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## INTERETHNIC RECONCILIATION

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## INTERETHNIC RECONCILIATION

A Bachelor Thesis submitted for the degree of  
“Bachelor of Arts in Law, Political Science and Diplomacy”  
at the University for Business and Technology

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Executive Summary

Interethnic reconciliation is a global issue that is ongoing in many areas of the world such as Azerbaijan and Armenia, United States – black African Americans and Native Americans, Israel and Palestine.

A great amount of work has been done so far by scholars to explain the historical background, which that brought about the conflict and war in Kosovo. Ten years into international administration of Kosovo, two violent days in March 2004 have greatly tested the international commitment to a multiethnic Kosovo. Directed against Kosovo's minorities and against the international missions itself, the violence has left many wondering whether international organizations have the capacity to achieve its objectives in the face of open resistance. Bringing together Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb unemployed young people, local governments, civil society and the private sector in a program which creates jobs, produces public goods, and builds organizational capacity and personal skills will also reduce the propensity to violent conflict.

This is a sensitive moment in the international policy in the region. The urgent priority, after the Kosovo's declaration of independence, for Kosovo's Government and incoming missions EULEX is to reaffirm the international commitment to multiethnic society, at both diplomatic and practical level. Different reports indicate significant drop in the public's confidence in government and international institutions in Kosovo, which come as a very worrying fact. The percentage of Kosovo Serbs expressing willingness to work with Kosovo Albanians fell from 79% to 29% after the six months of declaration.<sup>1</sup>

After Kosovo unilaterally declared itself sovereign state independent from Serbia, its self-proclaimed status was quickly recognized by United States, Great Britain and many other important European Union countries. Other important European states, including Russia, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and Cyprus have withheld recognition. Serbia, too, refuses to recognize an independent Kosovo and continues to partially administer Kosovo Serbs

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<sup>1</sup> Blue, Richard, (2008) "Conflict Mitigation Programs: Impact and Lessons Learned", USAID

majority territories within Kosovo. Although tensions have remained high in Serbian enclaves besides protest marches and demonstrations there are few incidents that occurred.

There are still nearly 130,000 Serbs living in Kosovo today, representing two-thirds of the pre-war Serb population<sup>2</sup>. Almost all of the urban Serbs have left, with North Mitrovica now the last remaining urban outpost. However, most of the rural Serbs have never left their homes. Roma consist of Ashkali the group of Roma that have been Albanised and are using Albanian language, Egyptians speaking Roma language and representing Egyptians in Kosovo and the Roma group mainly representing Serb and Turks and speaking Roma and Serbian language. The reality of Serbs and Roma in Kosovo today is small communities of subsistence farmers scattered widely across Kosovo.

According to the Statistical Office of Kosovo's assessment, the number of habitual residents is 2.1 million inhabitants with the ethnic composition:

- Albanians 88 %
- Other ethnic groups comprise of 12 % of the total number of population.<sup>3</sup>

Kosovo population by ethnic origin is as following:

**Table 1. Kosovo Ethnic Composition**<sup>4</sup>

	<b>2000</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>1981</b>	<b>1971</b>
Albanian	88%	82%	78%	74%
Serbian	7%	10%	13%	18%
Other ethnic groups: Bosniaks, Goranis, Roma, Ashakli, Egyptian and Turks	5%	8%	9%	8% <sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> "Multiethnic, Territory and the future of Kosovo's Serbs", (2004), European Stability Initiative

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ks-gov.net/ESK/eng/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ks-gov.net/ESK/eng/>

A negotiated settlement for Kosovo, between the international community, Belgrade and Kosovo Albanians brought more problems than a victory; it left the country in limbo for over eight years thus made it easy for ethnic divide. The sad lesson from Bosnia is that reconciliation between former enemies cannot be expected for years. The war in Bosnia and Kosovo produced no clear results, unlike in 1945, to allow for some of de-nazification and a completely fresh start. One approach to reconciliation there is that of arrests and trials of indicted war criminals remain unproven as long as the most notorious cases remain at large. But the arrests done so far do not suggest that the war criminals issue is the only one holding up reconciliation. They tend to bring merriment in two communities and a sense of victimization in the third.

This thesis discusses the historical background of Kosovo and what is left of joint living. It elaborates the interethnic contact relation, the effect and importance of interethnic contact. It will also discuss two different international reconciliation programs, Norwegian and US funded its goals and results. And the last part is about the decentralization of Kosovo, opinions about it and my arguments how it will further only divide the ethnicities instead of bridging and bringing them together. Each chapter contents essential arguments to the topic of this thesis, and all together they will present today's interethnic situation in Kosovo.



*Fig. 1 Ethnic composition of Kosovo <sup>6</sup>*

## 1. Historical Background

Pressures in this region between Kosovo Serb and Albanian populations trace back centuries. These difficulties began taking on their modern form in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, roughly coinciding with the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. No longer under Turkish control, both group experienced a surge in nationalistic aspirations. The Kosovo Albanian majority, most of which has been converted from Catholicism to Islam, sought unification along linguistic lines of geographic areas including Albania,

<sup>6</sup> [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/fb/Kosovo\\_ethnic\\_2005.png](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/fb/Kosovo_ethnic_2005.png)

Kosovo and parts of present –day Macedonia and Serbia. For Serbians, a numeric minority in Kosovo, this land was and still is a place of identity – defining significance as the location of Prince Lazar’s final attempt to drive back advancing Ottoman forces, and as the birthplace of Serbian Orthodoxy with several ancient monasteries still standing and Peja city as the seat of the church’s patriarch.

In 1912, following the first Balkan war, the present state of Albania was recognized, while the independent principality of Serbia took control of Kosovo and the 800,000 Kosovo Albanian speakers living here (ESI, 2004). From this time until 1914 land laws were altered and applied by the Serbian government to dispossess Albanian landholders and to facilitate the relocation of Serbian families to Kosovo<sup>7</sup>. Briefly during Second World War once Italian and German forces had taken control of the area, the Albanian government was allowed to administer Kosovo. Serbs maintain that hundred of thousand of Kosovo Albanians moved into the province during this four-year period. The engineering of Kosovo demographics by both groups is a disputed topic, though there is little doubt that each side deliberately implemented policies designed to strengthen their respective claims over the area.

## **1.2 Golden era of Yugoslavia**

After WWII Albanians living within Yugoslavia were granted the status of a minority nationality and as such had the right to education in their own language and to cultural protections. Strong in numbers, Kosovo Albanians had enough influence in parts of Kosovo and property values were such that by the late 1960 many Serbian farmers were opting to sell out and move to Serbia proper. Among the six Republics comprising the Socialist Federal of Yugoslavia Serbia was the largest and most populous with 40% of the century’s 22 million inhabitants, 1.7 million of them living in Kosovo (ISG Balkan Report, 2002). In attempting to ensure more of a Federal power balance, Marshal Tito oversaw the enactment of a new SFRY Constitution in 1974 that granted further

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<sup>7</sup> “Multiethnic, Territory and the future of Kosovo’s Serbs”, (2004), European Stability Initiative



autonomy to Kosovo's 1.7 million people, 90% of whom were Albanians, thus constraining Serbia's power within the Republic (ISG Balkan Report, 2002). SFRY established on brotherhood and unity principle, offering ethnicities at that time equal work and education opportunity, joint living, and as a result of it having a great number of mixed marriages between different ethnic groups.



Fig. 2 1981 Ethnic composition of Yugoslavia<sup>8</sup>

### 1.3 Milosevic Era

When Marshal Tito died in 1981, Kosovo Albanians responded by escalating the demand for separation from Serbia and for recognition as a full Yugoslav Republic. The Serbs

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.catsg.org/balkanlynx/03\\_countries/3\\_4\\_map-centre/maps-graphics/UniversityofTexas\\_1992\\_Map\\_of\\_Ethnic\\_in\\_former\\_Yugoslavia.jpg](http://www.catsg.org/balkanlynx/03_countries/3_4_map-centre/maps-graphics/UniversityofTexas_1992_Map_of_Ethnic_in_former_Yugoslavia.jpg)

met this activism with the deployment of Yugoslav army a declared state of emergency and widespread human rights violations. But Kosovo Serbs despite having Serbian government and Yugoslav military backing viewed themselves as disadvantaged and threatened by the Albanian majority. Demonstrating for their nationalist cause on April 1987 near Pristina, large numbers of Kosovo Serbs were driven back by Kosovo Albanian police using batons.<sup>9</sup> Slobodan Milosevic the prominent in the League of Communists of Serbia emerged from discussions with local Serbian representative and spoke to demonstrators. It is this speech in which he told the crowd “no one should dare to beat you” that is credited with putting Milosevic at the helm of the Serbian nationalist agenda.

Subsequent legislative changes at the republican level reduces Kosovo’s political autonomy, eliminated public funding for Albanian language media and severely limited the use of Albanian in school, cutting altogether those courses at Pristina University that were taught in Albanian. Thousand of Kosovo Albanians lost their jobs as civil servants and professors. Many emigrated to Western Europe and elsewhere-seeking employment. In response, Kosovo Albanians boycotted Serbian – run institutions, they setup and maintained parallel structures of governance and education funded largely by remittances from Albanians working abroad. In 1992, with SFRY disintegrated in warfare, Kosovo held its first parallel elections empowering the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) and its founder, Ibrahim Rugova, who was declared the President of Republic of Kosovo. Rugova and his party adopted a nonviolent approach toward settling the political status issues that were causing so much bloodshed elsewhere in Yugoslavia. Very little support came from the outside, as international attention and assistance flowed toward the more violent parts of the region. Meanwhile, the Serbian military presence in Kosovo became more oppressive.

By the mid 1999 the Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK or KLA) began taking shape. Contrasting with Rugova’s approach the KLA’s stated purpose was to provide armed

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<sup>9</sup> “Multiethnic, Territory and the future of Kosovo’s Serbs”, (2004), European Stability Initiative

resistance against the increasing oppression of Serbian police and military forces and to fight for Kosovo's independence. The KLA began attacking official and civilian targets in 1996, escalating these attacks in 1997 and early 1998. Nevertheless, in the two years leading up to January 1998 only 10 Serbian and 11 Kosovo Albanians had been killed in status-related Kosovo.<sup>10</sup>

However, January 1998 saw the introduction of special Serbian security forces that retaliated against KLA clashes by mercilessly attacking villages. One such assault occurred in a village in the Skenderaj municipality where some 54 people were killed. Among the dead were women, children and members of the Jashari family including Adem Jashari, said to be the head of KLA. Kosovo Albanians broadly consider this event that started the war. It would be easy at this point to become tangled in an unsolvable debate about what to label each side in this conflict – were KLA fighters' fringe secessionists and terrorists, as Serbs authorities alleged, or were the legitimate combatants struggling in self defense against the oppression of an illegitimate regime? Regardless the battles, the intimidation, and the systematic violation of human rights began steamrolling through communities of innocent civilians. The KLA found it easier to build support as Albanians in increasing numbers opted to flee or fight.

As Serbs forces began demonstrating a pattern of forcing villagers out of their homes extorting money from them and burning their houses, and as the tally of refugees and displaced persons grew into the hundreds of thousands, the international community became more involved. Negotiated agreements resulted in a calm in the violence at the end of 1998, but talks did not include the KLA, which used the cessation to bolster its military capacities. In Serbia, meanwhile, Milosevic was encouraged by voters to maintain a hard line on Kosovo. Yugoslav forces were building up along the Kosovo boundary with the apparent intention of a massive assault sometime in early spring 1999. But it was primarily the death of 45 people, including children, in the village of Recak in January 1999 that precipitated the events that followed (ESI, 2004). First, attempts at

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<sup>10</sup> "Multiethnic, Territory and the future of Kosovo's Serbs", (2004), European Stability Initiative

reaching a negotiated deal were intensified leading to talks between the parties at Rambouillet, France. An agreement was drafted, this time including the KLA, but the Serbian side failed to attend the signing. Hostile atmosphere continued in Kosovo, expanding to include substantial Yugoslav armor and some 30,000 additional troops (Daalder & O’Hanlon, 2000). On March 1999, NATO began bombing FRY targets.

#### **1.4 Post NATO Era**

The NATO campaign concluded on June 1999, after Serbian forces began their withdrawal pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 1244<sup>11</sup>. The peace plan brought thousands of NATO troops into Kosovo as the Kosovo Protection Force (KFOR) and thousands more UN Administrative staff and Civilian Police under the mandate of United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). At the same time the full gamut of NGOs arrived bringing unprecedented levels of money marked for humanitarian relief. Concurrent with all of this activity was the return of Kosovo Albanian refugees and internal displaced persons (IDPs) to the communities they had left during the war. This return was often paralleled by waves of Kosovo Serbs leaving their homes, usually forced out by fear of reprisal – a fear that proved to be well founded in many places as crimes of revenge, including murders and house burnings, committed by Kosovo Albanians became common<sup>12</sup>. In many regions of Kosovo, such crimes continue to pose a serious obstacle to Serbian freedom of movement, the return and reintegration of displaced persons and an eventual political solution on the status of the province.

While I was researching for my thesis I came to an understating that there have actually been two wars in Kosovo, one that ended with the withdrawal of Yugoslav troops and another that began at the same time, characterized by a Serbian mass departure and Albanians committing most of the atrocities. Whether the latter is a second, lower

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<sup>11</sup> Daalder, H., Ivo & O’Hanlon E., Michael (2000), “Winning Ugly: NATO’s War To Save Kosovo”, The Brookings Institution

<sup>12</sup> CARE International, (2006), “What Difference Has Peacebuilding Made? A Study of the Effectiveness of Peacebuilding in Preventing Violence, CDA –Collaborative Learning Projects

intensity conflict, or another phase in the first, it is important to understand that violence and distrust were still widespread in Kosovo, making all the more valuable the experiences of those communities that have stayed relatively peaceful throughout.

## **2. Quest for Identity, Ethnic definitions**

In the contemporary world, inter-ethnic relations have taken on a special significance and are very often a greater priority than socio-economic processes itself. Furthermore, on many occasions in the second half of the second century, disputes and conflicts in interethnic relations have placed states or entire regions into bloody wars bringing death and suffering for thousands of people.<sup>13</sup>

The ideological contest between capitalism and communism abates with the breakup of the Soviet Union and its satellite regions, questions of national identity and national self-determination have come to the forefront (Eriksen, 1993). It matters less, whether the state embraces the free market, the planned economy or something in between. It matters more where the boundaries of the state are drawn, who gets included and who gets excluded, what language is used, what religion endorsed, and what culture promoted. Ethnic community and identity are often associated with conflict, and more particularly political struggles in various parts of the world. However, there is no necessary connection between ethnicity and conflict. Quite apart from isolated conflicts, relations between ethnic communities and categories may be peaceful and cooperative. But, at the same time as Eriksen (1993) suggests, ‘the basis for conflict exists in the inclusion of two or more ethnic communities within a territorial state’.<sup>14</sup> Ethnicity – seems to be a new term, its earliest dictionary appearance is in the *Oxford English Dictionary* of 1895. Its meaning is equally uncertain. It can mean ‘the essence of an ethnic group’ or ‘the quality of belonging to an ethnic community or group’, or ‘what it is you have if you are an “ethnic group”’.

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<sup>13</sup> Eriksen, Hylland Thomas, (1993), “Ethnicity and Nationalism”, Pluto Press, London

<sup>14</sup> Eriksen, Hylland Thomas, (1993), “Ethnicity and Nationalism”, Pluto Press, London

‘Ethnic identity’ and ‘ethnic origin’ refer to the individual level of identification with a culturally defined collectivity, the sense on the part that she or he belongs to particular cultural community. Eriksen’s (1993) definition on ‘ethnic community’ states that:

An ethnic group is defined as a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their people hood. Examples of such symbolic elements are: kinship patterns, physical contiguity, religious affiliation, language or dialect forms, tribal affiliation, nationality, phenotypical features or any combination of these. A necessary accompaniment is some consciousness of kind among members of the group.<sup>15</sup>

The difficulty of defining an ethnicity springs from the fact that nations comprise a mixture of objective and subjective features, a blend of cultural and political characteristics.

In the following text I will summarize and evaluate studies of the effect of inter-group contact on the changing of the attitudes and ethnic relations. It is questionable whether the effect of the situation in other parts of the world can be compared or applied to Kosovo. However, it can be used as a starting point for evaluation and research on the effect and importance of interethnic contact.

### **3. Contact Hypothesis in Ethnic Relations**

Some goodwill programs are founded on the belief that contact between people – the mere fact of their interacting – is likely to change their beliefs and feelings toward each other. Such a view would maintain that men are basically good and seek understanding and mutual appreciation. If only one had the opportunity to communicate with the others and to appreciate their way of life, understanding and consequently a reduction of prejudice would follow (Yehuda, 1969).

This view, which seems to be held rather commonly, is exemplified in the explicit or implicit objective of various international exchange programs: student exchanges or those

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<sup>15</sup> Eriksen, Hylland Thomas, (1993), “Ethnicity and Nationalism”, Pluto Press, London

of professional people, organized tours and visits to foreign countries, the sending of foreign students to visit or live with native families, etc. in the latter instance, the student from abroad gets in close touch with the American family and observes the American life firsthand. The contact gives the out-group member an opportunity to see and evaluate life from the in-group member's point of view and this is held to enable him to appreciate, understand and perhaps even adopt the latter's way of life. International seminars, international conferences and exhibitions, the Olympic Games – all these – are often thought to be effective because of the opportunities for contact they afford (Yehuda, 1969). The basic premise is typically that personal contact can overcome difficulties where tons of paper work and memoranda have not succeeded.

On the other hand, there is much evidence indicating that inter-ethnic group contact does not necessarily reduce inter-group tensions or prejudice and that it may even increase tensions and cause violent outbreaks, racial riots and slaughter.<sup>16</sup> Historical documentation of anti-Semitism in Europe or the attitude toward African Americans in South of the United States are cases in point. In these instances, contact does seem to have fostered friendly relations and mutual understanding.

This inconsistency in the effect of contact on attitude change observed in everyday life is also found in the results of more systematic social psychological research. There has been increasing research interest in the effects of contact between groups on changes in inter-group attitudes.<sup>17</sup>

### **3.1 Casual versus Intimate Contact**

Opportunities for contact are regarded as prerequisite for inter-ethnic contact. If no opportunities for contact exist, or if these opportunities are minimal, no contact occurs,

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<sup>16</sup> Yehuda, Amir, "Contact Hypothesis in Ethnic Relations", Vol. 71, no. 5, Psychological Bulletin, 1969

<sup>17</sup> Yehuda, Amir, "Contact Hypothesis in Ethnic Relations", Vol. 71, no. 5, Psychological Bulletin, 1969

and obviously no change in attitude as a result of contact can be expected. Social research has provided evidence that casual contact between ethnic groups in itself is not sufficient to change attitudes. Furthermore, high frequency of contact does not necessarily have to foster positive ethnic relations. It may even increase prejudice. Anti-Semitism flourished in those countries with large Jewish communities and where contact between Jews and non-Jews was relatively frequent (Kelman, 1997). The same is true in relations to anti—African Americans in the South, where this population is denser than in other part of United States.<sup>18</sup>

It has been found among college students that intimate contact with Jews was associated with a smaller degree of prejudice; however those who had more contact with Jews were more prejudiced against them (Yehuda, 1969). On the other hand, several other studies found that frequency of contact, sometimes through proximity in living quarter, is related to reduction in prejudice (Yehuda, 1969). Greater conceptual clarity of this problem can be obtained by reference to important distinction between the characteristics of the contact situation itself and the characteristics of the interaction, which transpires within the situation. Proximity seems to produce more frequent inter-ethnic contact. Frequency of contact may in some cases produce intimate relations and thereby perhaps advance better inter-ethnic relations but also it may strengthen prejudice and feelings of ethnic hostility. I will hereby quote a particular dramatic example of the extent to which behavior may be limited to a specific situation in Yehuda's (1969) description of a mining community in West Virginia. The, white and African Americans miners work amicably together in mixed teams, which sometimes have an African American supervising white workers. However, the workers separate at the mineshaft and lead their above ground lives in complete segregation, with separate neighborhoods, restaurants, and no joint activities. It is also suggested that one need only look around any United States Northern community to see that unsegregated schools do not necessarily lead to unsegregated living (Yehuda, 1969).

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<sup>18</sup> Kelman, C. Herbert (1997), "Group Process in the Resolution of International Conflicts – Experience from the Israeli – Palestinian Case", Harvard University, American Psychologist



Studies on interracial housing in Israel demonstrated how specific circumstances, which may differ from group to group, are appropriate to influence the results of the contact (Yehuda, 1969). For instance the relationship between neighbors in immigrant villages and new settlements has been found that satisfaction with the neighborhoods is related to ethnic origin of the neighbors on both sides of one's house or apartment. But it would be advisable to have mixed-housing patterns, whereby a family has one neighbor with the same ethnic background and another one from a different ethnic background.

While a different study demonstrated a different conclusion. One of the immigrant towns in Israel has been investigated and reported two major findings on the relationship between inter-group contact and attitudes toward another ethnic group. First, most people in the community, of all ethnic groups, were indifferent to the ethnic background of their neighbors. Second, the more heterogeneous the neighborhoods the more receptive were its inhabitants toward members of other ethnic groups. In other words, people whose neighbors did not belong to their own ethnic group were more liberal toward other ethnic groups. This latter conclusion parallels findings from above mentioned housing studies. But here, too, it should be emphasized that a process of mutual selection might have taken place, between those who enjoyed living in the ethnically mixed area continued to live there, while those who disliked the intermixed housing pattern left their houses and joined the ethnically isolated groups<sup>19</sup>.

### **3.2 Institutional Support**

The effectiveness of interethnic contact is greatly increased if the contact is sanctioned by institutional support. The support may come from the law, a custom, a spokesman for the community or any authority, which is accepted by the interacting group. In many cases, institutional support comes simply from a social atmosphere or a general public agreement. In the study by Yehuda Amir (1969), the importance of the social norm as manifested by an "authority" was brought out clearly. In the segregated projects,

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<sup>19</sup> Yehuda, Amir, "Contact Hypothesis in Ethnic Relations", Vol. 71, no. 5, Psychological Bulletin, 1969

Albanians expressed the view that they would not mix with non-Albanians because “it just isn’t done”. In many cases, it was clear that the Albanian residents had actually no objections to mixing with the non-Albanians, but would not dare to do so publicly. In the integrated projects, on the other hand, people felt quite differently. The social atmosphere and the official policy of the housing authority were in favor of social integration and the people resented unfriendly relations between the ethnicities. In keeping with expectations, there was marked reduction in prejudice and in stereotyped opinions among the residents of the integrated projects.<sup>20</sup>

### **3.3 Personality Factor**

It can hardly be expected that contact will be so effective as to change the attitudes of all the members of the interacting group. There are always hindering factors, which resist the influence of the contact or may even counteract it. Certain personalities too will not be effected positively by interethnic contact. Their inner insecurity and their personal disorder will not permit them to benefit from the contact with a group against whom they are prejudiced because they will always need a scapegoat.

Yehuda’s (1969) studies the effect of contact on attitudes of white boys after a 4 – week stay of white and African American boys in an unsegregated summer camp. The group as a whole did not change in its attitude towards African Americans. However, about 25% of the white boys showed more prejudice after the camp experience, and just about the same percentage became less prejudice. There was no question of unequal status because there was no racial discrimination in the camp and everyone enjoyed the same privileges and was treated equally, and yet the positive changes were practically equal to the negative ones. Further analysis of the data showed that the boys who became less prejudiced were those who enjoyed their stay at the camp more and who made better adjustment at the camp. The boys who became more prejudiced exhibited in their test responses greater needs to defy authority and strong aggressive feelings (Yehuda, 1969).

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<sup>20</sup> “Multiethnic, Territory and the future of Kosovo’s Serbs”, (2004), European Stability Initiative

This finding suggests that the determining factors, or more specifically, the aggression need of the boys, Yehuda (1969) concluded and I quote: “that intimate contact with African Americans per se does not insure a decrease in prejudice; whether or not a child will change his attitude toward African Americans seems to be related to his personality structure and to certain factors in the social situation in which intimate contact occurs”.

In view of the above studies, the assumption that contact always lessens conflict and stresses between ethnic groups seems naïve. Ethnic contact may in certain circumstances lessen conflict and strains, but in different circumstances, similar contact may intensify the existing prejudices, thus increasing the distance between the groups.

#### **4. Reconciliation Programs**

##### **4.1 USAID**

Reconciliation and conflict resolution efforts take the form of training at Central/Municipal levels or policy formulation. In 2007- 2008 as a result of the shift in the political context in Kosovo, the status talks, the Ahtisaari Plan and the declaration of independence, Kosovo Serbs have become less likely to participate at a variety of levels including in municipal government and in cooperation with the projects implemented by the international community. Another reason for less enthusiastic participation in civil society and community linkages across the ethnic divides is because most of these projects have not started tackling the issue until late 2003.

Most well-known USAID programs, such as “Save Mozaik”, “Sesame Workshop” and “Freedom House” are focused on youth reconciliation among ethnic groups, by focusing on more case by case basis rather than developing a specific pattern. In the following I will assess each program separately and elaborate its achievements.

“Save Mozaik” (2005 -2008) a three year program, which involved pre-school cohort – children from ages three to six, which brought them together children, parents, teacher

and communities together for the first time to attend multi-cultural bilingual kindergartens. The overall goal of “Save Mozaik” was to reduce conflict and increase communication between members of participating communities. These classes provided a safe environment for parents where they can send their children while they are working. The project also involved teachers training, rehabilitation of classrooms, permission from the Ministry of Education, as well as outreach to school directors and municipal authorities. The project has been refused by the Kosovo Serb parents to enroll in the program thus only a very small number of children was reached. The program has been conducted in communities where there are reduced ethnic tensions and so the purpose of promoting tolerance, inter-ethnic cooperation and/or reconciliation was not relevant to parents.<sup>21</sup>

“Sesame Workshop” (2005-2007) a two-year program consisting of 26 half-hour episodes of pre-edited Sesame Workshop library material, which included Muppet and animation segments that address a range of cognitive and pro-social educational objectives, such as numeracy, health and social relations. All materials were dubbed into Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serbian and broadcast through Radio Television of Kosovo and three local Serbian TV Stations. It also included an outreach of storybooks production and a facilitator’s guide for parents and teachers to provide developmentally appropriate tips using the material at home and in classrooms. Its positive impact on Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb children has been demonstrated by its own evaluation report.<sup>22</sup>

“Freedom House” (2006 – 2008) a three-year old program with an aim to stabilize multi-ethnic communities and ease ethnic tension by mobilizing Civil Society Organizations around community-driven reconciliation initiatives (USAID, 2008). Through grants to CSOs the activity aims to increase cooperation among and between multi-ethnic communities on issues such as freedom of movement, youth, religious freedom, local government cooperation and decentralization, free and objective media reporting on

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<sup>21</sup> Blue, Richard (2008), “Conflict Mitigation Programs: Impact and Lessons Learned”, USAID

<sup>22</sup> Blue, Richard (2008), “Conflict Mitigation Programs: Impact and Lessons Learned”, USAID

human rights and cultural preservation.<sup>23</sup> For the duration of the program Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians participation was evident, though in some cases it was only Kosovo Serbs, the program seemed to be not big enough in scope or long enough in duration to sufficiently contribute to reconciliation. What the program did do was reinforce cooperation between the different ethnicities in the country, share information and provide support to some organizations' project ideas that they had been wanting to implement (USAID, 2008). In each and every of the 16 grants awarded engaged Kosovo Serbs, though sustained reconciliation would be more effective is Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians cooperate in the same project rather than in parallels.<sup>24</sup>

While United States' programs are more focused on direct interaction of youth, education programs and entertaining fields, European programs, such as "Nansen Dialogue Network" funded by Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is focused on community dialogue, peaceful conflict resolution conferences, human rights, and respect for democratic principles as alternatives to national and ethnic chauvinism. The Nansen Dialogue Network differs from other international peace building efforts in its emphasis on dialogue and reconciliation – just as essential to sustainable peace as are the issues of security, economic development and democratization (Bryn, 2006).

#### **4.2 Nansen Dialogue**

The idea of Nansen Dialogue programs is to provide space for dialogue to occur. There is the educational aspect of dialogue where you discuss the process of conflict resolution; integrate media and propaganda; discuss cultural identity and what ethnicity means; and theories of democracy.

Cultural identity is the symbolism attached to power and the conflict.<sup>25</sup> With the globalization the connection of people around the world such as through Internet connections, airports, the relationship of cities and villages and even how people live the

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<sup>23</sup> USAID, (2008), Kosovo Community Reconciliation Program, Freedom House

<sup>24</sup> Blue, Richard (2008), "Conflict Mitigation Programs: Impact and Lessons Learned", USAID

<sup>25</sup> Isaac, Dona (2001), "Nansen Case Study: The Balkan Dialogue Project", Cambridge

cultural differences around the world have almost vanishing. No matter which ethnic group in Balkan, the television is in the same place in the living room.

Before the Nansen Dialogue Centers (Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo) were established, the physical spaces for dialogues were absent and the population groups had few opportunities to meet across ethnic divides. A specific focus in 2005 has been on local politicians in municipalities, the network organized a Regional Forum for Young Politicians in Ohrid, Macedonia. More than forty young politicians from Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Macedonia participated in the forum (Bryn, 2006). Such activities reflect one of the network's chief goals to develop relationship across the borders, and to prepare young Balkan citizens to assume roles.

The social interaction is very important and the Nansen Programs focus on every aspect they get such as smoking room, sauna, dancing, skiing. Since many from the Balkans are smokers, the smoking room quickly becomes a central point of social interaction and continuing the discussions that started in the more traditional classroom. Dialogue can be a foundation for understanding and is a pre-requisite for solving problems. Thus while the underlying goal is to stimulate dialogue among the conference participants, it is also to explore the potential of dialogue as a tool in conflict resolution.<sup>26</sup>

The Nansen Dialogue concept is therefore mainly constructed from experiences in the field. It is simply a way of communicating that focuses on the understanding the "other", rather than convincing him or her that you are right (Donna, 2001). This understanding is a prerequisite for successful meditations and negotiations. It is logical that a Kosovo Albanian is in favor of an independent Kosovo while a Kosovo Serb is in favor of Kosovo as a part of Serbia. At this point dialogue partners may realize that despite their differences, their human needs and interests are often similar. A qualified facilitator can assist in shifting the focus from position to interest by making participants realize that

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<sup>26</sup> Isaac, Dona (2001), "Nansen Case Study: The Balkan Dialogue Project", Cambridge

they have common interests in economics development, quality education, a reliable system of security, improved job opportunities, less corruption, more independent media, clearer separation of politics and business – and the simple pleasure of drinking a morning cup of coffee in peace (Bryn, 2006).

When the focus is on that which we have in common, it becomes easier to embrace the thought of civic state. Since politics most often is organized around ethnic principles, the notion of citizenship in a civic state offers a concrete alternative to nationalism. People are often very receptive to a clearer division between state and nation, where a civic state does not threaten the different nations, but rather allows them to flourish in the cultural sphere accounting to internationally recognized minority rights (Donna, 2001).

Working to promote interethnic reconciliation in Kosovo in an environment marked by ethnic violence, insecurity and enemy images is not an easy task for Nansen Dialogue. It is a long-term investment, with unpredictable outcomes, requiring sustained commitment from the stakeholders involved. Therefore, it is important to be able to cope with setbacks, such as new episodes of ethnic violence and renewed political instability, and to maintain motivation under difficult circumstances.<sup>27</sup> It is also a constant challenge to develop plans of action in an environment of insecurity and constant change. Therefore measuring or reporting the successes of Nansen programs it is not easy to do at certain point in time, since it is a long term relationship build between communities.

Since 2005, Nansen Dialogue Center in Pristina has been focusing on reconciliation between Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serbian returnees (Bryn, 2006). These interethnic dialogue workshops between the receiving and returning communities were organized as a response to the return of the heads of returning community households to Kosovo. The return of the representatives of the returning families is part of the return process to the villages of Lismir/Dobridub and Nakaradë/e. The representatives are temporarily placed in the mainly Kosovo Serb village of Kuzmin until the reconstruction process is over, when they and their families will return to their places of origin.

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<sup>27</sup> Bryn, Steinar, (2006), “Engaging the Other”, The Nansen Dialogue Network in the Balkans

A dialogue workshop was held for each village separately. The dialogue in this workshop is a continuation of the interethnic dialogue on returns to Kosovo conducted by Nansen since 2005 (Bryn, 2006). However, these two short workshops were held for a much larger audience, involving people who did not have the opportunity to participate in earlier Nansen organized interethnic dialogue workshops. They were meant as icebreakers for both the receiving and returning communities. The aim was to re-establish the contact and open a direct dialogue on the issue of return by looking at the expectations from the project and the opposite community.

This workshop is the first in a number of planned dialogue meetings in different settings planned until the end of 2008, when returnees are expected to come back with their families.

The conflict in the Balkans in general, as Bryn (2006) sees it, is changing from being an ethnic conflict to being a “clash of cultures” as an elite class emerges. He sees three aspects of this change and I quote:

- (1) Postmodern global space with the internet and travel has begun and will continue to shift impressions and experience.
- (2) Modern nationals are those in the urban areas who are involved in nation building.
- (3) Traditional people from villages are coming to Sarejevo and Pristina in large numbers for work, university, and better living conditions.<sup>28</sup>

These aspects of today’s culture clashes add to the already complex nature of the centuries-old ethnic clashes. The idea of the clash of cultures provides a new angle by which to see age-old conflicts.

## **5. Decentralization**

When the plan was first announced in early 2002 for what it was termed “decentralization” was in fact a form of ethnically based self-government, bringing the

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<sup>28</sup> Bryn, Steinar, (2006), “Engaging the Other”, The Nansen Dialogue Network in the Balkans



government closer to the people and in line with European standards <sup>29</sup>. This changed the political dynamics of inter-ethnic relations in Kosovo. Then, in 2006, it was included in the status report, delivered by Finnish veteran diplomat Martti Ahtisaari, the United Nations envoy. <sup>30</sup> The report proposed a number of semi-self-governing municipalities, some of which are based on centers of Serbian heritage tradition, particularly the monasteries and historic churches. A danger signal appeared, from the Albanian point of view, in 2006, when in addition to the expected plans for the Serb-dominated region north of the Ibar river in Mitrovica, a more or less linked chain of Serb municipalities were recognized, including ex-mining centers such as Novo Brdo, that would lead to a more or less contiguous region of Serb self-rule in south east Kosovo (Pettifer, 2008). These communities will be financed in many areas of life directly from Belgrade and thus if implemented, will give Serbia a continuing role in the internal affairs of Kosovo.

The press event of status report by Ahtisaari was dominated by the first two questions, from an ethnic Albanian journalist of the moderate “Koha Ditore” newspaper asking whether Ahtisaari intended to reward Serbian ethnic cleansing by his work and by a Belgrade journalist asking whether he intended to set up the division of Kosovo. <sup>31</sup>

Therefore I would like to argue against the decentralization plan as a proposed model for reconciliation because the launching of the plan has got negative connotation and it would continue being perceived as such by both ethnicities, disturbing possible future reconciliation or completely isolating Kosovo Serbs from the rest of the territory.

### **5.1 Proposal as model for reconciliation?**

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<sup>29</sup> ISG Balkan Report, (2002), “UNMIK’s Kosovo Albatross: Tackling Division in Mitrovica”, Report no. 131, International Crisis Group

<sup>30</sup> Pettifer, James, (2008), “The Ahtisaari Report – Totem & Taboo”, Conflict Studies Research Centre, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom

<sup>31</sup> Pettifer, James, (2008), “The Ahtisaari Report – Totem & Taboo”, Conflict Studies Research Centre, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom

Although the subject of partition is another of the taboo terms in the report, the economic opportunities for subsidy and other levers seem unlikely to hinder the possibility of community separation, particularly in the North Mitrovica, Leposavic, Zubin Potok and Zvecan municipalities north of Ibar river. Unlike political options that might be of future interest to Kosovo Albanians, such a linking up with Albania, the report doesn't specifically and explicitly rule out partition or cantonization as a future option.

However, Belgrade politicians are in favor of this plan and they have been presenting it as a proposal for Kosovo under the label of decentralization. As the Serbian Prime Minister, Vojislav Kostunica said, "no matter what we call it – decentralization, cantonization, it makes no difference – some kind of autonomy must be given to Serbs in Kosovo".

On the other hand besides political reasons for decentralization, Kosovo Serb lives would not change greatly. At the moment, Serbian language primary schools and primary health care facilities at the local level are already funded jointly from the Serbia and Kosovo budget. In addition, North Mitrovica has a large university and hospital, both also fully funded by Serbia.

What kind of local institutions are needed to respond to the concrete needs of Kosovo Serbs? Below I will argue three dimensions that correspond to the different situations in which Kosovo Serbs live.

First, there are five municipalities in Kosovo which are already Serb-majority, where the interest is in strengthening the existing municipal government, rather than fragmenting it. In recent Kosovo budgets there has been a progressive increase in transfers to the municipal level in order to create more effective local administrations. The introduction of property tax will over time provide the municipalities with a reliable own revenue source.

Second, there may be a case for some municipal boundary changes, where this would help to ensure the survival of Serb communities in Kosovo. There are two places where there may be a sufficient concentration of urban Serbs to warrant separate municipalities. One is the small town of Gracanica and the second is North Mitrovica. Both of these

municipalities have a sufficient distinct economic and social profile to establish its own municipalities, if that is the desire of its citizens.

The first two measures are addresses to the needs of the Serb-majority municipalities and the two remaining Serb urban enclaves, respectively.

The third dimension of Kosovo Serbs is by far the most numerous: those who live in small villages within Kosovo Albanian – majority municipalities. Here there is a little value in experimenting with elaborate local structures of self-government, beyond the village councils that already exist in many areas. The focus should be on the concrete needs of these communities for adequate service provision in areas such as education and health. These services must be available in Serbian language, reasonably accessible to entire community and funded from revenues transferred from the centre rather than collected locally. They are fundamental both to the success of the return movement and to the long-term viability of Serbs in Kosovo.

The international community and the Kosovo government should therefore understand decentralization not as a one size fits all solutions for Kosovo Serbs, but as a package of institutional reforms designed to respond to specific need of the different Kosovo Serb communities.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> “Multiethnic, Territory and the future of Kosovo’s Serbs” (2004), ESI



*Fig. 3 Decentralization map*

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<sup>33</sup> [http://www.alternativeinsight.com/serbs\\_in\\_kosovo.gif](http://www.alternativeinsight.com/serbs_in_kosovo.gif)

## **Conclusion**

Since the war ended and conflicts in the regions stopped, great efforts have been undertaken by the international community to reconcile these two people. Achievements are evident, but nationalism is rising again, making reconciliation difficult.

The program models provided can be useful for the many divided communities where well-meaning individuals are willing to listen to what their counterparts on the other side of the divide have to say. The fact that effort in Kosovo fell apart, at least temporarily, as the tension in Kosovo turned into a hot war (March 2004), should serve as a warning that one should temper optimism with a realistic appraisal of human nature. Nonetheless, the dialogue approach embraced by the International Organizations does still serve as an example of one way to break down the invisible barriers that separate communities in Kosovo.

If one wants to achieve positive results in the area of interethnic reconciliation, it would be wise to consider carefully if prevailing conditions are suitable to bring about such a change. As we have seen education tends to increase exposure to inter-group contact, work situations provide the best opportunities, and then come neighborhood situations, and only to a lesser degree contact possibilities in organization, it is highly recommended that the interethnic programs are to be focused in educational sector primarily.

Multi-ethnicity is not a widely shared vision, and while side-by-side living is mentioned almost universally as the current reality and realistic goal, there is fear accepting this could feed calls for cantonization, division and further conflict. Possible pieces of a more compelling and realistic vision might include “coexistence” and “European development”.

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