Police profession in Kosovo: caught in the quagmire between politics and a regional epistemic community

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Abstract: The Kosovo Police has travelled a long way from being a brand new organisation and undertaking in-depth reforms under international auspices, to making considerable progress in embarking on regional cooperation. However, the identified obstacles to such cooperation risk becoming entrenched mainly due to the politicisation of what should be a technical arrangement between cross-border police services. The paper sets to examine Reiner's 'vexed conceptual relationship between policing and politics', and explores the earlier work on epistemic security communities, which in theory are formed by a shared interest of advancing the trans-border security sector governance. The paper argues that the advancement of this sector in Kosovo *vis-a-vis* Serbia and other neighbouring countries is reached through the further professionalization of police services. Moreover, the governments of the region would do well to apply a healthy detachment of daily politics when setting to tackle common security challenges, since it is the daily politicking which more often than not hinders regional engagement of police services. The paper uses empirical evidence gathered through long-term participatory observation in Kosovo, as well as interviews with politicians, the police and other security sector informants. The conclusions of the paper aim to contribute to the field of securitisation and the overall post-conflict security sector reform, while highlighting the challenges in the interplay between politics *versus* police profession.

Keywords: Police, Kosovo, regional cooperation, Western Balkans.

"To switch to a medical metaphor, they [police] are analogous to paramedics or A&E doctors, delivering first-aid relief but generally unable to cure the basic problems".

(Reiner 2010: 24)

Introduction

The police profession, as currently conceptualised, is a relatively novel notion in post-communist and post-conflict societies in the Western Balkans. A conventional approach to theories on the role of the police would consider it as part of a 'social contract', in which citizens surrender some of their powers and freedoms to the state (and by default to the police too) in return for some form of social order. Within the wider framework of Security Sector Reform (SSR) theory, the police are viewed as one amongst many security-related actors, subject to democratic mechanisms with the primary mandate to provide public order and security – widely referred to as public good. Theirs is a profession, which is understood to consist of their institutions, personnel, organisations, recruitment policies, standards and codes, and public relations (Abbot 1988).

In Kosovo, police was established from scratch in the immediate post-conflict period, and as such it finds itself in the crossroads between creating its own legacy and consolidating its regional standing. This study will aim to provide empirical evidence on the role of the Kosovo Police[1] in security governance by tackling in particular the police culture. This culture is in a constant state of evolution, since the institution is still young, and therefore amenable to further changes and improvements. In addition, this chapter attempts to analyse the degree of regional cooperation as a necessary prerequisite for a more effective and efficient performance in addressing the common risks, challenges and security threats in the Western Balkans. In this regard, the unavoidable spectre of politics hovers over this question, thus posing further obstacles to regional engagement.

The complexities surrounding the development of the Police in Kosovo are multidimensional and rather country-centric. However, while the paper aims to focus only on a few key issues, the research direction needs to be constructed on the basis of inclusion of all units of analysis, despite them being diverse. Thus, the primary question is – to what extent the political and societal developments effected the consolidation of the police in Kosovo? Which are the main driving factors constructing the police profession and police culture? The paper seeks to answer these questions from a rather broader perspective, taking into account a Western Balkans perspective.

The cooperation between the regional partners is certainly one of the crucial aspects among the epistemic communities. However, as the research finds out, such cooperation leaves a lot more to be desired, particularly between Kosovo and Serbia,

[1] The Constitutional name of the police in Kosovo is the Kosovo Police. For the purpose of this research paper and, in order to keep at friendly reader, we will just refer to **Police**.

due to the latter's refusal to recognise Kosovo's independence. However, the construction of epistemic communities cannot be seen only in the context of inter-state relations, since the level of analysis and knowledge sharing is a very important tool, too. As one author rightly pointed out 'the policy change is influenced by knowledge and the causal and principled beliefs; whereas change is obtained through the diffusion of information and learning, while impacting on the shift of patterns of decision-making' (Jackson 2010: 6). In other words, the alternative means among epistemic communities can support the efforts for strengthening the regional cooperation.

Further, the chapter is expected to supplement the academic efforts in a security-related epistemic community, based on shared sets of norms and principles, practices and direction, and which would surpass and overcome state borders and politically-motivated barriers. To do so, we will evoke Jackson's useful recommendation for the 'scholarly and policy worlds speaking to one another' which denotes the importance of constructive and collaborative communication between scholars and decision-makers, as a way of ensuring that 'theory' and 'practice' obtain maximum knowledge from one another. Jackson made it clear that 'the distinction between the two vocations of "science" (wissenschaft) and "politics" (politik), [or between] "scholarship" and "policymaking' (Jackson 2010: 6).

In order to provide to finalise the chapter "*Police profession in Kosovo: caught in the quagmire between politics and a regional epistemic community*", the authors have applied a number of data collection methods. The data collected derives predominantly from the review of existing knowledge and publications in the field based on a significant number of existing theoretical and empirical sources. The data are also gathered based on the authors' participatory and non-participatory observations as a result of their ongoing involvement on the issues of SSR in Kosovo and the wider region. The routinely professional interactions with the Police members, the representatives of the relevant parliamentary committees, lines ministries and other bodies, as well as international organizations operating in the region, have helped in collecting research data pertinent for this topic. Further, a number of semi-structured interviews were conducted with current and former police officers in order to gain insight of the police profession from a practical and first-hand point of view. The rule to respect confidentiality and the ethics of research has been observed at all times.

The first part of the paper aims to evaluate the context of police development in Kosovo and the profile of this security institution as it consolidates in identity as a profession and culture. The second part of the paper highlights a very Kosovo-specific issue on the police profession – the issue of the involvement of former police officers in high political positions. The third part of the paper provides some thoughts on the epistemic communities and the regional police cooperation seen from a Kosovo perspective.

Police development *versus* police culture – the context

Following the 1999 war in Kosovo, the subsequent set-up of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the conglomerate number of organizations which assisted the latter in its work - such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the European Union (EU) and others - the whole security sector underwent a process of development from scratch. The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) was disbanded and transformed into a civilian organization called the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC). The Police was set up taking into its ranks a large number of former combatants of the KLA. Under the executive competencies of the UNMIK chief, the OSCE was given the primary responsibility for recruiting and training the new Police officers (O'Neill 2004).

The first Police officers began to be deployed in the immediate aftermath of the war in July 1999. Their numbers peaked at over 4,500 members in March 2001, coming from all communities in Kosovo (Bajraktari et al 2006: 49). The build-up of the police service was accompanied by a large contingent of international Police officers, whose numbers decreased steadily with the increase of capacities of the Police force. The Police thus began to take the main security-related tasks while being the only local security institution which was granted executive powers during UNMIK period of governance (KCSS 2012).

The unique circumstances which have dictated Kosovo's build-up of security institutions in the late 1990s have had a direct effect on its Police service, too. In other words, considering that the Police and the security sector in general were built from scratch, it is rather befitting to talk about a case of Security Sector Development (SSD) in Kosovo post-1999 (Qehaja and Vrajolli 2011). Furthermore, the creation of the new security mechanisms was conducted without any direct institutional correlations with the former security structures of socialist Yugoslavia. Although there is no clear definition on SSD as most of the sources refer to Security Sector Reform (SSR), the most relevant one summarises it as '…a process dealing with the legacy of armed conflict, including the dissolution of military formations and their integration into new security structures and/or civilian life…' (Bryden and Hanggi 2004). This definition can be applied convincingly to the post-war Kosovo and its security mechanisms. Additionally, there are some other formulations which are drawn based on country-specific developments. The most notable one is Security Sector Transformation (Dodouet et al 2012); nevertheless the substance remains the same and the study cases provided reflects rather similar examples.

In the immediate aftermath of the war in Kosovo in 1999, the contribution of international organizations in establishing a new Police service, was crucial. In a situation with no ready-made blueprints for guidance, the task at hand was nothing less than the creation of a brand new Police (Harris 2005). Given the unique

circumstances of the establishment of the Police in Kosovo, one may raise the question of how and to what extent has the police culture been set up. The answer could be best provided by the actors involved in the key police development processes. According to interviews conducted, there is a general accordance that today's Police composition is a result of the 'three categories' of personnel (Neziri, Marmullaku, 2012):

- The first category is comprised of members with educational background and experience from the old Yugoslav system. These are either members of former police forces themselves, or former members of the reserve component of that force;
- The second category is comprised of former combatants of the KLA, who joined the police force with a different kind of experiential baggage;
- The third category of the police personnel consists of new recruits, whose experience began with the Police from point "zero", and who grew up professionally within the new, post-conflict police ranks.

The tension between these three categories, especially in the immediate aftermath of the war, was quite palpable. On one hand, the expertise and experience of the first category of police officers was undeniable and very much needed during the first steps of the police formation (especially those from the former active component). However, this category was often sidelined, suspected upon, or left outside of decision-making structures due to their association with the old, Yugoslav regime. To fill in the void, former KLA combatants were recruited, joining the Police with a completely different sort of experience: they had not been police officers in the past, they had fought during 1998/99 and were now 'transformed' into Police officers. Further, their attitude and approach towards 'others' was driven by the post-war euphoria where the role of former combatants was more emphasized than that of other groups. Between 25% and 50% of the Police were former KLA combatants at different points during the Police consolidation. This was part of the Northern Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)-led initiative to transform and reintegrate former combatants into post-conflict civilian life in Kosovo.[2]

In 'Taking stock: Toward a richer understanding of police culture', Paoline demonstrates how conventional conceptions of police culture, namely a mix of dangers faced and powers wielded by the police, contribute to a 'them and us' attitude among officers (Paoline 2003: 201). Uniformity, both physically and in attitude, is seen to be developed during the trainings and then out on patrol, as the new recruit becomes instilled with the organisational culture. The achievement of this 'uniformity' in attitude and profession suffered setbacks with the Police in its first few years, precisely because of the social and professional categorisation of police officers, depending on where they came from. Thus, the former KLA combatants

[2] For more information on the topic of transformation please see UNMIK Regulation 1999/8 on the Establishment of the Kosovo Protection Corps on http://www.unmikonline.org/regulations/1999/re99_08.pdf.

turned Police officers started to be perceived slightly trustworthy by their colleagues when compared with former police officers who had served in the old regime. However, whilst the first category might have enjoyed respect within their Kosovar Albanian community, the same was not true for the Kosovar Serb community, for instance, again exactly because of their KLA legacy.

The second dimension comprising the Police profile has to do with what some interviewees call the 'implications of various international organisational and managerial cultures' in the police's build-up (Azizi, Selimi, 2012). As the recipient of a multi-levelled international assistance, these implications have fed simultaneously into the 'ethics and discipline of Police members' (Azizi, 2012). There is also a clear inclination to state the prevalence of an 'American organisational culture in the build-up of the Police'. This 'culture' is discerned in the rules and regulations, the grading and commanding procedures (Marmullaku, 2012). However, the importation of such standard operating procedures comes with its own challenges. Firstly, the predominance of the 'American organisational culture' is sometimes mixed with other methods of training from Western European countries, which in itself poses problems for the Police in terms of balancing these methods. Secondly, the transplantation of foreign practices often comes at loggerheads with the local needs, and the two are not always compatible. Moreover, there is a wider incompatibility at play, a 'bifurcation of professional cultures' that affects the whole judicial system: while the police profession and standard operation procedures are heavily based on American or Anglo-Saxon practices, the justice system is largely based on the mainland European or continental practices (Selimi, 2012).

Selimi also sheds light on the relationship between police executives and the international community in Kosovo. As a vestige of the recent past, when Kosovo was an international protectorate headed by UNMIK, the Police at times continues to be too dependable of international assistance and advice. He also stated that there is a culture of excessive loyalty (servility) towards either the senior ranking officers or the international community. He went further to state that while he 'understands the opportunism and the necessary loyalty, he never understands the unnecessary loyalty towards senior management or international community' (Selimi, 2012). According to him, this culture has been built up so the officers could benefit from the accelerated advancement in the police chain of command.

The importation of a myriad of training cultures into the Police structures can have long-lasting effects. Undoubtedly, international assistance has gone a long way to shaping the Police professional culture. However, in terms of side-effects there are still issues with prioritising and localising that assistance into a coherent and uniform professional performance. In any case, the multitude of cultures embedded in the Police is regulated by primary and secondary legislation. However, there are some authors who challenge the 'diverse cultural implications' despite being in the legislation. Benson argues that legal and procedural reform cannot be effective

without deeper cultural changes and uniformity within the ranks of the police. ‘Without reform of police culture, we could end up with merely a Potemkin Village of legal reforms in which everything stays the same behind the scenes’ (Benson, 2001, p. 681).

The developments in the Police within the larger context of the development of security sector in Kosovo post 1999 are complex, both politically and socially. The importation of external expertise from the US and Western European countries played a crucial role in laying the foundations of a professional police culture, which is still being cultivated and harnessed. With the formation and progressive consolidation of mechanisms of democratic control, particularly after independence in February 2008, the Police is further engrained within the larger security sector in Kosovo. Consequently, notions such as ‘further professionalization’, ‘police culture’, or ‘community policing’, although very well taught and trained from best-practices scenarios, have to further be adopted to the local context and culture. The efforts to rapidly "Westernising" the security sector were not compatible with the level of democratisation and sensitive circumstances in Kosovo. Kosovo is an example where an externally-imposed security sector has not proved conducive to sustainable reforms (Bryden & hanggi 2004). This can be illustrated using the example of certain cases where there was a discrepancy between the policing techniques used by the Police. here, experts from different countries each presented their own domestic techniques, which jeopardised the uniform set of standards among the police, as the methods implemented were completely at discord with each other (Qehaja and Vrajolli 2011). Challenges remain, not least in delineating clearly between the police profession and other professions, as can be noted in the chapter immediately below.

The politics - police dichotomy

Because of the specific political circumstances under which the Police was created, we will borrow Reiner’s proposition (2010) for probing at the ‘vexed conceptual relationship between policing and politics.’ This is because in the Kosovo case, where the Police was created after 1999, the line between politics and policing as two separate professions remains quite blurry. On a few occasions the Police has been criticized for serving as an instrument of imposing social control through the disproportionate use of force and thus providing the necessary stability as a much-needed ingredient for a post-conflict society. This definition might be considered a truism in other circumstances, but in the case of Kosovo and the political mosaic of the Western Balkans it takes different connotations.

Reiner (2010) formulates the concept of social control as ‘everything that contributes to the reproduction of social order.’ The situation is driven by the political control exercised towards police and due to the appointment of the director of the police by the Minister of Internal Affairs. Appointments are made by public servants of the

Commission for the High Appointments, who have limited knowledge on the security policies and often fall under the influence of the political elite. In other words, the political interference in senior police appointments and in the conduct of police operations reflects an institution which is targeted to serve social order for the purposes of the ruling parties. The examples of political interference have been noted in police operations, political appointments, promotion in ranks, empowerment through various ways of support and other (Forum for Security, 2011).

The politics-police dichotomy is an intriguing one in the case of Kosovo, and as such requires a particular attention. The current President of Kosovo, Ms. Atifete Jahjaga, was "catapulted" into this position in April 2011, having previously served as colonel in the Police, with her last job being that of the Deputy Director of Police.[3] Jahjaga was the most senior ranked woman in the police. Her appointment was an obvious result of political calculations between three political parties (two coalition partners and the biggest opposition party), in an agreement mediated by the US Ambassador to Kosovo. Jahjaga's appointment helped avoid a political deadlock and preceded the creation of a new coalition government in Kosovo in 2011. What is disconcerting, however, is the involvement of politicians, national and international, in police hierarchy and the appointment of a top official in politics. Another high-profile example of a switch from police profession to political career occurred when the former General Director of the Police, Mr. Behar Selimi became a deputy of the Assembly of Kosovo as of April 2011. Far from being considered interference, the inclusion of former senior police officers into politics can be interpreted as an attempt of certain members of the force for carrier progression (Selimi, 2012). Former senior members of the police claim that once the edge of the hierarchy is achieved there are no further opportunities for advancement within the institution and, hence, a number of them decide to join other sectors.

However, Selimi's opinion is not shared with other former colleagues who state that the police have deliberately been used as a platform to jump into politics. Some other stakeholders went further to argue that the inclusion of former senior police officers in politics is just a switch from the uniform to the political party (claiming that these officers have been anyhow affiliated with the respective political party). Any changes to the governments lead to calculations by senior police officers over their potential inclusion in politics and the government (Marmullaku, 2012). In other words, the shift from police to politics is an embedded culture of the institution.

The politics-police dichotomy could be seen on, what some sociologists and political scientists define as "crisis of elites in Kosovo".[4] There is no clear distinction between "political elites", "academic elites", "musical elite" and other. Thus it is the case with the "police elite" which struggles to have its own identity . The crisis of "police elite"

[3] For more details please see http://www.president-ksgov.net/?page=1,92

[4] For more details please see "Kosovës i mungojnë elitat politike": Accessed in 29.04.2013 http://www.telegrafi.com/lajme/kosoves-i-mungojne-elitat-politike-2-31557.html

is deconstructed once some of the senior police members join "political elites" while the latest is anyhow fragile. Police knowledge with the politics is same as "if a politician asked to design an anti-organised crime operation".

Some argue that there was tremendous investment in the Police and, consequently, the knowledge is taken from the institution and used in other sector, including politics (Neziri, 2012). The high turnover of police officers and the interest to apply in other sectors (perhaps due to the low salaries) showed that former police officers are very competitive candidates while applying in the jobs. This certainly hampers the consistency in the institution. Over more than a decade, a lot has been invested in recruiting and training police officers in Kosovo. However, helping them reach a certain professional threshold of qualification does not resolve the issue of maintaining them within the ranks. And this is largely due to the very high job market demands and the poor economy. For a lot of them, enrolling in the Police is a way of earning a living, of having a job. The downside to this is that, after they have undergone a series of training and obtain better qualifications, they sometimes leave the Police in favour of better job opportunities. As such, since its establishment in 1999 around 2,000 officers have abandoned the Police for other offers (Azizi, 2012).

Further, Kosovo's politics-police dichotomy corresponds of what some authors refer to as legitimacy of an institution. It is widely argued that discourse and public perception play a key role in shaping the nature of a police force (McClellan & Gustafson, 2012). In the case of Kosovo, the Police have been repeatedly rated as one of the most trusted security providers, in a number of quantitative measurement data (UNDP 2006-2011). The high level of public trust towards the institution could be drawn from two dimensions: one is the social sympathy towards the uniform and second is its democratic behaviour towards the citizens. In other words, this level of legitimacy provides to certain individuals the ground in advancing further into politics and other domains of public life.

Kosovo's perspective on Western Balkans police cooperation

As seen above, the topic of police profession and reform is not quite a purely technical issue as it might seem. In the context of the Western Balkans, it often takes heavy political connotations, which hamper regional engagement. More than a decade after the end of wars in former Yugoslavia, the level of regional interaction/engagement between security mechanisms, more specifically the police, continues to face obstacles often mired by politics. State decision-making processes under conditions of complexity, political uncertainty and sensitivity, are often stalled.

The consolidation of the Police is contributing to the professionalization and completion of a security community in Kosovo. The replication of such a community at regional level, however, continues to pose various difficulties. At this point, it is feasible to recall that, similar to other chapters of this book, we borrow Deutsch's

definition of the security community as the existence of 'dependable expectations of peaceful change' (Deutsch et al 1957). Always with the regional context in mind, we want to refer to Adler's and Barnett's differentiation between three types of security communities: nascent, when states cooperate and coordinate policies without seeking security community; ascendant, with increasing institutional networks and a sense of 'we-ness'; and mature, with deep institutionalization, well-articulated common identity and mutual expectations of peaceful resolution of disputes (Adler and Barnett 1998). If we consider the scale of creation of a regional security community in the context of Kosovo, we would place the Police general standing between nascent and ascendant. It is ascendant and on the rise with neighbouring police services such as Albania, with which it enjoys excellent working relations. However, it is very much stuck at a nascent stage with the police services in Serbia, largely due to the political situation.

It is important to outline the epistemic communities in providing constructive alternatives for regional cooperation and, more specifically, the police cooperation. One might rather see it as alternative source of expertise. As Haas states, 'it often takes a crisis or shock to overcome institutional inertia and habit and spur them to seek advice from an epistemic community' (Haas 1992, 14). Epistemic communities may take a transnational character as a result of the 'diffusion of community ideas through conferences, journals, research collaboration, and a variety of informal communications and contacts' (Ibid. 17). Similarly, Sudgen (2006) highlights the importance of epistemic communities in tackling 'sources of violence' and thus advancing the 'security sector governance.' In this way, academics can contribute to the formation and consolidation of 'epistemic communities,' defined as a concrete collection of individuals who share the same worldview – or episteme (Haas 1992). Haas further elaborates that the epistemic community is a 'network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area.' According to him, for such a community to be impactful and consistent in their approach, they must share a certain number of principles and practices; namely, they must have:

> (1) a shared set of normative and principled beliefs, which provide a value-based rationale for the social action of community members;
> (2) shared causal beliefs, which are derived from their analysis of practices leading or contributing to a central set of problems in their domain and which then serve as the basis for elucidating the multiple linkages between possible policy actions and desired outcomes;
> (3) shared notions of validity – that is, intersubjective, internally defined criteria for weighing and validating knowledge in their domain of their expertise; and
> (4) a common policy of enterprise – that is, a set of common practices associated with a set of problems to which their professional competence is

> directed, presumably out of the conviction that human welfare will be enhanced as a consequence" (Hass 1992: 3).

Along the same lines, Adler calls these entities 'communities of practice', defined as 'likeminded groups of practitioners who are informally as well as contextually bound by a shared interest in learning and applying a common practice' (Adler 2008, 196). Security communities rest in part on the sharing of rational and moral expectations and dispositions of self-restraint. By taking as models the successful expansion of security communities from the West towards the Central and Eastern European countries (CEEC) during the 1990s, the issue at hand is how to replicate successfully this expansion further into South East Europe. Indeed, if one is to discern the traces of the expansion of the so-called 'cooperative security' community, one can see that it grew from the Helsinki Process, henceforth endowing European institutions, in particular the EU and NATO with the practices necessary for the spread of social structure (Adler 2008, 197).

While it is important to create an epistemic security community that is transnational and scholarly in its approach, it is just as vital that there is police cooperation at regional level. The key challenge for the police – but also other security mechanisms – is how to intensify regional cooperation through across-the-board professionalization. Vucetic (2001) emphasises three buzzwords as preconditions for the above-mentioned expansion of cooperative security: socialization (high quantity and quality of exchange), reciprocity (trust and social learning), and intersubjectivity (shared identity, 'we-feeling', mutual sympathy). He states that 'there is nothing to suggest that externally imposed arrangements cannot evolve into indigenous security bodies. The examples of NATO and OSCE demonstrate that the outside intervention can create the material conditions – a security environment – in which a regional mechanism [Stability Pact] culture can arise and a regional security dynamics can develop, self-directed or as sheltered as a sub-community within a larger region.' He went further to raise the question whether "such thing [can] exist in the Balkans?" (Vucetic 2001, 118).

While the answers to Vucetic's and other scholars' questions are broad, it is worth stating that there is a consolidated progress as regards police cooperation in the region. The last decade witnessed a number of regional initiatives in the field of policing with involvement from the police institutions of South East Europe. One can mention at least two regional initiatives which marked a step forward in practice: Police Cooperation Convention for South East Europe, and the other one is Southeast European Law Enforcement.[5] These initiatives adhere to the assumptions of scholars that the cooperation in the region can be driven (only) as the result of outside intervention and under the auspices of foreign actors. Nevertheless, this type of

[5] There are certainly other initiatives but the authors want to draw attention to those two which might be considered the most pro-active.

cooperation always relies on the political developments where, as a consequence, it keeps away the inclusion of a country in the region to be part of these initiatives. In other words, Kosovo was not part of these initiatives due to the fact that Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Romania do not recognize its statehood.

In fact, political developments influence and shape the three buzzwords of what Vucetic refers to socialization, reciprocity and intersubjectivity. But, does politics actually constrain the need for a professional cooperation of police officers? The answer is simply yes. The former border police commander of the Police in Kosovo explained clearly how he (once) approached the Serbian border police officers by explaining them openly the need to cooperate and refrain from the political developments (Selimi, 2012). It is so because police interaction across borders is often politicised, or is kept hostage to political differences between host countries. Such is very much the case in the Western Balkans, especially as regards relations between Kosovo and Serbia, due to the latter's refusal to recognise the political reality in the former. But, the political implications do not absolutely exclude the cooperation in the technical level. At least, the former commander of the border police and the current Member of Parliament confirms (Selimi, 2012).

However, the pessimism of Kosovo's regional police cooperation is challenged by the sound cooperation with its other neighbouring police services such as the Albanian, Macedonian and Montenegrin police officers. The key informants particularly highlighted a very good cooperation that exists between police officers in Kosovo and Albania. Or, as the interviewers stated, the cooperation with Albania is rather preferred having in mind the same language used in the police cooperation (Selimi, 2012; Neziri, 2012). The cooperation between the two police services is shown through a clear example where Kosovo police patrols operates and assists the Albanian police deeply in the territory of Albania, up to the vicinity of Tirana, especially during the summer holidays. In addition, there is a joint crossing point border management where the citizens are controlled and checked only from one border post (the so called enter-enter control). The sound cooperation also exist with Montenegrian and Macedonian police officers and the practice showed good track of cooperation (Neziri, Selimi, Marmullaku, 2012).

There are two key dimensions crucially important for the police cooperation: trust and language. Both are interconnected and take a significant part in the context of cooperation. Firstly, the issue of trust is complex and difficult to be achieved in a prompt manner. It requires more time and track of exchange of information in order to establish. But, the issue of trust in the police cooperation is not Western Balkan centric as there are ongoing trust-related challenges within the members of the European Union (EU) as well. The EU Commissioner for Home Affairs, Cecilia Malstrom, in one of the police conferences mentioned more than fourteen times (in a five page speech) the need to build up trust in order to secure a better cooperation between the police services in the EU (Malstrom, 2011). She went further by

explicitly asking the police representatives in trusting one another in sharing the experiences, information and know-how.

Secondly, the language burden in the communication between the police officers in the region is a challenge – so it is in the Western Balkans. The fact that the communication is conducted easier with the Albanian Police and then with other police forces of neighbouring countries implies primarily the issue of language. But, at least from the Kosovo perspective, the language dimension is not the one to decrease that much the level of cooperation having in mind that either a significant part of the Kosovo Police members speaks Serbian/Montenegrin language or there is a presence of Albanian minority police officers serving in the border crossing points. For example, in 3 out of 6 border crossing points with Serbia, there are a number of Albanian minority community officers in the Serbian side. The situation is similar in the Kosovo side while up to 5 border crossing points involved the Kosovo Police officers from the Serbian community. The similar picture is also reflected in the border crossing points with Macedonia and Montenegro.

The recent political dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade, and the subsequent agreement which was initialled by the two Prime Ministers, might just be ushering the region into a new chapter of regional cooperation, with positive effects on cross-border police engagement. The European Union has mediated in brokering an agreement on Integrated Border Management between Kosovo and Serbia. Although there are obstacles to seeing this agreement implemented on the ground, the political dialogue might have given the region a renewed impetus to intensify regional engagement. As a result, the cooperation between the Police in Kosovo and its counterparts in Serbia might gradually be moving forward and away from its nascent stage, in which it had stagnated for more than a decade.

Conclusion

More than a decade after the establishment of security sector, specifically the Police, Kosovo faces ongoing challenges. Reiner (2010) refers to the 'elephant of social control', rather than the 'breadbox' of policing agencies which accomplish the functions attributed to policing. In this respect, since 1999 Kosovo has been a melting pot of a diverse set of mechanisms which together comprised the 'elephant' of maintaining social control, law and order.

The myriad international and local police bodies – or as Reiner referred to as the 'pluralisation of policing' - have now given room to a more delineated structure in favour of Kosovo institutions. The pluralisation of policing, in the case of Kosovo, refers to the importation of police traditions as best practices from the US and Western European countries. The Police of today is a result of this mix of police reform, still to consolidate its practice of police profession and community policing in the local context.

A new police culture is being shaped, accustomed to the local context, while its police officers are being imbued with a sense of professionalization. However, there are setbacks in the latter due to creeping politicisation of the police profession. The dichotomy between police profession and politics in Kosovo especially is a critical one. Police profession in Kosovo is at an important junction in its young history: internally, it continues to deepen its practice in democratic policing, in service of all communities, facing politically-driven challenges particularly in the north. In the other hand, externally it faces hindrances to regional engagement due to the political situation, specifically the refusal by Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Romania to recognise Kosovo as an independent country. It is precisely such regressive politics at regional and international level that continues to condition to a degree the Kosovo Police's development and reform in line with those in other Western Balkans countries. Moreover, politics conditions their inclusion, or not, into security epistemic communities at regional level. This insulation or isolation of police does not assist the region as a whole to form truly regional mechanisms of cooperation, and continues to hinder the creation of sustainable and inclusive security epistemic communities. The agreement between Pristina and Belgrade in Brussels can be viewed as "a light in the tunnel" in the prospective cooperation between two police services and the entire Western Balkan region.

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