeply corrosive of formal state institutions and democratic consolidation.

Patronal politics refers to politics in societies where individuals organize their political and economic pursuits primarily around the personalized exchange of concrete rewards and punishments through chains of actual acquaintance, and not primarily around abstract, impersonal principles such as ideological belief or categorizations like economic class that include many people one has not actually met in person. In this politics of individual reward and punishment, power goes to those who can mete these out, those who can position themselves as patrons with a large and dependent base of clients (Hale 2015, pp. 9-10).

Ironically, clientelism is difficult to uproot because considerable swathes of society may be dependent on it. Clientelism maintains a system, leaving fledgling democracies in a grey zone between their conflict pasts and an unfulfilled consolidated democracy in the future. According to Hicken (2011) clientelism is defined as a system that feeds off a “dyadic relationship” between politicians and voters, in which the former provide favours in the form of jobs and resources, while the latter provide support in the form of votes (Hicken 2011, p. 291). A part of the reason for the clientelistic nature of democracies in transition are the formal-informal networks nourished by the political leadership which is comprised to a great

degree by former combatants turned politicians. The underlying causes for the creation of such a nefarious system that undermines fledgling democracies is predation and is the pursuit for personal riches and power.

One of the moments of depression after the war is exactly this clientelistic network that enriches a few but keeps the majority poor. In a post-independence, underdeveloped context, clientelistic relations help to concentrate the wealth in the hands of a small group of people (those who are close to the powerholders), while keeping the ordinary citizens under a silent suppression of poverty. This is true, for example, for many countries in Africa, where the “disappointment of independence” has led to calls by ordinary people for a “second independence”, triggered by an increased awareness that the economic plight is primarily caused by “the monopoly of power enjoyed by a failed leadership” (Ake 1993, p. 240). In such a context, the task of state-building and institution-building may generate “façade institutions where much governance and power continues to be concentrated in and implemented through informal structures; ranging from systems of patronage, regional or ethnic bonds, to old political and military ties” (Themnér and Utas 2016, p. 256). The authors here refer to the existence of informal governance functions that take charge of maintaining security or distributing economic resources and, in so doing, *de facto* outsourcing some state functions. In this sense, this sort of “governance through brokerage” is a tool – albeit an informal one – “for governing elites to integrate what is often perceived as problematic groups into the statebuilding process, and a mechanism that empowers war-affected groups” (Themnér and Utas 2016, p. 257). In Liberia, for example, the governing elites helped distribute patronage to different former combatant communities as a way of alleviating their economic grievances.

In many respects this is a phenomenon of Bigmanity (Utas 2012) identified especially in different contexts in Africa. Bigmanity holds a few key characteristics:

- It is based on social relations. Big Men transform social relations into strategic power and control.
- Big Men do not generally control followers. In fact; it is in the interest of followers to maintain ties with a Big Man because he is best positioned to provide economic possibilities, protection and social security.

- Bigmanity is a response to a lack of formal structures. Big Men wield a great deal of social power in situations where there is a structural void. Big Man power is seen as an alternative form of governance, where the national state does not reach (Utas 2012, p. 8). Cases of the prevalence of the Bigmanity principle are discerned in countries such as Uganda, Sierra Leone, Congo, Liberia, Ethiopia, etc. (Clapham 2018; Utas 2012).

Mkandawire (2002) echoes these descriptions when he talks about neopatrimonial regimes in Africa, where the chief executive “maintains authority through personal patronage, rather than through ideology or law” (Mkandawire 2002, p. 184). In this patron-client relationship the primary goal for all concerned in the race for political office, power and self-enrichment. However, he also cautions against the simplistic interpretation of neo-patrimonialism and clientelism as a “kind of Panglossian gloss (that) is given to the many malfunctionings that afflict Africa” (Mkandawire 2011, p. 21). Clientelism and the neo-patrimonial practices, he argues, may explain greed-related conflicts, but grievance should not be discounted as a genuine cause for a lot of social ailments in Africa.

5.1 Grievance leading to conflict, followed by predation

Predatory elites sit at natural odds with a democratised system. They are each other’s obvious adversaries. The more democratised a society is, the greater the threat to the predatory instincts of the political elites. The more transparent and accountable the latter is forced to be, the narrower the space for their predatory practices to occur. In transitional societies, those who hold power often see democratisation as a problem rather than a solution and may well prefer a form of government which is removed from liberal democracy, but which would ensure their political survival (Zürcher 2011, p. 85). There are plenty of cases when the post-conflict elites tend to push off democratisation and instead put an emphasis on stabilisation of the country (Keen 2012). Zürcher further raises the point that in countries such as Kosovo and Bosnia (and, I would add, FYR Macedonia) “liberal democracy poses a threat to the monoethnic fiefdoms on which elites have built their power” (Zürcher 2011, p. 91). Post-war stability, therefore, ought not always be synonymous with, or even a precondition to, democracy. Stability in such a scenario is preserving power-sharing arrangements for the enrichment or empowerment of new elites.

This connects to the post-conflict predatory behaviour of combatants. Although this thesis focuses on democratisation processes after the conflict, it is important to focus on the initial motivations of people joining armed groups. In so doing, I aim to obtain a picture over the corrosive effects that greed and predatory behaviour have over democratisation processes. However, there is a seemingly minor but essential element in the debate about predatory behaviour (or greed *versus* grievance dichotomy) which has not been discussed in literature with the attention it deserves. And that is the time factor. I argue that if we apply a time shift forward to when the war is over, the above dichotomy will be applied to completely new circumstances. In times of peace, when war is over and the agreement is reached, the predatory behaviour is strengthened, reinvigorated and takes a whole new meaning and relevance, which impacts directly on democratisation processes.

In the post-war setting, the factions of organised crime and underworld activities are a spill-over effect of demobilisation and deviant reintegration. Such phenomena can have a serious impact on democratic processes and might pose a threat to peace with continuing regional ramifications (Berdal and Malone 2000; Clewlow 2010b). I identify this as a security paradox within international relations of transitional societies, because sometimes the results of reintegration or transformation can have unintended consequences. There are bound to be former combatants who will undergo the DDR process but who will carry those camaraderie networks nourished during the war into times of peace with illicit objectives in mind. In so doing, they may establish crime and corruption networks that may bring immediate riches for them and their closed circle of friends and allies. What is more, former combatants turned politicians may well be involved in such illicit activities. In societies undergoing transition to democracy, these are formidable challenges of informal networks undercutting the hard work of formal political networks that are involved in furthering democratisation processes. These are examples of such deviant reintegration and transformation practices in post-war settings. Therefore, tackling issues of corruption and organized crime are intrinsic and corrosive side-effects of a society in transition (Thachuk 2005; Tanner 2007).

Scholars have waged a lively debate about the root causes of conflict, more specifically civil wars. Authors such as Collier (2001), Collier and Hoeffler (2004), Murshed and Tadjoeeddin (2009), or Berdal and Malone (2000) have been vocal about highlighting economic factors

influencing insurgency movements. The common denominator of their theory notes that genuine plights have been abused with, and wars have been waged, for personal enrichment of certain individuals who have seen opportunities in the grievance of other people. They have argued that, although there obviously are genuine causes for grievance stemming from social deprivation or oppression, the causes of grievance are often hijacked by certain individuals who are driven by greed and drive for economic control. “Conflicts are far more likely to be caused by economic opportunities than by grievance (...) Civil wars create economic opportunities for a minority of actors even as they destroy them for the majority” (Berdal and Malone 2000, p. 91).

However, such an interpretation of the emergence of intra-state armed conflicts or civil wars has been criticised for being too insensitive and simplistic a theory as to why wars occur. This is because the theory almost by default excludes the possibility that people might take up arms against state repression. Indeed, it weighs too heavily on the assumption that the state will not show too abhorrent a behaviour towards a certain group of the population, which proves to be the real trigger factor for rebellion. In his manifesto on the subject, Keen (2012) acknowledges that “‘greed’ (in the sense of economic motivation) is an important factor propelling violence in a great many civil wars” (Keen 2012, p. 759). However, he is against a one-dimensional interpretation over the causes of conflict, stressing the legitimacy of many insurgency movements against ruthless regimes. Indeed, blaming just greed for insurgency movements is “politically convenient”. Moreover,

The work represents a pretty far-reaching deligitimization of political violence that might threaten existing power structures; it provides an important alibi for a range of abusive states; and it chimes nicely with a neo-imperial zeitgeist that attributes various kinds of beneficial and healing powers to western military intervention and occupation (Keen 2012, p. 758).

Ballentine and Nitzschke (2005) have argued that inferring individual motivations of “wanting to do well out of the war” to the whole rebel movement is hardly a precise conclusion for its reason for being. Also, let us not forget the role that the state plays in committing crimes and indeed of prolonging the war, which is an aspect that seems to go amiss with Collier et al. Furthermore, “casting rebellion as a merely criminal rather than political activity may foreclose opportunities for diplomatic solutions” (Ballentine and Nitzschke 2005, p. 5). As

noted above, whenever armed hostilities come to an end, former combatants will most likely be part of peace accords or, even more, be part of government structures.

The question of why people join armed movements is one which continues to attract discussions among academic and policy circles alike. Conjoined with the “greed *versus* grievance” dichotomy is the perennial question on why people become combatants. What security ramifications or risks are there for men who become combatants *versus* those who refuse to join ranks? Common sense tells us that joining war efforts will increase the likelihood of harm, which in normal circumstances should act as a discouragement to wear the uniform. Such a “collective action problem” paradigm has purported to explain social group’s predicament to joining demonstrations, protests or social movements. By the same token, joining an army in war will increase the risks posed to individuals which, according to this argument, decreases the number of people who want to join.

However, authors such as Kalyvas and Kocher (2007) have also highlighted that there are certain benefits and incentives which one derives from joining the war, too. In fact, in many instances “the costs of nonparticipation and free riding often equal or even exceed those of participation: while it is undoubtedly true that rebels run serious personal risks in war zones, war is very dangerous for nonrebels as well” (Kalyvas and Kocher 2007, p. 183). Therefore, in times of war, staying home and not joining does not necessarily equate with greater safety. On the contrary, often being without a weapon might increase the likelihood of danger for oneself and one’s family. This follows that joining the rebel army and the war efforts might provide you with a degree of safety, symbolized by the Kalashnikov you might be holding and the comrades around you. In the aftermath of conflict, it is those same comrades who will be likely strengthen clientelistic networks and adopt a predatory behaviour that will damage the country’s democratic transition. Both Kosovo and FYR Macedonia prove that there were certain benefits which some of those who fought (mainly those in leadership positions) would come to enjoy precisely because they were part of such war efforts.

6. Conclusion

In a world where most conflict are waged within the borders of existing states, the role of intra-state armed groups—otherwise known as rebel, guerrilla, liberation movements, or

insurgencies—often determines not just the outcome of the conflict but also the viability of post-war peace processes. From Colombia to Northern Ireland, from Aceh to Nepal, from Burundi to South Sudan, there are numerous cases that testify to the role played by combatants not just during conflict but in its aftermath, too.

Usually, such groups follow a similar trajectory of development. The breeding ground that fosters their creation is the marginalization or repression of an ethnic or religious group by state authorities, coupled by demands for equal human rights, autonomy or independence by that group. If those demands are ignored, stifled or suppressed by the state, an armed resistance or insurgency may come to life. The intra-state armed conflict that ensues usually comes to an end after a defeat, a mutually hurting stalemate, if there is intervention from abroad, or if there is mutual interest to reach a peace agreement. In the process, rebel groups tend to become legitimate stakeholders of the agreement and the ensuing implementation of peace accords. In a rather paradoxical change of circumstance, former enemies become indispensable partners for peace and reconciliation, and while substituting bullets for ballots, some combatants create political parties and submit themselves to the will of the vote as politicians. The inclusion of former combatants in politics is a common practice for post-conflict, transitory societies. Such inclusion is advisable given the necessity to create durable peace that accommodates the interests of former soldiers and their constituencies. It is also encouraged as a way of preventing spoiler effects that could arise should they feel aggrieved at the lack of political representation (Manning 2007; Curtis and de Zeeuw 2009; Dudouet 2009; Metsola 2010; McMullin 2013b; Söderström 2016; Hansell and Gerdes 2017; Isacson 2018).

The literature review for this thesis has borrowed from an eclectic mix of sources such as international relations, security, peacebuilding and conflict resolution, democratisation and post-conflict predation. The chapter conducted a mapping of the academic discussion on the role of intra-state armed groups' representatives in the post-conflict period, including their involvement in politics.

Firstly, the chapter reviewed the literature discussion on DDR and political transformation from fields such as international relations, security and securitization studies. Current

literature offers a variety of cases of combatants undergoing DDR processes, which may mean a return to prior civilian life, reengagement in other security forces, or involvement in politics (Glassmyer and Sambanis 2008; Humphreys and Weinstein 2008; Dudouet 2012; Dudouet, Giessmann and Planta 2012; Blease and Qehaja 2013). Literature now also recognises armed groups as equal and necessary partners in striking peace accords, considered as a vital link for the enactment and survival of a post-conflict peace and a cohesive social contract (Knight and Özerdem 2004; Dudouet, Giessmann and Planta 2012).

Similarly, the discussion on the political transformation of former combatants looks mainly at the “structural” and “attitudinal” challenges of this transformation (De Zeeuw 2008). It underlines the importance that a successful political transformation can have for peace accords, as well as for the reengagement of former combatants through the means of ballot papers as opposed to weapons (Ishiyama 2016; Manning and Smith 2016). A successful transformation of former combatants in politics means a definitive break from the violent past and the installation of a potentially peaceful and democratic regime in the country.

While the literature on DDR deals largely with the immediate technical aspects of the combatants’ reintegration in society, the discussion on political transformation focuses on the politics and the political dynamics after the conflict. They both underline that the importance of DDR and of political transformation is inherently linked with long-lasting peace. However, these discussions focus mainly on the early stages of the combatants’ engagement after conflict. They offer little in terms of the long-term effects of reintegration, particularly of political transformation. They give primacy to peace and do not necessarily delve into the democratic quality that is built over three-four political mandates and further. I concur with Söderström (2016) when she argues that the research on the “transformation of armed groups into political parties has focused on explaining the transformation itself (...) rather than its effects on individual ex-combatants (or indeed the long-term workings of such parties” (Söderström 2016, p. 215). The impact of long-term transformation of combatants in politics remains a moot question.

Secondly, an integral part of DDR and political transformation is the process of democratisation or post-conflict democratic transition. Democratisation studies deal with the

emergence of multi-party democracy, and examine notions of inclusivity, transparency and representation. Within this framework, democratisation studies also examine the “organisational transformation” (Dudouet 2009, p. 8) of intra-state armed groups from illegal guerrilla formations to mainstream political parties. A multi-dimensional transition (from war to peace, from weapon to ballot paper, from soldier to politician) is assessed by the literature. Post-conflict institutional set-ups such as power-sharing arrangements, state-building and institution-building (Gromes 2009), are examined as an integral part of democratisation literature.

Given the ailing state of democracy in the world today (Munck 2016; EIU 2019; International IDEA 2019b; Krastev and Holmes 2019), academic and policy-making literature offers a wide range of studies on the challenges facing democratisation. Such challenges range from authoritarian tendencies betrayed by democratically-elected leaders, to democratic backsliding and executive aggrandizement (Diamond 2015; Bermeo 2016), to the dangers of rapid democratization (Keen 2012) when complex social grievances of different strata of society are not accommodated. Contemporary literature also underlines the beleaguered state of liberal democracy, affected by crises of migration and globalisation, the financial crisis and the austerity measures of a decade ago. Their influence is felt to this day in the form of a disenchanted electorate with mainstream politics and the rise of populism, nativism and radicalism (Bieber 2018; Krastev 2018; Krastev and Holmes 2019).

The moot points in the literature on democratisation relate to identifying correlations between setbacks in democratisation processes and the role of former combatants turned politicians. For instance, in general power-sharing arrangements are viewed as good balancing acts between different warring factions which are meant to ensure sustainable peace and representation. However, literature falls short of critically examining some devious aspects of power-sharing arrangements which often relate to the feudalisation of ethnic/religious/national electorates for the narrow benefits of political parties.

The literature on conflict resolution and conflict transformation (Lederach 2002; Miall, Ramsbotham and Woodhouse 2003), as well as that on post-war security and development (Duffield 2014) complements further our understanding of the complex challenges related to

peace and democratisation. Winning post-war peace and reconciliation, surpassing entrenched animosities in divided societies, undertaking security sector and economic reforms, are all issues that help to consolidate a nascent democracy. True to the liberal values of the peacebuilding paradigm, they are part and parcel of the so-called international community's drive to help a country turn a page from war to peace, from autocracy to democracy. In addition, the post-conflict peacebuilding paradigm and its advocacy for liberal values and human rights (Doyle and Sambanis 2000; Reyhler and Paffenholz 2001; Morphet 2002; Collier, Hoeffler and Söderbom 2008) offers a crucial insight on the role played by the so-called international community in peace accords and democratic transition. Within the peacebuilding framework, literature discusses the notion of peace spoilers, defined as a community of former combatants who might disrupt post-conflict peace through return to violence (Stedman 1997; Hoddie and Hartzell 2003; Ballentine and Nitzsche 2005; Glassmyer and Sambanis 2008; Dudouet, Giessmann and Planta 2012; Lyons 2016; Hansell and Gerdes 2017). For this reason, the paradigm stresses a vital importance on the maintenance of stability as a precondition for long-lasting peace and democracy. However, in order to have stability, potential peace spoilers need to be managed and their expectations need to be met. This gives rise to criticisms that the international community is buying peace and political stability (Le Billon 2001) and is instead imposing stabilitocracy (BIEPAG 2017).

A blind spot that does not seem to be tackled by the above literature is what happens to democracy's quality in the long-run when combatants are deeply integrated in politics. The peacebuilding paradigm advocates for giving a voice to former armed groups in the post-conflict era, and in neutralising potential peace spoilers as a matter of priority. However, this new political elite that comes from conflict, how is it shaping democracy in the long-run? The discussion as to whether the inclusion of former combatants in politics has turned them into democracy spoilers is not addressed.

Moreover, the peacebuilding literature comes under scrutiny in the framework of discussions on corruption and other illicit phenomena after conflict. Several authors stress that societies in transition often provide a fertile ground for the enrichment of the elite through means of corruption and crime (Zürcher 2011; Belloni and Strazzari 2014). What's more, the international community is not devoid of culpability in perpetuating corruption and in

tolerating informal practices (Krastev 2002; Distler 2018). This gives rise to claims of a “global peacebuilding industry” (Lindberg and Orjuela 2014, p. 726) that by putting an emphasis on stability, grows to cohabit and even collude with corruption and crime.

In a post-conflict society, patterns of corruption and crime are often underpinned by an unholy alliance between politicians who adopt the role of patrons and voters who are imposed with a clients’ role (Hicken 2011; Hale 2015). Clientelism is inherently corrosive for democracy and can easily lead to a predatory state (Diamond 2008). However, literature does not offer much insight on the linkages between corruption, crime and clientelism, and the responsibility of former combatants who are turned politicians for such phenomena.

However, literature does discuss the dichotomy between greed and grievance (Berdal and Malone 2000; Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Murshed and Tadjoeeddin 2009; Keen 2012). The academic discussion elaborates at some length on the economic incentives underpinning conflict, which are explained as greed but embellished as social grievance. But while the motivations for engaging in conflict are discussed, the reasons for engaging in greed after conflict are not aired out. What is not discussed are the post-conflict motives for greed and predation, and the illicit phenomena such as corruption, crime and clientelism that enable predation. The new political elite that comes from conflict, what is its responsibility for the installation of a predatory state? What does this mean for democracy? Literature is still to elaborate on these cause and effect links.

Having consulted the above fields of study, it became clear to me that the literature direction that is guided by my research question sits within political science and democratisation studies. My conceptual framework agrees with the academic argument that the inclusion of former combatants in post-war political arrangements is in the spirit of peace and democracy, and as such should be supported. However, the political elite that may be dominated by a network led by former combatants is likely maintained by a clientelistic web and predatory practices which in turn corrupt and frustrate institution-building and democratic consolidation.

III. Research Methods

1. Introduction

This chapter sets out the research methods and the tools utilised to gather data for the topic of this thesis. It starts by providing a general overview of the epistemological query that predated the research, and the steps taken to come up with the initial concept idea. It describes the research strategy and explains the reasons behind deciding on a comparative and qualitative analysis between two case studies. The part on data collection methods elaborates on the tools used to obtain data, particularly focusing on the pros and cons of field research, which ties with the part on ethical considerations. In the end, the chapter refers to the grounded theory to explain the inductive approach undertaken to generate the theory for this thesis, which is explained with the diagram illustrations.

Of note, while explaining the above steps taken for my research methods, I have at times used the first tense because I judge that a personalised account of my experience is relevant and insightful for the reader to be able to fully comprehend the context in which the research was born and developed.

I have referred to literature whenever was needed, but I intentionally interweaved an academic style of writing with a rather descriptive and journalistic style of narration to convey a more personalised approach to research methods. In other words, this chapter sets out to build an academic case for research methods but also brings in a personalised style of narration to tell the background story of the researcher, too.

2. Epistemological queries leading to conceptualisation of research question

One of the overarching challenges at the end of conflicts is how to reintegrate former combatants into society. Equally important is the question of the ability or willingness of society to accept former combatants in its midst. Just as poignantly, one of the burning issues in an immediate post-conflict environment is what kind of integration should take place. Is it right that the former combatants are integrated with a degree of preferential treatment that might come at the detriment of other critical needs facing a post-conflict society? A part of the society might object as such a preferential treatment may be viewed as applying unjust practices when justice should be delivered in tandem with the new-found peace. Still others

might argue that the integration of former combatants is detrimental to the survival of that very peace; that their inclusion in political processes ensures longevity of peace; and that otherwise they might become spoilers that can influence a rollback into conflict (Barakat and Özerdem 2005; Greenhill and Major 2006/07; Dudouet, Giessmann and Planta 2012; McMullin 2013a).

The longer-term inclusion of combatants in political structures is another burning matter. This is an issue that although touched upon by some authors, has not enjoyed nearly the attention and level of dissection as that of the immediate transformation of combatants (Manning 2004 and 2007; De Zeeuw 2008; Jarstad and Sisk 2010; Joshi 2010; Ishiyama 2016; Kovacs, Söderberg and Hatz 2016; Manning and Smith 2016; Marshall and Ishiyama 2016; Kuehn 2017). Literature agrees on a set of challenges, particularly immediate ones, relating to the reintegration of combatants, including in politics (Kalyvas, Shapiro and Masoud 2008; Jarstad and Sisk 2010; Joshi 2010; Ishiyama 2016). There is a basic moral and political dilemma at play, which is to ascertain whether the integration of former combatants into post-conflict societies is a genuine step towards democratic transition. After all, for that transition to succeed, former enemies - the regime and the armed group representatives - are obliged to work together as partners. Therefore, this automatically becomes a question of trust, of justice, peace and reconciliation, democracy and grievances. In the end, it is a question of finding the right balance between all these notions.

It follows, therefore, that peace accords and post-conflict democratisation are built on compromises and on finding a common ground between different stakeholders of the peace process. An integral part of those compromises is the integration of former combatants, including their transformation in politics. These are legitimate questions since for many segments of society the integration and transformation in politics are often considered a appeasement tactic to ensure the combatants' buy-off for peace. Otherwise, so the argument goes, if left out in the cold they can easily become dangerous spoilers to implementation of post-conflict peace accords. It is a choice, as many see it, between appeasing the destructive instincts of former combatants who in peacetimes may turn into spoilers or confronting such instincts as a matter of principle but jeopardising a hard-won fledgling peace (Stedman, Rothchild and Cousens 2002). For others still, as long as combatants are prepared to lay down

weapons and compete in democratic elections, this in itself should attest for a successful transition from war to peace. If there has been a successful and verifiable transition “from bullets to ballots” (Ishiyama 2016) then the transformation of former combatants to political figures should be accepted within the norms of normal democratic behaviour. Judging from many other case studies, the post-conflict transformation process is viewed as means to reintegrating former combatants in return for promoting democratisation and democratic institution-building (Kilroy 2009).

When I set out to delve into this subject, my main query aimed at exploring the longer-term transformation of former combatants (especially political one) as it seemed to hold the key to the success or failure of a post-war country’s democratic system and its institutions. What are the causes, processes and results of this transformation, as well as the subsequent impact on institutions and democratic consolidation? These were some of the questions I explored in the literature related to DDR and the post-conflict transformation in politics.

My interest in armed groups and/or resistance movements spans two decades, going back to the emergence of the KLA and their fight against the Serbian regime in Kosovo. I took an interest in them because I am from Kosovo and, by default, had a personal stake in what was happening there. At the time of the Kosovo war I was a student (BA and MA) at Leeds and Bradford universities in the UK, which enabled me to start researching the theoretical explanations of the rise of armed groups. Later, during 2007-09 I was a Political Advisor to the Committee of Internal Affairs and Security of the Assembly of Kosovo, which made it possible for me to work and know personally many politicians who had been part of the armed struggle. This was the time of great changes in Kosovo’s political scene (Kosovo declared independence on 17 February 2008) and by working at the Kosovo Assembly at the time I was able to witness and assist in the rapidly evolving security-related legal framework. In 2009-10 I became part of a global network of researchers examining resistance and liberation movements in transition, a fascinating project led and coordinated by the Berlin-based think tank, Berghof Conflict Research.² In addition to working closely with former combatants from Kosovo and FYR Macedonia, I got to meet and listen to the stories of many such personalities

² Now simply known as Berghof Foundation. See: <https://www.berghof-foundation.org/en/>.

from around the world where there have been or continue to be conflicts: Colombia, El Salvador, Northern Ireland, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Aceh. The end-result of my involvement with Berghof culminated with a report on Kosovo's journey from the 1990s till after independence, with a focus on the KLA's role in this midst (Bekaj 2010).

3. Research strategy

I undertook this research with the aim of allowing primary data to provide the backbone for the research. Since my main approach to fieldwork focused around semi-structured interviews, it was important that enough insight was gained about the history, the political dynamics, relations and processes between various political actors in the region. This insightful understanding was obtained as a result of spending a decade working in the region, immersing myself in participant observation, and cultivating trust-based relations with my respondents, informants and others who assisted along the data gathering process. Throughout this journey I was very conscious of the importance that the first-hand data had for my research. I also felt privileged to be able to have access to respondents such as former combatants, politicians, academics and civil society actors. I was also acutely aware of the sensitive nature of my research. All these factors made me deeply conscious of my responsibility as a researcher to build, nourish and respect trust-based relations with my respondents from the very start.

That is why once I managed to gain access to my respondents, it was essential that I maintained those trust-based relations while preserving the credibility of my research. From the start I was mindful that certain respondents would try to sell me a certain narrative of the history so that it would align with their party's political objectives. For instance, the issue of which group contributed to the war efforts continues to be a serious bone of contention in Kosovo, with wild and unsubstantiated claims made in all directions. Every time this issue comes back for debate (and this is usually during the election period) the public is left even more befuddled than before. This might in fact be the whole purpose of such "debates", as the aim seems to be to reap short-term electoral benefits by stoking the electorate's emotions rather than having a frank discussion and agreeing on a joint narrative on what happened in the past.

Another issue that came up several times with my interviewees was the matter of who funded the Kosovo war. One of them, a former commander of the KLA and an earlier activist of the clandestine resistance movement in the diaspora, was emphatic that they had raised all the money themselves and not a penny had been contributed by Kosovo's government in exile which was then led by the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) (FMC 02). (To recall, during the Kosovo crisis in the 1990s the LDK-led government had an acrimonious rapport with the KLA resistance movement, although they both represented ethnic Albanians). This to me seemed rather an exaggeration as, despite many disagreements between the KLA and the LDK, there was evidence that the latter had attempted to reach out to the former on several occasions during the conflict. I therefore broached the same subject with the representative of that government in exile who at the time of my meeting with him was a private citizen living in Kosovo. He categorically denied the KLA representative's claims, underlining that the LDK-led government had not only supported the war efforts but had given a considerable sum of money to this end (in millions of German Marks) (OPP 04). Having consulted credible literature on the subject and having read various interviews that shed light on this issue, it felt safe to conclude that the truth erred considerably on the side of the LDK-led government representative. However, it was not for me to put numbers and figures to those claims because of the insufficiency of the public documentation that is available.

While in the field, therefore, the strategy that I employed fitted perfectly with the notion of a "structured, focused comparison" as coined by George and Bennett (2004). Namely,

The method and logic of structured, focused comparison is simple and straightforward. The method is "structured" in that the researcher writes general questions that reflect the research objective and that these questions are asked of each case under study to guide and standardize data collection, thereby making systematic comparison and cumulation of the findings of the cases possible. The method is /I focused" in that it deals only with certain aspects of the historical cases examined. The requirements for structure and focus apply equally to individual cases since they may later be joined by additional cases (George and Bennett 2004, p. 67).

Likewise, my field experience relied heavily on a qualitative and comparative analysis between interview data provided by respondents in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia respectively. The interviews were structured in the sense that they provided general direction for the theme of the conversation (role of combatants in war, their personal circumstances that

pushed them to join politics, their rapport with the electorate, etc.). They were also focused in the sense that particular and individualised focus was given to each interviewee as a way of ensuring that their story, their nuanced narrative, was duly expressed.

4. Conceptualisation and case study choices

I approached the fieldwork with specific target groups of respondents in mind. My plan was to conduct a comparative analysis between two case studies and their respective armed groups: Kosovo and the KLA, and FYR Macedonia and the NLA. There are several reasons pointing to this decision, one of which derived from my long-term interest on the subject matter and the region. Secondly, and just as importantly, there are a series of common denominators between both armed groups which made for a compelling comparative examination:

- i. Both the KLA and the NLA represented the ethnic Albanian population, albeit in two different countries and settings.
- ii. Both armed groups claimed to fight for equal rights of their ethnic groups, rights which were being violated in different degrees and by different means. An important caveat is that while the NLA fought for equal and non-discriminatory treatment for the ethnic Albanian community within the Macedonian state, the KLA fought for complete secession of Kosovo from Serbia and for independence.
- iii. Although the conflicts were waged in two different countries and time periods (Kosovo in 1998-99, FYR Macedonia in 2001) both armed groups had clear links and synergies, coupled with similar objectives, ideologies, manpower and strategy. Some of the main organisers at the conceptualisation stages of the KLA came from FYR Macedonia. They often operated clandestinely from the diaspora in tandem with their co-activists from Kosovo, strategizing, raising awareness and money for the “cause”. By the same token, the NLA was assisted considerably by an influx of former KLA soldiers who joined their ranks. Certainly, a lot of weapons that spilled over from the demobilisation process of the KLA also found their way onto the NLA’s possession.
- iv. The origins of both armed groups lie in the clandestine resistance movement that emerged in the former Yugoslavia in the 1980s, the People’s Movement of Kosovo (in Albanian: Lëvizja Popullore e Kosovës, LPK). Ideologically, the LPK representatives

were Marxist-Leninist-inclined, but more than that they were nationalists who were prepared to use politics as well as arms in defence of the ethnic Albanian polity (regardless if they lived in Kosovo or FYR Macedonia).

- v. Since the armed groups' disbandment, a considerable number of former combatants were integrated in security structures, such as the army, police forces, intelligence services, and private security companies. In Kosovo, the KLA when disbanded provided the predominant number of personnel for the newly-constituted security apparatus. In FYR Macedonia, the NLA combatants were subjected to an amnesty law. More ethnic Albanians began to be integrated in security structures, which was in accordance with the peace accords and the Macedonian state's pledge to accommodate a greater percentage of this community into state institutions.
- vi. Since the armed groups' disbandment, their leadership representatives have occupied space in the political arena at the national and municipal level. Following the conflicts, both the KLA and the NLA decision-makers created political parties, subjecting themselves to the vote of the electorate. Today, three parties that originate from the KLA exist in Kosovo, and one party that derives from the NLA operates in FYR Macedonia. In both cases, their leaders' role on the political scene has been quite central to the future of their countries. Furthermore, they have been part of most coalition governments ever since the end of their respective conflicts. By virtue of being part of such coalitions, they carry a distinct responsibility over the successes or failures in democratisation processes.
- vii. Lastly, both Kosovo and FYR Macedonia share a common past (having been constituent elements of the former Yugoslavia), and both are in a relatively comparative proximity in their democratic transition trajectories, as claimed repeatedly by various organisations that work on democratic performance scoring, such as the Freedom House (2019a, 2019b), International IDEA (2019b), or the Economist Intelligence Unit (2019).

As the above points suggest, both case studies share a few common denominators, denoting a logical explanation for why I chose them for a comparative analysis. In other words, this was not an arbitrary selection process that tried to impose a comparable perspective on two countries with very little common ground. Both Kosovo and FYR Macedonia occupy the same

geographical area and share some identifiable traces that should make the research and its findings interesting and appealing for the reader. At the same time, they have both moved on with their own political trajectory, especially since their conflicts, which should make the nuances of the comparative study more gripping. Lijphart's (1971) observations on comparative analysis were quite informative in this respect:

Comparability is indeed not inherent in any given area, but it is more likely within an area than in a randomly selected set of countries. It seems unwise, therefore, to give up the area approach in comparative politics... The area approach should not be used indiscriminately, but only where it offers the possibility to establishing crucial controls (Lijphart 1971, p. 689).

At the start of this research, I toyed with the idea of a tripartite comparative analysis, bringing Serbia into the equation as well. Serbia had also grappled with an armed group in 2000/01 in its southern part bordering Kosovo. However, I opted against this option, as a third case study would have added too cumbersome an element at the stage of dissecting, comparing and analysing a triple set of data.

Comparative analysis must avoid the danger of being overwhelmed by large numbers of variables and, as a result, losing the possibility of discovering controlled relationships, and it must therefore judiciously restrict itself to the really key variables, omitting those of only marginal importance (Lijphart 1971, p. 690).

Adding the case of Serbia into the mix would have been accompanied with the inclusion of yet another layer of variables which would have further hindered my ability to "control relationships" (Lijphart 1971, p. 690). In any case, the conflicts in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia were relatively major compared to the one in Serbia, and as such can serve as paradigmatic cases in peace and conflict studies.

The two countries chosen as case studies are comparable for many reasons. For the purposes of this thesis, the word "comparable" means that the case studies are "(...) similar in a large number of important characteristics (variables) which one wants to treat as constants, but dissimilar as far as those variables are concerned which one wants to relate to each other" (Lijphart 1971: 687). Kosovo and FYR Macedonia are certainly "comparable" and "similar" in several ways. There is:

- i. a geographical proximity and they both derive from the same federal state of former Yugoslavia;
- ii. they have both made a transition from one-party, communist rule to fledgling multi-party democratic systems of governance;
- iii. they have both experienced intra-state conflicts;
- iv. they are both in similar stages of institutional development and democratic consolidation.

Simultaneously, conform Lijphart's (1971) definition, there are enough dissimilarities between the two countries to warrant a comparative examination. Although both countries have emerged from the same federation and have experienced internal strife, they have both experienced their own trajectories of democratic consolidation. Moreover, there are clear variations on the scope and depth of the international community's involvement. In FYR Macedonia there have been frequent instances of mediation and advocacy initiatives from international actors, especially the Western powers. For instance, the peace accords in 2001 were mediated by international actors, while in 2016-17 they monitored, guided and advised the Macedonian political parties out of a government crisis and onto early elections. In Kosovo the post-war administration of the territory was completely taken over by the UN and related organisations, becoming a *de facto* international protectorate. Since independence this has changed, with the government being placed at the steering wheel. However, the international involvement remains noticeable to this day, either in a monitoring and advising capacity or when certain political decisions that are consequential for the country's and the region's future are reached. Further, both countries have passed legislation to ensure representation of their non-majority communities in government structures. In Kosovo, the Serbian community is represented in certain ministries and in parliament by a guaranteed quota. In FYR Macedonia, the Albanian community through its political party(ies) is represented in each government through power-sharing arrangements. Both cases provide for the inclusion of their communities in governance structures, but the practicalities of those arrangements are quite different.

5. Data collection methods and research

The thesis builds on the review of secondary literature such as books and reports on the region, legal and normative acts, peer review journals, etc. It is supported by the author's participant observation in the ground for a period of ten years between 2006 and 2017. Most crucially, it relies quite heavily on semi-structured interviews conducted with former combatants of armed groups (KLA in Kosovo and NLA in FYR Macedonia), from the opposition parties, academia, and civil society. A detailed disaggregation of the interviewees' sample is elaborated immediately below under the sub-heading "Semi-structured (elite and non-elite) interviews".

I have not conducted first-hand quantitative research (surveys or questionnaires) but have instead decided to borrow data and information from the secondary literature. The reason for that when it comes to assessing and measuring democratic trends, ranking and scoring, is that there is ample and credible literature that I have been able to consult for this research. Sources from organisations such as the Freedom House, International IDEA, the Economist Intelligence Unit, or Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem), have proven greatly beneficial for this purpose. Each of these organisations has developed their individualistic conceptual frameworks and methodologies based on sets of indicators and questions that help them come up with measurements on the state of democracy across the world. Their indicators might shed light on different sets of freedoms at the country level (Freedom House 2019a), they might zoom into questions of civil liberties or checks on government (International IDEA 2019b), or they might provide identifiable variables for electoral *versus* liberal democracies, or autocracies or authoritarian regimes (Economist Intelligence Unit 2019; Varieties of Democracy 2019). Additionally, there are many renowned scholars who are at the cutting edge of the debates on the quality of democracy in the world today, such as Bermeo (2016), Dawson and Hanley (2016), De Zeeuw (2008), Diamond (2008; 2011; 2015), Dudouet (2009; 2012), Foa (2018), Morlino (2004; 2011), Munck (2016). However, rigorous cross-checking of this secondary data was applied throughout, which also coincides to a large degree with my own findings on the case studies of the research.

For these reasons, I deemed it more important and a value-added element to the field if I focused on semi-structured interviews. What was unique about the interviews and, by

extension, my participant observation, were the first-hand, authentic narratives obtained from actors who continue to be active players in the political scenes in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia. Their stories provide in-depth and personalised accounts of both countries' histories, which were collected as data, cross-referenced and cross-checked, only to finally provide the backbone of the analysis in my thesis.

This is therefore a comparative analysis between two case studies, relying considerably on qualitative data gathered through fieldwork. As Bernard and Ryan (2010) note, in social sciences researchers are normally interested in people's behaviour, their thoughts and emotions, but also their artifacts, translated as the physical residue of people's behaviour, thoughts and emotions. In addition, and to obtain a fuller picture of fieldwork, researchers are curious about the "environmental conditions" in which people behave, feel, think etc. (Bernard and Ryan 2010, p. 46). This point represents the diverging paths between quantitative and qualitative data (and I opted for the latter).

When we reduce our experience of those things to numbers, the result is quantitative data. And when we reduce people's thoughts, behaviors, emotions, artifacts, and environments to sounds, words, or pictures, the result is qualitative data (Bernard and Ryan 2010, p. 5).

Throughout my research my intention was to focus on analyzing "thoughts, behaviors, emotions, artifacts..." (Bernard and Ryan 2010, p. 5) as a way of helping me test hypotheses and buttress the theories. Hence, the focus on qualitative analysis and on exploring the "environmental conditions" of my respondents. The only way I could immerse myself with the data was by spending considerable amounts of time understanding their behavior and the circumstances that explained their decisions.

To summarise, during this research I have utilised the following data collection methods:

Desk research and literature review – Throughout this journey I continuously conducted research and kept up to date with first-hand information from native authors in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia. My mother tongue is Albanian. I speak fluent Serbian and am conversant in Macedonian. This enabled me to make use of a wide array of valuable texts in local languages, which are not necessarily available in English. By being able to follow the local press and

portals, reading various conference reports and briefings, I was able to keep a close eye on the pulse of daily political dynamics between actors. I believe that having access to the “local” perspective in political developments was a real insight and an asset for my research. Having said that, I was also vigilant of the bias that some of the publications by local authors can inherently contain, which is why I cross-checked a lot of such data with other sources, as and when needed.

Additionally, of course, English books and journals on the topic have provided a backbone to the desk research. Fortunately, there has been a surge of publications both on Kosovo and FYR Macedonia, particularly from the late 1990s onwards. However, it is my belief that often some of these publications are written with a degree of mysticism and exotics. The political developments are sometimes portrayed with bombastic tones (for instance, Kaplan (2005) and his reference of the ancient hatreds as a simplistic justification for all Balkan woes, or Judah’s (2000) rather flamboyant portrayal of the KLA as this exotic rebel group emerging from mystic beginnings). However, while such readings may be attractive to read, sometimes they lack depth of analysis. Often, the blame for inter-ethnic tensions that culminated in violent conflicts was put on ancient hatreds, thus implicitly suggesting that perhaps such is bound to be the fate of the people of the Balkans. This is an overly simplistic description that tends to explain complex cultural, political, economic or social relations of a region’s peoples with very broad strokes. It boxes a whole region in one category – that of a restless and troublesome backyard of Europe – and, by default, it contains them inside its borders. By putting the region in one box and labelling it, such a view admits that these are *their* specific problems, *their* specific social interactions, thereby suggesting that they have nothing to do with the rest of us. It is an exclusionary approach and, besides, it is wrong methodically.

For example, as the political situation in the Balkans was escalating in the 1990s, it is said that to get informed about the peninsula’s history, the US President Bill Clinton had read Kaplan (2005), which in fact offers a somewhat derogatory picture of the Balkans as peoples who have always fought one another and who are still grappling with “ancient hatreds” (Kaufman 1999). In his memoirs/autobiography the British Prime Minister Tony Blair (2010) offers his own take on why he had advocated for NATO bombardment over Kosovo in 1999. However, his view on the conflict seems to have been quite miscued, astonishingly, since he viewed the

conflict as essentially being a religious one, which obviously it was not. While on the topic of so-called “ancient hatreds”, the Serbian/Croatian Nobel prize winner and writer Ivo Adrić (1977) has written quite impressively and much more insightfully (and poetically, of course) on the reason for ethnic, religious or national animosities between various communities (in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example).

Nevertheless, the list of English publications on the region is still dominated by scientifically-robust books, reports, journals and articles written by academics, journalists, and practitioners who have themselves worked in the Balkans. In addition, and in line with my inter-disciplinary approach, I expanded my research to include texts from democratisation and security studies, politics, history, as well as normative and legal acts. The latter documents were particularly useful in dissecting “procedures, content and results” (Morlino 2004) of democracies while they are being built.

Field research in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia – This first-hand experience enabled me to conduct a relatively thorough mapping of security-related and political actors in the region. Following the successful defence of my PhD proposal in July 2014, I began my fieldwork in earnest in the beginning of 2015, which lasted for about a year.

Participant observation – Balsinger and Lambelet (2014) describe participant or participatory observation as an attempt to “gain insight in to mobilization processes as they take place, and understand activism from within” (p. 144). They note three core aspects that make for credible participant observation:

1. Collecting first-hand data: it is the element of “first-hand activity” that has moved social sciences as an activity done in libraries to “the scientific and modern form of anthropology based on field research” (Balsinger and Lambelet 2014, p. 145).
2. Moving the observation scale: doing participant observation aims at acquiring a deep knowledge of the social community.

It entails adapting to a local area and culture, and it requires evolving within the community of people one is studying over an extended period of time in order to gain a close and intimate familiarity with

them and their practices. It wants to get an indigenous view of the alliances, conflicts, and the different goals and strategies of actors... (Balsinger and Lambelet 2014, p. 146).

3. Experiencing: this is what is gained through participant observation. Through experience, “the best way to understand what people do, mean, think, or believe in is to be as close as possible to them” (Balsinger and Lambelet 2014, p. 146).

While spending time in the field, I have had almost daily interactions with decision-makers and other actors who are currently involved in security mechanisms and politics in their respective countries. Living in Kosovo and in such proximity to FYR Macedonia enabled me to stay on top of the news on politics in both countries. Through my work I have also been able to attend numerous meetings, conferences or presentations by political actors. Whilst in this position, I managed to observe from up close the security and political landscape, and to assess the impact of changes in the ground. While doing so, I was able to conduct active and passive participant observation for a period of ten years in the region (from 2006 to 2017). The key difference between active *versus* passive participant observation consisted on the depth and scope of my personal involvement as a researcher in the field.

My active participant observation was mainly conducted as a direct result of my professional assignments in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia over the years: between 2007 and 2009 I was a Political Advisor to the Committee on Internal Affairs and Security in the Assembly of Kosovo, whereas between 2010 and 2017 I conducted various civil society and research assignments in the areas of security sector reform and democratisation in the region. The Committee on Internal Affairs and Security conducted biweekly parliamentary proceedings between early 2007 to mid-2009 (when I left my job as Political Advisor). These meetings were held at the premises of the Assembly of Kosovo and were chaired by the Head of the Committee, Rrustem Mustafa MP. Mustafa had been a KLA commander for the Llap region in east Kosovo during the war and now belonged to the ruling PDK party. As Advisor I was privy to these Committee meetings and the preparations leading up to them. My tasks included researching and working on the legal security framework, advising the Chair and the Committee members on policy orientation and draft law amendments, and helping prepare questions directed to the Minister of Internal Affairs or other members of the executive. Following that, between 2009 and 2012 I worked as a freelance researcher for a global research project titled

“Resistance/Liberation Movements and Transition to Politics” headed by the Berlin-based think tank Berghof Conflict Research. While part of this project my duties entailed to conduct research on the KLA and LPK historical trajectory and collect first-hand data from former combatants through interviews and focus group discussions. At the invite of Berghof Conflict Research, I also attended three conferences that were held in Bangkok (May 2010), Bogota (May 2011) and Ottawa (May 2012), which brought together researchers and former combatants from a wide range of case studies: El Salvador, Colombia, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Burundi, Northern Ireland, Aceh/Indonesia, Nepal, and of course, Kosovo. I travelled to these conferences together with a former commander of the KLA for each of the events. The objective of these conferences was to share experiences on the reasons why intra-state armed groups wage war, and on the role of former combatants to achieving and keeping the peace after conflict. In addition, between 2012 and 2015 I conducted various research democracy-related projects for civil society organisations of the region, entailing interviews and discussion groups with former combatants, security sector representatives, academics and politicians. Throughout these tasks and assignments, my interlocutors were informed that I was also pursuing my PhD studies and that the information obtained might be informative for this project in the future.

My passive participant observation evolved naturally as a result of my living and working in the Western Balkan region during the above time period. During this time, I worked for a number of international organisations such as the OSCE, USAID, then the Assembly of Kosovo, civil society, and taught at the Rochester Institute of Technology in Kosovo. These experiences enabled me to stay abreast of political developments through access, contacts and networks. I followed closely what was happening in the region, be it through regular contacts with interlocutors, or attending various conferences, workshops, or simply through ongoing research.

One of the techniques that I employed in gathering data during my active and passive participant observation was to take notes. During an event or after it I found it useful to add a thought, an observation, or just a key word. For instance, when observing the meetings with the Committee of Internal Affairs and Security, it was very clear to me that the political dynamics between the Committee members were conditioned to a considerable degree not

just by the party they represented but also by their past. In other words, it mattered greatly whether they came from the war provenance or if they belonged to the LDK pacifist resistance. Since the Committee was headed by a former KLA commander, I saw clearly how his efforts to ensuring benefits for war veterans, for instance, were translated into law. Moreover, I also observed how the last coalition government in Kosovo (September 2017 – February 2020), which was comprised of three war-wing parties, was particularly amenable to addressing the war veterans' concerns. It was during this government that the welfare package for war veterans and their families was adopted. Another observation was following the evolution of the former combatants' political stance, their rhetoric and their principles. For example, as I was listening to Ali Ahmeti of FYR Macedonia deliver a lecture and answer questions in an event in Skopje in the summer of 2016, I was struck by his seemingly passionate defence of the Macedonian state. This was the same Ahmeti who was now leader of the ethnic Albanian DUI party, but who in 2001 had led the NLA rebel army in armed conflict against the Macedonian state. This was a person who has made a remarkable transformation from having been an enemy of the state to having become one of the state's staunchest guardians.

Semi-structured (elite and non-elite) interviews – The semi-structured interview is defined as an approach whereby the researcher uses an interview guide to facilitate a more focused exploration of a specific topic. In such situations there is a list of questions that the interviewer will want to ask, which add focus to the conversation. However, they also serve as reference points to enable a relaxed and conversational approach to the interview (Fossey et al. 2002). Semi-structured, qualitative interviews are conducted not only with the purpose of gaining answers but also to “gain access to the experiences, feelings, and social worlds of participants” (Hewitt 2007, p. 1150).

For the purposes of this thesis I found semi-structured interviews to be the most effective elicitation method of data collection. My experience tells me that structured interviews can be too rigid, dry and uncompromising. Because of the formality associated with structured interviews, they might scare people off, and might make the researcher seem prying, suspicious and unfriendly. In addition, the answers obtained from structured interviews may be unfulfilling and lacking in detail. Particularly when one is interviewing subjects that may be

of a sensitive nature (war and peace, combatant to politician transformation etc.), the answers given may just be a ready-prepared mantra to be serviced for daily consumption. On the other hand, with unstructured interviews the researcher risks losing control of the direction of the interview. They may set out to discuss a politician's route from being a combatant to becoming a minister but might instead end up listening to his slogans from last night's party rally. If left to his own devices, the interviewee might completely disregard your question and instead provide you with an account of what he wants you to hear. Elite interviews in particular benefit from a semi-structured approach precisely because the researcher is not bound by a rigid set of questions and uses probes to generate additional answers. In addition, elite interviews will likely offer the researcher empirical evidence that carries a certain contextual depth based on first-hand experience of the interviewees (Lilleker 2003).

Elite interview protocols often rely on a limited number of open-ended questions (...) Unlike the more passive role played by an interviewer using structured questions, this type of questioning allows the researcher to make decisions about what additional questions to ask as the session progresses (Berry 2002, p. 681).

For these reasons, I found semi-structured interviews as the best fit. Because of the sensitive nature of the themes discussed (negative impact on democracy, corruption and nepotism, state-building stagnation), and because the interlocutors normally came from "elite" groups (suspicious by default, authoritative, even narcissistic), semi-structured interviews were the best recipe for credible data collection. This setup provided us with the time to strip away rigid formalities and to create a sense of bond and mutual trust (Aberbach and Rockman 2002). Being semi-structured, the interview also enabled me to improvise around my themes, depending on who I was interviewing and in what circumstances. By so doing, I allowed my respondents enough space to elaborate on answers as they deemed fit but giving me sufficient control to guide the interview as per my own requirements.

Semistructured interviews occupy an interesting position along the structured-unstructured continuum. Semistructured interviews are flexible in that the interviewer can modify the order and details of how topics are covered. This cedes some control to the respondent over how the interview goes, but, because the respondents are asked more or less the same questions, this makes possible comparisons across interviews (Bernard and Ryan 2010, p. 29).

I found the point of comparison across interviews very useful for my research. Using the same set of questions for two sets of research environments (Kosovo and FYR Macedonia) brought with it a plethora of very useful data. In the process, I benefited from the advantage of comparing data between interviewees within the same country (Kosovo or FYR Macedonia), and of comparing data between the two countries involved. I began detecting the point of saturation when the respondents, regardless of whether they came from Kosovo or from FYR Macedonia, began giving me similar answers to my set of questions.

Approaching the interview, I had a list of general questions which had been previously prepared by me and cleared by my supervisors, preceded by the following statement which would be presented to the interviewee:

This thesis will look at how, in the aftermath of armed conflicts in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia, security mechanisms in newly-emerged democracies have been rearranged. It will examine the role of the armed groups and their legacies in contributing to, or hindering, democratisation processes. Their role in building security structures will also be examined within the context of emerging democracies. The research is addressing the influence of armed groups, the transformation of combatants into politicians of today, the implications of such transformation in politics and public life, and their role in consolidating, or hampering, democracy in their countries. The interview themes will focus on, but will not be limited to, 1) the role of the armed group's leadership in (Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration) DDR and transformation processes; 2) their influence in creating and maintaining democratic procedures and institutions, such as elections, coalition governments, parliaments etc., 3) the influence of informal relations between former combatants in post-conflict democratisation processes (Appendix II).

The questions of the open (semi-structured) interview³ served to guide the general direction of the conversation but allowed space for the interviewee to expand on various topics depending on their background and expertise. For instance, when interviewing a former activist of the Illegality movement s/he would be probed more on their role during this period. A current opposition party representative would be asked to elaborate on their stance regarding the clientelist networks maintained by the governing parties, etc.

³ Note that a copy of the Open (semi-structured) interview is attached in Appendix II of the thesis.

As a considerable degree of the data stems from qualitative research, the interviews with key stakeholders were a vital part of this research. In line with this view, my plan was to engage with some of the main actors involved in armed groups and politics, and with those considered experts in the field of security and democratization in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia. The first part of 2014 was spent consulting and identifying the right people to interview. The last part of 2014 and most of 2015 I spent in the field arranging interviews. In so doing, I tried to maintain an ethnic, gender, geographic and professional balance with the aim of obtaining a representative field sample.

In total, 26 semi-structured interviews were conducted. Out of those, 14 interviews were on Kosovo, 5 interviews were on FYR Macedonia, and 7 were joint interviews on both Kosovo and FYR Macedonia. Out of the total of 26 interviewees, 18 were men and 8 were women. 18 interviewees were of Albanian ethnicity, 6 were Macedonian, 1 Serb, and 1 other. Based on a further disaggregation of the interviewee sample, the following interviews were conducted:

- nine interviews conducted with former military commanders and activists – coded FMC;
- four interviews conducted with opposition political representatives – coded OPP;
- six interviews conducted with civil society organisation representatives – coded CSO;
- seven interviews conducted with members of academia – coded ACA.

The unequal number of interviews on Kosovo and FYR Macedonia is a token of the difficulties encountered in arranging to meet some of the interlocutors. As a rule, it seemed that the higher the seniority of anticipated interviewees, the more challenging it was to arrange formal interview sessions with them. Nonetheless, the actual experience of interviewing was worthwhile, and a lot of useful data was gathered. When meeting the interviewees, I normally stressed the aspect of narrative interviewing, and encouraged them to tell their stories during conflict, and their subsequent integration in politics and public life. By way of comparison, I used the same set of questions in both cases, to enable me to compare data in the end. The interview themes were generally focused on, but not be limited to, the issues of 1) the role of the armed group's leadership in DDR and transformation processes; 2) their influence in creating and maintaining democratic procedures and institutions, such as elections, coalition governments, representative parliaments etc.; 3) the influence of personal relations between former combatants in post-conflict democratisation processes. Since I have received training

on NVivo software⁴, I used this programme to plug in the data, as well as to triangulate and compare the end results.

In approaching the interviews, I am fully aware of how sensitive a subject this can be for people of any ethnicity living in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia. From the experience I know that whoever you talk to, there is a sense that their side of the story is true and therefore should be put across. I approached field research with this context in mind, knowing that as a researcher I hold a moral responsibility to be loyal and fair to the collected data. In that sense, I was guided by Cutcliffe and Ramcharan's (2002, p. 1000) coined term "ethics-as-process" to mean that as researchers our trust-based loyalty to the field data is a continuum that kickstarts at the interview stage, and continues during the writing phase and even well beyond it. Because indeed, the researcher's ethical conduct does not end at the completion of the interview but rather continues and even becomes crucial during the transcription phase of field interviews.

Participant Information Sheet⁵ and Consent Form⁶ – Such forms were signed between the interviewee and the interviewer to attest respect for confidentiality. These are standard forms which were cleared and issued by the University of Sheffield, and which offer a synopsis of the research project, purpose, and anticipated results. They explain to the interviewees the reasons why they were selected for an interview and state confidentiality and anonymity for the information given. The Participant Information Sheet informs:

You are kindly being invited to take part in the above research project. Before you decide we think it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this (Annex II).

⁴ NVivo is computer software that supports qualitative and mixed methods research. It is designed to help researchers organize, analyse and find insights in unstructured or qualitative data such as interviews, open-ended survey responses, articles, social media and web content. NVivo offers a place to organize and manage gathered material, and provides tools that allow researchers to ask questions of data in a more efficient manner. See <http://www.qsrinternational.com/what-is-nvivo>.

⁵ Note that a copy of the Participant Information Sheet is attached in Appendix II of the thesis.

⁶ Note that a copy of the Participant Consent Form, is attached in Appendix II of the thesis.

Anonymity and consent to participate – In line with the above forms, I agreed on the rules of interviewing, disclosure and anonymity with all interviewees prior to engaging with them. The interviewees were assured that anonymity and confidentiality would always be respected. This is reflected in this thesis whereby I have made sure that any reference to interview data is coded and thereby protects the sources' identities. The following codes have been used:

- Former military commanders and activists – coded FMC;
- Opposition political representatives – coded OPP;
- Civil society organisation representatives – coded CSO;
- Members of academia – coded ACA.

On the issue of anonymity the Participant Information Sheet informs:

Confidentiality: All the information that we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications (Annex II).

Knowledge of criminal and other illegal activities – Living and working in the Balkans has equipped me with a general understanding of illicit activities potentially involving members of the political class. My research, too, aims at exploring, among others, issues of greed-inspired phenomena which have fuelled corrupt activities, and subsequently have hampered democratisation efforts. With this background in mind, I was cautious in interviewing and obtaining data only from credible and reliable sources. Consequently, ahead of each meeting I always undertook a degree of preparatory work on the background of interviewees during the conflict and after it (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle 2000). Each interviewee was handed over a copy of the Participant Information Sheet and the Participant Consent Form. Additionally, I went to great lengths to explain to them the object of my study, and to reassure them of anonymity throughout my research. But at the same time, I did not have to embark on daredevil initiatives to interview people who have a proven track record of criminal activities. That is why my efforts at researching the potential interviewees' background beforehand was so important. Moreover, even when interviewing former combatants, I made sure that I spoke to those who are generally considered respected members of the community, ie. politicians, doctors, academics.

When broaching sensitive topics such as corruption or state capture, my stance was that of an objective researcher exploring the truth on a given problem. In reality, no one in the Western Balkans can or will argue against the prevalence of such corroding phenomena. Everyone agrees there is corruption and that the institutions are partially captured. Therefore, I would begin my discussions with interviewees from that premise and explore, without judgement or blame, the causes of these social ailments. Seeking the truth, respecting the interviewee and cultivating a mutually trustworthy relationship were my guiding principles.

Security and personal safety – Although both Kosovo and FYR Macedonia are generally considered safe, in any case I made a conscious effort not to place myself in unpleasant situations when interacting with people in the ground. Most meetings took place in open spaces, such as cafes or restaurants, and were duly recorded with the prior permission of the interviewees.

Objective assessment – Depending on whose “side” one is perceived to be, I am mindful that my thesis might generate divisive and heated debates. In accordance with my academic principles of serving to the truth, however, I employed a rigid method of deconstructing narratives and assembling my arguments based on objectivity, empirical evidence and cross-referencing of data.

6. Ethical considerations during fieldwork

Charmaz (2006) is a proponent of seeing the world of our research participants from within. This means that the researcher needs to go beyond just a formal Q & A session with their respondent. The researcher needs to understand the internal dynamics that explain the respondent’s behaviour and choices. S/he needs to inhabit the respondent’s space while ensuring that they remain objective and unbiased throughout this process. In accordance with Charmaz’s advice, I also tried to gain as much inside information on the circumstances impacting the life and career of my interviewees as I could. Through active participant observation I made a conscious effort to enter their settings and situations to the greatest extent possible.

Seeing research participants' lives from the inside often gives a researcher otherwise unobtainable views. You might learn that what outsiders assume about the world you study may be limited, imprecise, mistaken, or egregiously wrong (Charmaz 2006, p. 14).

However, as much as I placed validity onto the importance of viewing the participants' world from within, I also sensed an ethical predicament associated with this approach. I was faced with a classical "insider *versus* outsider" dilemma (McEvoy 2006, p. 187) in conducting field research. The fact that I am from Kosovo, living and working in the Western Balkans, made me doubly aware of the necessity to cross-reference all the gathered data. This is because, as McEvoy (2006) warns, the researcher should consider whether their identity and potential bias of both them and the researched may have bearing on the data. As a researcher I consciously tried to preempt any prejudices I might have carried with me to the field. However, it was more difficult, impossible even, to control and preempt any prejudices that my respondents might have had about me. This was the tricky part of the equation. This is where cross-referencing field data with secondary literature was vital for the credibility of the research. What is important to remember from the fieldwork is to understand "how and where the stories are produced, which sort of stories they are, and how we can put them to honest and intelligent use in theorizing about social life" (Miller and Glassner 2011, p. 145). Also, when discussing sensitive and emotional themes such as war and loss, I was conscious that my job as a researcher was to walk carefully between expressing a necessary degree of empathy versus keeping a professional distance *vis-à-vis* the interviewee. Whilst engaging "on an emotional level" may be common in such situations, the researcher should be mindful not to "enter the ground of the therapist" (De Laine 2000, p. 2).

The thesis I explored touched a sensitive subject area, which has to do with the contribution that former combatants have given to democratization processes after the conflict. Conjoined with this question is the inevitable issue of their role in illicit activities that may have hindered such processes. A considerable number of interviewees I spoke to are former commanders of intra-state armed groups who continue to be active in public life as politicians, academics or army/police officers. Others I spoke to are also public figures working in academia, civil society or politics. Considering they are still active in political life (i.e. they have a direct impact on political and democratic processes today), and considering this research examines their very

role in such processes, it was clear that their input could also be tinged with the politics of the day. In such situations, the researcher can even detect a tendency to use one's research as means to move forward certain political agendas of the interviewees' liking (Bekaj 2014). After all, they have a personal stake in the story told to the researcher (Robben 1998).

Often informants, and especially victims, have a stake in making researchers adopt their truths, especially since they perceive them to be curators of history who will retell their stories and provide them with the halo of objectivity brought by academic status (Kalyvas 2006, p. 51).

This was therefore my first ethical challenge upon meeting my interviewees: the challenge of knowing how to strip their narrative from the daily politicking and party agendas, and to shed light on the genuine message put across. Such a task was realised through prior research on the interviewees' personal and professional lives, their background and political interests. Also, it derived from in-depth understanding of the political dynamics reigning in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia which stemmed from years of active participant observation in the region. As regards their viewing of me, my being an ethnic Albanian opened a few doors with Albanian-speaking respondents. This was helpful, as one might imagine. However, at no time did I mislead them into believing that the research would abide by their potential political preferences. Each participant was shown the Participant Information Sheet of the University of Sheffield, which explains the background of the research. My approach to interviewing non-Albanians (i.e. Serbs and Slavic Macedonians) was to abide by my professional etiquette and to share with them the same formal documents of my research, including the Participant Consent Form.

Striking a relationship based on trust and honesty was another challenge. In preparation for interviews, Goodall (2000) lists a seemingly straightforward number of questions which might "problematize" and "complicate" an otherwise ordinary field experience. Namely, how does a researcher gain appropriate entry to a site, or gain legitimate trust and confidence of her/his informants? How does one deal with common questions of the researcher's position in relation to the informants' opinions? What sort of relationships and levels of interpersonal contact are appropriate? What should the researcher do, or not do, with obtained information about illegal, unethical or immoral activities? (Goodall 2000, pp. 153-154).

Such a list of questions that could potentially “problematize” the field experience, were kept in mind during my research. Being familiar with the interviewees’ biographies was one of the first homework tasks. As stated above, most of my interviewees hold important positions in politics and security structures, be it as representatives in parliament, political party members, municipal assembly members, high-ranking officers in police and army, academics and civil society. Knowing their biographies presupposes that the researcher is generally familiar with their political points of view and allegiances, their role during the war and after it, and their current positions. With this background knowledge I could deduct that their answers might be influenced by their positions and political allegiances. From my experience in the region thus far, I found this to be a general trend with elite interviewees (Bekaj 2014). In fact, the higher their present positions, the more likely were they to stick to the official story. As a result, I identified a blind spot that comes with conducting elite interviews. I called it the danger of mediocrity and repetitiveness. In other words, the risk that the interviewees might just repeat the political mantra that is the party line, or the official stance of the institution they currently represent. My mission in this regard was to dissect propaganda from truth, and daily political talk from long-term political impact. This was because when conducting interviewees, it is the researcher’s moral responsibility to be on the lookout for answers. One must dig proactively for the true answers and not be passively content with superficial response. In the end, it is the researcher who influences what and how much we can see.

Just as the methods we choose influence what we see, what we bring to the study also influences what we *can* see. Qualitative research of all sorts relies on those who conduct it. We are not passive receptacles into which data are poured. We are not scientific observers who can dismiss scrutiny of our values by claiming scientific neutrality and authority. Neither observer nor observed come to a scene untouched by the world (Charmaz 2006, p. 15).

This raises issues of objectivity *versus* bias, or truth *versus* data manipulations in field research. However, we pre-empt such an undesirable dilemma by being clear in our research question and research methods. Nevertheless, first-hand data constituted a vital part of my research and, in the end, it is their “truth” – the truth of the respondents - that we are interested in. Going into the interview, my aim was to be comfortably knowledgeable of the subject matter and the respondent who I was to interview. But, simultaneously, my approach

was to stand far enough from the object of analysis so as not to make a judgement but rather to describe the events and the phenomena witnessed. Because, after all,

Every text, every story, privileges someone's point of view. The questions 'who owns the truth about a culture?' is not easily resolved by simply increasing the number and diversity of voices within a text. Indeed, what you might gain in ethical display, you may lose in narrative coherence (Goodall 2000, p. 160).

The approach to the interviews needed to be "ethically sensitive" but at the same time "methodologically persuasive" (Shaw 2003, p. 9). It is in this nexus between ethical considerations and a truthful narrative (Clark 2012) that my fieldwork took place. The answers of my interviewees shed light into the uniqueness of their position as former combatants turned politicians, and their impact on their respective democratic systems. It was their story that I wished to explore, after all.

By pursuing this seemingly simple solution [looking at everyone's side of the story], we arrive at a problem of infinite regress. For everyone has someone standing above him who prevents him from doing things just as he likes (...) There is no end to it and we can never have a "balanced picture" until we have studied all of society simultaneously. I do not propose to hold my breath until that happy day. We can, I think, satisfy the demands of our science by always making clear the limits of what we have studied, marking the boundaries beyond which our findings cannot be safely applied (Becker 1967, p. 247).

It is equally true that ethical considerations do not cease to apply when the interview is over. Once the data is obtained, it is the responsibility of the researcher what s/he does with the data. As the interpretative explanation, or the unriddling, of the phenomenon studied takes place (Alasuutari 1995), the burden of responsibility to be truthful, honest and fair to the interviewees lies with the researcher. Therefore, the responsibility for a righteous ethical conduct should be even heavier in the post-interview stage. In the end the researcher needs to be comfortable that the data presented in the text does justice to what was said during the interview, and that it does justice to the interviewee and preserves the bond of trust developed during the interview, despite the researcher's opinions on the subject matter. Thus, the act of writing becomes a public act. The information bestowed from the interviewee to the researcher should be "handled as a valuable gift" (Zinsser 2006, p. 115). I was guided by this principle in my research and did my best to do justice to my interviewees until the end.

The “ethics-as-process” term, coined by Cutcliffe and Ramcharan (2002, p. 1000), was my guiding principle throughout my field research. I see truth narratives as stemming naturally out of such an ethical conduct. Because, in the end,

Truth is *ungenred*. It is a quality of what you have experienced, and what conclusions you come to, that allows it, as a concept, to transcend any representational boundaries. That “truth” may be – and usually is – limited to *the truth of my experience*, but it is as close as I am likely to “what is” and “what was” via language. I believe the business of the new ethnography is the interpretive evocation and representation of such truths (Goodall 2000, p. 168).

7. Grounded theory in qualitative research

The research for this thesis was conducted within the inter-disciplinary triangle of politics, democratisation and security studies. Although possibly unorthodox, this inter-disciplinary approach helped me examine my subject matter from a wider perspective while considering various variables that fed into the research question. It provided me with the freedom and elasticity to borrow from more than one discipline as a way of reaching for the truth, whilst keeping me grounded within the parameters of the research objectives.

Between 2006 and 2017 I lived and worked in the Western Balkans. I continue to be closely in touch with political developments in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia. Years of non-participant and participant observation have been utilised to produce valuable data for this research. My participation, presentation and facilitation of various workshops and conferences in Thessaloniki, Sheffield, Prishtina, Belgrade, Skopje, Tirana, Zagreb, Wroclaw etc. with politicians, civil society and academia have also proven to be a fertile ground for data collection and data testing. Therefore, it only seemed natural that I applied grounded theory to my research, allowing the data collected from the field inform my findings and my theory.

According to Suddaby (2006), grounded theory is an interpretive process that results from the researcher’s immersion in the field. It is partly conditional upon the researcher’s sensitivity to nuanced meanings and connotations of the data that may not be apparent from a mere superficial observation. “Many grounded theory researchers describe this interpretation as occurring subconsciously, as a result of their constant “immersion” in the data” (Suddaby 2006, p. 639). Also, a key element of grounded theory researchers is their ability not only to observe data, but to also create certain identifiable patterns and variables out of them. By

doing so, the examined data is subsequently elevated onto a higher level of abstraction (Martin and Turner 1986). For the purposes of this study, for instance, the recurring social practices of illicit interactions (such as corrupt exchanges and favouritism in politics, distribution of government jobs and services based on party loyalty), is identified as a clear case of clientelism that impacts right at the core of formal institutions and the democratic system itself. Also, the conceptualisation of long-term political transformation was gradually formed out of the semi-structured interviews. During these interviews, it became clear that my respondents were making a difference between the engagement in politics as a single act in time, *versus* the longer-term role in politics. Both Kosovo and FYR Macedonia have had more than three election cycles involving war-wing political parties as partners in government. In addition, the respondents referred to long-term political transformation as deriving from the creation of new political parties by former combatants, as opposed to joining existing ones. As these cases have shown, some of the longer-term consequences of their involvement in politics can only be seen after around three election cycles (decentralisation of government, results of economic reforms, EU visa liberalisation, etc.). Therefore, my definition of the long-term transformation of former combatants in politics uses three election cycles, or around ten years, as a reference point.

As I set out to do fieldwork, my intention was to record a life of a particular group of people by bringing to the forefront their relations and interactions, their processes and results. This group of people were the former combatants of intra-state armed groups, and the desired subject of study was their integration and political transformation after conflict. This was a qualitative study adding a comparative angle between two similar cases. Grounded theory and the inductive approach were adopted as guiding principles that helped generate the theory for this study. As Charmaz (2006) notes, grounded theory involves,

[...] sustained participation and observation in their milieu, community, or social world. It means more than participant observation alone because an ethnographic study covers the round of life occurring within the given milieu and often includes supplementary data from documents, diagrams, maps, photographs, and, occasionally, formal interviews and questionnaires (Charmaz 2006, p. 21).

This reference to the “sustained participation” of a given milieu echoes closely with the writings of Geertz (1996) on the subject. Referring to the ethnographic research conducted in

the Indonesian towns of Pare and Sefrou, Geertz underlines the importance of long-term, inter-connected and multi-faceted aspects of ethnographic research. The inter-connectedness of one's research subject, stretched over a period of time, will help create variables that would otherwise be impossible to discern just from a single interview or desk research.

For an ethnographer everything is a matter of one thing leading to another, that to a third, and that to one hardly knows what. Beyond Pare and Sefrou, around them, behind them, standing before them, hovering over them, is an enormous array of-what shall I call them? practices? epistemes? social formations? realities? that connect to them, and that must find a place in any project which seeks to gain from messing around in them something more than odd information. However difficult it may be to begin this sort of discourse, it is even harder to stop it (Geertz 1996, p. 20).

Charmaz (2014) states that grounded theorists try to learn what occurs in the research setting and generally to learn more about the participants' lives. Whatever the sources of our data – interviews, documents, scenes – grounded theorists examine with an open mind, “[...] so that we can learn about the worlds and people we study” (Charmaz 2014, p. 3). As grounded theorists we do not impose an already-prepared hypothesis upon the subject matter. We approach the field with an open mind, and let the data generated from the field inform our analysis. “As grounded theorists, we start with data. We construct these data through our observations, interactions, and materials that we gather about the topic or setting” (Charmaz 2014, p. 3).

I concur that as grounded theorists we start with data. However, a common misunderstanding is that we should enter the field without much knowledge of the subject matter or prior research. “An extreme variant is the notion that not only must the researcher enter the field with a blank mind (...), but that she or he must also enter the field with a blank agenda (i.e., without a defined research question)” (Suddaby 2006, p. 634). This idea of embarking on the fieldwork with a *tabula rasa* state of mind is a misplaced one, for it tends to ignore the importance of literature knowledge as a preparatory step to the fieldwork. The idea of a pure induction coupled with the delay of literature review may lead to some seriously skewed data in the end. Rather, one should opt in favour of a grounded theory that is informed by the literature review but is still comprised of the fieldwork data as a vital part of the research.

What I call informed grounded theory refers to a product of a research process as well as to the research process itself, in which both the process and the product have been thoroughly grounded in data by GT methods while being informed by existing research literature and theoretical frameworks (...) an informed grounded theorist sees the advantage of using pre-existing theories and research findings in the substantive field in a sensitive, creative and flexible way instead of seeing them as obstacles and threats (Thornberg 2012, p. 249).

Prior to commencing my work in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia I already had a relatively solid grasp of the academic literature in the region and of the theoretical frameworks pertaining to my chosen study. My choice for an inductive approach towards grounded theory was, therefore, taken not as a way of substituting for my lack of knowledge of the region, but rather as a means of obtaining a more inherent understanding of relations and processes. Through this approach I was able to discover “who they think they are, what they think they are doing, and to what end they think they are doing it, something a good deal less straightforward than the ordinary canons of Notes and Queries ethnography, or for that matter the glossy impressionism of pop art “cultural studies,” would suggest” (Geertz 2001, p. 9). In order to get to this level of in-depth analysis, it is important to insightful familiarity with their *modus operandi* of everyday lives. “This does not involve feeling anyone else’s feelings, or thinking anyone else’s thoughts, simple impossibilities. Nor does it involve going native, an impractical idea, inevitably bogus. It involves learning how, as a being from elsewhere with a world of one’s own, to live with them (Geertz 2001, p. 9).

Throughout my fieldwork, I employed a systematic and focused observation which helped me collect, compare, make sense, and filter through data. Particularly through my interviews I was informed not just about the questions I posed but also about the respondents’ lives. That is because my fieldwork was more than just my interviews and it lasted longer and delved deeper into the interviewees’ lives, their careers and the wider political context. Throughout my fieldwork I soaked up knowledge about the people who were a focus of my study, and I let their world inform my theory. That is how my theory was constructed. I adopted an inductive approach which allowed for their relations, claims and actions to be analysed (Charmaz 2005), which led to a systematic and cohesive theory that applies to both case studies.

Grounded theory methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories from the data themselves... Grounded theory begins with inductive data, invoked iterative strategies of going back and forth between data and analysis, uses comparative methods, and keeps you interacting and involved with your data and emerging analysis (Charmaz 2014, p. 1).

8. Analytic procedure

Once an interview came to an end, I commenced the transcription of data. Coding was the next stage of making sense of the bundle of data gathered. As the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data, coding helped me define what is happening with the data and what it everything meant (Charmaz 2014, p. 113). In this regard, I used memos to describe my observations throughout my research. Through memos I summarized ideas, made links between themes, and identified what causes themes to exist in the first place.

For example, if you are analyzing a set of texts about the experience of giving birth, you may notice that some women mention the pain; others don't, or even play it down. Noticing and memoing how the theme of pain is linked to other themes is an act of theory making, as is noticing and memoing the circumstances in a woman's life that make the mention of pain predictable" (Bernard and Ryan 2010, p. 78).

For instance, quite a few interviews noted the links between voters and politicians as conditioned by an unhealthy and dependent relationship based on promises of jobs and services in return for votes. This dyadic relationship, which is deeply corrosive for democracy, was built around the theme of clientelism. As seen in chapter 5, clientelism transpired to be one of the main strands that assisted me during the act of theory making.

Memos and analyses served to identify patterns of relations, causes and effects, and to generate new meanings out of them. Those meanings were then compared with each other, leading to the conceptualization and the generation of the theory. Each of these steps was replicated through the comparative lens of the two case studies. Take for example the raw data taken from one of my interviews:

Demilitarization happened too quickly, without a proper plan, without a proper project as to where and how they (combatants) would be systematized. There were a lot of improvisations, empty politics, deceiving politics of the international community, and the pacifist wing of resistance (LDK)... We came

to realise that the state we were trying to create did not have an overall strategy (including how to accommodate former combatants) (FMC 02).

The raw data was deconstructed into the following:

- Demilitarization (DDR) happened too quickly;
- There was no systematized plan for the reintegration of combatants;
- Improvisation and empty politics from the international community and the LDK;
- State did not have an overall strategy (for the integration of combatants);
- We were anathema from the start.

Followed by:

We did not want to become politicians after the war. Our main objective was the liberation of Kosovo and its becoming a state, and why not, leading to eventual national unification, which is a will and a desire that exists today too (...) Politics remained as the only asset where persons could develop (FMC 02).

Which was deconstructed as follows:

- No initial desire to enter politics.
- Main objective: liberation of Kosovo and perhaps national unification.
- Politics as the only available asset for professional development.

These themes were then placed in the following conceptual categories:

- Unfair and unjust reintegration process of former combatants.
- Rivalry and hostility from other political factions as well as the international community.
- Entrance in politics as the only way for professional development and representation of own electorate base.

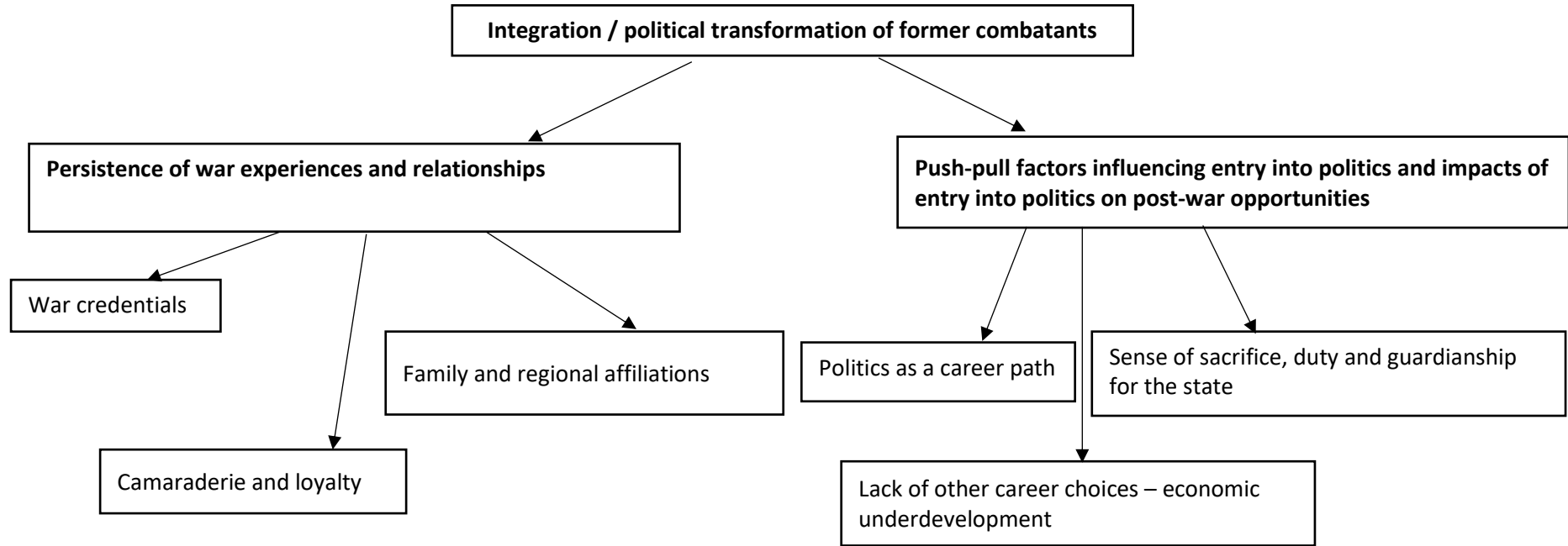
The diagrams below set out in more specifics the batches of codes per category diagram, and the conceptual categories that emerged from the analysis of interview data. They are meant to illustrate how I have identified the main concepts deriving from the semi-structured interviews, and how they contribute to the overall research question. The first two diagrams provide granularity of data by breaking down the research question into two parts:

- Category diagram - Assessing impact of former combatants on democracy outcomes in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia: this diagram aims to explore the first part of the thesis which concerns the act of integration or political transformation of former combatants. In order to answer this part of the question, the interview data has led me to identify two main indicators: the persistence of war experiences and relationships, and the push-pull factors influencing entry into politics and impacts of entry into politics on post-war opportunities. The persistence of war experiences and relationships indicator draws on what I identified as the incomparable weight of the war legacy that the former combatants have over their political rivals. In other words, in their quest for votes former combatants-turned politicians are likely to have an advantage that derives from their war legacy, which other politicians don't have. The other indicator (push-pull factors influencing entry into politics) measures the bottom-up requests for political representation *versus* the former combatants' personal interest in viewing political engagement as means to a career. Each of these two indicators is then buttressed by three sub-indicators respectively. I have found that the indicators and sub-indicators stemming from the interview data are equally applicable to both case studies.
- Category diagram – Assessing political transformation and reintegration outcomes in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia: this diagram zooms into the nature and duration of state capture by former combatants as a result of their political transformation in the long term. The interview data identifies two indicators which are equally applicable to Kosovo as well as FYR Macedonia: the rise of the new masters, and the client-patron relationships. What is specific about Kosovo is the role of the international community, whereas for FYR Macedonia it is the issue of power-sharing arrangements. Both issues are explored in separate indicators for either of the two case studies, which themselves are further supported by a set of sub-indicators.
- The third and last diagram represents a synthesis of the above diagrams, displaying the richness and complexity of data with less granularity and more generality. The concept diagram – evaluating democracy quality in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia, offers a more generic summary of the research question by identifying key concepts that build upon the categories and indicators of the two previous diagrams. It is an evaluation of democratisation processes in post-conflict environments, claiming that

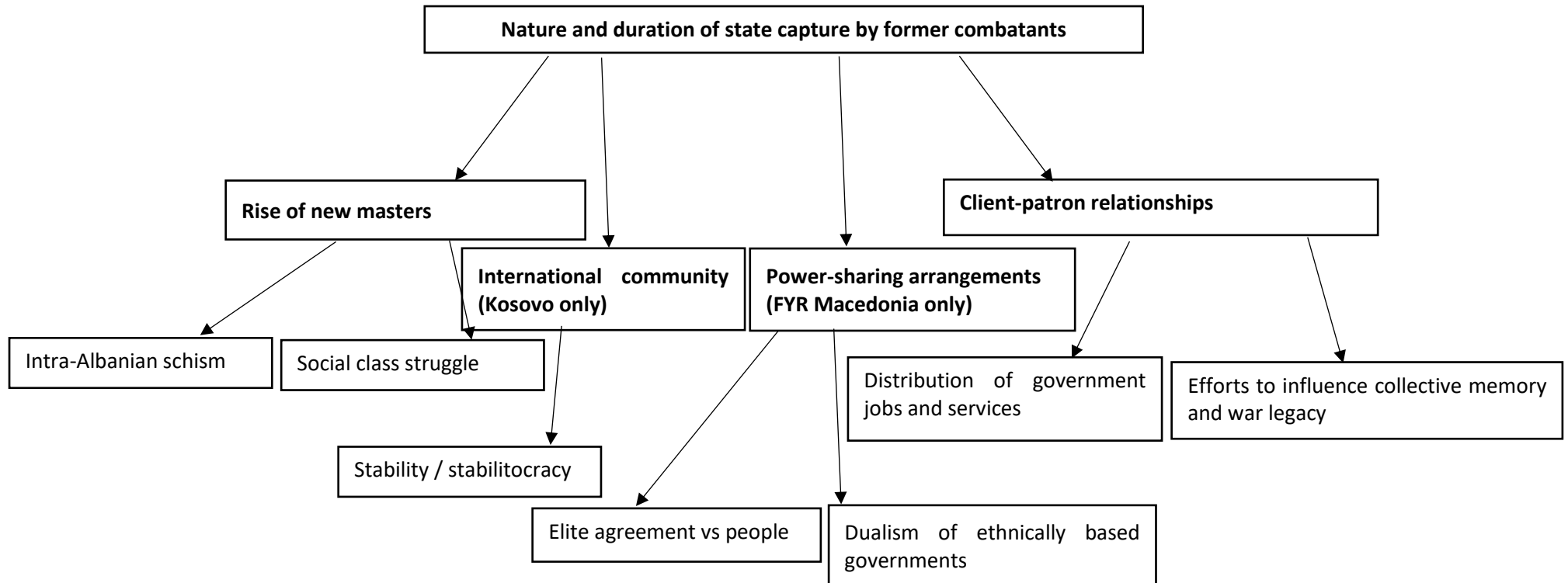
the quality of democracy is dependent upon the reigning power dynamics. Those reigning power dynamics in turn are dependent and feed off: 1. clientelism and corruption, 2. war legacy transformed in state capture, and 3. the peacebuilding paradigm and the international community as an enabler.

Both the category diagrams as well as the concept diagram show a structured build-up of the data findings deriving from the field. Akin to a pyramidal form, the diagrams begin by identifying the main indicators and then, building on those indicators, highlighting the main categories and concepts that feed into the overall research question of the thesis. For reasons of consistency, the same structure is then replicated under Chapter V - Presentation of evidence and findings from the field, where I discuss at length these concepts under a separate subheading each.

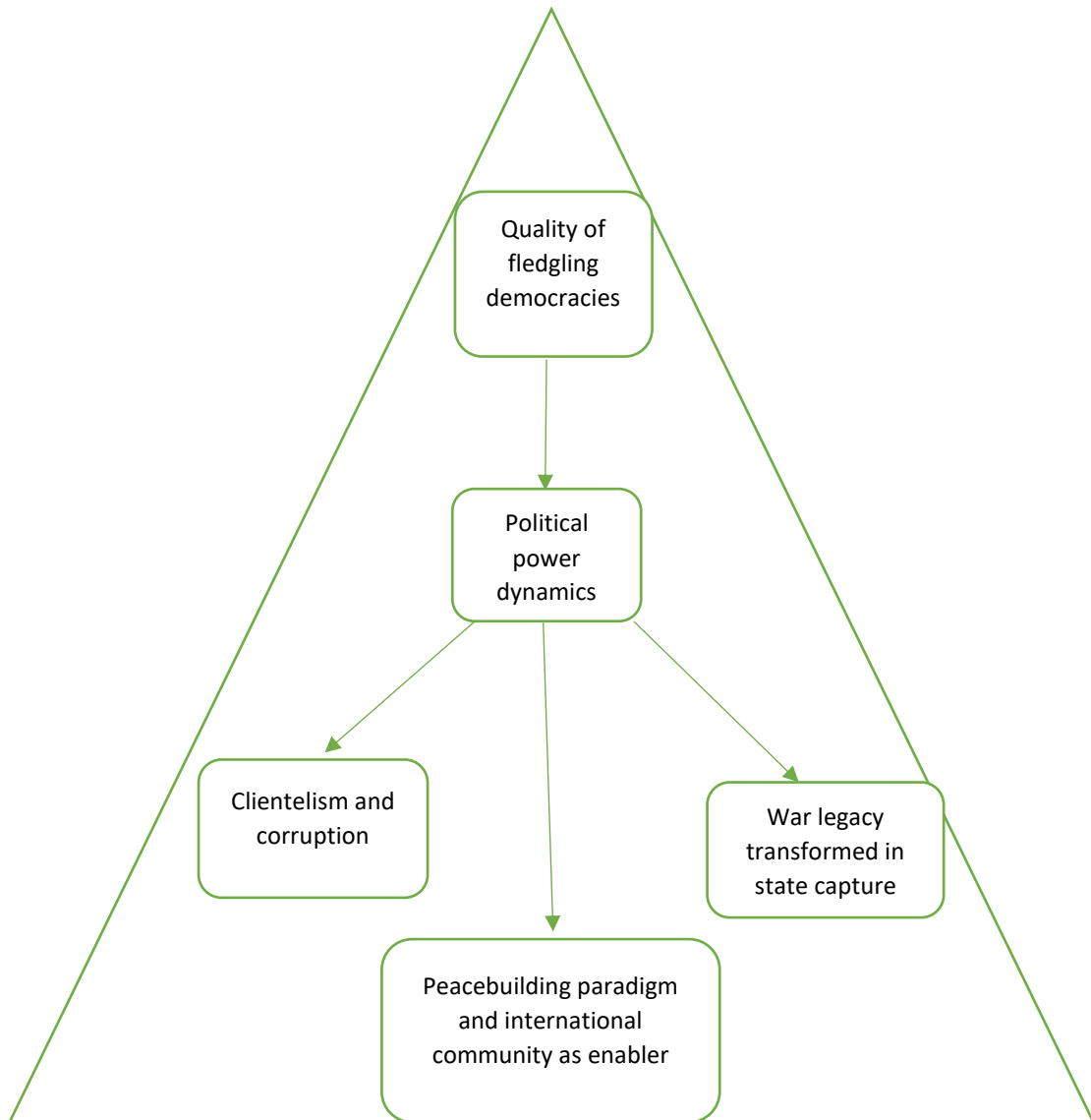
8.1 Category diagram - Assessing impact of former combatants on democracy outcomes in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia



8.2 Category diagram – Assessing political transformation and reintegration outcomes in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia



8.3 Concept diagram – Evaluating democracy quality in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia



9. Conclusion

This chapter began by sharing some epistemological ponderings about the subject matter, followed by a description of the research methods and the rationale behind the conceptualisation of the thesis. It offered a personalised account on the informed decisions taken on the collection methods employed to gather data, particularly focusing on the added advantage of fieldwork and the aspects of participant observation and semi-structured interviews. It also explained the rationale behind option for a qualitative and comparative research analysis, borrowing from a wide range of secondary literature areas, strengthened with data from the field.

The explanation on the grounded theory as well as the diagrams above help to compartmentalise the main concepts deduced from the fieldwork data. While the categories on diagrams 1 and 2 are more granular as they pertain to the country-level findings, diagram 3 produces generic concepts which serve to build the inductive-approach theory. This concept and diagram structure will represent a logical explanation for the full understanding of the field Chapter 5 below.

IV. Historical Account of Case Studies

1. Introduction

This thesis does not intend to delve into deep historical records. Judging from the wide array of books, journals and articles that have been published on the Balkans over the recent years, there is an abundance of such writings. In fact, while offering historical accounts many authors have also been known to fall prey to adopting narratives of different and subjective local perspectives of the people of the peninsula. As if to react to the many differing interpretations of history, they tend to give an extensive account of the history of the Balkans, sometimes going as far back as the 14th century when the Ottomans began conquering the region. To make sense of the present, they decide to dig into the past. For example, while Glenny (1999) or Kaplan (2005) emphasise ancient hatreds as a cause for recent wars in the Balkans, others such as Judah (2000), Ramet (2002), and Economides (2009) offer more realistic analyses focusing more on the socio-economic and political inequalities for former Yugoslavia as reasons for its demise.

While an historical perspective may help make sense of the present, it does not fully explain the current political setup. Also, telling historical tales of war and hatred, invasions and liberations, religion and cohabitation, may make for attractive reading, but may also subject historiography to bias of politics, conflict and religion. This can damage a publication's credibility and, in most cases, does not offer anything new to the historical account at hand. And yet, this is exactly what some of the writings on the Balkan countries sound like: they read as if delving into the quagmire of the medieval ages will help explain the complex social, political and economic realities of the present. But in fact, they often do the opposite: the distant past does not necessarily explain the present, and so the writing ends up lacking credibility or being tarnished as biased. Of course, this thesis aims to escape this trap.

Having said that, it is still important to offer a succinct picture of the recent past and events, but only as they relate directly to the rise of the armed groups. Cognizant of the fact that this thesis is rooted in political science, the historical account offered here is only meant to serve as a short background to the case studies of Kosovo and FRY Macedonia. The background does not merely aim to serve as an historiographical record but rather as a narration of the political dynamics in former Yugoslavia that led to the emergence of the armed groups, and

the subsequent events including the armed conflicts, the peace accords and the creation of new states. Its purpose is therefore to offer a fuller tableau for the reader as s/he delves into the topic of the thesis. Thus, the start date of the chapter will be around the creation of former Yugoslavia, which was accompanied with the popular grievances of ethnic Albanians that did not wish to be included within its borders. Such grievances were then manifested over the coming decades in sporadic armed rebellions that were swiftly and violently squashed by the Yugoslav/Serbian regime. Such events are explained in some detail below which, when taken together, serve as a good historical background to explain the events of the 1990s and their aftermath.

Structurally, this chapter will begin by offering a meta-picture of the creation of Yugoslavia, followed by a focus on the two case studies and their experience with the rise of the illegal political and military organisations, completed by a synopsis of their respective post-conflict institutional set-up.

2. The Yugoslav experiment

In the beginning of the twentieth century the Ottoman Empire – the “sick man of Europe” (de Bellaigue 2001) – was making a final withdrawal from the Balkans. Under the banner of a newly-awakened ethnic nationalism, what ensued was a frantic scramble for territories freed from Ottoman rule. Immediately after their withdrawal, the two Balkans wars of 1912 and 1913 were waged primarily with the objective of grabbing territories and obtaining an upper hand in the new and emerging power dynamics in the peninsula (Bilandžić 1978; Bej Vlora 2002; Mulaj 2016). In addition, the Balkans proved to be a bloody terrain between peoples during the two worlds wars. In what became known as Yugoslavia, the communist partisans led by Josip Broz Tito (who became in effect the father of the new country after WWII), fought against Fascist and Nazi occupation. But, at the same time, there was also a *de facto* civil war being waged between the communists on one hand and other factions on the other. There were factions fighting under the banner of a myriad of ideologies and nationalisms. For instance, the ethnic groupings of Croatian Ustashe, Kosovar Albanian Ballists (both allied with the Germans) or Serbian nationalist Chetniks, all fighting for their own independent countries with preferably expanded frontiers. But in the end, Tito’s communists emerged triumphant and, supported by the Allied forces (the capitalist West as well as the communist Soviet

Union), began the built-up of the Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia (check: Banac 1984; Malcolm 1996; Malcolm 1998; Glenny 1999; Allcock 2000; Ramet 2002; Lampe 2008).

One of the great beneficiaries of these turbulent times was Serbia. Following the Ottoman withdrawal, it was quick to move with its expansionist ambitions in the region. From having been an administrative region of the vast Ottoman Empire (or *vilayet* in Turkish), Kosovo was annexed by Serbia on the pretext of its self-proclaimed divine right over it. To support its claim over the territory, Serbia evoked memories and myths of its medieval kingdom predating the Ottoman occupation (Judah 2000). This was part of the nationalist discourse that set out to reawaken and reimagine the past so that it could serve the country's ambitions and interests in the future. It was necessary to delve into the past (a supposedly glorious one at that), and recall it, modify it, glorify it, so that it justified the present and the claim for new territories. Nations and nation-states, imagined or otherwise, were thus created in the redrawn Balkan map (Anderson 2006; Gellner 2008). From that time onwards, Kosovo remained as part of Serbia in what was initially called the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. After the Second World War, Kosovo became one of the two autonomous provinces of Serbia under the overall umbrella of the Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia (the other province, also within Serbia, being Vojvodina in the north) (Malcolm 1998; Glenny 1999).

In addition to the Republic of Serbia and its two autonomous provinces, the communist⁷ Yugoslavia consisted of five other republics: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Macedonia. The latter became one of the constituent republics of Yugoslavia after the Second World War. According to the Yugoslav constitution, Macedonia enjoyed the same legal and political rights as the rest of the republics, including the right to secession. The territory that came to be known as the Socialist Republic of Macedonia within Yugoslavia was comprised of Slavic Macedonians, Albanians, Bulgarians, Roma, Turks, Serbs etc. It must be noted that there was an intersection between the identities of a Macedonian and that of a Bulgarian which often overlapped. A part of the population would have

⁷ Note that I use the terms "communist" and "socialist" in this text interchangeably. In doing so I am replicating how they were used in former Yugoslavia, in everyday parlance or in official political discussions.

considered themselves ethnic Macedonian as a distinct people with its own identity and history. However, a percentage of them would call themselves Bulgarian living in Yugoslavia (Rossos 2008).⁸ In any case, upon the creation of Yugoslavia post-Second World War, in a stroke of genius (or abrasive disregard for ethnic aspirations of peoples, depending on one's point of view), its leader Tito saw it prudent to create the Republic of Macedonia as a federal unit of Yugoslavia. Its people were referred to as Macedonian (although a considerable percentage of them were Albanian, plus other nationalities), and their language as Macedonian (Bechev 2009).

Like the republics, the two autonomous provinces – Kosovo being one of them - enjoyed *de facto* equal rights, especially after the amendments of the Yugoslav constitution in 1974 (Constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia 1974). However, from a legal standpoint they were still provinces and as such came within the domain of the Serbian republic. But there was equality, for instance, in so far as political representation was concerned (following Tito's death the Yugoslav rotating presidency took turns to also include representatives from the provinces) (Szayna and Zanini 2000). Provinces, just like the republics, had their own autonomous bank, their parliament and government. However, in that distinctive parlance reminiscent of communist times, the peoples of the republics were considered "nations" and their respective republics were their homelands. The peoples of provinces, on the other hand, were deemed to be "nationalities". This differentiation points to more than just a semantic nuance. While the former refers to nations who comprise a federation, nationalities refer to a community of people who live in Yugoslavia but whose "mother nation" was located outside the Yugoslav borders. In other words, nations were those whose only home country was Yugoslavia, while nationalities were those peoples whose majority ethnic kin were resident in another, neighbouring country (Allcock 2000). For instance, while Hungarians living in the northern province of Vojvodina were indeed Yugoslav citizens, it was clear that by virtue of them being ethnic Hungarians they classified as a

⁸ The purpose of this overview is not to offer an historiographical or linguistic account on the origins of FYR Macedonia and its people. That should be left to the experts. I merely wish to refer to the country's recent history as it helps contextualise its present, the political dynamics within FYR Macedonia, as well as its relations with immediate neighbours, i.e. Greece, but also for different reasons, Kosovo, Albania, Serbia and Bulgaria.

nationality whose “mother nation” was Hungary. The same applied to Turks, for instance. Although they had lived in this region for centuries, and although they too were now Yugoslav citizens, they were still considered a nationality because their “mother nation” was Turkey. In the case of ethnic Albanians, even though they were a predominant majority in Kosovo, they were considered a nationality because, such was the reasoning, there was already an Albanian nation in the neighbouring Albania. Having two nations on both sides of the border fanned the flames of secessionist and nationalist desires, which undermined the Yugoslav federation.

In any case, the Yugoslav experiment was about striking the right balance between a hodgepodge of ethnic groupings in a region known for war and tragedy (Andrić 1977). The concept of Yugoslavism was meant to provide an umbrella sense of identity within which all nations and nationalities – Croats, Serbs, Albanians, Macedonians etc. – would live together as equals. Supported by the ideals of communism, this was meant to create a new kind of citizen, a Yugoslav citizen. In theory, it was about containing nationalist instincts for hegemony (Serbia’s instincts especially) by diluting them in a larger federation and offering balanced rights to marginalised communities. Between 1945 and the early 1990s, Yugoslavia built a federation under the slogan of “Brotherhood and Unity”, where different nationalities and religions would cohabit peacefully together (Allcock 2000; Ramet 2002).

This was the vision at least, a vision which was primarily undermined by two internal forces. The first one was Serbia’s ambition for hegemony, which never really dissipated despite the improving economic wellbeing in Yugoslavia. The second one was represented by the nationalist and secessionist movements, underlined by ethnic identity politics, that were successfully stifled but were never eradicated completely. These two internal forces would eventually come to a head-on collision, causing the bloody Yugoslav implosion of the 1990s (Little and Silber 1995; Ramet 2002; Terrett 2018). How did it come to this implosion, then, and why in the early 1990s?

Firstly, it is no coincidence that the dissolution occurred as the Cold War was nearing the end and as communism was collapsing throughout Central and Eastern Europe. With the removal of the communist veil, the peoples of this part of Europe (and further to the East) were able

to reemphasize freely their belongings and identities. In the name of those identities, they began exerting claims for human rights, autonomy and even independence. The Soviet republics are obvious examples; the peaceful break-up of Czechoslovakia is another one. The communist mindset of totalitarianism, as heavy-handed and undefeated as it might have seemed to be, proved to be in the long run a clay giant when faced with the determined will of the peoples. The “power of the powerless” had triumphed and won the day (Havel 2018).

It is the same wave of exerting one’s own identity that eventually swept across Yugoslavia. Besides, the early 1990s saw the re-emergence of the forces of “new nationalism” (Ignatieff 1993) all over the world, not just in the former communist bloc. Quebec held a referendum for independence, Northern Ireland was still an arena of sectarian infighting, and Spain faced an independence movement in the Basque country (Ignatieff 1993). The different ethnic communities in Yugoslavia, too, wanted a greater degree of control over their republics and provinces. The people quickly embraced the reawakened brand of nationalism and their ethnic identities, while rejecting the fuzzy identity of Yugoslavism. This withdrawal into oneself seemed the right step to take particularly in the face of a rising hegemonic threat coming from Serbia.

This brings us to the second cause for the break-up of Yugoslavia. As seen from Table 1 below, according to the last census held in Yugoslavia in 1981, there was a considerable percentage of Serbs who lived in BiH (32%), Croatia (11.5%), and Kosovo (13.2%). The rise of Slobodan Milošević to power in 1989 was the real gamechanger. Aware of the winds of change engulfing the region, he unleashed the forces of extreme Serbian nationalism which had simmered under the surface throughout the Yugoslav existence. This was a primordial form of nationalism that was very simple in its outlook: wherever there is a Serb there is a Serbian land (Drakulić 1993; Gow 2017). This in effect meant that Serbia claimed large swathes of land in Croatia, BiH and the whole of Kosovo. The end-result of these competing nationalisms (i.e. one based on ethnic identity and independence, and another based on hegemony and control) resulted in the bloody decade of the 1990s.



Map 1: Map of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Source: Geographic Guide (No date).

Ethnic Group	Population (in thousands)
Serbs	8,141
Croats	4,428
Muslims	2,000
Albanians	1,731
Slovenes	1,754
Macedonians	1,342
Montenegrins	579
"Yugoslavs"	1,209
Hungarians	427
Others	818
TOTAL	22,428

Table 1: Population of Yugoslavia by ethnicity according to 1981 census. Source: Szayna (2000).

Republic or Province	Percent of Population by Ethnicity								
	Montenegrin	Croat	Macedonian	Muslim	Slovene	Serb	Albanian	Yugoslav	Other
Yugoslavia	2.58	19.75	5.97	8.92	7.82	36.30	7.72	5.44	5.51
BiH	0.34	18.38	0.05	39.52	0.07	32.02	0.11	7.91	1.60
Montenegro	68.54	1.18	0.15	13.36	0.10	3.32	6.46	5.35	1.54
Croatia	0.21	75.08	0.12	0.52	0.55	11.55	0.13	8.24	3.61
Macedonia	0.21	0.17	67.01	2.07	0.03	2.33	19.76	0.75	7.67
Slovenia	0.17	2.94	0.17	0.71	90.52	2.23	0.10	1.39	1.77
Serbia	1.35	0.55	0.51	2.66	0.14	85.44	1.27	4.78	3.29
Kosovo	1.71	0.55	0.07	3.70	0.02	13.22	77.42	0.17	3.14
Vojvodina	2.13	5.37	0.93	0.24	0.17	54.42	0.19	8.22	28.33

Table 2: Ethnic groups by Republic and Province according to 1981 census. Source: Szayna (2000).

3. The rise of armed groups and the militarisation of societies

This sub-chapter provides a snapshot on the creation of armed groups or armies all over Yugoslavia against the background of an exponential disintegration of the Federation in the 1990s. I believe such a snapshot for the whole Yugoslavia is befitting here considering that the topic of the thesis relates to the transformation of armed group combatants into politics. This is because, in hindsight, the pattern of how these armies emerged is to a great extent replicable from case to case.

As explained above, there were many reasons that led to the Yugoslav implosion but two main ones were: 1. the secessionist movements of people for independence underpinned and encouraged by a post-Cold War reemergent nationalism, and 2. the traditionally self-contained but increasingly abrasive hegemonic instincts demonstrated by Serbia which desired control of larger swathes of territories, particularly those populated by a percentage of Serb communities in Croatia, BiH and Kosovo. Mindful of this political background, but also knowing that there was one single official army – that of Yugoslavia – what were the other armies that fought in the 1990s and what was their role in the unfolding tragedy?

The Yugoslav wars of the 1990s were accompanied by the emergence of various armed factions that claimed to fight in the name of their respective ethnic group (Ignatieff 1993). On one hand there was the Yugoslav Army which, with the unravelling of the federation, was *de facto* usurped by Serbia. While the army kept being referred to as Yugoslav, for all intents and purposes it had become a Serbian army overnight. Together with the military arsenal and the knowhow, the army was simply co-opted by Belgrade which considered itself as the direct descendant of Yugoslavia and fighting in defence of it. In addition to having an army, the

Serbian regime was quick to deploy paramilitary and other irregular security forces, comprised of hard-line nationalists. Such irregular units were often comprised of criminals, football hooligans and the like (Power 2002).

To obtain complete control of the Yugoslav army, Slovenian, Croatian and Bosnian soldiers and officers were either quickly purged or they changed sides to fight for their own aspiring countries. The emerging security vacuum, coupled with the intensification of hostilities between the former Yugoslav entities in which Serbia possessed a clear military advantage, forced Slovenia, Croatia and BiH to create their own national armies (Ignatieff 1993; Holbrooke 1999). Slovenia was less affected by the wars, having been the battleground of skirmishes that lasted about a week. To form an army, Croatia mobilised its internal resources but also relied heavily on foreign support of its wealthy diaspora in countries such as Germany, Austria etc. BiH followed suit in the same manner but struggled to get enough arsenal and to gain an upper hand in the war, which translated in the large number of victims and defeats on their side (Little and Silber 1995).

Since the end of hostilities, the armies of all these new countries have been undergoing reforms of democratic civilian control with various degrees of success. Certainly, Slovenia and Croatia have made the most impressive progress, now enjoying the status of full-fledged NATO and EU members (NATO No Date). Croatia and BiH have both seen their share of former combatants who made a leap to become politicians. Some of them have even been indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia (ICTY) to be sentenced or acquitted (for individual cases see: <http://www.icty.org/en/action/cases/4>). Particularly in BiH the issue of former combatants who play a role in politics continues to be a divisive one. This is mainly since BiH continues to remain a fragile confederation, dependent on the whims of a few nationalist leaders that do not mind threatening secession or using veto powers in government, which subsequently leads to political blockades (Hunt, Durakovic and Radeljkovic 2013). Therefore, being a politician with a combatant's past in BiH is likely to lead to accusations, or at the very least to a degree of suspicion, as to one's role during the war.

Towards the mid-1990s, a similar pattern of insurgency formation followed suit in Kosovo. The emergence of the KLA was a reaction to the increasingly oppressive Serbian regime

exerted on the Kosovo Albanian population. As soon as Milošević came to power in 1989 he annulled Kosovo's autonomy, which led to the further segregation of society along the lines of majority Albanians and minority Serbs. In response, Albanians were quick to organise around their self-proclaimed government that created a parallel system of peaceful resistance, led by the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK, as per its Albanian name: Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës), headed by Dr Ibrahim Rugova. This was an internationally unrecognized government, voted in internationally unrecognized elections with a mandate to represent the needs and interests of Kosovar Albanian people (Clark 2000). However, by mid-1990s and particularly after the Dayton Accords in 1995 which brought an end to the war in Bosnia (Holbrooke 1999), it was becoming increasingly clear that the LDK's peaceful policies were too feeble and ineffective a resistance for the ultra-nationalist Serbian regime of Milošević.

As a result, we witnessed the emergence of the KLA, whose first cells date back to 1994/95. The KLA founding members generally came from a traditionally marginalized strata of Albanian society, and they were normally young and rebellious. Despite sporadic attempts at mobilization, the KLA did not quite take off until around mid-1998, which is the time when Kosovo was submerged in full-scale war (Bekaj 2010). The subsequent intensification of the armed conflict between the KLA and Serbian forces led to an increased interest in international diplomacy. However, despite diplomatic interventions by the West and Russia, the Serbian regime was determined to treat the "Kosovo issue" as an internal matter. Such a stance seemed completely at odds with the reality on the ground, particularly in view of the impending humanitarian catastrophe in danger of spilling over from Kosovo into the wider region. The failure of diplomacy was followed by NATO's armed intervention in Serbia in the first half of 1999. By the end of the 1998/99 war, almost 15,000 were killed (mostly Albanian civilians), around 3,500 were unaccounted for, 120,000 houses were pillaged and destroyed, and rape was widely used as an instrument of war. Almost 900,000 ethnic Albanians fled Kosovo during the war for the neighbouring Albania, FYR Macedonia and Montenegro. Hundreds of thousands of others were internally displaced (Human Rights Watch 2001). The end of the Kosovo war ended the violent cycle of the break-up of Yugoslavia, resulting in new and reconfigured frontiers in the Western Balkans (for reference see: Glenny 1999; Holbrooke 1999; Clark 2000, Webber 2009). (Further details of the Kosovo crisis will be described below

under the Kosovo sub-chapter when I delve deeper into the trajectory of combatant activities).

Although the Kosovo war ended the bloody dissolution of former Yugoslavia, there were two more intra-state armed groups that appeared at the dawn of the twenty-first century. One emerged in FYR Macedonia (NLA), and another one in the southern part of Serbia (National Liberation of Medvegja, Presheva and Bujanoc, or in Albanian: Ushtria Çlirimtare e Preshevës, Medvegjës dhe Bujanocit - UÇPMB), both representing ethnic Albanian communities in those countries. What ensued were short-lived conflicts between them and the national armies of the two respective countries, with the former claiming to fight for rights of their communities which were being suppressed, and the latter claiming to exert control and stability over their territories. The UÇPMB armed group emerged in the latter part of 1999/early 2000 in the southern tip of Serbia bordering eastern Kosovo, claiming to fight for the liberation of three Albanian-dominated municipalities there (Presheva, Bujanoc and Medvegja). Most of the manpower and arsenal came from the newly-disbanded KLA in Kosovo. Having won the conflict with Serbs in Kosovo (admittedly, thanks to the NATO bombing), the idea was to seize the day and try to annex three more municipalities to Kosovo. Serbian forces were quick to quash such armed dissent, however, while the international community had drawn a line to their intervention within Kosovo (Sejdiu-Rugova 2015).

The NLA was formed in 2001, limiting their activities around the region bordering Kosovo and in the west of FYR Macedonia, which is also predominantly ethnic Albanian. As a direct spill-over of the KLA's disbandment, a lot of combatants, weapon and ammunitions came from Kosovo. In the six-month armed conflict that ensued with the Macedonian army, the NLA claimed to fight for equal rights and representation of ethnic Albanians within FYR Macedonia. In its peak the NLA did not number more than 3,000 soldiers in its ranks. As a result of the fighting with the Macedonian army, over 200 persons died and more than 100,000 persons exiled or internally displaced (Koktsidis and Dam 2008; Ceka 2018). In the end, similarly to the KLA, the NLA was involved in peace accords, with some of their leaders eventually becoming political figures. Their role in the power-sharing arrangements of FYR Macedonia has been crucial ever since (Risteska and Daskalovski 2011; Taleski 2011; Aziri and

Emurllai 2014). (Further details of the Macedonia crisis will be described below under the FYR Macedonia sub-chapter when I delve deeper into the trajectory of combatant activities).

The above text was meant to paint a general picture of the set-up of Yugoslavia, as well as to highlight a couple of its main internal tensions which eventually contributed to its demise. It made a quick detour over the rise of armed groups in each of the Yugoslav entities and noted their transformation in politics after conflict. This trajectory is a common denominator of all of them. I also touched upon the history of Kosovo and FYR Macedonia, however briefly and superficially. Below I will now delve into deeper examination on each of the two case studies. I will look at the political and social circumstances that set the scene for their internal strife in the late 1990s and early 2000s respectively and will then describe the processes of political transformation from combatant to politician as they have happened in both countries to date. Such a detailed account will help the reader contextualise the empirical data gathered from interviews and the fieldwork observations in chapter five.

4. Kosovo – overview

Traditionally, Kosovo was a region populated by a majority Albanian population, but with a minority percentage (smaller or bigger, depending on the period) of Serbs, Montenegrins, Turks, Roma minorities and others. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire provided an opportunity for the regional powers of the Balkans – first and foremost that of Serbia, traditionally supported by Russia – to carve out the territories abandoned by the Ottomans. Kosovo had been home to the Serbian Orthodox Church way back in earlier Ottoman and pre-Ottoman times. In the newly-awakened Serbian nationalism of the late 1800s Kosovo was portrayed as the holy Jerusalem of the Serbian nation and the home of their spiritual identity. This religious-historical claim by Serbia came in direct conflict with the aspirations of the majority ethnic Albanians to be part of Albania, which declared independence from the Ottomans in 1912. However, this aspiration came at complete odds with the Serbian nationalist agenda. Serbia was more powerful and had the support of the Great Powers of the day. As a result, Kosovo found itself swallowed by the Serbian state as the Ottomans were withdrawing (Allock 2000; Babler 2015).

Years	Total	Ethnic Albanian	Ethnic Serb	Others (Turkish, RAE, Bosniac, Gorani etc.)
1948	733.034	498.463 or 68%	176.661 or 24.1%	57.910 or 7.9%
1953	815.908	524.628 or 64.3%	196.633 or 24.1%	94.645 or 11.6%
1961	963.988	646.835 or 67.1%	226.537 or 23.5%	90.614 or 9.4%
1971	1.243.693	916.601 or 73.7%	228.839 or 18.4%	99.495 or 8%
1981	1.584.440	1.226.356 or 77.4%	209.146 or 13.2%	148.937 or 9.4%
2011	1.780.021	1.619.819 or 91%	60.520 or 3.4%	99.681 or 5.6%

Table 3: Kosovo population census between 1948 and 2011 by numbers and percentiles. Source: Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2019).⁹



Map 2: Map of Kosovo. Source: KfW Development Bank (No date).

Since the will of the majority of the people was at odds with the emerging political environment, Kosovo entered the 20th century in a state of turmoil and uncertainty. In fact, it is safe to say that Kosovo spent the whole of the 20th century torn between two extremes: on one hand, the Serbian state’s heavy-handed approach to yield the province to its diktat, and on the other hand, the long-lived wishes of the majority Albanian population for

⁹ Note that there was no census held in Kosovo for 1991 and 2001. By 1991, Milošević was already in power, Kosovo’s autonomy was already suspended, and the situation had generally deteriorated to such a degree that organizing a census would have proven completely senseless. In 2001, too, there was no census organized considering that Kosovo had just emerged from war two years prior. The international community headed by the UN mission had too many priorities to tackle and the census certainly could not be one of them. The first census to be organized after a hiatus of thirty years was in 2011.

independence and unification with Albania. Therefore, it should be noted that the Albanians' dissent against the Serbian/Yugoslav regime in Kosovo goes back almost a century ago. The reasons for dissent relate to their refusal to submit to Serbian rule, coupled with their aspiration for liberation and national unification with Albania. It is important to highlight this historical background as becoming aware of it helps to explain a lot of the current political dynamics in Kosovo and the region.

Soon after its annexation and right to the Second World War there were already several rebellions against the Serbian regime. Although usually such rebellions were sporadic and small, appearing in rural areas, they pointed to the Albanians' increasing discontent with the new regime. Such were, for example, armed struggles between the two world wars led by the so-called "*kaçaks*", meaning outlaws or rebels. These were, however, scattered and disorganized rebel groups that proved no match for the Serbian troops to quash (Bekaj 2010).

During the Second World War, many warring factions appeared in Kosovo (just like in the rest of the Balkans), some of which sided with nationalist forces, others with German or Italian occupying troops, and others that fought alongside the communist partisan forces. What was clear, though, is that the underlying nationalist resistance was very much alive even at the height of this war. Regardless of ideology, the common denominator of most of them was the ideal for unification with Albania after the war. To that effect, on 31 December 1943 and 1 January 1944, the leaders of Kosovo gathered in Bujan, northern Albania, and signed the "First Conference of the National Liberation Council for Kosovo and Dukagjin Plateau", which envisaged that, according to the will of the people, Kosovo would unify with Albania following the end of the Second World War. The so-called Bujan Declaration was signed by "the representatives of all parts of Kosova and the Dukagjin Plateau, Albanian, Serbian and Montenegrin: nationalist, communist, anti-fascist youth, communist youth, anti-fascist women, (...) for the development and union of the peoples of Kosova" (Weller 1999, pp. 50-51). What was novel about the Declaration is that for the first time the leaders of Kosovo managed to organize politically and agree on a joint platform that would pave the way for the future of the territory. Secondly, the delegates who signed the Declaration came from all ethnic and religious backgrounds of Kosovo, which testified to the agreement's tolerant and inclusive political approach and vision for the territory's future.

However, after the Second World War dissenting voices were stifled, side-lined or marginalized, while a new era of communist rule commenced. Under the slogan “Brotherhood and Unity”, the new Yugoslav leaders were eager to show that the ideology of communism was omniscient and prevalent over all national or ethnic identities. A new identity, one based on a Yugoslav and communist persona, was to replace and rise above all the other, narrower, forms of it. There was hope, real or feigned, that a new world order had been born, one in which the communist Yugoslavia would offer space for cohabitation to all the peoples living in it (Kraja 2003a). Based on this ideology, Tito’s Yugoslavia sought to forge ties between “nations” and “nationalities” based on communist principles. At the same time, it sought to strategically address nationalist and hegemonic streams in certain republics, either by bringing their leaders closer to the government, or by quashing them when the timing allowed for such action to take place. Tito seemed to be cognizant that these streams were very much alive, such as the nationalist Chetniks in Serbia, or the secessionist Ustashe in Croatia. Such was the case, for example, with the Serbian nationalist, Aleksandar Ranković, who served as Tito’s interior minister during the 1950s and part of the 1960s. Under the pretext of searching for weapons, he became infamous for using terror tactics upon the Albanian population in Kosovo. He also represented a constant threat to Tito’s grip on power and symbolised Serbia’s resurgent tendencies for hegemony within the Federation. Ranković was eventually removed in the mid-1960s, which represented a blow (however short-lived) to Serbian nationalism and a win for the reconstitution of a Yugoslav balance of powers, however fledging and fragile this proved to be in retrospect (Ramet 2002; Babler 2015).

On the other hand, the socio-economic situation was improving fast, making Yugoslavia an acceptable and credible partner internationally, both with the capitalist West and the socialist East. In addition, Tito as one of the founders of the Non-Aligned Movement managed to strike close relations with most of the Third World countries, thereby positioning Yugoslavia on a solid footing on the international stage (Mišković 2009). For a while at least, it seemed as if the economic betterment might neutralise the unhappy voices within the federation.

However, throughout this time Kosovo remained the poorest and most deprived entity of the federation. Starting from the 1970s onwards one could witness the gradual creation of an

urban, middle-class community, some of whom were even true proponents of the idea of Yugoslavism and the slogan of “Brotherhood and Unity”. They were well-integrated at school and at work, and they managed to get good jobs at nationally-owned social enterprises, or the state institutions. However, this new elite represented a very small minority in a territory whose population continued to be predominantly poor, rural and traditional.

The mid-1970s brought an era of political liberalisation in the Yugoslav federation. The nationalist and hegemonic undercurrents were successfully stifled (at least for a while, as witnessed later), and further powers were decentralised across the republics and provinces. The constitutional amendments of 1974 brought a greater degree of autonomy for Kosovo Albanians (Constitution of SFRY 1974). What ensued were around fifteen years of relative economic prosperity for the province. In addition, Kosovo gained autonomy over its banking system, had its own parliament, while the newly-established University of Prishtina became the epicentre of Albanian culture and literature (Clark 2000). Kosovo, with its emerging communist, urban, middle class was making strides towards becoming genuinely an organic part of the Federation, not just an artificial add-on for Serbia. Or so it seemed for some.

However, despite the economic boom and the political cohesion seemingly taking root across Yugoslavia, Kosovo continued to be the centre of a resistance which manifested itself in various forms and intensities. This undercurrent of resistance, of rebellion, armed or otherwise, was always there, from the beginning of Yugoslavia to its very end. It never dissipated, but rather continued to simmer among the more marginalized and rural parts of the territory. In general, there were two reasons for this lingering discontent. One was economic in nature – despite the economic progress in the federation, Kosovo remained the most deprived territory. The second reason was essentially political - Kosovo Albanians continued to be a marginalised community, relegated to *de facto* second-class citizens, and destined to fall in the lower category of a “nationality”, not that of the “nation”. These factors, coupled with the fact they considered Kosovo to have been occupied by Serbia, only served to enflame their nationalist ideals for liberty and unification with Albania.

4.1 From random spots of resistance to a unified clandestine movement

Normally, students and young people were at the forefront of clandestine activities against the Yugoslav establishment. These activities began to pick up around the end of the 1960s. There were a wide range of clandestine cells that started appearing, mainly organized by young students, but also intellectuals with a nationalist streak in their demeanour, or by defiant peasants in rural areas. Such cells were not necessarily organized around a whole and coherent structure. Rather, they seemed like scattered and disorganised rebellious mini-units that pointed to a larger symptom of popular discontent. Eventually, as the work of resistance cells intensified, they all came to be identified with a generic name for the movement known as “Illegality” (“Illegalja” in Albanian). Henceforth, all clandestine activities were referred to as part of this movement (Elshani 1998).

In 1968 the first major demonstration was held in the streets of Prishtina, where the slogans “Kosovo - Republic” and “Long live Albania” were chanted (Clark 2000). The Albanian flag was also seen flying among demonstrators, which was a rare and punishable offence for that time. One of the inspiring figures of the time was a young writer named Adem Demaçi. In his articles and books, he was very vocal about demanding that Kosovo be granted the right to secede from Serbia and Yugoslavia, and to unify with Albania. Because of his remarks and actions, Demaçi was subsequently arrested and spent most of the next thirty years in prison (with two short interim releases) (Gashi 2010). Following his final release, in 1991 the Council of Europe awarded Demaçi the Sakharov prize for Freedom of Thought. On its note about Demaçi, The European Parliament stated the following, among others:

Adem Demaçi is a symbol of the struggle for Kosovo's independence. Involved as a senior leader in the country's politics for many years, he was also a long-time political prisoner who spent a total of 28 years in jail for speaking out against the treatment of ethnic Albanians and criticising communism under Yugoslav dictator Josip Broz Tito (EP 1991).

Demaçi’s case offers an illustrative example of the journey of an intellectual (writer, journalist) who turned into a fiery proponent for liberation. He came to be known as the Mandela of the Balkans and a beacon of resistance for the younger generation within the KLA and outside of it. Even while in prison he continued to inspire young men and women with his nationalist ideals for struggle and freedom. But his political journey continued after prison,

too, and well into the 1990s and 2000s. When the KLA came into the scene and grew big enough to require a clear political structure, Adem Demaçi was appointed their Political Representative. While in this role, he came to represent a rather radical standpoint within the KLA ranks. Since armed groups are extreme by definition – as they employ violence to reach their goals – this says a lot about Demaçi’s figure. He did not agree with what he considered to be Kosovo’s concessions in the peace talks in Rambouillet, France (as well as the KLA leadership’s role in ceding to those concessions), and he was quite vocal about these views. However, the younger soldiers of the KLA leadership politely disagreed with him, always extending their respect and courtesy to the man who had grown to represent the ideals of their armed resistance (Gashi 2010). Demaçi continued to be active in politics until his death in 2018, promoting peace and reconciliation between Serb, Roma, Albanian and other communities. By so doing, he completed quite a remarkable circle in his political life, from having been a radical nationalist to becoming a credible figure calling for genuine peace and reconciliation between communities in post-war Kosovo.

The figure of Demaçi was central to the whole resistance movement in Kosovo after the Second World War, and even to the establishment of the KLA. His struggle and leadership came to embody the Illegality movement. In the 1960s and 1970s there were many scattered and decentralised cells of this movement that looked up to him for leadership. Although Demaçi was already in prison, in February 1982 these resistance cells managed to unify under a single hierarchy of command and formed a single political organisation that operated clandestinely called *Lëvizja Popullore e Kosovës* (LPK) (Elshani 1998; Gashi 2010; Surroi 2014). As will be elaborated in the beginning of Chapter V, the LPK was a Marxist-Leninist organisation that did not exclude armed confrontation from its strategy to liberate Kosovo from Serbia. A considerable majority of ethnic Albanian dissidents from the 1980s onwards were members of this organisation, including the founding members of the KLA. As will be seen in the immediate sub-chapter below, the LPK led the resistance until the creation of the LDK in the beginning of the 1990s. With its pacifist philosophy of resistance and its Western-oriented approach, the LDK changed the course of Kosovo’s recent history and in so doing weakened the LPK’s role, until the latter came back onto the scene with the emergence of the KLA in the late 1990s.

4.2 An accelerating crisis leading to full-fledged war

Meanwhile, towards the late 1980s the political situation in Yugoslavia was worsening, and Kosovo was at the epicentre of it. After Milošević rose to power in 1989 in Serbia, inter-ethnic relations between Serbs and Albanians took a turn for the worse. In 1989, Kosovo's autonomy was annulled, more than 100,000 ethnic Albanian workers were forced out of their jobs, and the premises of the University of Prishtina and most secondary schools were closed for ethnic Albanian students (Clark 2000).

The quite open and undisguised nature of the programme of ethnic politics and repression, enshrined in Serb law, was a reflection of the belief that the armour of state sovereignty would protect Belgrade from significant international interest in relation to these practices. After all, all the relevant decisions had been adopted by what Serbia claimed were the appropriate constitutional procedures, and only Serbia would be in a position to judge the validity of her own actions. While the abolition of Kosovo's independent powers had, in fact, occurred under rather controversial circumstances, the protestations of the Albanian leadership were now being portrayed as manifestations of separatism which, in turn, could justify even fiercer opposition (Weller 1999, p. 26).

As the above quote suggests, the Serbian regime's justification for increasing repression in Kosovo was the "armour of state sovereignty". In the name of that sovereignty and the principle of non-interference in states they seemed committed to prosecute anyone who was considered disruptive for the state. However, as will be seen below, the gross violations of human rights throughout the 1990s could not be hidden from the international audience, and nor could the sovereignty principle be a panacea for all such actions.

In response, Kosovo Albanians entered the 1990s by creating a parallel system of governance and welfare, coupled with economic and political boycott against Serbia. They organised themselves around the newly constituted party LDK, led by the writer-turned-politician Dr Ibrahim Rugova. The peaceful resistance, as it came to be known, relied largely on appealing to Western powers on the plight of Kosovo Albanians, while avoiding a direct armed clash with Serbian forces, considered to be catastrophic for the unarmed and unprepared Albanian population (Hamiti and Hamiti 2017).

At this point, it is interesting to note a change of gears and of leadership within the Albanian political spectrum in Kosovo. As I noted above, right up to the beginning of the 1990s the main

opposition movement in Kosovo was that of “Illegality” or, more precisely, of LPK. Its ideological outlook veered towards Marxism-Leninism, if only because of the communist regime in Albania which was viewed as the mother nation and a role model to follow. However, suddenly, the late 1980s and early 1990s ushered a new era in politics not just in Yugoslavia but internationally, too. The Cold War was coming to an end, communism was collapsing throughout Central and Eastern Europe, and scholars were talking about the end of history in which the capitalist West and the liberal order were the conclusive winners of the day (Fukuyama 2006). In the emerging era of pluralism (the buzzword of the day which exemplified the creation of more than one political party and the tolerance of the shaky communist regimes for them), new political parties also began appearing in Yugoslavia. It was right at the beginning of this changing political climate that the LDK was created in December 1989 (Hyseni 2019).

The popular support for the party in Kosovo was vast and unprecedented, and remained like that until the escalation of hostilities a decade later. Apart from being a new party, another novel aspect of it was its ideological outlook: the LDK leadership led by Dr Rugova made a conscious decision from the start to orient Kosovo towards the capitalist West and to position themselves in the centre right of the political spectrum (as much as one could talk about such a spectrum in Yugoslavia of that time). Additionally, the LDK was not comprised of clandestine escapees who had operated in the shadows. Although admittedly there were a few former political prisoners and LPK activists in their midst, the LDK was mainly composed of academics, writers, journalists and doctors. These acts alone – the creation of the party and its ideological positioning – were enough to completely throw the LPK movement out of the game and into the margins of political life (Marsavelski, Sheremeti and Braithwaite 2018). It took almost a decade (i.e. until the eruption of the war) for the LPK members to return to the forefront of politics and decision-making either through political activism in LDK or other parties or, more pointedly, through the KLA.

Meanwhile, Yugoslavia was quickly unravelling, falling prey to the ultra-nationalist and hegemonic forces orchestrated by Milošević, which were coming into clash with nationalist secessionist tides of constituent republics. The first one to get away was Slovenia, following a “seven-day war” with Serbian/Yugoslav army. In 1992 Croatia entered a war with Serbia too,

followed shortly by an even bloodier war in BiH. The international community's involvement in these conflicts peaked with the Dayton Accords in 1995, which brought an end to these wars, thus concluding this first harrowing chapter in former Yugoslavia's dissolution (Holbrooke 1999). Just like Slovenia, Croatia became a state with its Yugoslav borders elevated to international ones. BiH became a state, too, but a confederate model with half of it under the control of Bosniacs and Croats, and the other half under the administration of Serbs.

At the same time, Rugova's peaceful resistance was looking increasingly like a defeatist resignation in the face of increasing brutality by the Serbian regime. This became clear particularly after the Dayton Accords. The main premise upon which the LDK leadership had built its peaceful resistance was to appeal to the West for intervention in the Kosovo crisis. There was hope that when an international conference such as Dayton eventually took place, the Kosovo issue would be discussed parallel with that of Bosnia's. Meanwhile, people of Kosovo had to show restraint and patience. However, Kosovo was not discussed at Dayton at all (Holbrooke 1999), which was quite a shock for the LDK in Kosovo. This was certainly a cold shower upon anyone who harboured illusions that the international community was about to intervene in the Kosovo crisis. From that moment on, although the LDK continued to enjoy widespread popular support, it began losing terrain to alternative voices who criticized it for being too passive as a resistance (Hamiti and Hamiti 2017; Marsavelski, Sheremeti and Braithwaite 2018).

Clandestine organisations such as the LPK had long been arduous opponents of Dr Rugova. Even when cast aside by the overwhelming popularity of the LDK, they had never ceased to plot for ways to mobilise people in an armed resistance against Serbia. Their efforts intensified in the second half of the 1990s, with diaspora representatives beginning to actively raise funds to this end. During this time there were a few initiatives at armed organizations, but the one that emerged as the dominant force on the ground was the KLA. Rather than an army, initially this organisation resembled a random assortment of several haphazardly scattered cells across various villages in Kosovo (Elshani 1998; Bekaj 2010). It was only later, with the acceleration of hostilities in late 1997 and early 1998, that a newly formed leadership was put in place that helped create a coherent command structure of the KLA at the country-

wide level. It is around this time that people like Hashim Thaçi, Azem Syla, Agim Çeku, Kadri Veseli, Xhavit Haliti, Rexhep Selimi, Sylejman Selimi, Jakup Krasniqi and others were identified as the leaders of this guerrilla group. All of them, without exception, entered politics after the war and have been playing very important roles in Kosovo's political process ever since.

The KLA's emergence signalled two things: a preparedness for an armed confrontation with the Serbian regime, and an undermining of the LDK as the main resistance force. Its rise should indeed be understood in the context of the "persistent oppression of the Kosovo Albanians by the Serbian/Yugoslav governments (...) and subsequent Albanian efforts to obtain their independence" (Mulaj 2008, p. 1114). Until early 1998, the KLA was mainly involved in hit-and-run tactics, with its fighters organising isolated attacks against police forces or collaborationists of Albanian or other ethnicities. In response, Serbian forces conducted a series of assaults against KLA cells, also killing civilians and families in the process. Massacres of civilians were met with outrage, which triggered massive voluntary mobilisations in the KLA ranks from early 1998 onwards. By then it was becoming clear that the armed conflict was inevitable and that the LDK's peaceful resistance had to make way for the drums of war.

For a long time, they [the people of Kosovo] would not be searching for other political alternatives, but would instead end up comprising a subordinate mass of people, led by an almost unconscious inertia. Therefore, however harsh and inhumane this might sound, Kosovo was needed a war also for internal reasons. Kosovo had to get rid not only of Serbia, but also dispose of the idea of subordination [...] Kosovo needed a war to help her understand that there were other political alternatives, apart from that capital deception that dictated one could live in occupation, whilst dreaming of their freedom (Kraja 2003b, p. 36).

The above quote, written by a Kosovo-based writer and, coincidentally, one of the founding members of the LDK, is meant to portray the sense of pessimism that had engulfed Kosovo during that time. The LDK's passive resistance was increasingly viewed as just an excuse to justify the indignity and humiliation endured daily under the Serbian regime. That is why the KLA, when it appeared, managed to attract such huge popular following in such a short space of time (Judah 2000; Judah 2008).

The attention of international diplomacy was now fully fixed upon the unfolding humanitarian catastrophe in Kosovo. Any attempt at avoiding full-scale war was met with another round of armed clashes between the KLA and Serbian forces. The LDK was still a major political force in Kosovo but, as the hostilities intensified, it became clear that the KLA and its political leadership was gaining the upper hand (Marsavelski, Sheremeti and Braithwaite 2018).

As was noted above, the KLA was not a birthchild of the LDK but rather of its historic nemesis, the LPK. Kosovo's LDK and KLA were not like Northern Ireland's Sinn Féin and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in the sense that the former was the political wing and the latter was the armed wing of the same resistance. Rather, in Kosovo, while both the LDK and the KLA had similar objectives – fighting off the Serbian occupation of the country – the LDK employed pacifist means of resistance, whereas the KLA was expressly formed to be a guerrilla army. However, and this is key, the LDK was not the political wing of the KLA and the KLA was not the armed wing of the LDK. Their representatives came from two walks of life – while the LDK's leadership mainly comprised of urban intellectuals such as literary critics, journalists and professors, the KLA's founding members came largely from rural and marginalised areas and they had normally operated clandestinely with the LPK in the past. Therefore, as the resistance against Serbia intensified, so did the power play between these two strands of ethnic Albanian groupings. While the LDK was the point of contact for all political matters throughout the 1990s, by early 1998 the balance of power began to tip in favour of the KLA. Even for the international mediators who visited the region, the KLA political leaders were gradually becoming the main points of contact. This provided a degree of legitimacy for the KLA's struggle and suggested that any future political deal on Kosovo could not go ahead without the buy-in of the army's political leadership (BBC Albanian 2010; Jagger and Boyes 2018).

As it transpired during 1999, this indeed proved to be the case. On this year the main international actors – the Western powers as well as Russia – reached a consensus that the Kosovo conflict needed to be resolved swiftly. All diplomatic means would be used to try and pre-empt a humanitarian catastrophe with wider ramifications for the region. To this end, in March 1999 the representatives of the Serbian government and the leadership of Kosovo (comprised of the LDK, KLA and others) met in Rambouillet, France, to discuss a peace treaty,

under the auspices of French, British, American and Russian foreign envoys. The fact that the Serbian delegation was headed by Milan Milutinović – the then-President of Serbia – while the Yugoslav President Milošević had decided not to grace the conference with his presence was indicative from the start that they did not take these talks seriously. Everyone knew that the real decision-making power was concentrated with Milošević and that no deal could be signed without his approval. (After all, it was Milošević who had agreed on a deal on behalf of Serbia and the Serbs of BiH at Dayton four years previously). On the other hand, the Kosovo delegation was represented by Dr Rugova (LDK), Prof Rexhep Qosja (leader of a new party – LBD), Vetton Surroi (independent), and Hashim Thaçi (KLA). The head of this delegation, without whose approval no decision would be taken, became the 30-year old Thaçi (Tahiri 2001; Shala 2003; Surroi 2014; Jagger and Boyes 2018). This was the first time that the KLA political leaders officially reached the front-line of political decision-making for Kosovo.

In hindsight, the outcome of Rambouillet peace talks was to be expected. The accords called for immediate and verifiable cessation of all hostilities, withdrawal of all Serbian forces from Kosovo, and simultaneous establishment of a NATO-led force in the territory. It further called for self-government for Kosovo and left an avenue open for its future status to be resolved after three years through the will of the people (UN 1999c). Serbia did not agree to sign the treaty, while Kosovo's representatives signed it. This meant that by all accounts, the efforts at resolving the conflict through diplomacy had reached a dead-end, thus opening the possibility for military intervention against Serbia. Serbia's refusal to agree to the treaty's terms opened the way for NATO to begin a 78-day bombing campaign against it, making this the Alliance's first ever war against a sovereign state. In this "virtual war" (Ignatieff 2000), NATO conducted the whole operation from the air against an army operating on the ground. At no point during the bombing campaign did a single NATO soldier venture into ground combat.

NATO planes dropped their first bombs on 24 March 1999. The Alliance's aim was to target specific military installations of the Serbian army and weaken its capabilities to wage war against civilians on the ground in Kosovo. Initially, it was thought that the campaign would not last more than a couple of weeks, as Milošević would be coerced to succumb when faced with the Alliance's might. However, this did not prove to be the case and the Alliance quickly

had to expand the number of targets across the country to also include non-military installations such as bridges (strategic targets) or the national television of Serbia which by then had been transformed into a propaganda machinery for the regime (Blair 2010).

Finally, on 9 June 1999, Serbia agreed to sign a capitulation agreement with NATO. The Kumanovo agreement (as it came to be known, taking the name of the town in FYR Macedonia where the agreement was signed) was officially named the Military Technical Agreement between the International Security Force ("KFOR") and the Governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia. It stipulated for the "deployment in Kosovo under UN auspices of effective international civil and security presences" (NATO 1999). It further set detailed steps of the withdrawal of all Serbian forces from Kosovo and the subsequent setup of an international security presence headed by NATO (NATO 1999).¹⁰

4.3 International tutelage and independence

On 12 June 1999, NATO forces – henceforth to be known as the Kosovo Force (KFOR) - entered Kosovo from the south, while the Serbian forces left towards the north and into Serbia. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) was installed, mandated under the UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999), among others, to perform basic administrative functions over the territory; to organise and oversee the development of provisional institutions; and to facilitate a political process to determine Kosovo's future status (UN 1999b).¹¹ The resolution called upon the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to "put an immediate and verifiable end to violence and repression in Kosovo, and begin and complete verifiable phased withdrawal from Kosovo of all military, police and paramilitary forces according to a rapid timetable, with which the deployment of the international security presence in Kosovo will be synchronized" (UN 1999b, p. 2). This resolution was also to provide the main and overarching legal framework within which all institutions, international and domestic, would operate thenceforth. Within the framework of stipulating for the establishment of an international security presence in Kosovo to be led by NATO, the resolution also called upon the KLA to immediately end "all offensive actions and comply with the requirements for demilitarization as laid down by the head of the international security

¹⁰ Note that a copy of the Military Technical Agreement is attached in Appendix III of the thesis.

¹¹ Note that a copy of the UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) is attached in Appendix IV of the thesis.

presence in consultation with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General” (UN 1999b, p. 5).

The above resolution laid the groundwork for UNMIK to push for the speedy demobilization of the KLA. In fact, one of the immediate tasks of the UN Administration was to oversee the DDR process of KLA troops. On 20 June 1999 (just over a week after the conflict), a document called “Undertaking of Demilitarisation and Transformation by the UCK (KLA in Albanian acronyms)” was signed by the then-KFOR Commander General Mike Jackson, the then-Chief of Staff of the KLA Agim Çeku, and the then-Political Director of the Political Directorate of the KLA Hashim Thaçi. The agreement set out the terms, the timeframe and the process for demobilizing KLA combatants, and stated that the authority with regards to monitoring its implementation rested with the Commander of KFOR (UN 1999a). With NATO already fully operational across Kosovo, there was not going to be another force in the ground. “With immediate effect on signature the UCK agrees to comply with this Undertaking and with the directions of COMKFOR (Commander of KFOR). Any forces which fail to comply with this Undertaking or with the directions of COMKFOR will be liable to military action as deemed appropriate by COMKFOR” (UN 1999a, p. 2). All KLA combatants were to complete the process of demobilization within 90 days of the agreement entering into force.¹²

Exactly 90 days later, on 20 September 1999, UNMIK promulgated Regulation No. 1999/8 on the Establishment of the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC) (UNMIK 1999). It stated that the KPC would be established as a civilian emergency service agency, tasked with (a) providing disaster response services; (b) performing search and rescue; (c) providing a capacity for humanitarian assistance in isolated areas; (d) assisting in demining; and (e) contributing to rebuilding infrastructure and communities (UNMIK Regulation No. 1999/8)¹³. By this time the process of demobilization and disarmament was successfully completed. In addition, UNMIK appointed the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) with the task of offering Information Counselling and Referral Services during the demobilization process. The above regulation

12 Note that a copy of the Undertaking of Demilitarisation and Transformation by the UCK is attached in Appendix V of the thesis.

13 Note that a copy of UNMIK Regulation No. 1999/8 is attached in Appendix VI of the thesis.

allowed for the integration of KLA combatants into the newly-formed KPC (Clewlow 2010a). By November 1999, when the DDR process was rounded up, there were around 25,000 soldiers registered (Barakat and Özerdem 2005, p. 31). Around 5,000 of KLA combatants were transferred to KPC (Özerdem 2004, p. 442). Additionally, around 5,000 ex-combatants joined the Kosovo Police Service (KPS), which was also created following the conflict.

The immediate post-war period saw Kosovo undergo a rapid transition process that changed the make-up of its politics and the actors involved to a considerable degree. The KLA's transformation saw several of its key figures join post-war security mechanisms. However, most of its senior figures went on to either co-found political parties or were co-opted by those parties soon afterwards. One of them - PDK – was formed and is still led by former KLA leaders: between 1999 and 2017 by Kosovo's current President Hashim Thaçi, and from 2017 to this day by the current Speaker of the Assembly of Kosovo, Kadri Veseli. Due to political infighting, in early-2014 a splinter group led by one of the former commanders of the KLA, Fatmir Limaj, left the PDK and created its own political party called The Social-Democratic Initiative (Nisma Social-Demokratike in Albanian). Limaj has also been very active in politics after the war, occupying various positions in government or in the Assembly as a deputy. Currently he serves as Kosovo's Deputy Prime Minister. Finally, another commander of the KLA, Ramush Haradinaj, went on to form his own political party after the war, called the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK). Haradinaj is currently serving as Prime Minister of Kosovo.

Almost twenty years after the conflict the membership base in these three parties has changed considerably, with members from the academia, civil society, or younger men and women, joining their ranks (CSO 03). Although in everyday political discourse they continue to be referred to as the “war parties” or “parties that have emerged from war”, over the years they have become much more diverse and representative of a greater stratum of the people of Kosovo. However, what remains unchanged is the figure of the leader and the weight behind that figure. In all the cases mentioned here, each party has been founded and continues to be led by an important ex-KLA commander or decision-maker. Few would disagree that without them in charge their respective party would diminish greatly in scope and popularity.

Through their political parties, the former KLA combatants managed to insert themselves into the mainstream political scene. In many ways they have dominated that scene ever since, even when they were not in power. Kosovo's current political spectrum is comprised, on one hand, of these three parties that emerged from war. On the other hand, there is the LDK party with its pacifist legacy of Ibrahim Rugova. Lastly, a new party founded in 2004, called Self-determination (Vetëvendosje – VV) has become one of the main players of the scene (OPP 02). Although its leadership and members generally come from a younger, post-war generation, the party has attracted a few former KLA combatants who over the years might have become disgruntled with their old comrades in arms.

To this date politics in Kosovo continues to be affected to a large degree by parties or politicians whose origins are traced back to the KLA. During the UNMIK era of executive administration (1999-2008), Ramush Haradinaj's party entered in a coalition government with the LDK. Later, beginning in 2007 the PDK was part of each coalition government, either occupying the Prime Minister's post or other important positions. It was during Thaçi's first mandate as Prime Minister that Kosovo declared independence from Serbia on 17 February 2008. The declaration of independence was the culmination of several years of negotiations between Belgrade and Prishtina on the future status of Kosovo. The negotiations were mediated by the UN Special Envoy, the former Finnish President Marti Ahtisaari. His Report on Kosovo's future status, dated 26 March 2007, recommended that Kosovo be granted independence, supervised by the international community for a limited time (UN 2007).¹⁴ Following an appeal by Serbia, the International Court of Justice issued an advisory opinion on 22 July 2010 stating that Kosovo's "declaration of independence of 17 February 2008 did not violate general international law." (ICJ 2010, p. 7).¹⁵

14 Note that a copy of the Report of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Kosovo's future status is attached in Appendix VII of the thesis.

15 Note that a copy of the International Court of Justice's Advisory Opinion on Accordance with international law of the unilateral declaration of independence in respect of Kosovo (2010) is attached in Appendix VIII of the thesis.

However, the issue of final disentanglement from Serbia has in many ways proven to be the most challenging one. The whole political spectrum in Kosovo continues to be preoccupied with the issue of Kosovo-Serbia relations. Former combatants turned politicians are at the forefront of making decisions about the state of these relations in the future. Currently, the decision-making triumvirate in Kosovo is composed of: Hashim Thaçi (President), Ramush Haradinaj (Prime Minister), and Kadri Veseli (Speaker of the Assembly). All three of them are former KLA combatants.

Since the declaration of its independence, Kosovo's claim to statehood is still an on-going political process. Serbia's adamant stance not to recognize the "break-away province" and its tireless lobbying against independence, has brought the wave of recognitions to a standstill, and has blocked Kosovo's membership accession to certain international bodies, such as the UN, EU, the Council of Europe (CoE) or the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (Weller 2009). However, there are ongoing talks between Belgrade and Prishtina, mediated by the EU, which are meant to lead to the "normalisation of relations" between the two countries. There are many roadblocks along the way to reaching an agreement, but there is a push for the parties to agree on a deal as soon as possible, probably during 2020 (Kuzmanovic 2019).

5. The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia - overview

The violent break-up of Yugoslavia produced unspeakable tragedies from Slovenia in the north, to Kosovo in the south. But there were two Yugoslav republics that managed to secede without a shot being fired. One of them was Montenegro, Serbia's long-lasting ally. Following a referendum in 2006, Montenegro declared independence without violent consequences to such a decision. They took this step, however, only after seeing through the bloody decade of the 1990s and having been subjected to an uneasy and condescending cohabitation with Serbia during the same period, and with the prior consent of the latter. However, the Serbian minority in the country continues to pose political obstacles to Montenegro's closer ties with the West. It has tried to hinder Montenegro's aspirations to full membership with NATO but to no avail, as the country became a member of the Alliance in 2017. Serbia and/or Serbian politicians from Montenegro have also been accused of helping Russia become a destabilizing force in the region. For instance, Russia was accused of being behind a foiled coup attempt in

October 2017 which the Montenegrin political leadership claimed was intended to topple the pro-Western government and derail the country from its NATO accession (see: Balkan Insight 2018; Bešić and Spasojević 2018).

Years	Total	Slavic Macedonian	Ethnic Albanian	Others (Vlach, Turkish, Roma, Bosniac, Bulgarian etc)
1953	1.304.514	860.699 or 64.97%	162.524 or 12.45%	281.291 or 21.56%
1961	1.406.003	1.000.854 or 71.18%	183.108 or 13.02%	222.041 or 15.79%
1971	1.647.308	1.142.375 or 69.34%	279.871 or 16.98%	225.062 or 13.66%
1981	1.909.136	1.279.323 or 67.01%	377.208 or 19.75%	252.605 or 13.23%
1991	2.033.964	1.328.187 or 65.30%	441.987 or 21.73%	263.790 or 12.96%
1994	1.945.932	1.295.964 or 66.59%	441.104 or 22.66%	208.864 or 10.73%
2002	2.022.547	1.297.981 or 64.17%	509.083 or 25.17%	215.484 or 10.65%

Table 4: FYR Macedonia population census between 1948 and 2011 by numbers and percentiles. Source: Republic of North Macedonia State Statistical Office (2018).¹⁶



Map 3: Map of FYR Macedonia. Source: KfW Development Bank (No date).

¹⁶ Note that the irregular timing of censuses in FYR Macedonia post 1991 points to the essentially political and potentially divisive nature of this issue. The 1994 census was organized soon after independence as a way for the government to reaffirm clear population data now that the country was independent. The 2002 was another attempt to reconfirm the data and set the census on a normal procedure from then on. Another census was attempted in 2011 but it was botched due to accusations and counteraccusations of inflating or lowering percentages of Macedonian and ethnic Albanian communities respectively. The matter was therefore abandoned until further notice when political conditions are ripe for the reintroduction of the census procedure.

The other Yugoslav republic that managed not only to secede peacefully but to achieve this right at the start of the break-up of the federation, was FYR Macedonia. Several reasons point to this lucky escape, but two are perhaps the most important ones. The first is the fact that, like in Slovenia, there is a very small Serb minority living in FYR Macedonia. This meant that Serbia had no legitimate reasons to try and force FYR Macedonia against independence as it did not clash with Milošević's expansionist policies of uniting all Serbs into a single country. Secondly, Serbia was less interested to intervene in any case as it was already becoming fatigued by fighting wars in Croatia and BiH, as well as exerting control over Kosovo with a heavy police and army machinery.

FYR Macedonia declared independence in 1991. Two years later it became a member of the UN. Immediately after independence its government began undertaking serious efforts at institution-building and democratic reforms (ICG 1997). For a while the country seemed to be head over shoulders everyone else in the region in their EU integration path. While other former Yugoslav entities were submerged in war, FYR Macedonia was quick at consolidating state structures (Petkovski 2015). The political trajectory since the Yugoslav break-up seemed so unusually positive for FYR Macedonia that its first post-Communist President, Kiro Gligorov, kept praising his country for being an "oasis of peace" in a region that was being torn apart by barbarities.

Today, the world perceives the Republic of Macedonia as an atypical Balkan country. Located in one of the most neuralgic European regions, the Balkans, the Republic of Macedonia has gained the attention of the international community as a model of successful mastery over the causes and risks of Balkan instability and conflicts (Gligorov, cited in Balalovska 2004, p. 199).

However, the successful creation of a peaceful democratic state rested on the premise of promoting and consolidating the Slavic, ethnic Macedonian national identity at its core. The downside to this was that very little attention was paid to the presence and rights of non-Macedonian national communities and minorities in the country. From the outset it became clear that Slavic Macedonians would be the constituent nation, whereas the rest would be boxed into the category of national minorities. This was problematic especially for the ethnic Albanian community which makes up around thirty per cent of the population (Gromes 2009; Demjaha 2012). Seeing themselves in a new country with little sense of co-ownership, this

community grappled with finding a role in the new state. This was an almost existentialist dilemma, namely how to find a role for themselves without being left in the margins of decision-making, and how to feel co-owners and not second-class citizens.

However, the constitution of the new state was very clear that this was a Macedonian country with a Macedonian language, and all other communities were given minority rights. This was a euphemism for imposing a second-tier citizenship on non-Macedonian communities. The 1991 Constitution of the country stated:

The citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, the Macedonian people, as well as citizens living within its borders who are part of the Albanian people, the Turkish people, the Vlach people, the Serbian people, the Romany people (...) have decided to establish the Republic of Macedonia as an independent, sovereign state (Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia 1991, p. 23).

In other words, the country was comprised of its Slavic Macedonian people, as well as other citizens who happened to live inside its borders but who were part of other peoples. Little was done to reach out to the ethnic Albanian community to reassure them that they, too, would enjoy equal rights as citizens living in FYR Macedonia.

For Slavic Macedonians, the creation of the new state meant, by order of priority, the consolidation and internationalization of a Macedonian nation and a Macedonian language with its own history, customs and tradition. The project for the consolidation of such an identity was exclusionary by design and left little room for other ethnicities to feel as rightful co-owners of the new country. Through it the aim was to entrench Slavic Macedonian identity and language and Slavic Macedonian people as masters of the new country. The project of what was essentially a revival of national identity in the new country was ethnic-centred, not civic-oriented, relegating other ethnic communities to the rank of secondary citizens.

Because of the nature of it, at the core of the project was general discrimination against the Albanian community, be it in state public administration, the use of the Albanian language, or the right to higher education in their native language. This created two worlds, leading an uneasy cohabitation in FYR Macedonia: that of Slavic Macedonians who were in charge of politics, administration, security, and generally busying themselves with the creation of a

national identity, and that of ethnic Albanians who were left almost completely out of such processes and consequently did not feel like stakeholders in the new state (Brunnbauer 2002; Ellis 2003; Ringdal, Simkus and Listhaug 2007). Their economic situation was also much more deprived than that of Slavic Macedonians, often living off remittances from the diaspora in the West, as well as off of small family businesses.

The 1991 constitution of the newly independent state of FYR Macedonia established a national state for the ethnic Macedonian people; but one in which the sizeable Albanian minority was perceived as a nationality with equal rights, rather than a constituent nation and co-owner of the state. The constitution declared Macedonian as the sole official language, granted special recognition to the Macedonian Orthodox Church, and made no reference to the provision of higher education in the Albanian language... For the Albanians, their designated constitutional status implied that ethnic Macedonians have a higher constitutional status, paving the way for more discrimination in education, language and equitability (Koktsidis 2012, p. 7).

In other words, the new FYR Macedonia was home to only one constituent nation – the Slavic Macedonians. All others were minorities which turned them into passive recipients of the laws and decisions that were taken on their behalf by the constituent Macedonian nation. For ethnic Albanians particularly (since they comprised almost 30% of the population) this was an unjust and discriminatory concept from the start, as the project did not give them co-ownership over the build-up of the country (Xhaferi 2017a).

5.1 The inter-ethnic conflict

In the absence of assurances from Skopje, there were a few unilateral initiatives by ethnic Albanians aimed at asserting their rights. In the mid-1990s they opened a university in Albanian language in the predominantly Albanian town of Tetovo, which was not recognized by the regime. This proved to be a serious cause for disagreement between the two communities, with Albanian representatives stressing the right to education in their mother tongue, and the government insisting that this was an illegal act since Macedonian was the only official language of the country (Xhaferi 2017b).

Additionally, the town of Tetovo and the surrounding area proved to be a potential area for popular discontent due to another reason: some of the leaders of the LPK movement which had taken root in Kosovo and in the diaspora, came from this very area. As described above,

those leaders were very active in leading the resistance in Kosovo but, at the same time, they had an instrumental role to play in galvanising the Albanian public opinion to demand equal rights in FYR Macedonia. One of them, Fazli Veliu, came from that region. Veliu had become Head of LPK in the latter part of the 1980s, which was a time of rising turmoil in former Yugoslavia (Elshani 1998).

To surmise, there were genuine grievances stemming from social deprivation that eventually triggered an Albanian revolt. The uprising happened a decade after FYR Macedonia had declared independence, i.e. in the first part of 2001. The circumstances for such an uprising were quite opportune seeing as the armed conflict in Kosovo had drawn to a close in 1999. This gave the rebellious forces in both sides of the border a chance to start a new front. Ironically, one of the unintended side-effects of the KLA's DDR process was that it gave ethnic Albanians in FYR Macedonia a chance to arm. A lot of weapons which had been used by the KLA found their way into Albanian villages in north-west of FYR Macedonia. Several KLA soldiers, mainly those who felt disgruntled for having to disarm and to submit to the international community's command, stood ready to join forces with their brethren down south in the fight against the Macedonian army (Ceka 2018). It is impossible to say how many former KLA soldiers joined ranks with the NLA. Because of the secretive nature of such transactions, this data cannot be found easily. As a researcher one must rely on anecdotal evidence of those who took part in these conflicts, or on claims of other researchers who studied the subject. However, based on the above evidence accrued during the course of this research, it is safe to state that between 300 and 500 former KLA soldiers found their way to join the NLA at one point or another of the conflict in FYR Macedonia.

The NLA was thus created, engaging in armed conflict with Macedonian forces in the early 2001. Like the KLA story of its early days, the organisational set-up of the NLA was rather an *ad hoc* venture. In the run-up to its creation, this was an initiative undertaken by various rebellious cells in FYR Macedonia and Kosovo (CSO 06). Their aim was to engage in armed combat against the Macedonian regime. Manpower was drawn from FYR Macedonia but also from Kosovo, while the weapons were smuggled largely from the latter's conflict and the subsequent demobilisation process. When it finally took shape, the NLA was a small armed force that managed to assemble hierarchically under one unified command structure.

It is highly unlikely that the NLA exceeded 3,000 active combatants at its peak. A more moderate estimate speaks of 1,000 to 1,200. The rebel group probably consisted of at least six brigades. It is doubtful whether these so-called brigades fully submitted to a higher authority. However, given the post-crisis influx of NLA veterans into Ahmeti's political party DUI (Bashkimi Demokratik për Integrim – Democratic Union of Integration), most regional commanders probably paid allegiance to Ahmeti (Koktsidis and Dam 2008, p. 176).

The NLA's commander, Ali Ahmeti, had been an active member of the LPK's leadership as early as the 1980s. Like a lot of other LPK representatives who came from Kosovo, he operated from abroad for several years. Ahmeti came back to FYR Macedonia in the beginning of 2000s to help form and take charge of the newly-formed NLA in their armed struggle against the Macedonian army. As claimed in the above-quote, the NLA as an armed group did not quite manage to function like a fully-formed army. Besides, their struggle only lasted for about six months. But in the end, there was a hierarchy in place and Ahmeti came to be viewed as the driving force of the armed group (FMC 06). More importantly perhaps, his role as a leader amongst the ethnic Albanian community was consolidated after the conflict, overshadowing all the other leader figures of this community.

The armed conflict between the NLA and Macedonian forces lasted about six months, precipitating an international diplomatic intervention. The fighting resulted in over 200 casualties and more than 100,000 persons exiled or internally displaced (Ceka 2018). The reasons for the conflict, as said above, were to be found in the grievances over the social deprivation of the ethnic Albanian community. This was a result of their marginalization as second-class citizens by the Slavic Macedonian-run state. Going into conflict, the NLA leadership might have even toyed with the idea of fighting to carve out ethnic Albanian territories that could then be annexed to Kosovo. For some, this seemed like a promising idea considering that Kosovo was no longer under Serbian control. In fact, among the clandestine movements in Kosovo, FYR Macedonia and the diaspora, there had been plans for some time aimed at carving up FYR Macedonia and annexing it to Kosovo, which would then eventually end up joining Albania (Elshani 1998; Daskalovski 2004a). For a new country such as FYR Macedonia struggling with consolidating its international position, such ideas seemed quite realistic, particularly in the climate of the creation of new states out of former Yugoslavia (Krastev 2002; Dyrstad 2012). For ethnic Albanians whose rights in FYR Macedonia were being

ignored, at a time when the territories of former Yugoslavia seemed to be in constant flux, it seemed that this was the right moment to cede parts of the country along ethnic lines.

Such ideas, however, never came to fruition, even after the coming into scene of the NLA. The momentum of border changes, if ever was one, had passed with the bloody decade of the 1990s. By the early 2000s, certain red lines had been drawn on the geopolitical picture of the Western Balkans, one of which was that there would be no changes of borders and no realignment of territories along ethnic lines. Such red lines were fiercely guarded by the international community, especially the Western powers which had invested heavily into the peninsula. They were determined to make a success story out of the existing new states based on a civic form of identity, not ethnic. This meant that if it wanted to be realistic, the NLA had to come up with a formal objective that purported to demand equal human and political rights on behalf of ethnic Albanians within the existing state of FYR Macedonia. As the armed hostilities intensified, the NLA leadership clarified its official position that they were fighting for equal and non-discriminatory treatment of their community within the Macedonian state borders (ICG 2001).

The international community led by the West were quick to mediate a solution to the armed conflict. After six months of fighting, the compromise came in the form of a peace accord signed on 8 August 2001 in the Macedonian town of Ohrid (OSCE 2001). Under the auspices of international mediators, the leaders of the country's main political parties agreed on a set of wide-ranging constitutional amendments that aimed to meet the ethnic Albanians' demands. The actors involved were the Prime Minister at the time Ljubcho Georgievski from the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation – Democratic Party of National Unity (known with its Macedonian acronym VMRO-DPMNE), Branko Cervenkovski from the Social-Democratic Union of Macedonia (known with its Macedonian acronym SDSM), Arbën Xhaferi from the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA), and Ymer Ymeri from the Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP) (Daskalovski 2004b). Xhaferi and Ymeri were representatives of the ethnic Albanian community. Noteworthy, no representatives of the NLA played a role during the accords. However, as will be seen below, their role as politicians post-Ohrid accords managed to overshadow Xhaferi and Ymeri and their parties for a long time to come.

The Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA)¹⁷, as it came to be known, provided provisions for the cessation of hostilities, the development of a more equitable and decentralised government, for education and the use of languages, special parliamentary procedures etc. (OSCE 2001; Brunnbauer 2002). The issue of a more equitable decentralized state was an important one to tackle. The idea behind this initiative was to bring the government closer to the citizens by having careful considerations about their ethnic affiliation and representation in a given municipality. In tandem with that, the Agreement introduced the principle of non-discrimination and equitable representation, to be applied “in particular with respect to employment in public administration and public enterprises, and access to public financing for business development” (OSCE 2001, p. 2). Seeing as one of the root causes of the conflict was the lack of representation of ethnic Albanians in public administration and state institutions, this principle was meant to revise such erroneous practices by ensuring inclusion and fairer representation. The same principle applied to the use of languages, whereby the state would ensure that students of primary and secondary schools would be able to receive education in their native languages, including Albanian. Further, state funding would be available for university level education in languages spoken by at least 20 percent of the population, which directly applies to ethnic Albanians (OSCE 2001). But perhaps the most fundamental change pertained to the agreement on the constitutional amendment of the preamble. Whilst the existing Constitution had defined the country as the “[N]ational state of the Macedonian people, which guarantees the full civic equality and permanent co-existence of the Macedonian people with the Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Roma and the other nationalities (...) (Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia 1991, p. 23)”, the amendment was formulated as follows:

The citizens of the Republic of Macedonia [italics added], taking over responsibility for the present and future of their fatherland, aware and grateful to their predecessors for their sacrifice and dedication in their endeavors and struggle to create an independent and sovereign state of Macedonia, and responsible to future generations to preserve and develop everything that is valuable from the rich cultural inheritance and coexistence within Macedonia, equal in rights and obligations towards the common good (...) (OSCE 2001).

¹⁷ Note that a copy of the Ohrid Framework Agreement is attached in Appendix IX of the thesis.

The concession here was to do away with terms such as “Macedonian people” and instead focus on the civic concept of citizenship. The new Constitution did not talk about nationalities, peoples or minorities, but rather referred to “majority population”, “communities”, and “communities not in the majority” (Brunnbauer 2002). Although these concepts may seem semantic at first sight, the desired change is much more fundamental and related to making the state of FYR Macedonia more inclusive, equitable and representative regardless of ethnic belonging.

5.2 Intra-Albanian political rivalries, the armed conflict and the peace agreement

The OFA had a two-fold effect. Firstly, it paved the way for constitutional amendments that aspired to bring the ethnic Albanian community in par with Slavic Macedonians. The underlying tenet of the agreement was that ethnic Albanians, too, were a constituent community of the Macedonian state, not just a minority. And of course, the Agreement was not an end in itself but the start of a long series of reforms aimed at creating a truly civic state where all communities, regardless of ethnic background, would be treated equally. For some, there is still more work to be done in order to fulfil the spirit of the agreement (Phillips 2011; Aziri and Emurllai 2014; ACA 07).

Secondly, the armed conflict and the peace agreement that followed it, produced a side-effect within the ethnic Albanian political space in that they managed to shake and transform the balance of power between ethnic Albanians for good. The armed conflict was the catalyst that enabled this transformation to happen almost instantly.

Between independence and the 2001 conflict, ethnic Albanians were mainly organized around two main political parties. The PDP had been part of the government from the country’s independence right up to the 1998 elections. The DPA, on the other hand, had broken from PDP and had been a member of the government from the early 1999. At the time of the Ohrid Agreement, Ymer Ymeri was leader of the PDP, while Arbën Xhaferi was leader of the DPA. Both had an academic world and neither of them had anything to do with the rise of the NLA. The group of people who took charge of the latter’s creation came from other walks of life, such as clandestine activities with the LPK (Taleski 2011).

When the NLA appeared on the scene many politicians from ethnic Albanian parties were taken by surprise. The emergence of its cells was accompanied with mixed responses from the existing Albanian parties. Some of those responses were quite negative, aiming to distance themselves from armed incidents instigated, as they saw it, from combatants of a dubious armed organisation. The spokesperson of PDP even branded them as “terrorists”, referring to the NLA’s attack in a police station in the village of Tearce (Aziri and Lutfiu 2014, p. 390). As the armed conflict with the Macedonian army intensified so did the rivalry between the NLA and Albanian parties become fiercer. The leadership of DPA, Arbën Xhaferi and Menduh Thaçi, even gave statements in support of the preservation of stability of FYR Macedonia. Xhaferi called the rebels as “psychologically damaged Rambos”, while Thaçi denounced them as “criminals” and “traitors” who were exercising a “cosmetically modified plagiarism” of their party’s programme. The latter even suggested that the government should use any force necessary to fight the rebels, as “any government should exert its power in the entire region it governs”. In response, the NLA spokesman accused the DPA of being corrupt and for betraying the interests of the ethnic Albanian constituency (Hislope 2005, p. 31). As far as the representatives of the armed group were concerned, the above two parties that had been part of the Macedonian government from independence right to the eruption of armed conflict in 2001, were not and could not be devoid of responsibility for the second-tier status of their community in the country. Therefore, their revolt was also, as they saw it, a scathing condemnation of the subjugation of those Albanian parties to Slavic Macedonian diktats. In his analysis of the political competition between Albanian parties in FYR Macedonia, this is how Taleski (2011) describes the schism between DPA as the main Albanian party leading to the conflict, and the NLA and its successor party:

The main argument of DUI is that they as NLA won in 2001, and thus strongly improved the rights of Albanians in Macedonia. Hence their main legitimacy derives from their proclaimed success in the 2001 conflict. DUI display this act as grandiose, pinning it to ideals of countless generations. To support their glorification they depict themselves as mountains and high tops. They are protectors and providers of Albanian rights and do not want to divide the people. On the other hand they are overtly claiming that DPA is trying to deligitimize the conflict in 2001. This in the view of DUI is detrimental for all Albanians, and makes their political competitors comparable to mice and other pests. An interesting point to note is the differentiation that DUI makes with their competitors during the conflict and ten years later. In their understanding, they fought and won the battle with DPA during the conflict and afterwards.

On the other hand DPA sees the conflict in 2001 as a scenario of Belgrade. For them there was no reason to start the conflict in 2001. It was a scenario of the Serbian secret service to harm the independence of Kosovo, and DPA aims to investigate the causes of the ethnic conflict. They made a strong point that the history of Albanians does not start from 2001. This translates into their construction of the in group Albanians. They point to other historical events predating the conflict in 2001 as more important for the Albanians in Macedonia. DPA claims that Albanians should seek the truth and remove the 'Serbian spies' from the political scene. DPA presents themselves as a party that does not want political tricks and manipulation, just regular democratic elections. However on the other hand, DPA claimed that NLA/DUI were controlled by the Serbian secret service and Slobodan Milosevic. DPA also accused DUI of wanting to harm the Albanian national interests (Taleski 2011, p. 180).

As it became clear soon after the conflict, the underdogs (NLA) were eager to engage in politics after the peace accords. In order to ensure they had political space to gain votes they needed to do the utmost to eliminate the established parties from the scene. Even while the conflict was raging, this was already a race to gain votes among ethnic Albanians, with plenty of accusations and counteraccusations thrown between the rival groups. As the conflict progressed, the incumbent DPA was quickly losing the upper hand while the NLA gained in popularity. In the eyes of the ethnic Albanian community the latter stood on a moral high ground because they had challenged the regime via an armed resistance for equal rights. They had done so while the established Albanian parties had essentially colluded with that same regime for years while trampling over their constituency's rights.

Shortly after the conflict was over, the NLA leadership created its own political party called the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI, or in Albanian: Bashkimi Demokratik për Integrim) with the former leader of the NLA, Ali Ahmeti, at its helm. Ever since its formation, DUI has been the most popular political party among ethnic Albanians, leaving the rest of them in shadows. Since the OFA to this day they have played an active role in Macedonian politics by being part of each government coalition, except for a short hiatus in 2007-08 (Aziri and Emurllai 2014).

5.3 Power-sharing arrangements in today's FYR Macedonia

Some authors continue to claim that the OFA ended the conflict, but it did not put an end to the sources of this conflict (Reka 2011; Aziri and Emurllai 2014).

The Ohrid Agreement excluded from consideration territorial solutions to ethnic problems, but preserving the unitary character of the country was not accompanied with the relevant implementation of measures by which all citizens of this unitary country would be equally treated” (Reka 2011, p 12).

FYR Macedonia has come a long way since the 2001 conflict, agreeing on an amnesty law for the NLA, and incorporating the armed group’s former combatants into the political scene (Ruffer 2017). Having won the major share of the Albanian electoral vote, DUI has been part of all coalition governments from then till today, bar one. Between 2006 and the end of 2016 the coalition government was led by VMRO-DPMNE. In many respects this was a time of a downward democratic trend in the country. The long-standing impasse on the name issue with neighbouring Greece kept FYR Macedonia on a standstill position as far as the EU and NATO integration were concerned (Danforth 1995). Moreover, although the country was theoretically striving to build a truly inter-ethnic society, there were concerns that the Ohrid Agreement was stalling (Ringdal, Simkus and Listhaug 2007). In a power-sharing coalition arrangement DUI as junior partner carried a degree of responsibility.

By the end of his tenure as Prime Minister, Nikola Gruevski and his party VMRO-DPMNE were accused of blatant state capture, corruption and involvement in illicit activities (Ceka 2018). By being a junior partner in coalition with VMRO-DPMNE during this time, DUI and its leader Ali Ahmeti were not immune from similar accusations. Even if the Prime Minister’s party was primarily to be blamed for corrupt activities, DUI could not escape responsibility precisely because they had been part of this coalition government. As a result, this did not bode well for the popularity of DUI and Ali Ahmeti among the ethnic Albanian electorate, particularly in the last few years of this coalition.

The downward spiral for this coalition began in the early 2015 when the opposition party SDSM began publishing transcripts of conversations that were allegedly wiretapped by the government. This was just the beginning of what was discovered to be a government-sanctioned illegal surveillance scheme on a massive scale. There were alleged to be around 670,000 recordings targeting more than 20,000 people, ranging from government officials, media, civil society actors and private citizens. There were also recordings of high-level

government officials, such as the Prime Minister, the leader of DUI, and various ministers. The language used in those conversations was often highly offensive against each other, sometimes bordering on racist (ICG 2015). An EC expert group that investigated the wiretapping condemned the scandal as a massive invasion of privacy and fundamental human rights. It concluded that there seemed to be,

[...] apparent direct involvement of senior government and party officials in illegal activities including electoral fraud, corruption, abuse of power and authority, conflict of interest, blackmail, extortion (pressure on public employees to vote for a certain party with the threat to be fired), criminal damage, severe procurement procedure infringements aimed at gaining an illicit profit, nepotism and cronyism (EC 2015, p. 6).

FYR Macedonia's political scene worsened even further when on 9 May 2015 in the town of Kumanovo police forces intervened in a stand-off with more than 40 ethnic Albanian gunmen. A whole day of fighting ensued, leaving eighteen people dead (eight of them policemen) (Ceka 2018). As tragic an event as this was, it was also bizarre because of the conspiracy theories that emerged from it, claiming to link a few Kosovo politicians or DUI members with the actors involved. The circumstances surrounding this incident are not fully clear to this day, but there were doubts that a few young Albanian men from Kosovo had been lured to go to Kumanovo allegedly to plot against the regime. On the other hand, the regime's heavy-handed response was viewed as a way for the Prime Minister to distract the public's attention from the wiretapping scandal by playing the ethnic card (ICG 2015).

What followed was a period of unrest followed by a social movement which turned into what came to be known as the Colourful Revolution (Reef 2017). The demands of this movement, coupled by the increasing pressure from the Western delegations, forced early elections in the country. In the elections that were held in December 2016, SDSM and its leader Zoran Zaev came second by a slight margin, but managed to form a coalition government, forcing VMRO-DPMNE into opposition. In a curious case of acrobatics, Ahmeti's DUI joined Zaev's coalition government after allegedly obtaining assurances from the new Prime Minister for the full implementation of the Ohrid accords. As part of this power-sharing arrangement, a former commander of the NLA and current member of DUI, Talat Xhaferri, was voted as Speaker of the Macedonian Parliament (Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty 2017).

There are quiet hopes that with the current government, with DUI as junior coalition partner, FYR Macedonia is opening a new page in its history. On the name issue with Greece, Prime Minister Zaev upon coming to power immediately rekindled talks with his Greek counterpart, Alexis Tsipras. After almost twenty years of deadlock, the two governments reached an agreement signed in the Macedonian town of Prespa whose lake connects the borders of Albania, Greece and FYR Macedonia. The symbolism of choosing Prespa to sign the agreement is obvious. The “Prespa Agreement”¹⁸, as it is now known, stipulates that the country north of Greece is to be renamed “Republic of North Macedonia” and its citizens and language as “Macedonian”. On 11 January 2019, the Macedonian Parliament voted to ratify the “Prespa Agreement” to change the name of the country to North Macedonia (Wall Street Journal 2019). The Greek Parliament ratified the same agreement on 25 January 2019 (The Guardian 2019a).

In addition to international success with Greece, the Macedonian government achieved some success internally, too. The Law on the use of languages was passed in Parliament twice during 2018. However, President Gjorge Ivanov twice refused to sign it into law, warning that the signature would herald a gaping fissure in the country’s identity. Since this avenue seemed closed, in January 2019 the Macedonian Speaker, Talat Xhaferri, sent the Law on the use of languages to be published in the Official Gazette. The law upgrades the Albanian language into an official language at the national level, side by side with Macedonian (EWB 2019).

6. Conclusion

A lot has been written about the history of the Balkans. Some of that writing is sprinkled with a touch of the exotic other, portraying its peoples as historically destined to fight *ad perpetuum*. However, the causes of conflict are in a way much more mundane albeit tragic: they relate to deep social, economic and political injustices that are expressed through grievances and end up in wars. At the root cause of the Yugoslav implosion were: 1. the secessionist and nationalist aspirations of people for independence, and 2. the resurgent

¹⁸ Note that a copy of the Prespa Agreement is attached in Appendix X the thesis.

hegemonic instincts demonstrated by Serbia wishing for greater control of the Yugoslav federation, particularly those parts inhabited with ethnic Serbs.

The trajectory of development of the cases of Kosovo and FYR Macedonia provides for an intriguing comparative study: both the KLA and the NLA represented the ethnic Albanian population living in different parts of former Yugoslavia. The political and ideological origins of both armed groups date back to the 1980s and the clandestine movement known with its acronym LPK. For that reason, although the armed conflicts in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia did not happen at the same time, both armed groups displayed similar objectives, ideologies, manpower and strategy. After their respective conflicts and the peace accords, their leaders turned to politics and have since had direct influence upon state-building and democracy.

The rise of both armed groups was accompanied by a degree of intra-ethnic political rivalry. Both the KLA and the NLA (as well as their successor political parties) saw the existing ethnic Albanian parties as political competitors. The ensuing political fight for the electorate's vote resulted in the overthrow of the old political class and the triumph of the new masters dominated by former combatants turned politicians. Another similarity of both case studies is the fact that the political parties comprised of former combatants are culpable to a considerable degree for the perpetuation of clientelistic practices and state capture in today's Kosovo and FYR Macedonia. Perhaps the scope of culpability is greater in Kosovo simply because of the omnipresent nature of war-wing parties, whereas in FYR Macedonia the war-wing DUI has always been a junior partner in a power-sharing arrangement led by a senior Macedonian party.

Another key difference between the two case studies is the degree and scope of involvement of the international community during and after conflict. In Kosovo, NATO, the UN, the US and other Western powers played an existentialist role during the war and in the post-conflict period, too. In fact, they helped building institutions from scratch after 1999, including the parliament, ministries, oversight bodies, etc. The creation of the war-wing parties happened against this backdrop of international involvement. Conform the principles of inclusiveness and representation of the liberal peacebuilding paradigm, they encouraged the creation of new political parties comprised of KLA combatants. This was also done as a way of buying

peace and ensuring the appeasement of potential spoilers coming from disgruntled KLA veterans. By contrast, in FYR Macedonia the international community had a mediating role only in key moments such as the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement in 2001. But the creation of the political party that succeeded the armed group was still seen as a pragmatic way of keeping a lid on former combatants' possible discontent and providing a voice for their constituency. In both cases, clientelism, corruption and state capture have partly originated from the destructive role played by former combatants turned politicians who might have not become peace spoilers but, in the process, have mutated into democracy spoilers instead.

This chapter offered a short historical account of the case studies as a way of providing a context for the next chapter which delves into the empirical findings. Its aim was to explain the rise of armed groups and, in the process, to underline the trajectory of the combatants' movements from their early careers to their present as politicians. Being aware of this trajectory will, I believe, help have a more insightful picture of their role as politicians today, and their impact on democratisation processes.

V. Presentation of Evidence and Findings from the Field

1. Introduction

This chapter brings all the main threads of the thesis together. It intends to offer a bottom-up, inductive-approach theory that emerges from the field, which represents the contribution given to political science and democratisation studies. The chapter starts by recounting the main milestones of the resistance of ethnic Albanians in former Yugoslavia as a precursor to the creation of their armed groups. It describes the context in which their illegal operations were conducted, the political ideology that underpinned and fuelled their struggle, ending with how the KLA and NLA respectively were created. This second sub-chapter is meant to serve as a prelude to set the scene for the rest of the chapter.

The chapter is followed by two main sub-chapters that provide a comparative overview on Kosovo and FYR Macedonia, based on the empirical evidence collected from the field on the political transformation of combatants and their impact on democracy. The main findings from the field and the analysis presented separately for the two case studies will be interwoven, elaborated and summarised in the final and fifth sub-chapter. In addition to containing the main synthesised findings from the field, these sub-chapters will also suggest the theory that springs out of the analysis undertaken in this research.

The primary evidence and findings deriving from the field are constructed by answering the sub-questions of the thesis, referred to in the Introduction. Namely,

1. How have former combatants been integrated into society?
2. More specifically, how have former combatants been engaged in politics and decision-making positions across institutions?
3. What sets apart the former combatants' political engagement from that of other politicians?
4. What is the relationship of former combatants turned politicians with each other and with their electoral base?

As I lay down the field evidence through several sub-chapters within this chapter, the above sub-questions will be addressed naturally. The topic of each sub-chapter relates to a

conceptual category which has emerged from the analysis of my field data and which is described in the Research Methods chapter. Also, as set out on the diagrams in the Research Methods chapter, the analysis to the above sub-questions translates into an overall output to this thesis, which is the integration and political transformation of former combatants in post-conflict democratic institutions. On the other hand, the outcome product of the overall analysis, which emerges from the juxtaposition of the field data with the secondary literature on the state of democracy in the two case studies, translates into evidence on the impact of former combatants on democracy and state institutions. In the end, the evidence examined in sub-chapters feeds into the overarching research question of the thesis, which is: To what extent does the integration of former combatants in political structures contribute to, or inhibit, democratisation processes in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia?

2. Illegality, ideology and the intra-state armed groups emergence

The national liberations in Kosovo and Macedonia had a political programme which was developed by the LPK and which also founded the KLA. Due to the specific circumstances on the ground, the liberation war was initially waged only within the administrative boundaries of Kosovo. However, the wars of 2000 and 2001 were then expanded onto the Valley of Preshevo (author's note: southern Serbia) and in Macedonia, even though the former KLA leadership in Kosovo had promised the internationals that this war would remain confined within the territory of Kosovo (FMC 03)

As explained in the Historical Background chapter, the origins of both the KLA and the NLA can be traced back to the clandestine political and quasi-military organization called the People's Movement of Kosovo, known with its Albanian acronym LPK (Lëvizja Popullore e Kosovës). At this juncture it is important to shed light upon the background of the LPK and its leadership because they were the precursor of both armed groups in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia. Having an insight of the past, on the overall strategy of the LPK, and the relationship between its members, helps us understand today's political role of the organisation's successors in the shape of political parties or the leadership of those parties. In addition, the role that this organisation had in helping Albanians organize to resist the Serbian/Yugoslav rule can by no means be underestimated. However, because most of its activities were conducted secretly, the scope of its work and its membership have been a mystery for a long time. It is only in the last few years that the pieces of the jigsaw have started

coming together, be it through interviews by former members of the organisation or the limited number of books on this subject. However, during my fieldwork I managed to acquire access to several former LPK activists. Some of the crucial information shared herein results directly from my conversations with the interviewees based on their first-hand account.

As the situation in Kosovo was deteriorating in the early 1980s, there were several resistance cells that sprung up sporadically, but they did not necessarily operate in unison. Although they all came to be viewed as part of the loosely-termed “Illegality” movement, it was not until the early 1980s that a relatively large organization was formed with clear (although secretive) membership, hierarchy and political programme (OPP 03). This organisation was the LPK.

The LPK was founded in 1982, bringing under one decision-making umbrella the different resistance cells that had been operating disjointedly in Kosovo, FYR Macedonia and the diaspora. Its political programme called for the status of a republic for Kosovo within Yugoslavia. Its end-ambition, though, accelerated towards the late 1980s and early 1990s, was to demand the right for self-determination, which would translate into secession from Serbia and/or unification with Albania. Its ambitions were even wider: they wished to see all ethnic Albanian territories of former Yugoslavia, including parts of FYR Macedonia, unite in one country. Moreover, the LPK did not see itself as just a political project. Armed confrontation was viewed as a possible, and even inescapable, means to reaching its political goals. Its programme stated that to achieve the ultimate national objective, which was first and foremost the liberation of Kosovo, the LPK would not shy away from employing any means: democratic, peaceful, as well as armed (Kelmendi 1999).

A creation of the 1980s which continued to operate throughout the 1990s and, to a limited degree, well into the 2000s, the LPK was an ideologically-charged Marxist-Leninist organisation. To be more precise, it espoused an Enverist political outlook, after the name of Albania’s communist leader at the time, Enver Hoxha. The leaders and activists of this organisation were ethnic Albanians who came from various parts of Kosovo and FYR Macedonia in what was then the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Through clandestine actions – such as writing pamphlets against the Yugoslav/Serbian regime, plotting and

organising protests, liaising secretly with the communist Albania's intelligence and diplomatic representatives, raising funds, being very active in the diaspora, and even planning for an eventual armed uprising – they aimed to undermine Serbia's control of Kosovo and eventually annex the latter, together with other Albanian-inhabited lands in FYR Macedonia, with Albania. This was the grand vision of the organisation. They claimed that this vision was an embodiment of life-long aspirations of ethnic Albanians, and an enactment of the principle of self-determination, to live in one country – that of Albania.

The LPK grew in membership throughout the late 1980s and the first part of the 1990s. Since this was a clandestine organization operating under conditions of utmost secrecy, recruitment into its ranks was primarily based on existing representatives knowing prospective members and being able to guarantee for them. A lot of times they were family members or acquaintances with a proven family record of nonconformism against the state. Other times they were close friends who managed to forge intimate ties through their studies and the sharing of ideas in close friendship circles. The basis of the operability of this organization was the so-called "system of troika" (FMC 08). Each troika was a semi-autonomous cell comprised of three individuals, as the name suggests. The cell members knew of each other and their respective activities but were not aware of others who operated in other cells. Only one member of the cell knew the identity of another member of another cell, which ensured for uninterrupted lines of communication and coordination between the cells. But apart from this, other members were not aware of the identity and the activities of other cells and their respective members. The reason for keeping this information on a strictly need-to-know basis was to contain the damage that could befall the organization if captured. In other words, if a member of the movement was caught by the regime, he or she could only be forced to give out the names of the other two members of the troika cell. Even if they wanted to, they would not be able to divulge information on other cells, which would limit exposing the whole organization (FMC 08).

The LPK was particularly active among the Albanian diaspora in Switzerland and Germany. The reasons for this are obvious: there they could operate much more freely than they could ever do within Yugoslavia. There they also enjoyed a great deal of support from the large diaspora communities in those countries. Besides, they could rely on Albanian communities

who came not just from Kosovo but also from FYR Macedonia and other parts of Yugoslavia (Elshani 1998).

The LPK attracted membership from outside Kosovo and within former Yugoslavia, particularly from FYR Macedonia. In fact, some of the main people who were in the LPK's leadership positions came from the western part of FYR Macedonia, parts of which are predominantly ethnic Albanian. One of them was Fazli Veliu who for several years was at the helm of the organisation (Televizioni Koha Tetovë 2018). Another one was Ali Ahmeti who was an active leadership member of the LPK, operating from the diaspora for most of the 1980s (FMC 06). It is the same Ali Ahmeti who in the early 2000s became the commander of the NLA, and who continues to play a crucial role as the main political figure representing the Albanian community in that country to this day.

There are other figures, too. In the late 1980s, while they were still students at the University of Prishtina, Hashim Thaçi and Kadri Veseli – close friends already – were inducted into the LPK ranks through a trusted family member of the latter. Both went on to play leading roles in the KLA during the war of 1998-99, with Thaçi becoming Head of its Political Directorate, and Veseli leading the army's Directorate on Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence. Moreover, both are leading figures of the political scene in Kosovo to this day. Thaçi was founder and leader of the PDK, and is now President of Kosovo, having previously served as Prime Minister for two consecutive mandates. Veseli is in his second consecutive mandate as Speaker of the Kosovo Assembly and is Head of the PDK political party.

Other important figures who had operated within the LPK early on are Adem Jashari, Jakup Krasniqi, Xhavit Haliti. Adem Jashari is regarded as one of the main founding members of the KLA. In March 1998 his house was surrounded by the Serbian forces and in the following three-day siege 56 members of his wide family were massacred indiscriminately, including him (Bekaj 2010). Jakup Krasniqi went on to become a Spokesperson for the KLA, and after the war one of the founding members of the PDK party, as well as a Speaker of the Kosovo Assembly for two consecutive mandates. Xhavit Haliti is one of the founding members of the KLA, one of the founding members of the PDK party, and has been part of the Presidency of the Kosovo Assembly for five consecutive terms to this day.

The fact that the LPK was a Marxist-Leninist organisation is viewed as a blemish from today's perspective. In public discourse this tends to shroud and render less important any contribution that the organisation might have given. However, more than ideologically-inclined, the LPK was essentially a pragmatically-driven nationalist movement. In addition to being nationalist, it also happened to be Enverist because communist Albania was such at the time, and because this country was viewed as the "mother nation" they aspired Kosovo and other Albanian-inhabited parts to join (Elshani 1998; Kelmendi 1999). Although forged in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism, the ideology was adopted primarily because their points of reference were communist Albania and its leader Enver Hoxha, who happened to practice such principles.

Marxism-Leninism, therefore, just happened to be the ideology of the day. It is true that the organization embraced it wholeheartedly, although it did so for pragmatic reasons. To understand their position, we need to recall the wider geo-political context in which such organisations operated. Movements like the LPK were taking place in a Cold War world in which there was a clear delineation of strategic spheres of interest between West (Capitalism) and East (Communism), with the Non-Aligned Movement providing a possible third way for those countries that did not necessarily want to take sides between the two ideologies. In this regard, the Albanian movements which took hold in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia were not so different from other, similar, movements and liberation struggles of the time. Such struggles usually had a Marxist-Leninist undertone, too, but they were essentially nationalist ventures that used communist rhetoric as a model to rebel against the capitalist one. Such movements took place in several countries across Africa, Central and South-East Asia at the time (Maharaj 2008; Ogury 2008). It is fair to say that although they might have used Marxist-Leninist vernacular at the time, generally their struggle was one of independence, decolonisation, or combatting apartheid, as the case might have been.

This is important to note because one of the criticisms heard to this day about the LPK and its representatives is the alleged stigma stemming from their early allegiance to communism and the Eastern Bloc. Moreover, these criticisms resurface time and again since some of those early LPK proponents continue to be in leadership positions to this day. However, these

criticisms of early allegiance to communism do not hold water in terms of the above-figures' political transformation and their subsequent impact on democratisation processes. As stated above, the Marxist-Leninist ideology was a practical cloak to be worn at the time, for what were essentially nationalist efforts of liberation and self-determination. Also, the accusations are largely unfair and unsubstantiated for two reasons. Firstly, in the bipolar world of capitalism *versus* communism in 1980s and even early 1990s, popular liberation and self-determination movements were naturally leftist (take for example Northern Ireland, Southern African, or Latin American revolutions). In this vein, it makes sense that the LPK movement had branded itself along the same lines. Secondly, the LPK movement essentially had a cause, which was to liberate Kosovo (and other "Albanian lands" such as those in FYR Macedonia) and join Albania. Since Albania was communist, it was a foregone conclusion that the LPK leaders would also embrace such ideals, revering as they did Albania and its communist leader. This was a pragmatic decision based on nationalism, rather than a calculated position based on ideology.

As an example, one of my respondents, FMC 03, who is now a lawyer, was among the first members of the LPK from the early-1980s onwards. He was very active in the diaspora, namely in Switzerland. He is in his late-50s now and belongs to the first generation of LPK activists. The reason for mentioning his age is that he would have been in his mid-to late-20s when he began his activities within the organisation. He belongs to a generation of activists who would have been at the forefront of clandestine activities from early 1980s onwards. He was one of the organizers of the 1981 students' protests in Prishtina which as an event was the precursor of the political turmoil to come in Yugoslavia. In fact, it has often been claimed that while Yugoslavia began officially to unravel in Slovenia, followed by Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the early 1990s, the seeds for the implosion of the Federation were planted a decade earlier in the streets of Kosovo's capital, Prishtina (Little and Silber 1995). Following those protests, the Yugoslav federation spent another decade managing the cracks until the actual implosion happened. Respondent FMC 03 was among those early activists fighting the Serbian state's presence in Kosovo and, by default, opposing the Yugoslav federation. He even was a proponent of the idea that Albanians should organize militarily and begin a war of liberation against the occupying forces of Serbia (FMC 03).

People like the FMC 03 were typical activists who at the time intertwined the nationalist with an Enverist ideological outlook. Like a lot of other colleagues of his time, FMC 03 came from humble and rural beginnings and a family with a long tradition of resistance against the regime. As would be expected, people like him were in the target list of the Serbian regime very early on. Often, they spent their youth either in prisons, or hiding and operating half-clandestinely inside Kosovo. Eventually, they were forced to emigrate and move their operations abroad. Such was the fate of the respondent too, who fled Kosovo in early 1990s and continued to be very active abroad while stationed in a small city in Switzerland. From there, he wrote pamphlets and articles, he met with the diaspora community, raised money for the cause, and helped manage and organize the first cells of the KLA. By then (early 1990s) he would have been in his early to mid-30s, which was also the age group of many of his LPK colleagues who were forced to move abroad, too.

At this juncture it is important to highlight that for ethnic Albanian activists who originated in FYR Macedonia (or indeed, for any ethnic Albanian living in Yugoslavia at the time), Kosovo's capital, Prishtina, was viewed as the epicentre of politics, culture and education. In FYR Macedonia, the predominantly-Albanian town of Tetovo in the western part of the republic was the only place which the students and activists of this ethnic community could consider as a point of reference. However, Tetovo was a very underdeveloped and provincial town, with no access to higher education. On the other hand, Skopje – the Macedonian capital – was predominantly Slavic Macedonian and, although there is a part of the city that is mainly inhabited by ethnic Albanians, the opportunities for work and education for Albanian students and activists remained limited there. Prishtina was therefore the only place that accommodated the interests of Albanian students from all corners of Yugoslavia (being the only city in the federation to have had an Albanian-speaking university), as well as potential activists who wanted to join the LPK.

My respondent, FMC 06, was a typical case of an activist who came from FYR Macedonia but whose activities brought him to Prishtina. Having become a member of LPK in late 1980s, like FMC 03, he also belongs to the first generation of LPK activists. FMC 06 is originally from FYR Macedonia but moved to Prishtina to study in the mid-1980s. That is when he got involved in the clandestine movement and, while his base continued to be Prishtina, he intensified his

rapports with his contacts in FYR Macedonia (FMC 06). Being persecuted from the regime, he was forced to flee the country and subsequently spent more than a decade living and working abroad. He continued to be very active with the diaspora cells, helping the “national cause” regardless of whether it was Kosovo or FYR Macedonia.

The above examples aim to show that the Illegality Movement, embodied in the LPK project, was the motor with which the armed resistance eventually gathered pace. As seen from the quote at the start of this sub-chapter, the armed movement was initially conceived as a single whole encompassing all Albanian-inhabited territories in Kosovo, FYR Macedonia, and Serbia. As one respondent noted, the LPK was the “torso” out of which all clandestine, illegal activities branched out (FMC 02). The first military cells were organized by this organization and by activists such as the above-quoted respondents. However, by the time the armed resistance gathered pace in the beginning of the 1990s, this first generation of activists were in their 30s and living abroad.

This brings us to the rapport of the LPK veterans living abroad with the younger generation of activists operating inside Kosovo. The idea of an armed confrontation with Serbia came to fruition with the birth of the KLA as early as 1994, when its first cells began making isolated attacks on Serbian forces in Kosovo. The LPK was *de facto* the political wing which had given birth to its armed wing – the KLA. LPK activists were active in sending communiques, taking responsibilities for the KLA’s attacks, raising funds abroad, and organizing people around the cause inside Kosovo. Their operations were also very much synchronised with the diaspora communities abroad (FMC 02). However, as the KLA became stronger on the ground, the younger generation of rising commanders (in their early- to mid-20s) began to challenge the supervisory role coming from LPK members stationed in the diaspora. It was around this time (circa 1997) when the younger generation took a bold position and quietly began severing links with the LPK (the 30-something year olds operating abroad). By breaking ranks with the LPK, the KLA was also quick to adjust its ideological viewpoint and, perhaps even more importantly, its marketing strategy in order to be in line with the West’s geopolitical interests and agendas. This ideological U-turn could not have been entirely coincidental but came as a result of increasing deliberations inside the KLA ranks as well as meetings with Western delegations. Also, considering the post-Cold War world was no longer bipolar and the West

had emerged triumphant, there was a ripening awareness by the KLA's rising elite of the need to retune its ideological compass in response to the wider geo-strategic game in Europe and the US.

To sum up on the LPK-KLA rapport: it would be too farfetched to claim that the division between them was clear-cut and along differing generations only. But it was true that those commanders who were inside Kosovo and operating under the line of fire were often younger, perhaps more agile, and boldly ambitious in their endeavour to take charge of the war efforts. Besides, it was not difficult to leave the LPK behind since its veterans, operating as they did from the cushy positions in the West, were not able to have full access to the reality on the ground and to measure the people's pulse. Those who were younger (Hashim Thaçi, Kadri Veseli etc.) created their own contacts in the West (diaspora as well as foreign intelligence services) and often travelled in and out of Kosovo, thus helping to organize KLA ranks with the embedded commanders.

Based on what was said above it is not an exaggeration to surmise that this was indeed a sort of putsch inside the ranks of this politico-military organism called the LPK. The result of this putsch was the LPK's marginalization and the KLA's stamp of authority as a guerrilla army on its own right. Eventually, faced with the rising demands to communicate and establish contacts with Western diplomats and the media, the guerrilla army gave birth to its own political wing – the Political Directorate – headed by Thaçi. This itself was a paradox, since usually it is the political wing that gives rise to its armed faction, not the other way around. However, as explained above, the KLA young commanders were very keen to be seen as the founders of the army, despite the fact its early origins undoubtedly lay with the LPK. By mid-1998, however, when the war was in full swing in Kosovo, the KLA as the armed wing was the precursor and had given rise to its political wing – the Political Directorate, as opposed to the other way around.

The armed conflict in FYR Macedonia which flared up two years after the war in Kosovo, draws direct parallels with the KLA story. As much as the DDR process in Kosovo was considered to have been successfully completed, the Macedonian conflict confirmed that there were sufficient weapons and ammunition hidden away which could be transferred to another

battlefield. FYR Macedonia had been an independent country for less than a decade when the former LPK activist operating in Switzerland, Ali Ahmeti and his friends, began efforts to mobilise young men into joining the newly-formed NLA. A considerable amount of manpower, weapons and ammunition was spilled over from Kosovo, helping set up the new army. As a result, the 2001 conflict in FYR Macedonia had two main rivals: the NLA on one hand and the Macedonian army on the other. However, similar to the Kosovo experience, the NLA managed in the process to marginalise the existing Albanian political parties. This, too, can be considered a sort of putsch, one which forcefully sought to fight the state while simultaneously making sure that the Albanian rival parties are stripped of their monopoly of power (CSO 06). In the post-conflict era this is exactly what happened: the DUI political party as a direct NLA successor gained the upper hand among the ethnic Albanian electorate, and they continue to hold this monopoly to this day.

3. Kosovo

3.1 The integration and political transformation of former combatants

In accordance with the structure of the thesis, as laid out in the Methods chapter, this first section of the Kosovo sub-chapter will deal specifically with the act of the integration of KLA combatants in politics. This act of their political transformation will be examined against the background of their war legacy, followed by an analysis as to the reasons why they underwent such a transformation: a bottom-up, popular request for representation *versus* an opportunistic career opportunity.

3.1.1 The persistence of war experiences and relationships, and the decision to enter politics

The role of the KLA and its proponents in the democratization processes was key. Immediately after the end of the war, the political wing of the KLA took the decision to form a political party, and then another one. Former KLA combatants have given their contribution to democratization processes by being active players and by accepting the electoral results every time, although they possessed the power to create troubles if they wanted to (FMC 01)

The above quote, taken from one of the interviews conducted with a former combatant turned politician (he has served as Member of Parliament in Kosovo in the last three mandates), is very telling about the perception that army veterans have about their role in the post-war period.

Firstly, after conflict the reality on the ground as viewed by the people in Kosovo was that the KLA emerged victorious, while the Serbian army was forced to flee the territory. As the annexed documents testify (The Military-Technical Agreement, and the UNSC Resolution 1244/99), while this might have been true it was only part of the story. The truth is that the NATO Alliance was instrumental in defeating the Serbian army and installing a peacekeeping mission in 1999. However, for the predominantly-ethnic Albanian population, the KLA soldiers were regarded as heroes and they were held in very high esteem by the majority. This perception of the people, of how they truly felt (and, to a considerable degree, still feel) about the war veterans, is crucial to understanding the success of their transformation into politics. The war aura, coupled with tales, anecdotes and national songs about their courage facing the enemy, still accompanies them twenty years after the end of the war. Whilst today this aura has somewhat faded (it would have been surprising if it didn't in the background of simmering corruption and poverty), former combatants-turned-politicians still enjoy a great deal of popularity precisely because of their role during the war.

Secondly, as the UN Administration, the OSCE and other international organisations began preparing Kosovo for multi-party, democratic elections in the early 2000s, the need for new political parties became self-evident. At this point in time, the LDK party which had led Kosovo's non-violent resistance in the 1990s, continued to be viewed as the dominant force in the political scene. However, it was clear that the political spectrum lacked diversity and did not offer much in terms of options for the electorate. Apart from the LDK, it was clear that there was a political vacuum which needed to be filled. Moreover, a considerable percentage of the population in Kosovo simply did not view the LDK as a viable option any longer, mainly because of its record of clashing with the KLA during the conflict. Another reason for the political vacuum in post-war Kosovo was that the former communist leaders had been sidelined almost completely from public life. Whilst in other parts of former Yugoslavia (Slovenia and Croatia, for example) it was not unusual for former communists to continue with leadership positions after conflict, the same did not happen in Kosovo.

Former communist leaders could not really even make an appearance in public. The representatives of the monist system were judged very harshly, although they also played a constructive role during the times of survival in the 1990s and even before (FMC 05).

Thirdly, following the DDR process a considerable number of KLA combatants found themselves transferred to the newly-formed KPC or the Kosovo Police. However, for the leaders of the resistance it quickly became clear that changing the KLA uniform for that of the KPC or the Police was not as fulfilling as initially envisaged. These two organizations were, after all, civilian entities. The NATO-led KFOR was the only entity in charge of security. In addition, the leaders of the resistance had larger, political, ambitions, which were certainly not going to be fulfilled by being stranded in security-related institutions.

Turning to politics was also a question of “organizational survival” and “collective incentive strategy” (Manning 2004, p. 66). Besides, what were the alternatives if it was not for politics?

When the fighting stopped in Kosovo, members of the KLA’s small political leadership initially tried to resist the notion that its position as the self-identified guardian of Kosovo’s new-found autonomy should be called into question in competitive elections. However, once it became clear that competitive elections would indeed be used to establish provisional governing institutions to replace the KLA-led structures, a leading faction of the KLA quickly formed itself into the PDK (Manning 2004, p. 64).

Considering all the above, it was obvious that they would go on to create their own political parties. The PDK was the first one to be created by Hashim Thaçi and friends in October 1999 (PDK 2019), followed by AAK founded by Ramush Haradinaj and friends in April 2001 (AAK 2019).

What set apart the so-called “war-wing” parties from the LDK was undoubtedly the war legacy. Going into politics, the KLA combatants were endowed with an incomparable advantage of having belonged to an intra-state armed group that was partially deserving of Kosovo’s liberation. Consequently, being equipped with such war laurels gave the war-wing parties a solid ground to potentially do quite well in elections.

The legitimacy enjoyed by former commanders partly derives from their war credentials. Such credentials were “certainly a contributing factor that assisted PDK in entering peace talks with Belgrade to the extent they did. Others without such credentials would not have been in a position to go so deep for fear of major popular discontent” (CSO 06).

However, moving to mainstream politics also meant submitting to accountability and transparency, including financial transparency. According to Manning (2007), “the need to shift away from any illicit funding sources and for greater accountability and transparency with respect to finances poses challenges to party leaders” (Manning 2007, p. 257). As regards the KLA spring-off political parties, Manning also talks about the internal competition becoming greater as the KLA leaders were preparing to make the jump into politics. In the case of PDK, for example, the KLA leaders “aspiring to use their military struggle as a springboard into political power was to edge out rivals from the KLA war-time umbrella” (Manning 2007, p. 261). Once they entered politics, the most effective way to gain credibility was to demonstrate popular support at the ballot box. Their investment into their future electoral performance, therefore, was paramount for their political survival in the post-war period.

In the short run, the DDR process accomplished two objectives: it provided the former combatants with a civil role and removed their weapons from their hands. Of course, the DDR process is in many respects as straightforward as that: in times of peace, former soldiers of irregular armies need to dispose of arms and provide space, in this case for NATO troops, to fill in the security vacuum. Their longer-term transformation into politics, however, is more challenging since it changes the political scene of the country beyond recognition.

The formation of two political parties in Kosovo (PDK and AAK) was a result of the political transformation of the KLA. For some, their inclusion in politics has served to enrich the political scene to a great degree. Moreover, their political record is to be “applauded”, since they respected the electoral results even when they lost. PDK particularly proved successful in reinventing itself and bringing in new generations, youth and women in its midst (CSO 06).

On the other hand, respondents such as FMC 05 were themselves part of the KLA, but now belong to the LDK party. For him, and indeed many others, twenty years after the war it is difficult to separate the political parties into camps. “I believe that the people are really grateful about the true soldiers of the KLA, even now – 15 years after the war. This is seen

also from the fact that every political party is populated with former combatants, so now it is impossible to divide us into “war wing” and “pacifist” political parties” (FMC 05).

Most former commanders I have interviewed exuded a sense of sacrifice and duty for joining politics after the war. For them, this was just another means of serving their country. If they had come to the defence of the country in its darkest hour fighting the enemy, they were prepared to do so again in times of peace. They recalled the sacrifices incurred during the war, when they had lost friends, family and loved ones. In peacetimes they were even more prepared to contribute to society in order to make sure that the country was on the right path to peace, democracy and prosperity (FMC 01; FMC 02; FMC 04). In their logic, who deserves more than them to be regarded as guardians of the state? Their account of sacrifices they had made seemed to give them the right to equip them with a guardianship role. According to this rationale, if they had been successful in gaining freedom, they had just as much responsibility in preserving that freedom.

These were some of the main reasons for the combatants’ transformation in politics. Their willingness to exchange “bullets for ballots” (Ishiyama 2016) was an early indicator of the potential success of this transformation. Former combatants, then, got elected and ascended to power through democratic means. By all accounts, the move from war to peace, from violent means of combat to democratic means of competition through elections, was successfully completed.

For a member of PDK (former combatant himself), the very fact that a part of the KLA leadership decided to enter politics by forming a political party (and then another one) is considered a positive contribution to democracy. They were active players in politics and always respected the electoral outcome, regardless if they won or lost. However, there is an implicit accusation amongst critics of “war-wing parties” that former combatants are not really supposed to be in politics (ACA 05). They might have offered a valuable contribution to the liberation of the country, for which they are thanked for, but the underlying tone is that somehow, they should not be in politics. The respondent did not show to be impressed, or negatively influenced, by the criticism coming from the media, civil society of other political parties, that their “place is not in politics”. The respondent takes the will of the people,

expressed through their free votes, as an indicator of whether the likes of him should continue to be politically active or not (FMC 01).

When talking about this group's success in elections it is impossible not to refer to the notion of the "regional networks of alliances and support" (ACA 01). The very basis of the KLA structure was built around village and regional affiliation. Members of this rebel group normally knew each other either through family or very close friends. There was a strong sense of trust and brotherhood which kept the structure relatively tightly knit. It is no surprise, therefore, that by the end of the war these combatants had forged very close networks and alliances amongst themselves. Granted, there were sub-groups within the organisation, mainly built around sub-regional affiliation, but by the end of the conflict there was a clear understanding that the KLA combatants needed to take care of each other. This sense of loyalty for one another, these bonds of camaraderie, would eventually feed into the organisational and political relations of the war-wing parties.

According to FMC 01, a respondent from PDK, one can never and should never forget about the comrades of war. "In fact, the inclusion of former combatants in politics has helped democracy, because in that way even the remotest member (veteran) of the war could seek, and obtain, answers and accountability from us" (FMC 01). In a sense, this statement illustrates what democracy stands for: it is about giving a voice to one's electorate and fighting for their rights and concerns. In the case at hand, the respondent mentioned the state benefits for war veterans as one of the issues that had not been resolved in Kosovo for around fifteen years after the war. There was a sense that Kosovo institutions were not paying attention to the war veterans and were neglecting passing a law that would enable a basic level of social support for them and their families. "If it was not for members of the KLA who are in politics and who could appeal to their brethren for calm, I am sure we could have had more protests and social tensions such as the kind demanding pensions and other benefits for war veterans" (FMC 01).

The implicit warning of social turmoil is another characteristic of war combatants who became politicians. Herein lies the two-edged sword: as the statement makes it very clear, former combatants as a community may represent a threat to peace and social order,

particularly if their grievances are not being addressed. However, having their representatives in power certainly helps ameliorate those grievances by addressing their concerns or, if that is not possible within a given deadline, by keeping their comrades' potential for social implosion at bay and on check.

As we saw, the chains of camaraderie are forged in the embers of war. That rapport is then transformed into trust (which equals votes) after the war. FMC 01 was very emphatic about pointing out that for him the vote is tantamount with trust. In fact, the inclusion of former combatants in politics was a positive factor also because in that way, former combatants everywhere had a direct access to government for any grievance or complaint in need of address.

But where the line is between representation and accountability from comrades turned politicians, *versus* manifestations of clientelism and corruption? As will be seen below, while war veterans did address a need for representation in the electorate, their war-based alliances served them well in utilising those links for the consolidation of formal institutional relations. It is also interesting to note that the inclusion of former combatants in politics is seen as a stabilising factor. Without that, as claimed above, there would have been almost a sure chance of protests and social turmoil from war veterans seeking benefits. In fact, this is a sentiment one often hears in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia.

3.1.2 Push-pull factors influencing entry into politics, and impacts of entry into politics on post-war opportunities

I think the transformation of political parties is bigger than the people realise. Look at PDK with the new generations. I think they are modernising from inside. They are not a well-organized group; some villages are better off, and some others are poorer. Talk to MPs privately, they want to get jobs for their own community. Apart from getting rich for themselves, they want some of it to trickle down to them, because this is where they get the vote. It is an accountable system (maybe in the wrong way), but history will tell... perhaps a totally normal system for this level of evolution where we are now (CSO 03)

For many respondents, including independent scholars and civil society activists, the inclusion of former combatants into politics is seen as a normal political evolution. They have given a

“significant contribution to post-war Kosovo, by helping found two political parties, making up a large part of the police, and participating in state-building processes” (ACA 01). Additionally, their leaders have been in “constant dialogue with international actors” (ACA 01), which is marked as a praiseworthy characteristic of their political persona, regardless of which party they belong. Such was the case, for example, when both Limaj and Haradinaj – former KLA commanders and leaders of war-wing political parties after the war - gave themselves up to the ICTY at the Hague as soon as indictments against them were brought forth in 2004 and 2006 respectively (ICTY 2019). Another example given is the fact that each coalition government has been made “in concert with international actors”, thereby contributing to stable governments and a unitary position *vis-à-vis* external challenges such as the negotiations with Serbia on Kosovo’s future status (FMC 01).

In Kosovo, the inclusion of former combatants in politics was also a necessity, since there was a segment of the population who for a long time had not supported the LDK or its pacifist movement. These social grievances of this segment of the population were channelled through the clandestine activities of its representatives going back to the Illegality or LPK movement of the early 1980s. For two decades they had operated illegally, and their operations climaxed with the KLA war. Now, in times of peace, it was finally possible for them to take a logical step and enter the mainstream of politics through their own political parties and their representatives.

Such was the fate of FMC 02, one of my respondents, who had been a member of the LPK movement for more than a decade. In the interview, he gave a short account of his engagement from very early on, while he was still a student at university. (Of note, I should stress that in the majority of circumstances, those who eventually became leaders in war had been involved in clandestine activities for years prior to it.) By taking part or organizing protests, writing leaflets, or opposing the regime through sabotage and other similar methods, they began getting to know their kin, and in that way deepening and widening their network. FMC 02, for instance, was acquainted very early on with the likes of Kadri Veseli, Hashim Thaçi or Jakup Krasniqi – leaders of the KLA and of the PDK party after the war. Trust, family ties and friendship were the key lubricants which helped the cogs of resistance grow and move forward. Those ties served them during the war and, according to him, it is normal

to expect that the same ties helped them in their contribution after the war (FMC 02). In fact, would it have been realistic to expect a sudden severing of those ties when the war came to an end? In fact, one could argue that the need to step forward and enter mainstream politics came as a natural progression in their careers, and as a result of grassroots demands made by people who needed their “own kin” in Kosovo’s new institutions.

To claim legitimacy, the respondent FMC 02 reiterated that “we fought for liberation and independence”. However, he clarified that the immediate objective of the armed group was not to enter politics or gain power. This is an important point to make since it dispels accusations that the combatants fought to gain political positions after the war. However, there is no evidence of such plans having taken place, which comes out clearly from the interviews as well.

Further, respondent FMC 02 blamed the “internationals” for having exercised a policy of “divide and rule” amongst Albanians, and for having destroyed and looted the “economic basis” of the country. He was very critical of the non-armed political actors who, as he claimed, did very little, or nothing, to reach out to those who had fought. The combatants were “bleeding” and were fatigued from the war; they needed rehabilitation, they had lost their loved ones. On the other hand, politicians who had served in the West began returning to Kosovo, “full of money, fully charged, in good health and with their healthy families” (FMC 02). They were returning and occupying space in political life. They spoke the language which the international community wanted to hear. The respondent was also explicit in stating that some of these returnees were trained to further the agendas of others, not excluding those of Serbia (FMC 02).

Considering this situation, it was normal that a number of combatants who had charisma, who were more active and ambitious, would rise to the occasion and enter politics so as to defend their interests and those of their constituency (FMC 02). It was to be expected that the representatives of the armed faction would look after each other’s interest. Besides, the enemy was still lurking in our midst, working to topple the fragile peace achieved and to return Serbia back to Kosovo. The KLA representatives saw themselves as guardians of the new state and as such, were prepared to sacrifice further in its defence. Considering these

circumstances, it seems that the issue of “bottom-up request for representation” (FMC 02) was naturally born after the war. This expression – bottom-up request for representation – was used by the above respondent to illustrate that the desire for political representation came from the people themselves. Once the conflict was over, the people were the ones who called upon former combatants to lead them in times of peace, too. In post-war Kosovo, former combatants needed to make their voices heard and, in addition, there was a whole swathe of the population who also looked up to them for direction and leadership. In fact, to cease political activity altogether, in addition to being disarmed and demobilised, would in fact have been irresponsible and antipatriotic.

During my fieldwork I had the opportunity to speak to a number of former KLA combatants who had also served in the Information Service of Kosovo (known with its Albanian acronyms SHIK or Shërbimi Informativ i Kosovës). SHIK was the intelligence and counterintelligence wing of the KLA. Instead of ceasing their activities, after the war they grew further and were transformed into the intelligence wing of PDK. Its members are alleged to have been involved in sabotage, coercion and intimidation of Albanian “collaborators” and political enemies. A number of deaths and death threats after the war are attributed to SHIK. Of course, its members would not portray their organisation with such sinister colours. For them, SHIK was an essential part of state-building that positioned itself at the forefront of national security and dealt with uncovering and pre-empting threats that came from Serbia or its collaborators living in Kosovo.

For example, respondents FMC 02, FMC 06 and FMC 08, and had been active members of SHIK for many years. As such, they had a very clear stance regarding certain individuals with a non-KLA background: for them, many of these individuals were under the payroll of the enemy and promoted certain agendas from abroad. Once war came to an end, they continued and even intensified their activities, sabotaging the state-building process and “throwing mud on the just war conducted by the KLA”. Taken from that point of view, it is clear why the respondents considered it important for former combatants turned politicians to be the custodians of the nascent state. Their guardianship was an imperative for its existence (FMC 02, FMC 06 and FMC 08).

There is no evidence, therefore, that might suggest that the KLA combatants were already conspiring to take over the politics of the country while the fighting was still raging. Nevertheless, when the war came to an end, the circumstances for political engagement were such that it seemed natural for combatants to form their own political parties. As another respondent noted, post-war Kosovo ushered a new era in which the former combatants saw an opportunity to improve their economic wellbeing, and as a result their social standing. “It was the underdogs trying to get the upper hand in many ways. It was as much about Albanians freeing up themselves from the Serbs as it was about them becoming a factor after the war” (CSO 03). Just like the communists used to be the political elite that had seen the height of its fame and power in the old regime, so were the KLA combatants intent on becoming the main powerholders in today’s Kosovo.

Gradually, politics came to be recognised as an asset, or the only real asset, for personal and professional development. In a post-war ruined economy such as Kosovo’s, where there was no network of support as such, politics began to be viewed not just as means for gathering power but also as an opportunity for career and professional development.

This brings me to an interesting point, which is what happens when politics becomes the asset for development and growth in a transitional society. How differently is politics viewed when there are meagre alternatives for development and there is a destroyed economy? In such a scenario politics could be viewed as the means to develop professionally, to get rich and to provide for the inner circle. In such a way one begins to create a network of friends and family that they represent through the platform of democracy, but that they also provide for in return for their allegiance and support. This seems to be a nascent form of clientelism which is reinforced and almost takes a life of its own as it becomes a standard operating procedure in a new democracy. Politics as an asset thus resembles a medusa out of which its tentacles grow, and which is conditioned and dependent by it. Take higher education with the public University of Prishtina, for example: it is a widely accepted claim that politics (read: the war wing political parties) had an active interest in influencing who would be nominated in its leadership (Rector and deans) positions. By having its people in such posts, PDK could then use the University as a platform for educating younger generations and potentially grooming a new generation of supporters and party apparatchiks (OPP 01).

Indoctrination and party loyalty do not just start at higher education level. Primary school directors are also party appointees. “They will ensure that most of the teachers belong to his party. This is spread everywhere, even at kindergarten level. Your belonging to an institution is measured against your political party affiliation. This corrodes, eats away the substance of the state” (OPP 02).

3.2 Nature and duration of state capture by former combatants

This second section of the Kosovo sub-chapter focuses on the second phase of the combatants’ inclusion in politics, which is their impact on democracy and institutions. With the consolidation of the war-wing parties we witnessed the creation of a new political and social class, comprised of KLA veterans, their families and friends. This section will therefore examine the rise of the new masters and what this has meant for democracy in Kosovo. It will also analyse the intricate nature of relations between politicians and voters, highlighting clear patterns of a patron *versus* client rapport, which points at the phenomenon of clientelism as one of the defining features of Kosovo’s fledgling democracy today. Lastly, this section will look at the role that the international community has had on maintaining the status quo, emphasising stability while hampering true democratic principles.

3.2.1 The rise of the new masters

The competitive value system happened overnight, in a place where values are up for grabs; and when you don’t have this settled value structure, it becomes a battle of groups. What is the difference between LDK, PDK and AAK? Have they said anything different about the VAT? No. Have you ever heard them having different positions on health care? Or different position on customs tax? There is absolutely no ideological difference between them. VV is a party established by a particular socio-economic group established by a particular socio-economic position. There we have a difference. So the battle of the major parties in Kosovo is not ideological; it is about who grabs power. This is not just the combatants, it is the overall political culture in Kosovo. With combatants, the only thing is that it is a bit more accentuated, because they have the right feeling to be disillusioned in many ways, because they contributed, they gave their limbs, risked their lives. And they have a dose of thanklessness from the society, and they are right to feel this way [disillusioned, disappointed] (CSO 03)

The Kosovo conflict with Serbia was in way a civil war in the making enmeshed in a liberation war. This kind of statement echoed throughout several interviews that I conducted. In both societies – that of Kosovo and FYR Macedonia - the combatants often represented the “underdogs” of ethnic Albanian society. In FYR Macedonia, the ethnic Albanian parties that had represented their community from the country’s independence right to 2001 when the armed conflict erupted were mainly members of intelligentsia and from urban areas. The

same goes for Kosovo. The biggest party throughout the 1990s was the LDK, comprised of intellectuals such as writers, literary critics, doctors, journalists and, certainly, persons who did quite well economically during Yugoslav times.

The “war parties”, on the other hand, represented another side of the ethnic Albanian society. They were often the traditionally underprivileged, marginalised ones, and they came from rural and isolated areas. But they were committed to grasp the momentum gained with the advent of the KLA and entrench themselves in decision-making positions in Prishtina after the war. Indeed, the tensions which arose within the Albanian factions in Kosovo during and in the immediate aftermath of the conflicts led many to suggest that we were witnessing the potential of a civil war (CSO 04; CSO 06). In the end, there was no civil war, but there was a definitive changeover of the political landscape in favour of the war-wing parties. In other words, we saw the creation of the war-wing parties and their eventual penetration of the political system through democratic vote all the way to the highest levels of government. During this process we also witnessed the creation and consolidation of post-war masters which dominates Kosovo’s political and economic scene to date. This new class of the rich and the powerful consists mainly of those former combatants who are now politicians, their families and entrusted friends, mutually supported by a network of businessmen and oligarchs in the making.

One of my respondents who is a civil society activist - CSO 06 - was very clear that had it not been for the inclusion of former combatants in security structures, and perhaps more importantly, their entrance in politics, post-war Kosovo would have been faced with a civil war “in the face of 45 thousand NATO troops” that were deployed to keep the peace in the territory after the war. Their political role was therefore unquestionable, and their impact on every process of democratization and state-building is clearly marked. However, their role was perhaps supposed to be short-lived in the transitional period in post-war Kosovo. But this transition happened to continue for many more years than people hoped. Consequently, the role of former combatants turned politicians was also stretched and is currently in its second decade. The downside to this was that it “depressed the growth of political elites, enabled combatants to access the wealth of nation, where they enhanced their formal and informal influence and from where they withdrew benefits” (CSO 06).

The end of the war saw not just the leap from conflict to peace, and from a communist regime to a democratic system of governance. It saw a transplantation of political classes in favour of the war-wing faction. My respondent codenamed OPP 01 - a former civil society activist and now a member of the LDK opposition party - touched upon the very sensitive issue of post-conflict Kosovo, which is the animosity that existed between the KLA and its successor parties (mainly PDK), and the LDK. As the war was nearing the end, it was becoming increasingly clear that in parallel with the war against Serbia, Kosovo was also undergoing an elite, class struggle. The KLA represented the more marginalized, rural and younger part of the Albanian population who had fought clandestinely for many years, as opposed to the LDK which was run by literary critics, writers, journalists, professors and doctors. The latter, although they had been equally suppressed as their Albanian kin, had nevertheless been luckier at gaining education and a better standard of living under Yugoslavia (OPP 01). The end of the war made these differences crystal clear: KLA young men were eager to move to Prishtina and make use of opportunities one enjoys in freedom, such as gain education, enter politics, open businesses, and in the process, become wealthy. This also meant that they quickly started becoming part of the urban elite, however artificially that seemed to be enforced. The incumbent-elite, on the other hand, were left staring at the rapidly-changing land-space taking shape in front of their eyes and, what's more, in their territory, "their" capital city. This was, essentially, a leap from war to peace, a jump from village to city, and a dramatic change of elite structures.

These claims are echoes by CSO 02 – a civil society activist and an expert of the security sector. Although the goal of the KLA was to liberate the country, their sub-goal once the war was over was indeed to create their own elite. In the end, together with creating democratic institutions, Kosovo was faced with a clash between the elite of socialist Yugoslavia and the "war-related elite" (CSO 02).

How did this come about? What were some of the means that the former combatants employed to become the nouveau riche? Above I have written about their successful transformation from guns to ballot paper and their submission to the democratic will of the people. This process of being elected as representatives of the people elevated them to

mainstream politics and enabled them to gain influence. However, another method, strategically employed to ensure longevity for the new elite structures, was gaining control of the management of the public university. The only public university in Kosovo until very recently was the University of Prishtina, which accommodates around 40,000 students. The PDK was instrumental in penetrating its management structures and implanting its own men in decision-making positions. As a result, most of the rectors and several deans in the last two decades have also been PDK officials or very close to the party leadership. This was done because, “for them, this was a tool for upward mobility, so you want to control that. You get lots of kids from your area to get educated, so that you can get them into the party, into boards, in the public sector, and you need to do that as fast as you can” (CSO 03). This is exactly what has been happening in Kosovo in the last two decades.

During my fieldwork I also spoke with FMC 07 who is now retired. He is a former high-ranking officer of the Yugoslav Army. Like many in his situation, with the beginning of the break-up of Yugoslavia he managed to obtain early retirement and avoided taking sides in the upcoming conflicts. Instead, he retreated home in Kosovo and did not reappear in public life until the war was over. As UNMIK and NATO set up the KPC he was recruited to share his expertise for the young recruits of the latter. However, he recalled the “humiliation” he experienced from the young KLA men who branded him a “communist”, and who forced him into a subservient role. “We were pushed aside, and we were commanded by someone who might not have even had their primary school completed” (FMC 07).

These young men were the new upcoming elite of Kosovo. My interviewee’s and his fellow men’s personal relationship with this new elite (who were all much younger than him) was highly acrimonious and shrouded in suspicion. As much as he would have wanted to assist the KLA, he would have been viewed with suspicion. He would have been considered a former collaborator of the enemy and, as a member of their security structures, might have even been involved in crushing Albanian demonstrations during the 1980s in the streets of Prishtina. In addition, the younger commanders who were professionally untrained and unprepared in matters of complex warfare strategies, would have viewed him as a competition. Let us not forget that within the KLA and the successor KPC structures there was stiff competition for positions, and the young commanders would have not viewed lightly the

prospect of taking orders from a “communist” and a “traitor”. As a result, in the rising order of post-war Kosovo even former Generals had to oblige to the instructions of the new generation of KLA commanders, ie. the representatives of the nouveau riche.

In the end, what matters is who has the upper hand. Who has the power to set the terms for the future? The rising elite that originated from the armed struggle were determined to gain monopoly over those terms. In the end, it is about the dominance of “big men”, i.e. the heads of family and patronage systems who continue to dominate the country by speaking the language of democracy and by offering promises of peace and stability. These “big men” are dominant personalities with a legitimized right to power and resources no matter the form of notional or rhetorical institutions, norms, and laws (Kanin 2003, p. 492).

According to a Member of Parliament from an opposition party in Kosovo, OPP 02, the battle of the major parties in Kosovo is not ideological; it is about who grabs power. Indeed, what is the difference between the PDK, AAK and Nisma (all of whom derived from the war) in Kosovo today? Have they said anything different about the VAT? Have you ever heard them having different positions on health care? Or do they have different positions on customs tax? There is no ideological difference between them. “This is not just the combatants, it is the overall political culture in Kosovo. With combatants, the only thing is that is a bit more accentuated, because they have the right feeling to be disillusioned in many ways, because they contributed, they gave their limbs, risked their lives” (OPP 02).

Today, he continues, the ultimate ambition is to get a job in administration/civil service. “Ask a young man: where do you wish to get a job? They will tell you it is the civil service, starting from being a janitor to getting a job as a taxman, where you could possibly get rich. We need to do what Finland did after WWI: they spent billions of euros in education” (OPP 02). There are serious problems in this regard too: the biggest employer is state administration (civil service), which does not bode well for a small country such as Kosovo, its private sector and its economy. Civil service is indeed viewed as a haven not just from unemployment, but also from an irregular private job market, where you are likely to have your employee rights trampled.

3.2.2 Client-patron relationship

In his paper titled succinctly “Clientelism” Hicken (2011) provides a short but thorough literature review on the definition of “client” and “patron” and, by extension, of “clientelism”. According to him, at the heart of the phenomenon is the “dyadic relationship” between politicians and voters, fostered by an ongoing transaction of support for the former in exchange for discriminatory favours for the latter.

Politicians supply benefits only to individuals or groups that support or promise to support the politician. Likewise, the client supports only that politician who delivers, or promises to deliver, a valued benefit in return for the client’s electoral support (Hicken 2011, p. 291)

Unlike, say, the example of bribing a police officer which may be a one-off event, the clientelistic transaction is a long-term cycle of mutual and exclusive dependency. This means that clientelism is not unlike a single act of bribery in the sense that an illicit transaction has occurred for the benefit of a select group of individuals. But it is more than a simple bribery in the sense that it is iterated, structurally perpetuated and self-sustained in a wider society.

The former (read: bribery) are (hopefully) one-off interactions, with neither party having a strong expectation of interacting in the future. By contrast, clientelism is at its core an iterated interaction, with each side anticipating future interactions as they make decisions about their behavior today (Hicken 2011, p. 292)

This sort of relationship, based in iterated rounds of mutual dependency, is what makes the politician a patron and the voter a client.

OPP 02, an opposition party representative as well as a member of the Assembly of Kosovo, is of the opinion that the politician-voter relationship created in Kosovo after the war is typically clientelistic. He argues that the inception of such a relationship may be detected when a person is promised a job not because of their ability but because of their connection to powerful people in politics.

You can get a job if you have connections with a network which will accommodate you. Otherwise, you may be the smartest guy, have a PhD, and you may still be unemployed. You and your family may prosper in proportion with your personal proximity with the people that control and that accommodate (OPP 02)

Echoing above's note by Hicken (2011) on iteration, a number of respondents have stressed the long-term effect of clientelism. Talking about war veterans who have entered politics, OPP 03 – herself a former civil society and now a Member of Parliament – states, “Yesterday they did not fear death, today they do not fear the law, because they sense that they made these laws and institutions and they feel entitled. For them, it is entirely normal to accommodate their closed ones” (OPP 03). This rings quite true in a country such as Kosovo where the rate of unemployment is very high but there is a big and burdensome civil service that lives off the taxpayers' money. For political parties – i.e. the nouveau riche - especially the war-wing ones, the challenge is to employ as many of their own supporters in key positions in administration because this leads to dual benefits: it is beneficial for the supporter who will get a job and consequently be in a position to help their family, and it is beneficial for the party as they will be able to further strengthen the ties with the supporter and their network. But, as we will see from the quote below, clientelism is long-lasting, which counts for its iteration and its vicious circle.

Clientelism does not come to an end when you get a job. Clientelism is eternal and makes you eternally dependent on it. The fact that you got a job does not mean you are safe from it. You will be checked on a regular basis: are you following the line? How many of your family have we employed for you? How many new members have you managed to recruit for us? It is a periodical verification. You need to photograph your vote. So, even when you are employed, you have this Sword of Damocles that hangs over your neck. Even if you are not employed, there is the network of false hopes. I have seen it myself. They say to people, when we win, I will take your daughter to work in the municipality. And of course, if you are earning 300 euros a month and there are six of you in a family, how the hell are you supposed to survive with those 300 euros. This will keep around 100,000 to 150,000 stable votes for the party (OPP 02)

Above I spoke about the inherently democratic wish of a certain part of the population to be politically represented by KLA veterans. When the conflict was over in 1999, freedom was the first prize that the people of Kosovo were able to cherish. However, the enjoyment of this freedom was quickly tainted by the realisation of the challenges laying ahead. Kosovo was a country with a collapsed economy, poor infrastructure and no legal framework (until the UN Administration began building one from scratch). The need to create jobs and opportunities in a place whose economy was destroyed to the ground was imminent. Building a viable future was a task that, almost by default, fell upon the political and military leaders of the

time. A significant portion of this leadership came from the KLA ranks, enjoying as they did a large popular following.

However, one of the persisting problems is how former commanders use their war-time hierarchical links to avoid formal structures and institutions. “Several local and regional commanders refused to play by institutional rule and worked hard to maintain their underground regional networks and remain still very powerful. In many cases they control who gets elected locally and in the national assembly from their region” (CSO 06). A great number of former combatants continue to give a valuable contribution in daily life, be it in academia, civil service, security structures, politics etc. However, it seems as if, with the consolidation of democratic institutions, certain powerful figures have learned to circumvent democracy’s basic rules of checks and balances. By using their influence and links on the ground, they have been able to influence who gets elected to what office, and how the people vote. At first glance, such elections might prove to be free and fair, as most of them have indeed been noted by international observers. However, the underlying problems are numerous, and they relate to how these powerful figures prepare the ground for votes, so that when their persons are elected, the outcome is indeed a free and fair one. These are just some of the basic problems faced in a fragile democracy.

These veterans had the credibility and enjoyed the support to run and even win elections. However, in the context of a destroyed economy as well as burgeoning needs of the electorate for support, the war veterans who became politicians turned to clientelist practices as a quick-fix for the daunting challenges ahead. “When the war was over, the clans counted on the patronage of KLA commanders for access to jobs and resources. In the context of widespread deprivation, such use of networks is very common and often not controversial or illicit” (Dziedzic, Mercean and Skendaj 2016, p. 161).

This is in a way how the first seeds of a clientelistic structure were planted: in a virtually lawless society that had just emerged from war, the need for direction, resources and jobs was an existentialist emergency. The leaders who would trace the way forward were former commanders who were slowly reinventing themselves as politicians. However, in a place where guns and muscle still spoke louder than words and law, the KLA commanders or their

delegates fed off the clientelistic networks and practices. Practices of racketeering and organised crime were gradually becoming means for quick enrichment. The international administration led by the UN was aware of what was happening. However, their level of tolerance, or even collusion, was quite high (Belloni and Strazzari 2014; Distler 2018). Maintaining peace also meant ensuring that the former rebels were committed to it and one way of making sure they had a seat at the table was to tolerate some of these illicit activities. “When KFOR and UNMIK intervened in June 1999, prominent KLA commanders controlled illicit, clan-based power structures that opposed the peace process through violent means, but their interests were negotiable (Dziedzic, Mercean and Skendaj 2016, p. 191).

CSO 03 is a long-time civil society activist who has written quite extensively on governance issues in Kosovo and the wider Balkan region. In our conversation about corruption and democratisation in Kosovo, he was of the view that things should be analysed from the point of view of those who are involved in clientelistic relations. Taking such a point of view should shed light on the genuine causes behind it.

Corruption is a fairly well-accepted value in our society. To call someone corrupt will not necessarily erode their voting base. This is a clientelistic system, a pyramidal one, where a person who is seen as clientelistic, his people see him as someone who is trying to get a piece of the pie in this very unjust system – their very own Robin Hood (CSO 03)

The respondent’s argument is a sobering one: far from positioning himself in defence of clientelistic practices, he understands the corrosive effect they have on democracy. But at the same time, he is cognisant of the circumstances reigning in a society in transition such as Kosovo’s. “This was the logic during the war, and before it. If you lived in a village and all you saw was the police, what level of organization are you gonna flock towards? It is your kin! The family is going to provide for you, they will take care of your kid” (CSO 03). Likewise, in times of peace and in a ruined economy, one will flock to the politician who will commit to providing for them.

However, discerning between genuine democratisation efforts and clientelistic manoeuvring is a challenge. How much of the war veterans’ accession to power can be attributed to

democratic means *versus* clientelistic alliances? This is a question which begets no easy answer.

Former KLA leaders turned politicians undertook a successful transition into post-war politics in Kosovo. They were able to get elected through their respective political parties, and the war legacy was certainly a major factor contributing to their election. Let us not forget that their war time-forged friendships, their camaraderie contributed greatly their popular success in post-war politics (ACA 01)

However, once in power, this “network of alliances” was further nourished and cultivated by “distributing jobs and services” to friends and family (ACA 01). The line, therefore, between democratic representation and clientelism became increasingly blurred.

What is also blurred are the lines between formal and informal relations impacting governance in Kosovo. I have referred above to the camaraderie-based, regional and family alliances and networks that associate the former KLA combatants. With the set-up of the institutions and the legal framework, Kosovo made great strides towards institutionalising public and political life. However, those informal networks may still operate underground, thus undermining formal and official government business. For politicians/patrons and their networks it is vital that informality is maintained so as to be able to attract further riches and power.

My respondent, OPP 02 – Member of Parliament from opposition ranks – describes the formal versus informal relationship in this way:

Here, the political power is created for the benefit of clans and narrow groups. I do not think that the public good is a priority. The law is like the spider’s net: it catches small creatures, ants, but cannot stop big animals. You see this on a daily basis: the policeman will let someone go and not fine him in traffic because he is close to power. The law lets the powerful go and penalises the weak. The same is replicated at the highest levels, where people strive to get wealthy at the detriment of the public good. Even when a law is pushed forth, there might be narrow personal or clan-based interests at play, instead of public interests (OPP 02)

Most respondents, apart from the former combatants themselves, shared the opinion that Kosovo is shrouded in a system which is deeply corrupt and clientelistic, and which has an

impact of the consolidation of democracy. Most of them also voiced their belief that, although others are also to be blamed, the main culprits are the war-wing parties.

Respondent ACA 07 is an expert on nationalism studies and on the Balkans. He has worked for many years in Kosovo with international organisations and the government. He makes a few concise points to show that not only are these parties corrupt but that their corruption is also directly impacting on democracy. There is plenty of evidence, he explains, that embroil the war-wing parties in corruption. PDK and AAK have to “varying degrees manifested the ills of corruption, personal and familial embezzlement, illiberal politics, control of media and contributing to the entrenchment of new elite which stifle democracy” (ACA 07). He recalled many instances when during his own research he encountered people who were scared of the reaction of the war-wing parties to criticism from the media and civil society. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that “the quality of democracy has not been markedly improved by the armed groups transformed into political parties (ACA 07).

The evidence from the interview data suggests that the entrance of combatants in politics was generally good for democracy as it has diversified the offers for the electorate. It was good for combatants as they managed to find a new objective after the war, and it was good for their electorate as they now also felt they had a voice in politics through war veterans. However, the evidence also suggests that in the long-run this political transformation was blighted by corruption, clientelist practices and the penetration of informal politics in formal institutional conduct.

Respondent ACA 07 further believed most former guerrilla leaders in politics have not been successful as political leaders. “They have shown illiberal tendencies and through state jobs, nepotism, favouritism and through non-transparent political campaign financing have been able to rule a “democracy by numbers” system whereby they can dominate the political scene and entrench themselves as leading parties or king-making politicians” (ACA 07).

Other respondents have also noted the ability/agility of war-wing parties in this democracy of ruling by numbers. Over the past decade or so, elections have generally confirmed free, fair and transparent conduct. Observers have confirmed the results of elections as being fair

and correct. However, such observations fail to provide deeper examination on how the voters are organised, how they choose to vote for the party's favourite candidates, and how social structures at local or regional level are mobilized that succeed in pushing forward their preferred candidates. It is these structures and games that happen behind the scene that help certain individuals "entrench themselves" in the political scene (CSO 03).

This brings us back to the issue of structures and alliances that are needed to maintain this unholy dyadic relationship between patron and client. In the post-war period when the new parties were created, "soldiers were not only subordinates, they were votes, campaign and instruments to enhance power" (CSO 03). These social structures were initially used to access power and gain wealth. Once in power, the circle of friends and families (read: clients) whose interests had to be looked after in exchange for political support, continued to grow and to feed off itself. Clientelism is thus transformed into a black hole that continues to suck until there is nothing left, at which point a social implosion could be possible. But what is the way out? "We (opposition party) are trying to open the people's eyes by telling them that by voting for them (read: war-wing parties) you are perpetuating this situation" (OPP 02). But this is easier said than done because, "people are not disposed to think in terms of collective damage, and of abstract consequences. When the personal benefit is placed in juxtaposition with the collective damage, they will choose the former" (OPP 02).

3.2.3 The culpability of the international community

A clear gap can be noted between Kosovo's statebuilding needs and the role the international community has played in seeking to reduce those fragilities: in numerous areas, international actors and donors actually did precisely the opposite, and have to some extent consolidated those fragilities. The reason for this can also be found in the international actors' prioritisation of establishing short-term security in Kosovo at the price of long term sustainable peace and economic development (Montanaro 2009, p. 19).

When war came to an end in 1999, Kosovo proved to be a suitable terrain for the enactment of a liberal peacebuilding paradigm that promoted sustainable peace, democratic consolidation and development. However, twenty years later – out of which almost ten were a direct UN protectorate - the quality of democracy continues to be challenged by corruption and informal practices. With all the interviewees I spoke to – regardless of political leanings - there was a joint agreement that Kosovo had a long way to go to reaching a consolidated and

deeply-entrenched democracy, with high levels of participation and with embedded transparency and accountability. But the fault as to why the country has not reached that point yet is more complex and multi-faceted.

If by democratization one means the construction of a robust democracy, with a responsive elite and high levels of participation, this is not what one can observe in Kosovo, but the reason for this is to be found in the role the United Nations and other international actors have played in demobilizing both the elites and the citizenry. As for the ultimate goal of a truly democratic country where minorities are integrated and protected, the responsibility for Kosovo's failure in this regard falls on both domestic and international actors (ACA 01)

The interviewees also underlined that we should not forget the international community's role in building institutions from 1999 to 2008. We should also take into account their role in supporting national institutions and even continuing to exercise a limited executive mandate in certain areas after independence such as the rule of law and the judiciary. As respondent ACA 01 noted above, the UN and other international actors cannot avoid responsibility for "demobilizing both the elites and the citizenry". Since the end of the war, we have indeed seen a marginalization of former elites, and the substitution of that elite with a new one. The new elite has largely come from the ranks of former combatants, whose representatives become some of the main interlocutors of the "internationals" after the war. A similar story occurred with the "citizenry" which, after the establishment of UN structures in 1999, began to be quickly transplanted with numerous civil society organizations, supported by international donors and very much promoting the latter's agenda of the day.

ACA 01 is an international academic who has previously lived in Kosovo and has written extensively about the conflict. She emphasises that although Kosovo is now independent and has its own institutions, this was not so the case for almost a decade after the 1999 war. Between then and 2008 when independence was declared, the UN Administration had executive powers and, consequently, they are partly to be blamed for the democratic discourse. "International actors bear most of the responsibility for what Kosovo has become (...) because for almost ten years they have held extraordinary power. For example, justice is a key sector that works less well than others." (ACA 01). It is no coincidence that the respondent refers to the justice sector, seeing as it continues to be one of the weakest aspects in Kosovo's system.

In retrospect, it is evident that the main priority for international actors in Kosovo was to maintain security and stability. Since the KLA combatants posed an immediate threat after the war, it seemed logical that the attention is directed towards ensuring their demobilisation and disarmament. However, this was not enough: their engagement with the political representatives of the armed group was gradually transformed into a long-term partnership that sought to build institutions and transit to democracy, while keeping the peace. More than a willing partnership on the side of the international community, this seemed like a pragmatic approach. “If you want peace, you must negotiate with ‘men with guns’. That is a prerequisite” (CSO 05). That is exactly what the international actors did. Ideally, you would want to negotiate with them until outlive their usefulness and help replace them with a new generation of local leaders. “If you manage later to discredit those leaders (armed combatants) and find new ones, that is a recipe for democratic consolidation” (CSO 05). However, this is not how it transpired in practice seeing as the new political elite deriving from the armed group went from strength to strength, rendering political alternatives less important and positioning itself at central stage. Since this elite is also involved in corruption and clientelistic practices, the international actors have found themselves in a predicament between not engaging as a matter of principle or engaging and closing an eye. Taking a pragmatic approach, they almost always engaged and, in the process, cohabited with local politics where illicit practices are quite widespread.

4. FYR Macedonia

4.1 The integration and political transformation of former combatants

As explained in the Methods chapter, this first part of the FYR Macedonia sub-chapter will deal specifically with the act of the transfer of NLA combatants into politics. Like the Kosovo sub-chapter, the act of the NLA’s political transformation will be examined against the backdrop of their war legacy, followed by an analysis as to the reasons why they undertook such a transformation: a bottom-up, popular request for representation *versus* an opportunistic career opportunity.

4.1.1 The persistence of war experiences and relationships, and the decision to enter politics

The DUI leader, Ali Ahmeti, is widely reported to have been at the head of the NLA during the conflict in 2001. I guess it was this – his conflict-time credentials – that enabled him to gain and maintain the party leadership since then (ACA 03)

The NLA trajectory from war to peace and from combat to ballot box, draws many parallels with the KLA. Just like with the KLA, the NLA veterans were able to benefit from the war legacy for many years after the conflict. In doing so, they assembled around the DUI party, thus becoming the most voted party among ethnic Albanians in FYR Macedonia since 2001 to date. As explained in the historical background chapter, the armed conflict in 2001 between the NLA and the Macedonian army was relatively minor and short-lived. The result that came at the end of it was the Ohrid Framework Agreement, signed by the parties in 2001 (Risteska and Daskalovski 2011). For the ethnic Albanian community, the NLA was viewed to be the motor that spearheaded developments in FYR Macedonia and broke the unequal political lull existing between the Macedonian and ethnic Albanian parties in governing coalitions. For them, the coalition was an unfair and unequal arrangement that offered Albanian parties a symbolic role in government in return for very little for their community at large. Their grievances went unaddressed, and the question of the status quo that maintained a de facto second-class citizen status for ethnic Albanians, was silently stifled (FMC 06).

The armed conflict shook everything up and demanded a resolution for this status quo. The Ohrid Agreement that brought the conflict to an end was generally seen as a good and beneficial result for the ethnic Albanian community. As a result, the NLA were to be thanked for this, first and foremost. The NLA combatants and its leadership were regarded as heroes and gained massive popularity. The war aura about their contribution in the conflict has accompanied their political lives since then, catapulting them onto the forefront of Macedonian politics ever since. Whilst today this aura does not shine as brightly as it used to, the political successors of the NLA armed group continue to enjoy a relatively large support from the ethnic Albanian electorate.

Before the conflict erupted, the main political parties that represented the ethnic Albanian community were the Party for Democratic Prosperity and the Democratic Party of Albanians. The leaders of both parties were signatories of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. What is

unique about this Agreement is that, unlike the practice with most peace agreements, OFA was not signed by the parties of the conflict, i.e. the NLA representatives and the Macedonian army. Instead, it was signed only by parliamentary parties while its key content began to be implemented through constitutional reform rather than coming into force directly (Ruffer 2017). However, despite the above parties being signatories to the peace agreement, the NLA was viewed as the actual force that did the hard labour which led to the agreement in the first place.

As part of the OFA package was the demobilisation and reintegration of NLA combatants. However, in view of the increased popularity of the rebel group, its leader Ali Ahmeti and his friends decided to create their own political party called the Democratic Union of Albanians (DUI). Certainly, cashing in on the gained popularity was one reason. However, just like with the KLA, this was also a question of “organizational survival” and “collective incentive strategy” (Manning 2004, p. 66). Disbanding altogether and returning to private lives, and then letting the other Albanian parties take over the implementation of the Ohrid Agreement seemed counterintuitive, and self-defeatist. In fact, ceasing activities altogether after the conflict would have been tantamount to giving up on struggle for their community’s rights in FYR Macedonia. Besides, what was the point of having fought in the first place? (ACA 07). These were some of the internal deliberations of the NLA leadership leading to their decision to turn to politics. In hindsight, it seemed like the normal course of action following the armed conflict.

The “war image” (ACA 02) has served DUI well in more than fifteen years of its existence. Having this advantage vis-à-vis the other Albanian parties enabled DUI to almost wipe out any competition and claim a sort of monopoly over the ethnic Albanian electorate. In addition to the advantage of this war legacy, DUI was able to harness its regional and local network as well as their networks of family and friends. Their war record also equipped them with the credibility that they are loyal to the “cause”. Officially the “cause” was to gain equal rights for ethnic Albanians within a democratic and multi-ethnic FYR Macedonia. Indeed, during the conflict the NLA had sent communique no. 6 which emphasised that their “objective was not the separation of the country but greater rights for ethnic Albanians in Macedonia” (FMC 06). However, for some DUI still harbours ideals to unite Albanian-inhabited territories to Kosovo

and/or Albania. Of course, this is pure speculation since DUI is very much involved in political processes in FYR Macedonia. However, the nationalistic past of its leadership, be it when they fought in NLA or prior to that in the Illegality movement, still makes some doubt DUI's true intentions. "Does DUI belong to the state? How do they see the (Macedonian) state? What sort of flag do they have in their cabinet? In their party HQ you see US, EU, Albanian flags, but you do not see a Macedonian flag?" (CSO 01). The question of loyalty, therefore, has served DUI as a double-edged sword: while for Macedonians their political aims may be viewed with some suspicion, it has served them to harness support from the Albanian side precisely they are viewed as a nationalist party.

4.1.2 Push-pull factors influencing entry into politics, and impacts of entry into politics on post-war opportunities

Since its establishment DUI was very successful in positioning itself as the war-wing party, managing to hold the monopoly of the Albanian vote for more than fifteen years now, and playing the king-maker of all coalition governments since 2001 (bar the period 2004-07). "The image of the war hero", ACA 02 states, continues to give this party the political advantage which galvanizes the ethnic Albanians into showing their support for it. However, their contribution into bettering the socio-economic conditions of the people they seek to represent, has been meagre. More than anything else, this party has managed to cement itself into a power-sharing arrangement with the Macedonian coalition party, also known as "tender-coalition", which divides government grants and tenders in accordance with party and individual interests of the few (ACA 02).

The interviewee makes another pertinent point when she sets to critically examine the DDR, qualifying it as a process that should involve the public at large, and if it doesn't, then it is an elite-driven agreement between a few people, thereby failing to trickle down to the society at large. Such was the DDR process in FYR Macedonia, according to her, for the coalition is a "marriage of interest" between DUI and VMRO-DPMNE, struck for pragmatic purposes aimed at benefiting their inner circles. We cannot talk convincingly of a consolidated democracy so long as there has not been a comprehensive and just peace (ACA 02).

Ahmeti is an unchallenged leader since 2002. He never took any state position, except being MP. However, he prefers to stay away from the parliament and to communicate directly with the prime minister (as a rule, he is ethnic Macedonian), and with the electorate through the media. Interestingly,

so far, in 14 years he is never heard to speak Macedonian and has given just couple of interviews for the Macedonian media/to Macedonian journalists. Most of his political and diplomatic activity is run directly from DUI's HQ. Negotiations with the Macedonian counterpart in the government often take place out of the formal institutions, and in times of crisis through mediation of the international community's representatives. Rhetoric on both sides, especially during electoral campaigns, resembles war by words and hate speech (ACA 02).

Again, we see political representatives (in this instance, DUI's leader) utilising informal links with the Prime Minister, his party colleagues or his electorate, as a way of fighting off opposition. Instead of setting an example of how formal structures should be respected, Mr Ahmeti relies of the personal contacts with the above to maintain stability as well as monopoly of the electorate.

Regress in democratic consolidation was the war/violent conflict per se. In 2001 - according to my opinion - there was no genuine internal conflict potential to lead towards violence. It was induced intentionally in order to serve as "catalyst" for faster political change and advancement of collective rights of ethnic Albanians. Having in mind that DPA had already been a coalition partner and many issues on improvement of collective/minority rights had been opened, the use of force was gross setback for the democratization and consolidation process. It took many years to recover from the war trauma, let alone human casualties and other war related costs. Since 2001 the political system transformed into a hybrid power-sharing (bi-national) system that often has nothing to do with democracy but represents cartel of ethnic elites that run the country in accordance to their narrow and lucrative interests. Conflict past has been always used during the electoral campaign and provocation of interethnic incidents (ACA 02).

The war itself served as a "catalyst" for faster political change and advancement of the rights of Albanians in FYR Macedonia. Simultaneously, the war represented regress to the democratic consolidation of the country, because it took several years for society to address issues of war trauma. Since then, far from being a truly inclusive and representative democracy, the political system has morphed into a "hybrid power-sharing and bi-national system", or into a two-tiered, bi-ethnic system in which the two parties are in charge of their respective ethnic communities. The system, as a result, produces a parallel system of governance in which the coalition partners take care of their own insulated interests which serves "the cartel". It is a stable system, in a way, so long as the two coalition partners have

an internal agreement on their respective spheres of influence which coincide pretty much with ethnic lines of division (ACA 02).

4.2. Nature and duration of state capture by former combatants

This second section of the FYR Macedonia sub-chapter focuses on the post-political inclusion phase of the combatants, zooming in on the impact they have had on democratisation processes in the country. Similar to the Kosovo narrative, FYR Macedonia also experienced change of political elites within the ethnic Albanian community, comprised of NLA veterans, their families and friends. This part will examine the rising ethnic Albanian nouveau riche in the country and will dissect the nature of relations between politicians and voters, underlining the patron *versus* client rapport within the Albanian community but also in the wider Macedonian political scene. The specific aspect of clientelism in the Macedonian context is applied against a facet of a power-sharing arrangement between Macedonian and Albanian political parties respectively, which will also be explored below.

4.2.1 The rise of the new masters

Without socially just integration of former combatants and full disarmament, even more - without just peace, trials for war criminals and reconciliation in the society and between the former enemies - democracy is but a distant illusion. The “marriage of interest” between DUI and VMRO-DPMNE (previously SDSM) has been only a pragmatic agreement necessary to stay in power while the rest of the society has never been involved in the process and lives in parallel worlds (ACA 02)

The NLA combatants represented the underdogs of the ethnic Albanian society. In FYR Macedonia, the ethnic Albanian parties that had represented their community from the country’s independence right to 2001 when the armed conflict erupted were mainly members of intelligentsia and from urban areas. Based on the facts on the ground, it is not an exaggeration to claim that alongside the conflict against Macedonian forces, the NLA and its successor party DUI waged a tug war against the existing ethnic Albanian political elite of the country. As stated in the empirical overview chapter, between independence and 2001 FYR Macedonia was governed by a majority Macedonian coalition party and a junior Albanian one. The Party of Democratic Prosperity and the Democratic Party of Albanians respectively had taken turns at being in these coalition governments. According to the leadership of these parties, they had done the utmost to promote the ethnic Albanian interests in the country. Although no one could claim they were happy with the progress made, there were discernible achievements for this community and, more importantly, the ethnic Albanian parties

continued to operate within decision-making bodies of state institutions, as opposed to outside of them (Xhaferi 2017a; Xhaferi 2017b).

However, the rebel group begged to differ. Their position was that the incumbent Albanian political elite had not been sufficiently emphatic at demanding full constitutional rights for ethnic Albanians. They were deemed to be pushovers or even worse, sell-outs of the “national cause”, which was a euphemistic way of calling them traitors. That is why alongside the struggle against Macedonian forces the NLA needed to overthrow the existing Albanian political class in the country. This they did quite successfully by stressing that unlike them, the NLA leadership possessed a war legacy and by galvanising the Albanian community’s nationalist feelings, which were running high after the conflict. Just like in Kosovo, this was an opportunistic strategy at forcing the Macedonian state onto the negotiating table, while simultaneously pushing the rival Albanian parties out of the equation in future elections because the latter had been too soft in demanding equal rights. “Without DUI’s commitment to the Ohrid Agreement it would have been difficult to fully disband the NLA, to persuade armed groups to give up arms and violence and to restore police and army control over the entire territory of the country in the short time period that it took” (ACA 03). After the Ohrid agreement, the two existing Albanian parties offered to integrate Ali Ahmeti and his NLA friends into their structures, but Ahmeti refused to be “under their shadow” (ACA 04). This tactic is similar to that employed by the KLA leadership in Kosovo: why would they agree to be co-opted into existing party structures when they could create their own parties and dominate the political scene? Why share power by being merged with existing structures when one can keep power for themselves?

It was time for those activists of the Illegality movement (LPK) who had operated clandestinely from abroad for many years, gearing support for Kosovo as well as for Albanians in FYR Macedonia, to return home and enter mainstream politics. As a result, DUI became the most voted Albanian party in the country, and still have “no viable alternative. It continues to explore the role of the NLA’s historical win, as they see it. The Ohrid Framework Agreement is their trophy” (ACA 04).

It should not be misunderstood, however, that this changeover of political classes, this rise of the war-related nouveau riche, was somehow undertaken undemocratically. In fact, the rise of DUI, and with it of its network of allies and friends, was a result of it being the most voted party among ethnic Albanians in all elections post-2001. Besides, “without the inclusion of DUI and Ahmeti, Macedonian democracy would certainly have been less representative, as they represent the interests of a large share of the ethnic Albanian community in the country” (ACA 03).

For others, however, the rise of the new political elite was very much a top-down imposition even within NLA ranks, which left aside a lot of “ordinary soldiers”. This is because the reintegration and political transformation from NLA to DUI did not apply to everyone equally. In fact, integration and transformation were another name for providing opportunities as a kind of “privilege for the NLA top bras” (ACA 02). The “ordinary soldiers” often suffered the fate of having to return home with not much to show, or in the best-case scenario, of serving as instruments in the clientelistic web for those “top bras” turned decision-makers in politics or security structures (ACA 02).

This is supported by claims by another respondent, ACA 07, who considers that the objectives of the NLA leadership’s fight were not as pure as stated. Their “propagated goals have been nationalistic but if we look at the social origins and the current trajectories of the leaders turned into politicians, the picture is more nuanced and shows they have also fought for status, power, wealth and prestige” (ACA 07). The war-related nouveau riche is therefore a result of democratically elected political elites who achieved “status, power, wealth and prestige” by pushing rivals out of the game through the installation of a clientelistic system of manipulation and predation, as will be seen below.

4.2.2 Client-patron relationship

The tacit institutionalization of corruption within the hierarchy of the state apparatus – for example through below subsistence civil service wages or the purchase of decision making positions – is a powerful means for rulers to retain the allegiance over its individual members and organizations by providing both an inescapable economic incentive (access to rents/bribes) and a disciplinary threat (dismissal for corruption). Finally, political corruption provides rulers with a means to channel funds

outside through a parallel budget used for political purposes, such as patronage or electoral campaigning – thereby often sustaining a stable – if not just – political order (Le Billon 2001, p. 3)

The evidence from the interview data and literature suggests that the entrance of combatants in politics was generally good for democracy. It helped diversify the political space and increased the range of offers for the electorate. Their political transformation was positive for NLA combatants because they managed to find a new objective after the war, but it was also good for their electorate as they had a voice in politics through war veterans. However, the evidence also suggests that in the long-run this political transformation was blighted by corruption, clientelist practices and the penetration of informal politics in formal institutional conduct (Gromes 2009; Günay and Dzihic 2016; Keil 2018).

Today FYR Macedonia is a young democracy run by a coalition government comprised of a Macedonian and an Albanian party. However, there are strong indications that the “clientelistic networks” as described by Hicken (2011) are very much alive across the political spectrum and especially within the ethnic Albanian electorate. CSO 06 explains that the NLA’s approach to mobilising its electoral base was similar to that employed by the KLA after the war. Namely, once conflict was over those soldiers who were part of the NLA became “votes, campaign and instruments to enhance power” (CSO 06). DUI as a successor party to the NLA was careful to nourish relations with its veteran base and their circle of families and friends. Since they gained almost complete monopoly of the ethnic Albanian vote in FYR Macedonia, they started to practice a method of consolidating its power base by offering jobs and resources to key people and areas, a method which is akin to clientelism.

(...) additional means of maintaining political legitimacy among the electorate are essential for getting re-elected at every election after the end of the conflict in 2001, as the DUI and Ahmeti have done. Therefore, patronage and maintenance of clientelistic networks are crucial for remaining in power, though this is a general hallmark of Macedonian politics, not endemic to political leaders with combatant background (ACA 03)

Through the above quote respondent ACA 03 acknowledges that the political system suffers from patronage and clientelist networks, and that democracy is still to be consolidated in FYR Macedonia. However, there is nothing to suggest that such damaging traits are more evident in parties representing former combatants. It is rather a “general hallmark of Macedonian

politics.” The example of the Albanian community, however, represents a case of the ethnicization of political issues for the benefit of the DUI party. Through every election cycle the instrumentalization of ethnicity becomes the norm of political discourse. The “ethnic card” enters daily political rhetoric, supported by references to the conflict past and the role that the NLA and the DUI leadership had in it. The war credentials certainly help them have legitimacy among their electorate. “Because of such credentials, they are in a position to preempt serious popular discontent, which is stifled or addressed by distributing jobs, contracts or resources” (CSO 06).

It seems that winning elections and maintaining those wins is achieved through two separate methods. To win elections the war wing parties such as DUI refer to their war legacy and the patriotic credentials. These references have helped, for instance, the DUI leader, Ali Ahmeti, to maintain leadership since 2001. “They have won all post-2001 elections and have been members of all but one post-2001 government. So the electorate must be happy with how the party performed in office and how well DUI represented their interest at the national level” (FMC 06). However, in order to maintain power, and at the lack of a genuine and tangible offer for the electorate, feeding the clientelistic network becomes a necessity. Patronage and distribution of jobs and services becomes crucial for remaining in power.

4.2.3 The intricacies of a power-sharing agreement

Since independence the Macedonian government in each of its mandates was formed based on a power-sharing arrangement, according to which there is a senior Macedonian party and a junior Albanian one. Since 2001 DUI has been that junior party in all mandates except one, regardless of which Macedonian party was in power. But how does this power-sharing coalition government really work in practice?

Firstly, for a party that fought the establishment, it is impressive to see how committed the successor NLA party has become to the power-sharing arrangements. They have even become more committed to the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement than the other Albanian parties. For instance, the Democratic Party of Albanians “has frequently asked for a new agreement to replace the Ohrid Agreement, something that Ahmeti has never done” (ACA 03). It is therefore quite impressive to see the transformation of a party’s

leadership from leading an insurgency in a state to becoming a staunch guardian of that same state. However, this enthusiasm for the state and its institutions cannot fully be explained without considering the power-sharing arrangements and the stake of the Albanian junior partner (DUI) in it.

The spirit of the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OSCE 2001) promotes a power-sharing arrangement which ensures non-discrimination and equitable representation of all communities concerned. The international community was called upon to facilitate, monitor and assist in the implementation of the Agreement's provisions which, among others, stated,

Taking into account i.a. the recommendations of the already established governmental commission, the parties will take concrete action to increase the representation of members of communities not in the majority in Macedonia in public administration, the military, and public enterprises, as well as to improve their access to public financing for business development (OSCE 2011, p. 12).

However, in practice, the power-sharing arrangements seem more like a feudal-like parcelling of political space according to ethnic affiliation of the electorate. "Each look within their territory of operation, gaining and maintaining their political influence among their communities and voters" (CSO 06).

When asked about this issue most of my respondents answered rather cynically, stating that the implementation of the Ohrid Agreement has taken the form of everyone taking care of their own turf: while Slavic Macedonians go about the business of consolidating the state, ethnic Albanians are left under the management of their own parties, willing to distribute riches as needed. In that sense, the Macedonian state still resembles a company that outsources or subcontracts certain tasks and responsibilities to a smaller company. The Prime Minister delegates to his junior partner – the ethnic Albanian DUI - a modest share of the budget and jobs, not national policy or governance tasks.

Limited access to state resources hampers DUI's ability to deliver services to the fourteen municipalities it runs. Jobs that can reward loyalists are mostly non-managerial in the public sector, some existing only on paper. They pay a salary but reinforce the message that ethnic Albanians have little role in governing (ICG Report 2015, p. 8).

The political system in FYR Macedonia has been called 'Sultanism' by which one tries to denote organizationally weak political parties that are led by corrupt, authoritarian bosses (Hislope 2005). Once in power, these bosses treat state assets as their own fiefdoms that are to be divided among coalition partners as one would divide spoils.

The way each of the coalition governments has functioned is by dividing the pie along ethnic lines while viewing politics as a business interest and opportunity. For example, the senior coalition partners, ie. the Macedonian party, is allowed a free reign over general national matters, foreign policy, state capital, state security, etc. The Albanian junior party, ie. DUI, is given a free hand to manage and allocate resources over the predominantly Albanian municipalities in the western and southwestern part of the country, and in Albanian neighbourhoods such as north of Skopje. With such a degree of governing autonomy the parties are given their respective percentage of the state budget for them to manage and utilise accordingly. The unspoken rule is neither intervenes in the "internal" business of the other, making this the practice of each coalition government in FYR Macedonia. For some, this adds a dualist component into Macedonian government, seeing as there is an arrangement of "two ethnically-based governments" that work in silos with one another (ACA 07). Authors have even noted that the implementation power-sharing arrangements is used for ethnic political engineering and gerrymandering by ethnically-aligned political parties (Stewart 2019).

In this "politically and ethnically divided society", DUI's approach is very much elitist, whereby a pronounced role is given to the leader, Ali Ahmeti, and his inner circle of friends. To maintain popular support, populist propaganda and the ethnicization of political issues, including the implementation of the Ohrid agreement, is regularly employed.

This approach, which is largely identical to the approach of the coalition partner, is not attached to the realization of the objectives associated with the acceleration of democratisation processes and economic prosperity. Apart from participation in government, DUI's main objective is the attractive management positions in the organs and institutions of the state (ACA 06).

There is also a strong case to make for the politicisation of public administration. The clientelist web ensures that in exchange for votes, people who supported DUI get rewarded

with posts in public administration. “And do not forget that family members who work there, they are also expected to make sure that their entire family and friends vote for them. This creates a powerful structure which is difficult to disengage” (CSO 01). When this dyadic relationship between clients and patrons becomes so co-dependent, it is hard to even break the bond. Ironically, this ensures the implementation of a power-sharing arrangement, but one which is based on informal needs, and immediate and clientelistic opportunities of the few, as opposed to the consolidation of the state and its formal institutions.

Every time elections come, there is a national sport to make a big question, ethnicize it and make it a big deal. For example, we will now have elections in April '16, and all of a sudden DUI is talking about establishing a University in Skopje for ethnic Albanians. It is important, but people are saying, is this the best you can offer us. These are just cheap nationalistic injections (CSO 01).

5. Conclusion: Synthesis of the two case studies

Democratization has formed the cornerstone of most peace settlements in this period of “liberal peacebuilding” (...) Liberal peacebuilding presumes that armed opposition groups will lay down their weapons and replace violent conflict with political competition. To what extent have armed opposition groups embraced this model? (Manning and Smith 2016, p. 972)

This conclusion represents a synthesised summary of the two case studies. It identifies the main commonalities from Kosovo and FYR Macedonia which feed into the emerging theory. By way of mirroring the structural breakdown from the Methods chapter diagrams, the conclusion will initially delve into the first stage of the combatants’ post-conflict evolution, which is the act of their transformation into political actors. The second part of the conclusion will then examine the impact of this transformation for the state institutions and its democratic consolidation. The emerging theory, built on the findings from a field-based inductive approach, will be elaborated in the end.

5.1 The integration and political transformation of former combatants

At the end of their respective conflicts, both intra-state armed groups – the KLA and the NLA – underwent a process of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration. In Kosovo the DDR process was much more comprehensive and all-encompassing, driven forward by NATO and UNMIK international administrators. Since in the post-conflict era the security space was to be occupied by NATO, the DDR process was a top-down imposition to ensure that there would be no overlap of security mechanisms. In FYR Macedonia, the NLA underwent a similar

demobilisation process while its combatants were spared legal prosecution thanks to the amnesty law. A symbolic number of them were integrated into security structures, mainly in police services.

However, while both armed groups experienced similar processes of demobilisation, the context in which these processes happened was quite different. In Kosovo, the KLA was transformed into a quasi-military, civilian organisation called Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC), allowing for a large percentage of combatants of its predecessor to be transferred there. Demographically, Kosovo was and is predominantly ethnic Albanian, meaning that after the withdrawal of Serbian forces in 1999 there were no other local security mechanisms in the country. While the NATO-led Force was mandated with peacekeeping and ensuring the safety of Kosovo borders, the local security mechanisms such as the KPC, the Police, intelligence services etc. had to be created from scratch. The KLA combatants had a role to play in all of them not only by filling most of their positions but also by occupying most decision-making posts.

In FYR Macedonia, ethnic Albanians number 25% to 30% of the overall population. Following the 2001 conflict, its existing security mechanisms had to undergo slight reforms in order to mirror the inclusive spirit of the Ohrid Framework Agreement and to offer more space to representatives of the ethnic Albanian community. Therefore, while in Kosovo the former combatants of the armed group had almost complete freedom in creating security mechanisms from scratch, in FYR Macedonia this was more of an opt-in exercise in already-existing institutions.

This says a lot about the upcoming internal power relations in the two countries. The context in which both processes of demobilisation happened was an early indication of how the post-war politics would shape up to be. What transpired soon after the conflict was that senior members of the now-defunct internal armed groups were not content occupying functions in security institutions, functions which were largely symbolic. For those more ambitious to extend their influence beyond the war, integration into security institutions was tantamount to a containment measure. The police and soldier uniforms proved to be too tight a constraint which would only curtail their ambitions for power. That is why the armed groups' decision-

makers quickly turned to politics, forming their own political parties and exchanging bullets for ballots (Ishiyama 2016). In Kosovo, two war wing parties were created soon after the war – PDK and AAK – followed by a third one in 2014 – Nisma. In FYR Macedonia, the head of the NLA became leader of the DUI party, formed soon after the conflict ended there in 2001. To this date, in the subsequent rounds of democratic elections held in both countries, the above parties have managed to attract an impressive percentage of votes, placing them first on in the top three most voted parties in their countries.

The emergence of war wing parties changed the political scene once and for all. In Kosovo, the upper hand which the KLA had acquired during the war, was extended in times of peace through the parties that emerged from the army's ashes. Suddenly, Kosovo's political scene was crowded with new arrivals that shook up the hitherto established political establishment. The LDK, the long-time rivals, were pushed aside and, although they continue to be one of the biggest parties in Kosovo, never managed to recover the popularity enjoyed during the 1990s. As a result, since 1999 there has been no government that has not had one of the "war wing" parties in coalition. Currently, all three of them head a grand coalition, with their leaders – former and current – occupying the posts of the President, Assembly Speaker and Prime Minister respectively.

In FYR Macedonia, DUI erupted victorious from the conflict, managing to just about wipe out the existing Albanian parties from the scene. Although their share of the overall vote has dwindled a little over the years, they continue to be the most voted party among the ethnic Albanian electorate. They, too, have been part of each coalition government since 2001 (except one) and, although a junior member in these coalitions, they have exerted a considerable weight on decision-making processes. Two of the latest examples that are likely going to shape the country's future for decades to come could not have happened without DUI's and, by extension, the Albanian electorate's vote: the ratification of the Prespa Agreement on the country's name, and the election of the pro-Western Stevo Pendarovski for President of the country on 6 May 2019 (The Guardian 2019b). DUI is the king-maker not just of coalition governments but also of the formation and implementation of long-term consequential national policies.

This certainly was not just an impressive transformation of the armed groups into political actors, but a successful project on their part in galvanising electoral support which brought them to power. But what counts for the success of these parties in the political scene? To what do they owe this degree of popularity? Kovacs and Hatz (2016) note that, among other factors, the timing of their political transformation is of the essence.

The viability of rebel groups to transform into political parties increases when the group's leadership is united in their decision to abandon the armed struggle and enter peaceful politics, when the rebel group enjoys a relatively high level of support among the population, and when international actors recognize the armed group as a legitimate political actor (Kovacs and Hatz 2016, p. 992).

In addition, the end of the Cold War and the “subsequent onset of the so-called liberal peacebuilding era”, was accompanied with a reinvigorated emphasis on “democracy strengthening in post-war societies as an integral part of peacebuilding processes and peace agreements. The transformation and inclusion of former combatants into politics was part of this change” (Kovacs and Hatz 2016, p. 993).

In Kosovo and FYR Macedonia, one of the underlying factors of their success was certainly the so-called persistence of war experiences and relationships. This comes out clearly and loudly from the field. And yes, almost two decades after the conflicts, these parties remain controlled by war veterans. Over the years, a lot of new blood, new ideas and talent has been infused in them. They have even maintained an open-door policy to new arrivals. An increasingly large share of senior leadership posts, especially in the PDK in Kosovo and DUI in FYR Macedonia come from post-war generations (Assembly of Kosovo 2019; DUI 2019). This certainly speaks to their propensity for diversification and growth. However, at the helm of all these parties, supported by a network of likeminded brothers in arms (metaphorically and literally speaking) sit the same people who were in commanding positions during the war. In fact, these parties would most likely face near-extinction if the army veterans in control of them would suddenly go home. Therefore, it is the war legacy, the war credentials, and the respect that they still enjoy among certain strata of society, that explain their popularity to a considerable degree.

Coupled with the war legacy, and closely interwoven with it, are the personal and organisational relations as well as the camaraderie and loyalty forged in the times of war and even before it. In Kosovo, the KLA was created through a trust-based network of very close friends and family members who shared the same ideals (fighting the Serbian occupation, freedom and independence, even secession and unification with Albania). They usually had the same background (they came from rural and impoverished areas, their families might have served as a nest of resistance for generations, they might have been traditionally persecuted etc.). Similarly, in FYR Macedonia a lot of NLA combatants came from families who had traditionally been fiercely patriotic and who were not integrated in the new Macedonian society. In addition, the NLA had the benefit of the knowhow, the arsenal and a considerable number of demobilised KLA combatants who were looking for a way to reengage in combat. The latter joined the NLA for reasons which were purely patriotic, as they saw it, i.e. to lend a hand to their brethren in FYR Macedonia, but also for more prosaic and selfish reasons, such as to engage in another adventure. That is how their relations deepened and widened. As regards the more senior, decision-making figures of the resistance in either side of the border, most of them came from the LPK and similar related cells of the illegal resistance. In the 1980s they had subscribed to an ideology of Marxism-Leninism primarily because they viewed Albania that was communist at the time as the mother nation. But more than an ideology they subscribed to a straightforward nationalist ideal that sought to fight for the liberation of Albanian lands, as they saw it, and their unification with Albania.

It should also be recalled that the post-war period did not offer many opportunities for integration or economic betterment. Kosovo's economy was completely ruined and, together with the political institutions, it had to be rebuilt from scratch. FYR Macedonia's economy was in a slightly better position, although the conflict had set it back. For the ethnic Albanian community, however, the opportunities for progress were very limited. Given these circumstances, one of the immediate challenges for combatants in the post-conflict environment was the prospect for a successful integration in the country's structures. Would their country be able to provide for them, take care of them? Who would do that? Could they trust their fate to the state structures, i.e. to those against whom they had fought, like in FYR Macedonia? Or to those Albanian political parties who had opposed their emergence, had criticised them, had even called them traitors? Could they trust the LDK in Kosovo, or PDSH in

FYR Macedonia, to be guardians of their fate? The answer, understandably, was an unequivocal no. In addition, the conflict had generated a *de facto* separate electoral base that expressed an unswerving loyalty to the armed groups and their representatives. This was a loyalty- and camaraderie-based network of comrade-in-arms, friends, family and tribe relations that already saw the armed combatants as their future political leaders. It is therefore safe to say that the decision of former combatants to turn to politics was driven by two opposite factors: it was a bottom-up request for accountability, whereby people in the ground saw them and wanted them to be the political representatives. It was also a top-down drive according to which, after the conflict, former armed leaders needed to reinvent themselves to have a role to play, lest they would be forgotten or side-lined.

Therefore, in such conditions, politics came to be viewed as a career opportunity and development. The armed group leaders considered they had a political mission, which was first and foremost, to take care of their electoral base and, secondly, to ensure their own imprint on their countries' future political path. That is how politics began to be viewed as a career path and an asset for professional development. If seen from their point of view, the decision to transform politically makes complete sense. Viewed from a grounded theory-perspective, as one of the interviewees (FMC 02) conferred to me, they had paid the ultimate sacrifice by going to war. And yet, they were the ones who were left with nothing, exhausted and bereft, and there was no one willing to take care of them when war finished (FMC 02). It was also out of a sense of sacrifice and duty that they would step forward and take charge of their electorate's political future and, possibly, the future of their countries. In Kosovo, the LDK as the KLA's traditional rival was a completely different political construct. Their leadership base had always been much better off, before and after the war, more urban, more integrated, "more rested" to take charge of the country after the war (FMC 02). In FYR Macedonia, by the time conflict was over an irreparable gulf had already been created between the NLA leaders and the existing Albanian parties, primarily because of the latter's refusal to acknowledge them as a rising factor on the political scene. Therefore, in hindsight, it seems normal, inevitable even, that the war-wing parties such as the PDK and AAK in Kosovo and DUI in FYR Macedonia should have been created.

Their political transformation was just as much inevitable because of the dangers of the spoiler effect if they were left out. There were plenty of interviewees, former combatants and otherwise, who emphasized unequivocally the real risk of a post-conflict intra-Albanian civil war had they not been included in political processes (CSO 02; FMC 06; FMC 09). In Kosovo, the rivalry between LDK representatives and KLA combatants had flared up to that degree that accusations against each other about treason or collaboration with the enemy had become a common discourse. After the conflict it was unimaginable for KLA representatives to join LDK ranks. Likewise, in FYR Macedonia the incumbent Albanian parties were harshly critical of the NLA and its motives. As far as these parties were concerned, the NLA was unilaterally causing havoc on all those hard-won concessions for the Albanian community which they had fought for since Macedonian independence. For the NLA the prospect of joining an existing political structure and, moreover, yielding to the authority of those Albanian parties who had not fought and had even sabotaged their efforts along the way, was just as unimaginable.

In the end, why would former combatants have joined existing parties, regardless if it was Kosovo or FYR Macedonia? Why would they have succumbed to their rivals' authority when they could create their own parties, and their own party base. This was, essentially, a power play between different political forces, resulting in the abrupt eruption onto the political scene by former combatants. Interestingly, the international community was very supportive of the combatants' switch to politics, too. Their closest local interlocutors after the war became the war-wing parties. In Kosovo, even while the PDK or the AAK were in opposition, figures like Thaçi or Haradinaj were consulted on all matters related to state- and institution-building. In FYR Macedonia, DUI was consulted from the very start on all steps related to the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. This approach of the international community was driven by a pragmatic logic. For actors such as the EU, Western embassies, or NATO, stability was paramount in the immediate post-conflict environment. Rather than isolate the former combatants and risk causing social upheavals triggered by their supporters, their approach was meant to contain them while making them part of political decision-making. Some authors have criticised this approach which they consider to be a kind of appeasement because they claim the former combatants have benefited undeservedly from this preferential treatment. In fact, they have been rewarded with political inclusion in return

for not threatening to spoil the fragile peace. This focus on stability, or “stabilitocracy” (BIEPAG 2017; Bieber 2018), has come at a high price: the international community has continued supporting war-wing parties even when there has been substantiated evidence of the latter’s involvement in corruption and crime. Instead of supporting other political forces needing a push, so goes the argument, they have extended their support to the “commanders” for far too long, contributing to the stagnation of the democratic progress (BIEPAG 2017).

Following their leap onto politics after the conflict, the war-wing parties succumbed themselves to the will of the people through the ballot box. In free and fair elections, they consistently managed to get a large share of the electorate’s vote, be it in Kosovo or in FYR Macedonia. However, these parties did not have clearly-articulated political programmes, especially in the first years after the conflict. So how come so many people voted for them, and how come they still do?

One of the main factors for this, as has transpired from the interviews, is attributed to the war legacy that they enjoyed, and the personal, organisational relations that they forged during the war. For a large part of the electorate, the question as to whom to give the vote to has been clear: it was a choice between war heroes, liberators, or those party representatives who stood idly by as the liberators were prepared for the ultimate sacrifice for the future of their people. That was their choice. Their decision to vote for former combatants turned politicians, although often not based on ideology or party platform but legacy, was still a decision. At this stage, the question as to whether this is fair, i.e. that leaders or parties should be elected not based on clear party platform but on elusive ideals and principles of the past, is beside the point. It is irrelevant. What is important, and true, is that in competitive elections they are voted, and the votes, regardless of the motives behind them, ought to be respected. This is a basic tenet of democracy. The follow-up question, though, which points to the crux of this thesis and which emerges naturally from the above synthesis, is what happens when politicians who come from armed groups enter politics. What is their impact on government quality and, by extension, on democracy and its quality?

5.2 Nature and duration of state capture by former combatants

In general, literature shows consensus on the state and quality of democracy in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia. According to the latest Freedom House reports (2018; 2019a), both countries are ranked as partly free, which is slightly lower than the democratic progress in most Western Balkan countries (but considerably lower than those who have already joined the EU such as Croatia and Bulgaria). Freedom House ranks countries according to three categories: Free, Partly Free, and Not Free, and places an aggregate score for each of them (0 being least free, and 100 being most free). The following table provides a comparative snapshot of rankings of some Western Balkan countries, including the case studies, as featured in the latest Freedom House (2019b) data.

Country	Year	Score and Category
Kosovo	2018	54/100 Partly Free
FYR Macedonia	2018	59/100 Partly Free
Albania	2018	68/100 Partly Free
Serbia	2018	67/100 Partly Free
Montenegro	2018	65/100 Partly Free
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2018	53/100 Partly Free
Croatia	2018	85/100 Free
Bulgaria	2018	80/100 Free

Source: Freedom House (2019b)

As can be seen, both Kosovo and FYR Macedonia trail along a similar path of democratic development as, or just below, most other Western Balkan countries, i.e. those who have yet to join the EU. Croatia and Bulgaria, as seen on the table, are already EU members and their democratic progress is much more advanced, on the Free category.

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) (2018) lists both Kosovo and FYR Macedonia in the categories of hybrid regimes and/or flawed democracies. EIU uses an aggregate score spectrum from 0 to 10.0. Within this spectrum, countries scoring between 8.0 to 10.0 classify as Full Democracies, between 6.0 to 7.99 classify as Flawed Democracies, between 4.0 to 5.99 as Hybrid Regimes, and between 0 to 3.99 as Authoritarian Regimes (EIU 2018). Below are a snapshot of the data on the region from the EIU.

Country	Year	Score and Category
Kosovo	2018	Between FYR Macedonia and Serbia
FYR Macedonia	2018	5.87 Hybrid Regime
Albania	2018	5.98 Hybrid Regime
Serbia	2018	6.41 Flawed Democracy
Montenegro	2018	5.74 Hybrid Regime
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2018	4.98 Hybrid Regime
Croatia	2018	6.57 Flawed Democracy
Bulgaria	2018	7.03 Flawed Democracy

Source: Economist Intelligence Unit (2018)

The EIU portrays a similar picture of democratic performance in most non-EU Western Balkan countries. They oscillate between the upper and lower levels of the Hybrid Regime category. Serbia is the only one that scores as a Flawed Democracy in their index. Although the EIU does not have a separate score for Kosovo, it is safe to deduct that its performance on its own also ranks somewhere between FYR Macedonia's and Serbia's. For comparative reasons, Croatia and Bulgaria are added to show that they score higher than the average of the rest, ranked as Flawed Democracies.

International IDEA (2019b) scores both Kosovo and FYR Macedonia as democracies but with mid-range performances in most of the attributes of its conceptual framework. International IDEA's framework of democracy consists of five main attributes (Representative Government, Fundamental Rights, Checks on Government, Impartial Administration, and Participatory Engagement), and they score democratic performance between 0 and 1. Within this spectrum, countries scoring between 0.0 and 0.39 rank as Non-Democracies, those that score between 0.4 and 6.99 rank as Hybrid Regimes, and countries that score between 0.7 and 1.0 score as Democracies (International IDEA 2019b). The table below will provide an overview of the performance of the following countries.

Country	Year	Score and Category				
		Representative Government	Fundamental Rights	Checks on Government	Impartial Administration	Participatory Engagement ¹⁹
Kosovo	2018	0.53 Mid-range	0.49 Mid-range	0.51 Mid-Range	0.51 Mid-Range	Mid-range
FYR Macedonia	2018	0.64 Mid-Range	0.60 Mid-Range	0.54 Mid-Range	0.52 Mid-Range	Mid-range
Albania	2018	0.62 Mid-Range	0.68 Mid-Range	0.59 Mid-Range	0.46 Mid-Range	Mid-range
Serbia	2018	0.57 Mid-Range	0.59 Mid-Range	0.48 Mid-Range	0.45 Mid-Range	Mid-range
Montenegro ²⁰	2018	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2018	0.5 Mid-Range	0.62 Mid-Range	0.56 Mid-Range	0.43 Mid-Range	Mid-range
Croatia	2018	0.75 High	0.63 Mid-Range	0.62 Mid-Range	0.54 Mid-Range	Mid-range
Bulgaria	2018	0.68 Mid-Range	0.71 High	0.68 Mid-Range	0.53 Mid-Range	Mid-range

Source: International IDEA (2019b)

Although International IDEA does not provide for one single aggregate score on democracy but rather five scores across their respective attributes, the picture from the above table is quite telling. All the countries in the table classify as democracies, but most of them, including Kosovo and FYR Macedonia trail in the mid-range category of performance in all the attributes. Two countries that are clearly further ahead in their democratic trajectory are Croatia and Bulgaria, which score high on Representative Government and Fundamental Rights respectively.

The above data was meant to offer an objective picture on the state of democracy and governability in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia, and to show how their performance rates in comparison with the Western Balkan region. In addition, authors have been cautioning of an emerging democratic crisis engulfing most Central and Eastern European countries in the last few years. There are indications of an illiberal rise of democracy, of authoritarian tendencies displayed by those in power, of a creeping democratic backsliding, or of incessant attacks –

¹⁹ Participatory Engagement is not aggregated into one score. Hence, there is a note on the general category but there is no single score.

²⁰ International IDEA scores countries with 1 million inhabitants or more. Since Montenegro has around 700,000 inhabitants, they were left out of the measurement data.

direct or subtle - on civil liberties and civic space (Mujanović 2018; Krastev 2018; Keil 2018; Bieber, Solska and Taleski 2019;). Kosovo and FYR Macedonia are certainly not immune to such challenges. In addition to these challenges they also suffer from a precarious majority *versus* minority ethnic balance which some authors argue may still lead to political crises in the future (Skendaj 2016; Prelec 2017).

Having depicted the democratic landscape of the two case study countries, as well as the region, how can we assess the political impact of former combatants on democracy and institutions? How can we dissect the landscape of democracy, and the performance of government institutions, and judge what is attributable to former combatants turned politicians and political parties, and what is not? In other words, can we identify a clear cause and effect link between this group of politicians and the state of democracy in their countries, be it progress or regress? My grounded theory-inductive approach was instrumental in offering some answers to these questions, referring to the viewpoints obtained in my fieldwork and cross-referenced with secondary literature.

As noted in the subsection above, entering politics for former combatants was essentially a power play fought between them on one hand and the old political elite on the other. To triumph in this power play, they needed to yield themselves to the ultimate means of a democratic system, which are elections and the ballot box. The empirical evidence suggests that in relatively free and fair democratic elections the war-wing parties managed to attract a large number of following, resulting in the overturn of the political system known theretofore. In FYR Macedonia, DUI suddenly became the dominant political force representing ethnic Albanians, leaving in the shadows all the other Albanian parties. In Kosovo, PDK and AAK together counted for roughly half of the constituency's vote, posing a serious rivalry to the LDK. By all standards, this was a successful transformation of combatants into politics, and a successful trade-off of weapons for the ballot box. Weapons and bullets had been exchanged for votes, while means of violence had been traded for political competition (Joshi 2010; Ishiyama 2016; Manning and Smith 2016).

Gradually, both countries saw the emergence of a new masters of politicians who, by all accounts, are here to stay. When I use the term "nouveau riche", I am of course referring to

those politicians whose origins are traced back in times of war and armed resistance, as already established. But I am also referring to their ever-widening network of friends, family and tribe members, war comrades, political allies - old and new - who have stood ready to support them in their new fight on the political arena. Perhaps more poignantly, I am also referring to the younger generation of supporters who are willing to build on the newly acquired political clout of the nouveau riche by echoing their war legacy and taking the reins of power further onto the future.

As seen from both case studies, one way of ensuring longevity over the reins of power has been to invest in the younger generation through a certain kind of education. This is a sort of education which will equip the younger minds with the knowhow and the skills for the future, but which is closely aligned with the war narrative, and in support of the war-wing political parties. That is why in the immediate post-war period in Kosovo one of the first institutions to come in the radar of the war-wing parties was the public university – the University of Prishtina. There have been multiple examples over the years of political interference in the appointment of professors in key positions such as deans, pro-deans, or even rectors. One of my interviewees, FMC 06, is himself a university professor, and he was very clear that they (i.e. war-wing parties) needed to make sure that the future generations were taught the right narrative of the conflict, as he saw it (FMC 06). In the last few years the Kosovo government, when led by the PDK, decided to establish three more public universities and several associated faculties. Most, if not all, of these universities and departments are led by professors who are also members of the above political parties, or who are closely associated with these politicians.

In FYR Macedonia, the situation concerning the political interference in higher education is not as bad. After the armed conflict the Albanian-led underground university in Tetovo was recognised by the state and, under the mediation of the OSCE, became a national university offering education of students of all ethnic backgrounds (University of Tetovo 2019). However, the University of Tetovo continues to this day to attract a large following by ethnic Albanian students. Most of the teaching staff are Albanian, too. In their own way, both cases testify that to ensure longevity the political nouveau riche needs the support of an education system that will not back their war narrative but will also craft future generations according

to their own design. In conclusion, the role of public universities in this kind of education through indoctrination goes hand in hand with the consolidation and perpetuation of the new political class. This in turn contributes to efforts to influence collective memory and the war legacy.

But above all else, one of the predominant themes that war-wing parties have been accused of is their alleged manipulation, or derangement of the voter-politician relationship which, in theory, should be sanctimonious. I am of course referring to the patronal and clientelistic nature of this relationship which, by its very definition, plunges the voter (read: client) and the politician (read: patron) into a vicious cycle of mutual conditionality that is very hard to break (Hicken 2011; Hale 2015). Coupled with clientelism, and even immersed within it, is the corroding phenomenon of corruption. Political corruption, economic corruption, bribery, sabotage, financial extortion, nepotism, they all fall under this category. One could even argue that a client-patron relation that intends to play by the rules of democracy *prima facie*, is in fact itself a corrupt manifestation of this rapport.

Many scholars and practitioners have written about the phenomenon of clientelism in the Western Balkans and, more specifically, in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia. On Kosovo, Belloni and Strazzari (2014) refer to corruption phenomena as deals among friends, Cvejić (2016) discusses the informal power networks and political patronage, and Dziedzic (2016) talks about “criminalised power structures”. On FRY Macedonia, Gromes (2009) and Ceka (2018) elaborate on corrupt and clientelistic interpretation of what is the meaning of power-sharing arrangements on the ground, while Günay and Dzihic (2016) talk about the “authoritarian code” of politicians that undermines democratic norms and values. The data from my interviews and the field work corroborates to a considerable degree the claim that the relationship between a politician and a voter in both Kosovo and FYR Macedonia is an essence a clientelist one. Such a relationship affects the whole political spectrum but is particularly accentuated among the war-wing parties. What is the evidence stemming from the field?

Lyon (2015) makes note that in the context of unconsolidated states, there are strong pressures to create patronage politics. When state institutions are still being created or consolidated, the space for informal manoeuvring is greater for those aspiring power.

This is particularly true in ethnically-diverse democracies, where intra-ethnic party competition may act as a powerful catalyst for intensifying clientelism (...) Disenchantment in local political processes increases the likelihood of patronage-based party-voter linkages, since the parties have no other effective way of attracting and holding on to voters (...) Democratic accountability dependent on clientelistic exchanges between parties and voters derives from the politician's promise of a job or of a financial reward (Lyon 2015, pp. 170-171).

Kosovo was a clean slate after the war in 1999. Institutions were created from scratch. Although the international community oversaw institution-building and was in charge of installing democracy, the domestic political spectrum was up for grabs. The war-wing parties, PDK and AAK, were quick in filling in the vacuum and posing a serious threat to the LDK. As stated in the subsection above, their political transformation was a welcoming and enriching development in the country's political space. As long as they played by the democratic rules of the game, their success and contribution to the country's democratization was duly noted. The same was true of DUI after the conflict in FUR Macedonia. As long as they played by the rules of democratic game, their contribution to implementing the Ohrid Framework Agreement on mending inter-ethnic relations was duly noted. However, what is also true – which is corroborated by interviews conducted – is that the war-wing parties were very skilful in building a deep and wide informal network of contacts, comprised of war-time veterans and their associations, their families, friends and further. Such networks made sure to take care of one another using the main commodity at their disposal: the state and its resources. Essentially this was the logic and pattern that dictated the distribution of government jobs and services, encouraged the collusion politics with the business, or the politicisation of the state's administration and civil service. This is how the phenomenon of clientelism is explained by one of my respondents:

It starts from giving the person the hope that (s)he will get a job not because of their ability, but because of their connection with the powerful people in politics. You can get a job if you have connections with a network which will accommodate you. Otherwise, you may be the smartest guy, have a PhD, and you may still be in a wretched position. You and your family may prosper in proportion with your personal proximity with the people that control and that accommodate. Clientelism does not come to an end when you get a job. Clientelism is eternal and makes you eternally dependent on it (OPP 02).

FYR Macedonia shares many resemblances with Kosovo: there, too, corruption and clientelism are real and corrosive elements and they pose real challenges to democratic consolidation. However, the Macedonian case is different in some key aspects: following the short-term conflict in 2001, institutions did not have to be created from scratch but rather reformed to accommodate ethnic Albanian interests. Secondly, although DUI as the only descendant of the NLA became the most voted party among the ethnic Albanian community, this community is the second largest one in FYR Macedonia, after Slavic Macedonians. Since they have been part of all but one coalition governments, they share responsibility in widening the clientelistic network, if only by association. The latter years of VMRO-DPMNE were shrouded in bizarre twists and turns of corrupt affairs, illegal surveillance scandals, and authoritarian tendencies by the former Prime Minister. Through all of it DUI seemed content at having a quasi-feudal autonomy over its electorate. In effect, they took the notion of the power-sharing agreement and made a distorted interpretation of it. As long as they were allowed to have control over their share of distribution of government jobs and services, as long as they were allowed to mingle politics with the business, they could turn a blind eye to what the senior coalition partner was doing. This way of governing represented a dualism of an ethnically-based “two-governments” arrangement. DUI’s role in feeding clientelism and corruption was to contribute, rather than lead, to a wider political trend. The maintenance of patronal and clientelistic networks became a crucial method for ensuring the maintenance of power (ACA 03).

Kuehn (2017) throws an intriguing metaphor on the role of the combatants in a post-war setting. Is it their role to be a “midwife or gravedigger of democracy”? (Kuehn 2017, p. 784).

In the 1990s and 2000s in Latin American countries such as Brazil, Chile and Peru,

(...) militaries were able to control the pace and direction of the transition to democracy to such an extent that they could enshrine amnesty for human rights violations and political privileges into the new democratic order. In the civilian-led new democracies of Eastern Europe including Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, defence and military policy remained the almost exclusive arena of military active-duty and retired officers (Kuehn 2017, p. 785).

Similarly, both case studies here testify to the corrosive effect of clientelism, patronage system and corruption, which are often instigated and maintained by networks originating

from war times. All these negative phenomena corrode government and good governance, which in turn corrode democratic consolidation. Right now, every one of the targeted “war-wing” parties in this thesis could potentially meet some criteria to be branded exactly that: a potential gravedigger of democracy. In a sense, it is exactly those old networks and alliances that can interfere with formal politics. Lyons (2016) even claims that parties whose origins are as victorious insurgent groups have unique legacies and hence different institutional structures and patterns of behaviour. Their cohesive leadership, discipline and hierarchy shape post-insurgent political parties. This may in turn lead them into becoming “powerful authoritarian political parties that dominated post-war politics” (Lyons 2006, p. 1026).

This issue helps us answer the key sub-question of the thesis’ research question, which is what is so unique about the former combatants turned politicians and their contribution to democracy.

5.3 The emerging grounded theory

The grounded theory (Charmaz 2014) emerging from the case studies rests on the premise that there are genuine underlying factors that push for the creation of intra-state armed groups in sovereign countries. Such factors usually have to do with the marginalisation or repression of an ethnic group by state authorities, followed by demands for equal human rights, autonomy or independence on behalf of that group. The trajectory that is seen in conflict-affected countries generally goes like this: state repression is followed by demands, which are initially articulated peacefully. If those demands are ignored, or if in an effort to silence dissent the state’s response is to intensify the means of repression, an armed resistance or insurgency may be created. The armed conflict that ensues usually comes to an end after a defeat, a mutually hurting stalemate, if there is intervention from abroad, or if there is mutual interest to come to a peace agreement. In the process, rebel groups tend to become legitimate stakeholders of the agreement and the ensuing implementation of peace accords (De Brún 2008; Durán, Leowenherz and Hormaza 2008; Maharaj 2008; Álvarez 2010).

Once the conflict is over, there are no reasons why former combatants should not get involved in politics. My findings affirm the claims of those authors who argue for a meaningful

and inclusive DDR process, as well as a political inclusion of former combatants as a constructive step towards peace and democracy (Barakat and Özerdem 2005; Collier, Hoeffler and Söderbom 2008; De Zeeuw 2008; Glassmyer and Sambanis 2008; Curtis and de Zeeuw 2009; Jarstad and Sisk 2010; Dudouet, Giessmann and Planta 2012; Gurses and Rost 2013; McMullin 2013b; Ishiyama 2016; Marshall and Ishiyama 2016).

In fact, their inclusion in public debate, either through political parties or other fora, is encouraged because this ensures that post-war institution-building and democratization is widely represented. It is, therefore, good news for a nascent and unconsolidated democracy when former combatants have successfully traded weapons for the ballot box. This enriches the public discourse and diversifies political opinion and competition. In addition, the former combatants' inclusion in politics helps to neutralise their spoiler effect, which could be detrimental for peace and democracy. Literature is rich with findings on the risks posed by spoilers and the importance of inclusion in post-conflict democratic transition (Stedman 1997; Hoddie and Hartzell 2003; Glassmyer and Sambanis 2008; Lyons 2016; Hansell and Gerdes 2017).

However, democracy begins to falter, and formal state institutions get corroded when the rules of democracy begin to be manipulated for the sake of acquiring power and of enriching a small group of people and their cronies. There are numerous instances of clientelism, corruption and authoritarian practices noted throughout the Western Balkans, and they are all warning signs for the stagnation of democratic consolidation (Petkovski 2015; Günay and Dzhic 2016; Ramet, Hassenstab and Listhaug 2017; Bieber 2018; Krastev 2018; Bieber, Solska and Taleski 2019).

What is unique about the war-wing parties in this regard is that they have mastered the art of clientelism and have created *de facto* fiefdoms out of their electoral bases. They have done so precisely by tapping on those personal informal relations from the times of war, which have in turn helped them to maintain informal and illicit networks of people in all strata of society. Some of those people are in every level of institutions and they represent important cogs in the predatory mechanism of corruption and self-enrichment.

The clientelistic relationship is essentially a corrupt one. The client-patron rapport feeds off and is maintained by an informal power network of intra-party and party-constituency relations. These relations constantly undermine and silently erode the formal and official mechanisms of government at all levels. They slow down and corrupt the process of decision-making, rendering it less effective and efficient, and potentially harmful for the people. As a consequence, the cogs of governance calcify, rendering the business of government more corrupt, costlier, less transparent, less accountable, less representative and less efficient.

Thus, the novelty aspect of my grounded theory builds upon the long-term political transformation of former combatants, which begins by their creation of new political parties and subsequently their active participation in government for at least three election cycles or around ten years. Grounded theory thus focuses on the long-term ramifications on democracy stemming from the political transformation of former combatants, as defined above. While their inclusion certainly enriches post-conflict public discourse, the new political class tends to undermine long-term democratic consolidation through the maintenance of its informal networks and illicit activities. The peacebuilding paradigm may have indeed helped neutralise peace spoilers after the war (Dawson and Hanley 2016). However, one of my key findings stemming from this research suggests that the war-related political class can easily become democracy spoilers instead. The peacebuilding liberal practices are partly to be blamed for calling for the appeasement of restive groups of former combatants after conflict as a way of buying peace and stability and deepening political inclusion and representation. However, in the end, by wanting to maintain their clientelistic networks that profit a few but suppress the majority, those restive groups of former combatants became spoilers of democratic consolidation instead. Thus, as this thesis infers, the notion of spoilers needs rethinking.

As Diamond (2008) states, democracies which are at risk are usually plagued by poor governance. They appear to be “trapped in patterns of corrupt and abusive rule” (Diamond 2008, p. 42). Once they succeed in capturing state institutions, they use the consolidated power to limit economic competition and democratic opposition. “The result is a predatory state” (Diamond 2008, p. 43). People or constituencies are no longer viewed as equal citizens but as “clients of powerful local bosses, who are themselves the clients of still more powerful

patrons”. Public policies become irrelevant, or just a façade for “producing private goods for officials, their families and their cronies” (Diamond 2008, p. 43). Bad governance directly impacts democracy and its norms and values. Therefore, democracy suffers, too.

VI. Conclusion

Although in the last twenty to thirty years the number of inter-state wars has seen a decrease, the world is now faced with a dramatic increase of intra-state wars and conflicts. In a way, this has complicated classical warfare since the enemy is not always a clearly organised structure with clearly delineated borders and representing a single state. Instead, conflicts often are waged between organisations, groups, factions that may fight on behalf of a state or may fight against a state. These are all fluid variables, but the constant seems to remain the same: such wars and conflicts tend to be waged within the borders of an existing state (Olser and Aall 2001; Kalyvas, Shapiro and Masoud 2008; Dudouet 2012; Duffield 2014).

At the time of writing this, examples of such warfare are seen in the Middle East, in Syria and Yemen. In a sense, these two tragic conflicts are a continuation of the so-called Arab Spring, kickstarted almost a decade ago in Tunisia, only to be spread across most of North Africa and parts of the Middle East (Amnesty International 2018; Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue 2018; Michaelson 2019). This wave of revolution was one of the latest examples of movements or conflicts happening inside existing states, demanding equal rights, more autonomy for certain ethnic or religious groups, or a change of government.

The intensification of intra-state wars coincided with the end of the Cold War and the fall of the communist ideology in Central and Eastern Europe. Some of the bloodiest examples of such wars which happened immediately following the fall of Communism were played within former Yugoslavia. The Federation proved to be the terrain where tragic conflicts were waged between people who had cohabited for almost fifty years. There were two main reasons that led to these inter-ethnic conflicts: on one hand it was Serbia's long-standing nationalist desire for hegemony and the impulse to subjugate the neighbouring people; on the other, there were reawakened nationalist ambitions of the other entities of Yugoslavia for independence. This tension between Serbian nationalist hegemony and the secessionist, independentist drive of the other Yugoslav entities, led to the bloody dissolution of Federation, and the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Kosovo ended the bloody cycle of the Yugoslav break-up with the 1998/99 war that culminated with the NATO military intervention against Serbia. FYR Macedonia proved to be an exception to this rule, having managed to secede peacefully and became independent in 1991. However, due to inter-ethnic tensions between Slavic

Macedonians and the ethnic Albanian community, the new country was engulfed in a six-month armed conflict in 2001 (Little and Silber 1995; O'Neill 2002; Ramet 2002; Rossos 2008; Weller 2009).

With the emergence of these intra-state conflicts we also witnessed the creation of rebel armies, or intra-state armed groups, that fought on behalf of a national group. In the case of Kosovo, the Kosovo Liberation Army was an authentically-driven armed organisation fighting on behalf of the majority Albanian population and against the Serbian occupation of the country. In the case of FYR Macedonia, the National Liberation Army was created to fight on behalf of ethnic Albanians and against the Macedonian state, demanding equal rights and representation. Both those armed groups played a role in clinching peace accords and in the demobilisation processes afterwards. Further, they share a similar trajectory in so far as their leadership's role in the post-conflict period is concerned, which is the creation of political parties out of armed groups and the integration of their combatants into politics.

This thesis focused on two aspects of the combatants' integration in politics:

- Firstly, it looked at the act of their political transformation. By mapping the political scene of the two case studies it seems obvious that the inclusion of the combatants in politics was a necessity driven by bottom-up requests for representation. The war legacy was a driving force behind the popularity of war veterans, coupled by an enabling environment that was supported by strong regional and family ties and alliances;

- Secondly, the thesis examined what this political transformation has meant for the quality of democracy in the long-run. By studying the long-term behavioural patterns of former combatants turned politicians, the empirical evidence provides some strong correlations between their role in politics and the beleaguered state of democratic institutions and democracy in general. These correlations are not difficult to make considering that both in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia the political scene is populated with war-wing parties. In Kosovo there are three such parties – PDK, AAK and Nisma - and they have all been in power at one time or another since their inception. In FYR Macedonia, DUI is a direct descendant of the NLA and has been a junior member of every coalition government since 2001, apart from one.

According to Bieber (2018), countries in the Western Balkans are dominated by competitive authoritarian regimes that combined multi-party elections with nationalist rhetoric and the privatisation of the state to affiliated business interests. This has come about as a result of two defining features: 1. institutional weaknesses that provides insufficient democratic safeguards, and 2. authoritarian political actors who utilise these weaknesses to attain and retain power (Bieber 2018, p. 338). Kosovo and FYR Macedonia are not immune to these predicaments. However, what is specific about these two countries is that a great degree of responsibility for the capture of institutions lies with the new political elite which is dominated by combatants who turned politicians.

This thesis has focused on the long-term political transformation of combatants and their impact in democratisation processes. Long-term political transformation is defined here as political inclusion of former combatants through the creation of their own political parties and their active participation in the political scene for three election cycles or more, or around ten years. While most related literature discusses the validity of the reintegration of combatants, their DDR processes, and even the usefulness of their inclusion in politics, the aspect of their long-term impact on democracy is not explored. By focusing on this aspect this thesis contributes to political science and, in particular, to democratisation studies. Based on participant observation and field interview data, the thesis follows the trajectory of their political careers up to two decades after the conflict, dissecting the reasons they are in power and what this has meant for democracy. The findings concur that the inclusion of former combatants in post-war political arrangements is within the spirit of democracy and inclusion, which helps maintain the fragile peace.

However, in countries where the clientelistic web and predatory practices corrupt and frustrate the process of institution-building and democratic consolidation, such as in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia, the political establishment which dominated by former combatants turned politicians carries a big part of responsibility and culpability (in Kosovo more so than in FYR Macedonia). The grounded theory of this thesis concurs that the inclusion of former combatants in the post-conflict political space helped neutralise peace spoilers. However, the new war-wing political elite is primarily responsible for maintaining clientelistic networks, for

allowing illicit activities to obstruct formal democratic institutions, which in the long-term has created democracy spoilers out of this new elite.

Postscript

1) As I was nearing the end of my writing, the political scene in Kosovo experienced major upsets which has led to the biggest government shake-up that the country has witnessed since 1999. On 6 October 2019 Kosovo held snap general elections, called after Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj decided to resign in response to having been called for an interview as a potential suspect by the Kosovo Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutor's Office at the Hague (The Guardian 2019c). (Some suspect he resigned because of international pressure to renege on his government's decision to place a total ban on all imports coming from Serbia in response to the latter's actions taken against Kosovo's statehood (DW 2019)). In any case, the Kosovo Assembly dissolved, and general elections took place.

The October elections proved that the war-wing parties suffered a debacle not seen since their creation. PDK has come third with around 22% of the total vote, AAK has come fourth with around 11% of the total vote, whereas Nisma just managed to reach 5% of the threshold needed to enter Parliament. The election winners are the opposition parties: LDK came second with around 24% of the total vote, and Self-Determination Movement came first with around 25.5% of the total vote (CEC 2019). Self-Determination is a party formed about a decade ago but has always been in opposition. According to the legal framework, the onus falls on the winner of elections to form a government. As a result, in February 2020 the Self-Determination Movement managed to form a coalition with the LDK, relegating all the war-wing parties to opposition status for the first time since their creation (Kallxo 2019).

This electoral turmoil comes as a result of the people's frustration with the chronic corruption perpetrated by the "commander generation", as well as the emergence of a young generation in Kosovo who are not impressed by the glories of the past but are keen to look at better prospects for their future. The increasing consensus is that Kosovo suffers from endemic corruption and state capture and its economy is all but stagnant. Naturally, those who have been in power the most – ie. the war-wing parties – are largely responsible. For this, they have been castigated through the ballot box like never before in their twenty-year existence.

It is too early to predict, but this government shake-up may lead to big structural changes in the political scene in Kosovo. For the first time the former commanders turned politicians will

be out of power and, as a result, less able to maintain their monopolies and clientelistic networks. Self-Determination seem intent on enforcing the rule of law and strengthening the justice sector, which are considered the Achilles' heel that hampers Kosovo's development. The culprits, according to them, and not just them, are first and foremost the political class of combatants turned politicians, now deposed.

2) October 2019 did not end without a few dramatic events in FYR Macedonia, too, which for the sake of correctness had to be included as a postscript in the final version of this thesis. The new Macedonian government that came into power in May 2017, led by prime Minister Zoran Zaev in coalition with Ali Ahmeti's DUI party, was meant to open a new page for the country, particularly in view of the corruption scandals associated with the previous government. The Prespa Agreement on the name issue, signed between FYR Macedonia and Greece in June 2018, was an historic landmark for the country, opening the doors for the commencement of its accession to the NATO Alliance. Since Greece is now in support of the Macedonian membership, the accession process is currently undergoing the NATO filters of approval, and FYR Macedonia will likely become a full-fledged member of the Alliance in the next couple of months. These two developments – i. e. a new government and the Greek-Macedonian resolution on the name issue – coupled with the rule of law, political and economic reforms in the country, were preconditions to FYR Macedonia opening accession talks with the EU. It should be stressed also that all the signs coming from Brussels were that the country had been successful in meeting all these preconditions.

However, to the dismay of all aspiring countries of the Western Balkans, as well as that of most EC commissioners, on 16 October 2019 the EU – or rather a selected number of countries led by France - decided to block accession talks for FYR Macedonia (and Albania). This action was taken in response to the fear that the prospect of new members into the EU would stoke populist surge in EU countries such as France, the Netherlands or Denmark. The French President, Emmanuel Macron, was primarily responsible for placing this veto, thus coming in direct clash with other leaders such as the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, who had stated that the EU needed to keep its promise of accession for Western Balkan countries (Euronews 2019).

The consequence of the EU's decision is that Prime Minister Zaev has resigned and snap general elections in FYR Macedonia are now planned for 12 April 2020. Meanwhile, there will be a caretaker government until then. This will be another test for the ruling Albanian elite led by DUI, particularly considering the increased disenchantment of its electorate with it, coupled with the rising popularity of new and alternative Albanian parties such as the Alliance for Albanians or the Movement BESA (Koha Ditore 2019). It remains to be seen whether DUI,

a party beleaguered like never before in the last twenty years of its existence, will be able to hold monopoly over the ethnic Albanian vote, or if the above parties will steal its thunder. It would not be a total shock if this was to happen in FYR Macedonia, too.

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Interviewees and Transcriptions

Former military commanders and activists – coded FMC

- FMC 01** Former commander of KLA; Member of PDK and Deputy of Assembly of Kosovo; male, Albanian. Interview conducted on 12 Jan 2015
- FMC 02** Former soldier of KLA; Member of PDK; male, Albanian. Interview conducted on 30 Dec 2014
- FMC 03** Former member of LPK and KLA; Lawyer; male, Albanian. Interview conducted on 07 Feb 2015
- FMC 04** Former soldier of KLA and war veteran; retired; male, Albanian. Interview conducted on 30 Jan 2015
- FMC 05** Member of LDK and deputy of Assembly of Kosovo; male, Albanian. Interview conducted on 19 Feb 2015
- FMC 06** Professor and former intelligence member of KLA; male, Albanian. Interview conducted on 21 March 2015
- FMC 07** Former high-level officer of Yugoslav Army; former officer of KPC; male, Albanian. Interview conducted on 08 Jan 2015
- FMC 08** Doctor, former member of LPK and former deputy of Assembly of Kosovo; female, Albanian. Interview conducted on 09 April 2015
- FMC 09** Member of PDK and deputy of Assembly of Kosovo; male, Albanian. Interview conducted on 07 April 2015

Opposition political representatives – coded OPP

- OPP 01** Consultant, civil society activist and LDK member in Prishtina; male, Albanian. Interview conducted on 24 Dec 2014
- OPP 02** Member of opposition Self-Determination Movement and deputy of Assembly of Kosovo; male, Albanian. Interview conducted on 15 March 2015
- OPP 03** Member of opposition Self-Determination Movement and deputy of Assembly of Kosovo; female, Albanian. Interview conducted on 25 Dec 2014
- OPP 04** Former representative of the 1990s government in exile and current private citizen; male, Albanian. Interview conducted on 30 Jan 2015

Civil society organisation representatives – coded CSO

- CSO 01** Civil society activist and researcher on security sector reform in Skopje; male, Macedonian. Interview conducted on 31 July 2015
- CSO 02** Researcher and civil society activist in Prishtina; male, Albanian. Interview conducted on 05 Jan 2015
- CSO 03** Researcher and civil society activist in Prishtina; male, Albanian. Interview conducted on 20 Jan 2015
- CSO 04** Civil society, journalist and civil servant in diplomatic core of Kosovo; male, Albanian. Interview conducted on 02 Feb 2015
- CSO 05** Civil society activist in Belgrade; male, Serbian. Interview conducted on 29 Dec 2014
- CSO 06** Researcher and civil society activist in Prishtina and Skopje; male, Albanian. Interview conducted on 06 Feb 2015

Members of academia – coded ACA

- ACA 01** Lecturer and author of various books and articles on Kosovo and the region; female, Italian American. Interview conducted on 26 June 2015
- ACA 02** Professor and author of several books and articles in Skopje; female, Macedonian. Interview conducted on 17 March 2015
- ACA 03** Consultant and researcher in Skopje; female, Macedonian. Interview conducted on 28 June 2015
- ACA 04** Professor and former member of intelligence services in Skopje; male, Macedonian. Interview conducted on 31 July 2015
- ACA 05** Lecturer and civil society activist in Prishtina; female, Albanian. Interview conducted on 24 Dec 2014
- ACA 06** Professor and author of several publications in Skopje; male, Macedonian. Interview conducted on 20 July 2015
- ACA 07** PhD candidate and researcher on nationalism and ethnicity; male, Albanian. Interview conducted on 17 July 2015

Appendix I: Timeline – Jan 2012 to Dec 2019

Date	Activity	Location
Jan 2012	Commencement of PhD programme	Prishtina
March 2012	Review and resubmission of PhD concept	Prishtina
March 2012	Training Needs Analysis	Prishtina
May 2012	Workshop on quantitative methods and data analysis	Croatia
Sep 2012	Presentation at DSC conference	Thessaloniki
Sep 2012	Workshop 'How to write a thesis'	Thessaloniki
Sep 2012	Workshop on interpreting interview material	Belgrade
Nov 2012	PhD course on Fieldwork Methodology	Oslo
Nov 2012	PhD course on Ethics of Peace in World Politics	Oslo
March 2013	Training Needs Analysis	Prishtina
Sep 2013	GERN Doctoral Summer School on Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of Sheffield	Sheffield
Oct 2013	Submission of first draft of PhD proposal	Prishtina
Nov 2013	Training Needs Analysis	Prishtina
May 2014	Submission of final draft of PhD proposal	Prishtina
July 2014	Defence of PhD proposal	Thessaloniki
Sep 2014	Completion of upgrade procedure Obtain University Ethical approval	Sheffield and Thessaloniki
Sep-Dec 2014	Research records / interview contacts	Prishtina
Jan-June 2015	Researching / interviews	Kosovo
June-Dec 2015	Data analysis I	Prishtina
April 2015	Research records / interview contacts	Kosovo / FYRoM
June-Sep 2015	Researching / interviews	FYRoM
Dec 2015 – March 2016	Data analysis II	Prishtina
May-Sep 2016	Joined data analysis of Kosovo and FYRoM	Prishtina
Sep 2016 – May 2017	Writing up first chapter drafts	Prishtina
May 2017 – May 2018	Review research and results / fill in gaps	Prishtina
Feb-June 2019	Writing up final chapter drafts	Stockholm
Sep 2019	Submission and presentation of paper “Institutions Replacing Armed Conflict – What Happens When Soldiers Seek to Build a Country?” at EPCR Conference	Wroclaw, Poland
June-Oct 2019	Review and revision of thesis	Stockholm
Oct-Dec 2019	Submission of final PhD thesis Viva voce	Stockholm, Thessaloniki and Sheffield

Appendix II: List of Supplementary Documentation

Open (Semi-Structured) Interview

Research Project Title: Rearranging the puzzles of security in post-conflict democracies: a comparative study of the transformation and political integration of armed groups in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia

Researcher: Armend Bekaj

Interviewee: _____
(Name, surname & profession)

Date: _____

This thesis will look at how, in the aftermath of armed conflicts in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia, security mechanisms in newly-emerged democracies have been rearranged. It will examine the role of the armed groups and their legacies in contributing to, or hindering, democratisation processes. Their role in building security structures will also be examined within the context of emerging democracies. The research is addressing the influence of armed groups, the transformation of combatants into politicians of today, the implications of such transformation in politics and public life, and their role in consolidating, or hampering, democracy in their countries. The interview themes will focus on, but will not be limited to, 1) the role of the armed group's leadership in (Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration) DDR and transformation processes; 2) their influence in creating and maintaining democratic procedures and institutions, such as elections, coalition governments, parliaments etc., 3) the influence of informal relations between former combatants in post-conflict democratisation processes.

1. To what extent does the integration of former combatants into political and security structures contribute to, or inhibit, democratisation processes in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia?
2. Assess the long-term impact of DDR and transformation processes of combatants in politics and security structures. What has this meant for the quality of democracy?
3. Offer your thoughts on how former combatants ascended to power and how they maintain their power-structures. Through democratic means, legitimacy, political (war) credentials, patronage, reward/distribution means?
4. Identify the links, if any, between the former combatants' influence in politics and their countries' consolidation of democracy. How successful have they proven to be as elected leaders?
5. Discern and measure the impact of horizontal links, if any, between former combatants-cum-politicians after the conflict. In other words, how well has their camaraderie served their careers and economic wellbeing?

- 6.** Ascertain what level of noted regress in democratic consolidation is attributable to former combatants-cum-politicians. Or is such regress a result of more complex political circumstances, with an equal share of responsibility across the political spectrum?
- 7.** Examine the horizontal, cross-border relations between the two armed groups in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia. What were the goals, real or propagated, of these groups, and what was the degree of synergy between them?
- 8.** Look at the role of armed groups in contributing to the implementation of peace agreements in partnership with their respective countries and/or international interlocutors.

University of Sheffield

Participant Information Sheet

Research Project Title: Rearranging the puzzles of security in post-conflict democracies: a comparative study of the transformation and political integration of armed groups in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia

You are kindly being invited to take part in the above research project. Before you decide we think it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

The project's purpose: This project is part of my PhD programme, which is built around a comparative study of Kosovo and FYR Macedonia. They are emerging democracies with a common past, but have experienced specific trajectories of security transition and democratisation. They both faced internal armed struggles; they dealt with the integration of former combatants in security structures and politics; and they both aspire to join the EU. This thesis will examine the success of the transformation and integration of former combatants into post-conflict security structures, and by consequence their role in these emerging democracies.

Why have you been chosen to participate? With your background in armed groups and post-war democratisation processes in your country, I believe you are in a unique position to shed light as first-hand source upon some of the challenges and successes related to the transformation of armed combatants into security structures and politics.

Do you have to take part? It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep, and you will be asked to sign a consent form. You do not have to give a reason should you wish not to take part.

What are your responsibilities if you take part? I would be most grateful if we could meet 2-3 times for a long series of interviews lasting 1-2 hours each.

Possible disadvantages of taking part: There are no foreseeable disadvantages, apart from the possibility of some hard questions that I may put to you. In light of the chosen topic, such questions will relate to the role that army combatants turned politicians have had on democratization processes. Probing questions and themes as to the personal, party or leadership responsibility in relation to weak democratization performance will be asked and explored. However, if at any point you feel I am not showing a duty of care of appropriate sensitivity, I would appreciate if you told me.

Possible benefits of taking part: There are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project. It is hoped that the researcher's fieldwork and interviews will culminate into a published PhD thesis and possibly a peer-reviewed article or articles.

What if something goes wrong? As per the Consent Form and this Information Sheet, if at any point during this research you as research participant wish to opt out from this interview, you are free to do so. Any concerns or complaints regarding this research can be addressed to me or, as last instance, to the University Registrar and Secretary. Address and contact details: School of Law, Bartolomé House, The University of Sheffield, Winter Street, Sheffield, UK, S3 7ND, Tel: +44 (0)114 222 6771, Fax: +44 (0)114 222 6832, Email: law@sheffield.ac.uk.

Confidentiality: All the information that we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications.

Results of the research project: They will comprise a useful part of a larger study, which aims to be published as a PhD thesis. In addition, some of the information gathered herein may be utilized for publishing articles related to the subject matter. The principle of anonymity and confidentiality will continue to be respected at all times.

Organization and funding of project: The project is being organized by me, while my PhD stipend is offered by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in Kosovo. I am doing my PhD with the University of Sheffield, City College Thessaloniki.

Who has ethically reviewed the project? The Law School, University of Sheffield, and the City College Thessaloniki.

Recorded media: The audio recordings of your activities made during this research will be used only for analysis and for illustration in conference presentations and lectures. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

Contact for further information: Armend Bekaj, Tel: +377 44 970 912, email: armend.bekaj@gmail.com (lead researcher); Prof. Paul Knepper, Tel: +44 (0)114 222 6734, email: P.Knepper@sheffield.ac.uk (principle supervisor).

Thank you very much for taking part in this research. Your contribution given is key to making this research original and thereby contributing to furthering social science knowledge in general.

Participant Consent Form

Title of Research Project: Rearranging the puzzles of security in post-conflict democracies: a comparative study of the transformation and political integration of armed groups in Kosovo and FYR Macedonia

Name of Researcher: Armend Bekaj

Participant Identification Number for this project: _____ **Please initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.
3. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.
4. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research.
5. I agree to take part in the above research project.

Name of Participant
(or legal representative)

Date

Signature



Lead Researcher

Date

Signature

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Copies:

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/pre-written script/information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the project's main record (e.g. a site file), which must be kept in a secure location.

Appendix III: Military Technical Agreement

between the International Security Force ("KFOR") and the Governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia

9 June 1999

Article I: General Obligations

1. The Parties to this Agreement reaffirm the document presented by President Ahtisaari to President Milosevic and approved by the Serb Parliament and the Federal Government on June 3, 1999, to include deployment in Kosovo under UN auspices of effective international civil and security presences. The Parties further note that the UN Security Council is prepared to adopt a resolution, which has been introduced, regarding these presences.
2. The State Governmental authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia understand and agree that the international security force ("KFOR") will deploy following the adoption of the UNSCR referred to in paragraph 1 and operate without hindrance within Kosovo and with the authority to take all necessary action to establish and maintain a secure environment for all citizens of Kosovo and otherwise carry out its mission. They further agree to comply with all of the obligations of this Agreement and to facilitate the deployment and operation of this force.
3. For purposes of the agreement, the following expressions shall have the meanings as described below:
 - a. "The Parties" are those signatories to the Agreement.
 - b. "Authorities" means the appropriate responsible individual, agency, or organisation of the Parties.
 - c. "FRY Forces" includes all of the FRY and Republic of Serbia personnel and organisations with a military capability. This includes regular army and naval forces, armed civilian groups, associated paramilitary groups, air forces, national guards, border police, army reserves, military police, intelligence services, federal and Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs local, special, riot and anti-terrorist police, and any other groups or individuals so designated by the international security force ("KFOR") commander.
 - d. The Air Safety Zone (ASZ) is defined as a 25-kilometre zone that extends beyond the Kosovo province border into the rest of FRY territory. It includes the airspace above that 25-kilometre zone.
 - e. The Ground Safety Zone (GSZ) is defined as a 5-kilometre zone that extends beyond the Kosovo province border into the rest of FRY territory. It includes the terrain within that 5-kilometre zone.
 - f. Entry into Force Day (EIF Day) is defined as the day this Agreement is signed.

4. The purposes of these obligations are as follows:
 - a. To establish a durable cessation of hostilities, under no circumstances shall any Forces of the FRY and the Republic of Serbia enter into, reenter, or remain within the territory of Kosovo or the Ground Safety Zone (GSZ) and the Air Safety Zone (ASZ) described in paragraph 3. Article I without the prior express consent of the international security force ("KFOR") commander. Local police will be allowed to remain in the GSZ.

The above paragraph is without prejudice to the agreed return of FRY and Serbian personnel which will be the subject of a subsequent separate agreement as provided for in paragraph 6 of the document mentioned in paragraph 1 of this Article.

- b. To provide for the support and authorization of the international security force ("KFOR") and in particular to authorize the international security force ("KFOR") to take such actions as are required, including the use of necessary force, to ensure compliance with this Agreement and protection of the international security force ("KFOR"), and to contribute to a secure environment for the international civil implementation presence, and other international organisations, agencies, and non-governmental organisations (details in Appendix B).

Article II: Cessation of Hostilities

1. The FRY Forces shall immediately, upon entry into force (EIF) of this Agreement, refrain from committing any hostile or provocative acts of any type against any person in Kosovo and will order armed forces to cease all such activities. They shall not encourage, organise or support hostile or provocative demonstrations.
2. Phased Withdrawal of FRY Forces (ground): The FRY agrees to a phased withdrawal of all FRY Forces from Kosovo to locations in Serbia outside Kosovo. FRY Forces will mark and clear minefields, booby traps and obstacles. As they withdraw, FRY Forces will clear all lines of communication by removing all mines, demolitions, booby traps, obstacles and charges. They will also mark all sides of all minefields. International security forces' ("KFOR") entry and deployment into Kosovo will be synchronized. The phased withdrawal of FRY Forces from Kosovo will be in accordance with the sequence outlined below:
 - a. By EIF + 1 day, FRY Forces located in Zone 3 will have vacated, via designated routes, that Zone to demonstrate compliance (depicted on the map at Appendix A to the Agreement). Once it is verified that FRY forces have complied with this subparagraph and with paragraph 1 of this Article, NATO air strikes will be suspended. The suspension will continue provided that the obligations of this agreement are fully complied with, and provided that the UNSC adopts a resolution concerning the deployment of the international security force ("KFOR") so rapidly that a security gap can be avoided.

- b. By EIF + 6 days, all FRY Forces in Kosovo will have vacated Zone 1 (depicted on the map at Appendix A to the Agreement). Establish liaison teams with the KFOR commander in Pristina.
- c. By EIF + 9 days, all FRY Forces in Kosovo will have vacated Zone 2 (depicted on the map at Appendix A to the Agreement).
- d. By EIF + 11 days, all FRY Forces in Kosovo will have vacated Zone 3 (depicted on the map at Appendix A to the Agreement).
- e. By EIF +11 days, all FRY Forces in Kosovo will have completed their withdrawal from Kosovo (depicted on map at Appendix A to the Agreement) to locations in Serbia outside Kosovo, and not within the 5 km GSZ. At the end of the sequence (EIF + 11), the senior FRY Forces commanders responsible for the withdrawing forces shall confirm in writing to the international security force ("KFOR") commander that the FRY Forces have complied and completed the phased withdrawal. The international security force ("KFOR") commander may approve specific requests for exceptions to the phased withdrawal. The bombing campaign will terminate on complete withdrawal of FRY Forces as provided under Article II. The international security force ("KFOR") shall retain, as necessary, authority to enforce compliance with this Agreement.
- f. The authorities of the FRY and the Republic of Serbia will co-operate fully with international security force ("KFOR") in its verification of the withdrawal of forces from Kosovo and beyond the ASZ/GSZ.
- g. FRY armed forces withdrawing in accordance with Appendix A, i.e. in designated assembly areas or withdrawing on designated routes, will not be subject to air attack.
- h. The international security force ("KFOR") will provide appropriate control of the borders of FRY in Kosovo with Albania and FYROM ([1](#)) until the arrival of the civilian mission of the UN.

3. Phased Withdrawal of Yugoslavia Air and Air Defence Forces (YAADF)

- a. At EIF + 1 day, no FRY aircraft, fixed wing and rotary, will fly in Kosovo airspace or over the ASZ without prior approval by the international security force ("KFOR") commander. All air defence systems, radar, surface-to-air missile and aircraft of the Parties will refrain from acquisition, target tracking or otherwise illuminating international security ("KFOR") air platforms operating in the Kosovo airspace or over the ASZ.
- b. By EIF + 3 days, all aircraft, radars, surface-to-air missiles (including man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS)) and anti-aircraft artillery in Kosovo will withdraw to other locations in Serbia outside the 25 kilometre ASZ.
- c. The international security force ("KFOR") commander will control and coordinate use of airspace over Kosovo and the ASZ commencing at EIF.

Violation of any of the provisions above, including the international security force ("KFOR") commander's rules and procedures governing the airspace over Kosovo, as well as unauthorised flight or activation of FRY Integrated Air Defence (IADS) within the ASZ, are subject to military action by the international security force ("KFOR"), including the use of necessary force. The international security force ("KFOR") commander may delegate control of normal civilian air activities to appropriate FRY institutions to monitor operations, deconflict international security force ("KFOR") air traffic movements, and ensure smooth and safe operations of the air traffic system. It is envisioned that control of civil air traffic will be returned to civilian authorities as soon as practicable.

Article III: Notifications

1. This agreement and written orders requiring compliance will be immediately communicated to all FRY forces.
2. By EIF +2 days, the State governmental authorities of the FRY and the Republic of Serbia shall furnish the following specific information regarding the status of all FRY Forces:
 - a. Detailed records, positions and descriptions of all mines, unexploded ordnance, explosive devices, demolitions, obstacles, booby traps, wire entanglement, physical or military hazards to the safe movement of any personnel in Kosovo laid by FRY Forces.
 - b. Any further information of a military or security nature about FRY Forces in the territory of Kosovo and the GSZ and ASZ requested by the international security force ("KFOR") commander.

Article IV: Establishment of a Joint Implementation Commission (JIC)

A JIC shall be established with the deployment of the international security force ("KFOR") to Kosovo as directed by the international security force ("KFOR") commander.

Article V: Final Authority to Interpret

The international security force ("KFOR") commander is the final authority regarding interpretation of this Agreement and the security aspects of the peace settlement it supports. His determinations are binding on all Parties and persons.

Article VI: Entry Into Force

This agreement shall enter into force upon signature.

Appendices:

A. Phased withdrawal of FRY Forces from Kosovo



[\(176Kb\)](#)

B. International security force ("KFOR") operations

1. Consistent with the general obligations of the Military Technical Agreement, the State Governmental authorities of the FRY and the Republic of Serbia understand and agree that the international security force ("KFOR") will deploy and operate without hindrance within Kosovo and with the authority to take all necessary action to establish and maintain a secure environment for all citizens of Kosovo.
2. The international security force ("KFOR") commander shall have the authority, without interference or permission, to do all that he judges necessary and proper, including the use of military force, to protect the international security force ("KFOR"), the international civil implementation presence, and to carry out the responsibilities inherent in this Military Technical Agreement and the Peace Settlement which it supports.
3. The international security force ("KFOR") nor any of its personnel or staff shall be liable for any damages to public or private property that they may cause in the course of duties related to the implementation of this Agreement. The parties will agree a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) as soon as possible.
4. The international security force ("KFOR") shall have the right:
 - a. To monitor and ensure compliance with this Agreement and to respond promptly to any violations and restore compliance, using military force if required.

This includes necessary actions to:

1. Enforce withdrawals of FRY forces.
2. Enforce compliance following the return of selected FRY personnel to Kosovo
3. Provide assistance to other international entities involved in the implementation or otherwise authorised by the UNSC.
- b. To establish liaison arrangements with local Kosovo authorities, and with FRY/Serbian civil and military authorities.
- c. To observe, monitor and inspect any and all facilities or activities in Kosovo that the international security force ("KFOR") commander believes has or may have military or police capability, or may be associated with the employment

of military or police capabilities, or are otherwise relevant to compliance with this Agreement.

5. Notwithstanding any other provision of this Agreement, the Parties understand and agree that the international security force ("KFOR") commander has the right and is authorised to compel the removal, withdrawal, or relocation of specific Forces and weapons, and to order the cessation of any activities whenever the international security force ("KFOR") commander determines a potential threat to either the international security force ("KFOR") or its mission, or to another Party. Forces failing to redeploy, withdraw, relocate, or to cease threatening or potentially threatening activities following such a demand by the international security force ("KFOR") shall be subject to military action by the international security force ("KFOR"), including the use of necessary force, to ensure compliance.

Footnote:

1. Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional

Appendix IV: UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999)

Adopted by the Security Council at its 4011th meeting,

on 10 June 1999

The Security Council,

Bearing in mind the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and the primary responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security,

Recalling its resolutions 1160 (1998) of 31 March 1998, 1199 (1998) of 23 September 1998, 1203 (1998) of 24 October 1998 and 1239 (1999) of 14 May 1999,

Regretting that there has not been full compliance with the requirements of these resolutions,

Determined to resolve the grave humanitarian situation in Kosovo, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and to provide for the safe and free return of all refugees and displaced persons to their homes,

Condemning all acts of violence against the Kosovo population as well as all terrorist acts by any party,

Recalling the statement made by the Secretary-General on 9 April 1999, expressing concern at the humanitarian tragedy taking place in Kosovo,

Reaffirming the right of all refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes in safety,

Recalling the jurisdiction and the mandate of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia,

Welcoming the general principles on a political solution to the Kosovo crisis adopted on 6 May 1999 (S/1999/516, annex 1 to this resolution) and welcoming also the acceptance by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia of the principles set forth in points 1 to 9 of the paper presented in Belgrade on 2 June 1999 (S/1999/649, annex 2 to this resolution), and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's agreement to that paper,

Reaffirming the commitment of all Member States to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the other States of the region, as set out in the Helsinki Final Act and annex 2,

Reaffirming the call in previous resolutions for substantial autonomy and meaningful self-administration for Kosovo,

Determining that the situation in the region continues to constitute a threat to international peace and security,

Determined to ensure the safety and security of international personnel and the implementation by all concerned of their responsibilities under the present resolution, and acting for these purposes under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations,

1. Decides that a political solution to the Kosovo crisis shall be based on the general principles in annex 1 and as further elaborated in the principles and other required elements in annex 2;

2. Welcomes the acceptance by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia of the principles and other required elements referred to in paragraph 1 above, and demands the full cooperation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in their rapid implementation;

3. Demands in particular that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia put an immediate and verifiable end to violence and repression in Kosovo, and begin and complete verifiable phased withdrawal from Kosovo of all military, police and paramilitary forces according to a rapid timetable, with which the deployment of the international security presence in Kosovo will be synchronized;

4. Confirms that after the withdrawal an agreed number of Yugoslav and Serb military and police personnel will be permitted to return to Kosovo to perform the functions in accordance with annex 2;

5. Decides on the deployment in Kosovo, under United Nations auspices, of international civil and security presences, with appropriate equipment and personnel as required, and welcomes the agreement of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to such presences;

6. Requests the Secretary-General to appoint, in consultation with the Security Council, a Special Representative to control the implementation of the international civil presence, and further requests the Secretary-General to instruct his Special Representative to coordinate closely with the international security presence to ensure that both presences operate towards the same goals and in a mutually supportive manner;

7. Authorizes Member States and relevant international organizations to establish the international security presence in Kosovo as set out in point 4 of annex 2 with all necessary means to fulfil its responsibilities under paragraph 9 below;

8. Affirms the need for the rapid early deployment of effective international civil and security presences to Kosovo, and demands that the parties cooperate fully in their deployment;

9. Decides that the responsibilities of the international security presence to be deployed and acting in Kosovo will include:

(a) Deterring renewed hostilities, maintaining and where necessary enforcing a ceasefire, and ensuring the withdrawal and preventing the return into Kosovo of Federal and Republic military, police and paramilitary forces, except as provided in point 6 of annex 2;

(b) Demilitarizing the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and other armed Kosovo Albanian groups as required in paragraph 15 below;

(c) Establishing a secure environment in which refugees and displaced persons can return home in safety, the international civil presence can operate, a transitional administration can be established, and humanitarian aid can be delivered;

(d) Ensuring public safety and order until the international civil presence can take responsibility for this task;

(e) Supervising demining until the international civil presence can, as appropriate, take over responsibility for this task;

(f) Supporting, as appropriate, and coordinating closely with the work of the international civil presence;

(g) Conducting border monitoring duties as required;

(h) Ensuring the protection and freedom of movement of itself, the international civil presence, and other international organizations;

10. Authorizes the Secretary-General, with the assistance of relevant international organizations, to establish an international civil presence in Kosovo in order to provide an interim administration for Kosovo under which the people of Kosovo can enjoy substantial autonomy within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and which will provide transitional administration while establishing and overseeing the development of provisional democratic selfgoverning institutions to ensure conditions for a peaceful and normal life for all inhabitants of Kosovo;

11. Decides that the main responsibilities of the international civil presence will include:

(a) Promoting the establishment, pending a final settlement, of substantial autonomy and self-government in Kosovo, taking full account of annex 2 and of the Rambouillet accords (S/1999/648);

(b) Performing basic civilian administrative functions where and as long as required;

- (c) Organizing and overseeing the development of provisional institutions for democratic and autonomous self-government pending a political settlement, including the holding of elections;
 - (d) Transferring, as these institutions are established, its administrative responsibilities while overseeing and supporting the consolidation of Kosovo's local provisional institutions and other peacebuilding activities;
 - (e) Facilitating a political process designed to determine Kosovo's future status, taking into account the Rambouillet accords (S/1999/648);
 - (f) In a final stage, overseeing the transfer of authority from Kosovo's provisional institutions to institutions established under a political settlement;
 - (g) Supporting the reconstruction of key infrastructure and other economic reconstruction;
 - (h) Supporting, in coordination with international humanitarian organizations, humanitarian and disaster relief aid;
 - (i) Maintaining civil law and order, including establishing local police forces and meanwhile through the deployment of international police personnel to serve in Kosovo;
 - (j) Protecting and promoting human rights;
 - (k) Assuring the safe and unimpeded return of all refugees and displaced persons to their homes in Kosovo;
12. Emphasizes the need for coordinated humanitarian relief operations, and for the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to allow unimpeded access to Kosovo by humanitarian aid organizations and to cooperate with such organizations so as to ensure the fast and effective delivery of international aid;
13. Encourages all Member States and international organizations to contribute to economic and social reconstruction as well as to the safe return of refugees and displaced persons, and emphasizes in this context the importance of convening an international donors' conference, particularly for the purposes set out in paragraph 11 (g) above, at the earliest possible date;
14. Demands full cooperation by all concerned, including the international security presence, with the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia;
15. Demands that the KLA and other armed Kosovo Albanian groups end immediately all offensive actions and comply with the requirements for demilitarization as laid down by the head of the international security presence in consultation with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General;

16. Decides that the prohibitions imposed by paragraph 8 of resolution 1160 (1998) shall not apply to arms and related matériel for the use of the international civil and security presences;
17. Welcomes the work in hand in the European Union and other international organizations to develop a comprehensive approach to the economic development and stabilization of the region affected by the Kosovo crisis, including the implementation of a Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe with broad international participation in order to further the promotion of democracy, economic prosperity, stability and regional cooperation;
18. Demands that all States in the region cooperate fully in the implementation of all aspects of this resolution;
19. Decides that the international civil and security presences are established for an initial period of 12 months, to continue thereafter unless the Security Council decides otherwise;
20. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Council at regular intervals on the implementation of this resolution, including reports from the leaderships of the international civil and security presences, the first reports to be submitted within 30 days of the adoption of this resolution;
21. Decides to remain actively seized of the matter.

Annex 1

Statement by the Chairman on the conclusion of the meeting of the G-8 Foreign Ministers held at the Petersberg Centre on 6 May 1999 The G-8 Foreign Ministers adopted the following general principles on the political solution to the Kosovo crisis:

- Immediate and verifiable end of violence and repression in Kosovo;
- Withdrawal from Kosovo of military, police and paramilitary forces;
- Deployment in Kosovo of effective international civil and security presences, endorsed and adopted by the United Nations, capable of guaranteeing the achievement of the common objectives;
- Establishment of an interim administration for Kosovo to be decided by the Security Council of the United Nations to ensure conditions for a peaceful and normal life for all inhabitants in Kosovo;
- The safe and free return of all refugees and displaced persons and unimpeded access to Kosovo by humanitarian aid organizations;

- A political process towards the establishment of an interim political framework agreement providing for a substantial self-government for Kosovo, taking full account of the Rambouillet accords and the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the other countries of the region, and the demilitarization of the KLA;
- Comprehensive approach to the economic development and stabilization of the crisis region.

Annex 2

Agreement should be reached on the following principles to move towards a resolution of the Kosovo crisis:

1. An immediate and verifiable end of violence and repression in Kosovo.
2. Verifiable withdrawal from Kosovo of all military, police and paramilitary forces according to a rapid timetable.
3. Deployment in Kosovo under United Nations auspices of effective international civil and security presences, acting as may be decided under Chapter VII of the Charter, capable of guaranteeing the achievement of common objectives.
4. The international security presence with substantial North Atlantic Treaty Organization participation must be deployed under unified command and control and authorized to establish a safe environment for all people in Kosovo and to facilitate the safe return to their homes of all displaced persons and refugees.
5. Establishment of an interim administration for Kosovo as a part of the international civil presence under which the people of Kosovo can enjoy substantial autonomy within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, to be decided by the Security Council of the United Nations. The interim administration to provide transitional administration while establishing and overseeing the development of provisional democratic self-governing institutions to ensure conditions for a peaceful and normal life for all inhabitants in Kosovo.
6. After withdrawal, an agreed number of Yugoslav and Serbian personnel will be permitted to return to perform the following functions:
 - Liaison with the international civil mission and the international security presence;
 - Marking/clearing minefields;
 - Maintaining a presence at Serb patrimonial sites;
 - Maintaining a presence at key border crossings.

7. Safe and free return of all refugees and displaced persons under the supervision of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and unimpeded access to Kosovo by humanitarian aid organizations.

8. A political process towards the establishment of an interim political framework agreement providing for substantial self-government for Kosovo, taking full account of the Rambouillet accords and the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the other countries of the region, and the demilitarization of UCK. Negotiations between the parties for a settlement should not delay or disrupt the establishment of democratic self-governing institutions.

9. A comprehensive approach to the economic development and stabilization of the crisis region. This will include the implementation of a stability pact for South-Eastern Europe with broad international participation in order to further promotion of democracy, economic prosperity, stability and regional cooperation.

10. Suspension of military activity will require acceptance of the principles set forth above in addition to agreement to other, previously identified, required elements, which are specified in the footnote below. A military-technical agreement will then be rapidly concluded that would, among other things, specify additional modalities, including the roles and functions of Yugoslav/Serb personnel in Kosovo:

Withdrawal

- Procedures for withdrawals, including the phased, detailed schedule and delineation of a buffer area in Serbia beyond which forces will be withdrawn;

Returning personnel

- Equipment associated with returning personnel;
- Terms of reference for their functional responsibilities;
- Timetable for their return;
- Delineation of their geographical areas of operation;
- Rules governing their relationship to the international security presence and the international civil mission.

Notes

Other required elements:

- A rapid and precise timetable for withdrawals, meaning, e.g., seven days to complete withdrawal and air defence weapons withdrawn outside a 25 kilometre mutual safety zone within 48 hours;
- Return of personnel for the four functions specified above will be under the supervision of the international security presence and will be limited to a small agreed number (hundreds, not thousands);
- Suspension of military activity will occur after the beginning of verifiable withdrawals;
- The discussion and achievement of a military-technical agreement shall not extend the previously determined time for completion of withdrawals.

Appendix V: Undertaking of Demilitarisation and Transformation by the UCK

20 June 1999

1. This Undertaking provides for a ceasefire by the UCK, their disengagement from the zones of conflict, subsequent demilitarisation and reintegration into civil society. In accordance with the terms of UNSCR 1244 and taking account of the obligations agreed to at Rambouillet and the public commitments made by the Kosovar Albanian Rambouillet delegation.

2. The UCK undertake to renounce the use of force to comply with the directions of the Commander of the international security force in Kosovo (COMKFOR), and where applicable the head of the interim civil administration for Kosovo, and to resolve peacefully any questions relating to the implementation of this undertaking.

3. The UCK agree that the International Security Presence (KFOR) and the international civil presence will continue to deploy and operate without hindrance within Kosovo and that KFOR has the authority to take all necessary action to establish and maintain a secure environment for all citizens of Kosovo and otherwise carry out its mission.

4. The UCK agrees to comply with all of the obligations of this Undertaking and to ensure that with immediate effect all UCK forces in Kosovo and in neighbouring countries will observe the provisions of this Undertaking, will refrain from all hostile or provocative acts, hostile intent and freeze military movement in either direction across International borders or the boundary between Kosovo and other parts of the FRY, or any other actions inconsistent with the spirit of UNSCR 1244. The UCK in Kosovo agree to commit themselves publicly to demilitarise in accordance with paragraphs 22 and 23, refrain from activities which jeopardise the safety of international governmental and non-governmental personnel including KFOR, and to facilitate the deployment and operation of KFOR.

5. For purposes of this Undertaking, the following expressions shall have the meanings as described below:

- a. The UCK includes all personnel and organisations within Kosovo, currently under UCK control, with a military or paramilitary capability and any other groups or individuals so designated by Commander KFOR (COMKFOR)
- b. « FRY Forces » includes all of the FRY and Republic of Serbia personnel and organisations with a military capability. This includes regular army and naval forces, armed civilian groups, associated paramilitary groups, air forces, national guards, border police, army reserves, military police, intelligence services, Ministry of Internal Affairs, local, special, riot and anti-terrorist police, and any other groups or individuals so designated by Commander KFOR (COMKFOR).
- c. The Ground Safety Zone (GSZ) is defined as a 5-kilometre zone that extends beyond the Kosovo province border into the rest of FRY territory. It includes the terrain within that 5-kilometre zone.
- d. Prohibited weapons are any weapon 12.7mm or larger, any anti-tank or anti-aircraft weapons, grenades, mines or explosives, automatic and long barrelled weapons.

6. The purpose of this Undertaking are as follows :

- a. To establish a durable cessation of hostilities.
- b. To provide for the support and authorisation of the KFOR and in particular to authorise the KFOR to take such actions as are required, including the use of necessary force in accordance with KFOR's rules of engagement, to ensure compliance with this Undertaking and protection of the KFOR, and to contribute to a secure environment for the international civil implementation presence, and other international organisations, agencies, and non-governmental organisations and the civil populace.

7. The actions of the UCK shall be in accordance with this Undertaking. « The KFOR » commander in consultation, where appropriate, with the interim civil administrator will be the final authority regarding the interpretation of this Undertaking and the security aspects of the peace settlement it supports. His determinations will be binding on all parties and persons.

Cessation of Hostilities

8. With immediate effect on signature the UCK agrees to comply with this Undertaking and with the directions of COMKFOR. Any forces which fail to comply with this Undertaking or with the directions of COMKFOR will be liable to military action as deemed appropriate by COMKFOR.

9. With immediate effect on signature of this Undertaking all hostile acts by the UCK will cease. The UCK Chief of General Staff undertakes to issue clear and precise instructions to all units and personnel under his command, to ensure contact with the FRY force is avoided and to comply fully with the arrangements for bringing this Undertaking into effect. He will make announcements immediately following final signature of this Undertaking, which will be broadcast regularly through all appropriate channels to assist in ensuring that instructions to maintain this Undertaking reach all the forces under his command and are understood by the public in general.

10. The UCK undertakes and agrees in particular:

a. To cease the firing of all weapons and use of explosive devices.

b. Not to place any mines, barriers or checkpoints, nor maintain any observation posts or protective obstacles.

c. The destruction of buildings, facilities or structures is not permitted. It shall not engage in any military, security, or training related activities, including ground or air defence operations, in or over Kosovo or GSZ, without the prior express approval of COMKFOR.

d. Not to attack, detain or intimidate any civilians in Kosovo, nor shall they attack, confiscate or violate the property of civilians in Kosovo.

11. The UCK agrees not to conduct any reprisals, counter-attacks, or any unilateral actions in response to violations of the UNSCR 1244 and other extant agreements relating to Kosovo. This in no way denies the right of self-defence.

12. The UCK agrees not to interfere with those FRY personnel that return to Kosovo to conduct specific tasks as authorised and directed by COMKFOR.

13. Except as approved by COMKFOR, the UCK agrees that its personnel in Kosovo will not carry weapons of any type:

- a. Within 2 kilometres of VJ and MUP assembly areas ;
- b. Within 2 kilometres of the main roads and the towns upon them listed at Appendix A ;
- c. Within 2 kilometres of external borders of Kosovo ;
- d. In any other areas designated by COMKFOR

14. Within 4 days of signature of this Undertaking :

- a. The UCK will close all fighting positions, entrenchments, and checkpoints on roads, and mark their minefields and booby traps.
- b. The UCK Chief of General Staff shall report in writing completion of the above requirement to COMKFOR and continue to provide weekly detailed written status reports until demilitarisation, as detailed in the following paragraphs, is complete.

Cross-Border activity

15. With immediate effect the UCK will cease the movement of armed bodies into neighbouring countries. All movement of armed bodies into Kosovo will be subject to the prior approval of COMKFOR.

Monitoring the Cessation of Hostilities

16. The authority for dealing with breaches of this Undertaking rests with COMKFOR. He will monitor and maintain and if necessary enforce the cessation of hostilities.

17. The UCK agrees to co-operate fully with KFOR and the interim civil administration for Kosovo. The chief of the General Staff of the UCK will ensure that prompt and appropriate action is taken to deal with any breaches of this Undertaking by his forces as directed by COMKFOR.

18. Elements of KFOR will be assigned to maintain contact with the UCK and will be deployed to its command structure and bases.

19. KFOR will establish appropriate control at designated crossing points into Albania and the FYROM.

Joint Implementation Commission (JIC)

20. A JIC will be established in Pristina within 4 days of the signature of this Undertaking. The JIC will be chaired by COMKFOR and will comprise the senior commanders of KFOR and the UCK, and a representative from the interim civil administration for Kosovo.

21. The JIC will meet as often as required by COMKFOR throughout the implementation of this Undertaking. It may be called without prior notice and representation by the UCK is expected at a level appropriate with the rank of the KFOR chairman. Its functions will include

:

- a. Ensuring compliance with agreed arrangements for the security and activities of all forces ;
- b. The investigation of actual or threatened breaches of his Undertaking ;
- c. Such other tasks as may be assigned to it by COMKFOR in the interests of maintaining the cessation of hostilities.

Demilitarisation and transformation

22. The UCK will follow the procedures established by COMKFOR for the phased demilitarisation, transformation and monitoring of UCK forces in Kosovo and for further regulation of their activities. They will not train or organise parades without the authority of COMKFOR.

23. The UCK agrees to the following timetable which will commence from the signature of this Undertaking:

- a. Within 7 days, the UCK shall establish secure weapons storage sites, which shall be registered with and verified by the KFOR ;
- b. Within 7 days the UCK will clear their minefields and booby traps, vacate their fighting positions and transfer to assembly areas as agreed with COMKFOR at the JIC. Thereafter only personnel authorised by COMKFOR and senior Officers of the UCK with their close protection

personnel not exceeding 3, carrying side arms only, will be allowed outside the assembly areas.

c. After 7 days automatic small arms weapons not stored in the registered weapons storage sites can only be held inside the authorised assembly areas.

d. After 29 days, the retention of any non automatic long barrelled weapons shall be subject to authorisation by COMKFOR.

e. Within 30 days, subject to arrangements by COMKFOR, if necessary, all UCK personnel, who are not of local origin, whether or not they are legally within Kosovo, including individual advisors, freedom fighters, trainers, volunteers, and personnel from neighbouring and other States, shall be withdrawn from Kosovo.

f. Arrangements for control of weapons are as follows :

i. Within 30 days the UCK shall store in the registered weapons storage sites all prohibited weapons with the exception of automatic small arms. 30 per cent of their total holdings of automatic small arms weapons will also be stored in these sites at this stage. Ammunition for the remaining weapons should be withdrawn and stored at an approved site authorised by COMKFOR separate from the assembly areas at the same time.

ii. At 30 days it shall be illegal for UCK personnel to possess prohibited weapons, with the exception of automatic small arms within assembly areas, and unauthorised long barrelled weapons. Such weapons shall be subject to confiscation by the KFOR.

iii. Within 60 days a further 30 per cent of automatic small arms, giving a total of 60 per cent of the UCK holdings, will be stored in the registered weapons storage sites.

iv. Within 90 days all automatic small arms weapons will be stored in the registered weapons storage sites. Thereafter their possession by UCK personnel will be prohibited and such weapons will be subject to confiscation by KFOR.

g. From 30 days until 90 days the weapons storage sites will be under joint control of the UCK and KFOR under procedures approved by COMKFOR at the JIC. After 90 days KFOR will assume full control of these sites.

h. Within 90 days all UCK forces will have completed the processes for their demilitarisation and are to cease wearing either military uniforms or insignia of the UCK.

i. Within 90 days the Chief of General Staff UCK shall confirm compliance with the above restrictions in writing to COMKFOR.

24. The provisions of this Undertaking enter into force with immediate effect of its signature by the Kosovar Albanian representative(s).

25. The UCK intends to comply with the terms of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244, and in this context that the international community should take due and full account of the contribution of the UCK during the Kosovo crisis and accordingly give due consideration to :

a. Recognition that, while the UCK and its structures are in the process of transformation, it is committed to propose individual current members to participate in the administration and police forces of Kosovo, enjoying special consideration in view of the expertise they have developed.

b. The formation of an Army in Kosovo on the lines of the US National Guard in due course as part of a political process designed to determine Kosovo's future status, taking into account the Rambouillet Accord.

26. This Undertaking is provided in English and Albanian and if there is any doubt as to the meaning of the text the English version has precedence.

Appendix VI: Regulation No. 1999/8 on the Establishment of the Kosovo Protection Corps

20 September 1999

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General,
Acting pursuant to the authority given to him under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) of 10 June 1999,
Hereby promulgates the following:

Section 1

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KOSOVO PROTECTION CORPS

1.1 The Kosovo Protection Corps shall be established as a civilian emergency service agency, the tasks of which shall be to:

- (a) Provide disaster response services;
- (b) Perform search and rescue;
- (c) Provide a capacity for humanitarian assistance in isolated areas;
- (d) Assist in demining; and
- (e) Contribute to rebuilding infrastructure and communities.

1.2 The Kosovo Protection Corps shall not have any role in law enforcement or the maintenance of law and order.

Section 2

ORGANIZATION OF THE KOSOVO PROTECTION CORPS

2.1 The Kosovo Protection Corps shall consist of active members, up to a maximum of three thousand, as well as reserve members, up to a maximum of two thousand, who may be called upon when required.

2.2 Members of the Kosovo Protection Corps shall be individually recruited on the basis of professional criteria required for the functions to be performed. In keeping with the multi-ethnic character of the Kosovo Protection Corps, at least ten percent of both active and reserve members shall comprise individuals from minority groups.

2.3 The Special Representative of the Secretary-General shall have final authority over the selection and appointment of members of the Kosovo Protection Corps and shall have the authority to dismiss such members on appropriate grounds.

2.4 The Kosovo Protection Corps shall not take part in any political activity, nor shall members of the Kosovo Corps hold public office or actively engage in political affairs.

Section 3

FUNCTIONING OF THE KOSOVO PROTECTION CORPS

The Kosovo Protection Corps shall operate under the authority of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. KFOR shall provide day-to-day operational direction to the Kosovo Protection Corps in accordance with policies and priorities established by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

Section 4

ENTRY INTO FORCE

The present regulation shall enter into force when the Special Representative of the Secretary-General determines that necessary funding is available for the establishment and maintenance of the Kosovo Protection Corps and COMKFOR confirms compliance with the relevant provisions of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

Bernard Kouchner

Special Representative of the Secretary-General

Appendix VII: Report of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Kosovo's future status

Recommendation: Kosovo's status should be independence, supervised by the international community

1. In November 2005, the Secretary-General appointed me as his Special Envoy for the future status process for Kosovo. According to my terms of reference, this process should culminate in a political settlement that determines the future status of Kosovo. To achieve such a political settlement, I have held intensive negotiations with the leadership of Serbia and Kosovo over the course of the past year. My team and I have made every effort to facilitate an outcome that would be acceptable to both sides. But after more than one year of direct talks, bilateral negotiations and expert consultations, it has become clear to me that the parties are not able to reach an agreement on Kosovo's future status.

2. Throughout the process and on numerous occasions, both parties have reaffirmed their categorical, diametrically opposed positions: Belgrade demands Kosovo's autonomy within Serbia, while Pristina will accept nothing short of independence. Even on practical issues such as decentralization, community rights, the protection of cultural and religious heritage and economic matters, conceptual differences — almost always related to the question of status — persist, and only modest progress could be achieved.

3. My mandate explicitly provides that I determine the pace and duration of the future status process on the basis of consultations with the Secretary-General, taking into account the cooperation of the parties and the situation on the ground. It is my firm view that the negotiations' potential to produce any mutually agreeable outcome on Kosovo's status is exhausted. No amount of additional talks, whatever the format, will overcome this impasse.

4. Nevertheless, resolution of this fundamental issue is urgently needed. Almost eight years have passed since the Security Council adopted resolution 1244 (1999) and Kosovo's current state of limbo cannot continue. Uncertainty over its future status has become a major obstacle to Kosovo's democratic development, accountability, economic recovery and inter-

ethnic reconciliation. Such uncertainty only leads to further stagnation, polarizing its communities and resulting in social and political unrest. Pretending otherwise and denying or delaying resolution of Kosovo's status risks challenging not only its own stability but the peace and stability of the region as a whole.

5. The time has come to resolve Kosovo's status. Upon careful consideration of Kosovo's recent history, the realities of Kosovo today and taking into account the negotiations with the parties, I have come to the conclusion that the only viable option for Kosovo is independence, to be supervised for an initial period by the international community. My Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status

Settlement, which sets forth these international supervisory structures, provides the foundations for a future independent Kosovo that is viable, sustainable and stable, and in which all communities and their members can live a peaceful and dignified existence.

Reintegration into Serbia is not a viable option

6. A history of enmity and mistrust has long antagonized the relationship between Kosovo Albanians and Serbs. This difficult relationship was exacerbated by the actions of the Milosevic regime in the 1990s. After years of peaceful resistance to Milosevic's policies of oppression — the revocation of Kosovo's autonomy, the systematic discrimination against the vast Albanian majority in Kosovo and their effective elimination from public life — Kosovo Albanians eventually responded with armed resistance. Belgrade's reinforced and brutal repression followed, involving the tragic loss of civilian lives and the displacement and expulsion on a massive scale of Kosovo Albanians from their homes, and from Kosovo. The dramatic deterioration of the situation on the ground prompted the intervention of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), culminating in the adoption of resolution 1244 (1999) on 10 June 1999.

7. For the past eight years, Kosovo and Serbia have been governed in complete separation. The establishment of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) pursuant to resolution 1244 (1999), and its assumption of all legislative, executive and judicial authority throughout Kosovo, has created a situation in which Serbia has not exercised any governing authority over Kosovo. This is a reality one cannot deny; it is irreversible. A return of Serbian rule over

Kosovo would not be acceptable to the overwhelming majority of the people of Kosovo. Belgrade could not regain its authority without provoking violent opposition. Autonomy of Kosovo within the borders of Serbia — however notional such autonomy may be — is simply not tenable.

Continued international administration is not sustainable

8. While UNMIK has made considerable achievements in Kosovo, international administration of Kosovo cannot continue. Under UNMIK authority, Kosovo institutions have been created and developed and have increasingly taken on the responsibility of managing Kosovo's affairs. This has set into motion a dynamic political process, which has reinforced the legitimate expectations of the Kosovo people for more ownership in, and responsibility for, their own affairs. These expectations cannot be realized within the framework of continued international administration.

9. Further, while UNMIK has facilitated local institutions of self-government, it has not been able to develop a viable economy. Kosovo's uncertain political status has left it unable to access international financial institutions, fully integrate into the regional economy or attract the foreign capital it needs to invest in basic infrastructure and redress widespread poverty and unemployment. Unlike many of its western Balkans neighbours, Kosovo is also unable to participate effectively in any meaningful process towards the European Union — an otherwise powerful motor for reform and economic development in the region and the most effective way to continue the vital standards implementation process. Kosovo's weak economy is, in short, a source of social and political instability, and its recovery cannot be achieved under the status quo of international administration. Economic development in Kosovo requires the clarity and stability that only independence can provide.

Independence with international supervision is the only viable option

10. Independence is the only option for a politically stable and economically viable Kosovo. Only in an independent Kosovo will its democratic institutions be fully responsible and accountable for their actions. This will be crucial to ensure respect for the rule of law and the effective protection of minorities. With continued political ambiguity, the peace and stability

of Kosovo and the region remains at risk. Independence is the best safeguard against this risk. It is also the best chance for a sustainable long-term partnership between Kosovo and Serbia.

11. While independence for Kosovo is the only realistic option, Kosovo's capacity to tackle the challenges of minority protection, democratic development, economic recovery and social reconciliation on its own is still limited. Kosovo's political and legal institutions must be further developed, with international assistance and under international supervision. This is especially important to improve the protection of Kosovo's most vulnerable populations and their participation in public life.

12. Kosovo's minority communities — in particular the Kosovo Serbs — continue to face difficult living conditions. The violence perpetrated against them in summer 1999 and in March 2004 has left a profound legacy. While Kosovo's leaders have increased their efforts to reach out to Kosovo Serbs and to improve implementation of standards, protecting the rights of minority communities requires their even greater commitment. At the same time, Kosovo Serbs need to engage actively in Kosovo's institutions. They must reverse their fundamental position of noncooperation; only with an end to their boycott of Kosovo's institutions will they be able to protect effectively their rights and interests.

13. I therefore propose that the exercise of Kosovo's independence, and its fulfilment of the obligations set forth in my Settlement proposal, be supervised and supported for an initial period by international civilian and military presences. Their powers should be strong — but focused — in critical areas such as community rights, decentralization, the protection of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the rule of law. These powers should be exercised to correct actions that would contravene the provisions of the Settlement proposal and the spirit in which they were crafted. Recognizing Kosovo's current weaknesses, the international community's intensive engagement should extend also to institutional capacity-building. I envisage that the supervisory role of the international community would come to an end only when Kosovo has implemented the measures set forth in the Settlement proposal.

14. Notwithstanding this strong international involvement, Kosovo's authorities are ultimately responsible and accountable for the implementation of the Settlement proposal.

They will succeed in this endeavour only with the commitment and active participation of all communities, including, in particular, the Kosovo Serbs.

Conclusion

15. Kosovo is a unique case that demands a unique solution. It does not create a precedent for other unresolved conflicts. In unanimously adopting resolution 1244 (1999), the Security Council responded to Milosevic's actions in Kosovo by denying Serbia a role in its governance, placing Kosovo under temporary United Nations administration and envisaging a political process designed to determine Kosovo's future. The combination of these factors makes Kosovo's circumstances extraordinary.

16. For over a year, I have led the political process envisaged in resolution 1244 (1999), exhausting every possible avenue to achieve a negotiated settlement. The irreconcilable positions of the parties have made that goal unattainable. Nevertheless, after almost eight years of United Nations administration, Kosovo's status must be urgently resolved. My recommendation of independence, supervised initially by the international community, takes into account Kosovo's recent history, the realities of Kosovo today and the need for political and economic stability in Kosovo. My Settlement proposal, upon which such independence will be based, builds upon the positions of the parties in the negotiating process and offers compromises on many issues to achieve a durable solution. I urge the Security Council to endorse my Settlement proposal. Concluding this last episode in the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia will allow the region to begin a new chapter in its history — one that is based upon peace, stability and prosperity for all.

Appendix VIII: International Court of Justice: Accordance with International Law of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in Respect of Kosovo

(Extract)

Advisory Opinion of 22 July 2010

V. General Conclusion

122. The Court has concluded above that the adoption of the declaration of independence of 17 February 2008 did not violate general international law, Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) or the Constitutional Framework. Consequently the adoption of that declaration did not violate any applicable rule of international law.

Appendix IX: Ohrid Framework Agreement

Concluded at Ohrid, Macedonia

Signed at Skopje, Macedonia on 31 August 2001

The following points comprise an agreed framework for securing the future of Macedonia's democracy and permitting the development of closer and more integrated relations between the Republic of Macedonia and the Euro-Atlantic community. This Framework will promote the peaceful and harmonious development of civil society while respecting the ethnic identity and the interests of all Macedonian citizens.

1. Basic Principles

1.1. The use of violence in pursuit of political aims is rejected completely and unconditionally. Only peaceful political solutions can assure a stable and democratic future for Macedonia.

1.2. Macedonia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the unitary character of the State are inviolable and must be preserved. There are no territorial solutions to ethnic issues.

1.3. The multi-ethnic character of Macedonia's society must be preserved and reflected in public life.

1.4. A modern democratic state in its natural course of development and maturation must continually ensure that its Constitution fully meets the needs of all its citizens and comports with the highest international standards, which themselves continue to evolve.

1.5. The development of local self-government is essential for encouraging the participation of citizens in democratic life, and for promoting respect for the identity of communities.

2. Cessation of Hostilities

2.1. The parties underline the importance of the commitments of July 5, 2001. There shall be a complete cessation of hostilities, complete voluntary disarmament of the ethnic Albanian armed groups and their complete voluntary disbandment. They acknowledge that a decision by NATO to assist in this context will require the establishment of a general, unconditional

and opened a cease-fire, agreement on a political solution to the problems of this country, a clear commitment by the armed groups to voluntarily disarm, and acceptance by all the parties of the conditions and limitations under which the NATO forces will operate.

3. Development of Decentralized Government

3.1. A revised Law on Local Self-Government will be adopted that reinforces the powers of elected local officials and enlarges substantially their competencies in conformity with the Constitution (as amended in accordance with Annex A) and the European Charter on Local Self-Government, and reflecting the principle of subsidiarity in effect in the European Union. Enhanced competencies will relate principally to the areas of public services, urban and rural planning, environmental protection, local economic development, culture, local finances, education, social welfare, and health care. A law on financing of local self-government will be adopted to ensure an adequate system of financing to enable local governments to fulfill all of their responsibilities.

3.2. Boundaries of municipalities will be revised within one year of the completion of a new census, which will be conducted under international supervision by the end of 2001. The revision of the municipal boundaries will be effectuated by the local and national authorities with international participation.

3.3. In order to ensure that police are aware of and responsive to the needs and interests of the local population, local heads of police will be selected by municipal councils from lists of candidates proposed by the Ministry of Interior, and will communicate regularly with the councils. The Ministry of Interior will retain the authority to remove local heads of police in accordance with the law.

4. Non-Discrimination and Equitable Representation

4.1. The principle of non-discrimination and equal treatment of all under the law will be respected completely. This principle will be applied in particular with respect to employment in public administration and public enterprises, and access to public financing for business development.

4.2. Laws regulating employment in public administration will include measures to assure equitable representation of communities in all central and local public bodies and at all levels of employment within such bodies, while respecting the rules concerning competence and integrity that govern public administration. The authorities will take action to correct present imbalances in the composition of the public administration, in particular through the recruitment of members of under-represented communities. Particular attention will be given to ensuring as rapidly as possible that the police services will generally reflect the composition and distribution of the population of Macedonia, as specified in Annex C.

4.3. For the Constitutional Court, one-third of the judges will be chosen by the Assembly by a majority of the total number of Representatives that includes a majority of the total number of Representatives claiming to belong to the communities not in the majority in the population of Macedonia. This procedure also will apply to the election of the Ombudsman (Public Attorney) and the election of three of the members of the Judicial Council.

5. Special Parliamentary Procedures

5.1. On the central level, certain Constitutional amendments in accordance with Annex A and the Law on Local Self-Government cannot be approved without a qualified majority of two-thirds of votes, within which there must be a majority of the votes of Representatives claiming to belong to the communities not in the majority in the population of Macedonia.

5.2. Laws that directly affect culture, use of language, education, personal documentation, and use of symbols, as well as laws on local finances, local elections, the city of Skopje, and boundaries of municipalities must receive a majority of votes, within which there must be a majority of the votes of the Representatives claiming to belong to the communities not in the majority in the population of Macedonia.

6. Education and Use of Languages

6.1. With respect to primary and secondary education, instruction will be provided in the students' native languages, while at the same time uniform standards for academic programs will be applied throughout Macedonia.

6.2. State funding will be provided for university level education in languages spoken by at least 20 percent of the population of Macedonia, on the basis of specific agreements.

6.3. The principle of positive discrimination will be applied in the enrolment in State universities of candidates belonging to communities not in the majority in the population of Macedonia until the enrolment reflects equitably the composition of the population of Macedonia.

6.4. The official language throughout Macedonia and in the international relations of Macedonia is the Macedonian language.

6.5. Any other language spoken by at least 20 percent of the population is also an official language, as set forth herein. In the organs of the Republic of Macedonia, any official language other than Macedonian may be used in accordance with the law, as further elaborated in Annex B. Any person living in a unit of local self-government in which at least 20 percent of the population speaks an official language other than Macedonian may use any official language to communicate with the regional office of the central government with responsibility for that municipality; such an office will reply in that language in addition to Macedonian. Any person may use any official language to communicate with a main office of the central government, which will reply in that language in addition to Macedonian.

6.6. With respect to local self-government, in municipalities where a community comprises at least 20 percent of the population of the municipality, the language of that community will be used as an official language in addition to Macedonian. With respect to languages spoken by less than 20 percent of the population of the municipality, the local authorities will decide democratically on their use in public bodies.

6.7. In criminal and civil judicial proceedings at any level, an accused person or any party will have the right to translation at State expense of all proceedings as well as documents in accordance with relevant Council of Europe documents.

6.8. Any official personal documents of citizens speaking an official language other than Macedonian will also be issued in that language, in addition to the Macedonian language, in accordance with the law.

7. Expression of Identity

7.1. With respect to emblems, next to the emblem of the Republic of Macedonia, local authorities will be free to place on front of local public buildings emblems marking the identity of the community in the majority in the municipality, respecting international rules and usages.

8. Implementation

8.1. The Constitutional amendments attached at Annex A will be presented to the Assembly immediately. The parties will take all measures to assure adoption of these amendments within 45 days of signature of this Framework Agreement.

8.2. The legislative modifications identified in Annex B will be adopted in accordance with the timetables specified therein.

8.3. The parties invite the international community to convene at the earliest possible time a meeting of international donors that would address in particular macro-financial assistance; support for the financing of measures to be undertaken for the purpose of implementing this Framework Agreement, including measures to strengthen local self-government; and rehabilitation and reconstruction in areas affected by the fighting.

9. Annexes

The following Annexes constitute integral parts of this Framework Agreement:

- A. Constitutional Amendments
- B. Legislative Modifications
- C. Implementation and Confidence-Building Measures

10. Final Provisions

10.1. This Agreement takes effect upon signature.

10.2. The English language version of this Agreement is the only authentic version.

10.3. This Agreement was concluded under the auspices of President Boris Trajkovski.

Done at Skopje, Macedonia on 13 August 2001, in the English language.

Boris Trajkovski

President of the Republic of Macedonia

Ljubco Georgievski

President of VMRO-DPMNE

Arben Xhaferi

President of the Democratic Party of Albanians

Branko Crvenkovski

President of the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia

Imer Imeri

President of the Party for Democratic Prosperity

Witnessed By:

Francois Leotard

Special Representative of the European Union

James W. Pardew

Special Representative of the United States of America

Appendix X: Prespa Agreement

(Extract)

Final Agreement for the Settlement of the Differences as described in the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 817 (1993) and 845 (1993), the Termination of the Interim Accord of 1995, and the Establishment of a Strategic Partnership between the Parties.

Part 1

Settlement of the difference on the name, the pending issues related to it and entrenchment of good neighbourly relations.

Article 1

3. Pursuant to those negotiations the following have been mutually accepted and agreed:

a) the official name of the Second Party shall be “The Republic of North Macedonia”, which shall be the constitutional name of the Second Party and shall be used erga omnes, as provided for in this Agreement. The short name of the Second Party shall be “North Macedonia”.

b) The nationality of the Second Party shall be North Macedonian/citizen of the Republic of North Macedonia, as it will be registered in all travel documents.

c) The official language of the Second Party shall be the “Macedonian language”, as recognized by the Third UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, held in Athens in 1977, and described in Article 7(3) and (4) of this Agreement.