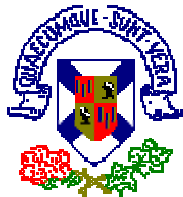


**KOSOVO, MARCH 2004: A “WIDENED”
PERSPECTIVE ON AN INTRA-STATE
SECURITY DILEMMA IN THE CONTEXT OF
EXTREME UNCERTAINTY**

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Introduction

Though under international administration and the supervision of several security providers – including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), NATO, the European Union and other international and nongovernmental organizations – in early 2004 Kosovo experienced a massive violent outbreak that resulted in deaths, injuries, property destruction and the ethnic cleansing of some Serb areas of the province. On 17-18 March 2004, some 50,000 people committed arson, looting, shooting, and stone-, petrol bomb- and grenade-throwing. The violence resulted in 19 deaths. More than 900 persons were injured and 4,000 others were displaced from their homes. The violence was perpetrated by Kosovar Albanians and was directed primarily against Kosovar Serbs and members of the United Nations international mission to Kosovo, UNMIK. Among the injured were “61 police officers, including 40 members of the UN special police unit” and 17 peacekeepers. Some 730 houses, 29 Serbian Orthodox churches and monasteries and an unspecified number of schools, post offices and medical clinics were destroyed or damaged.

These events represented by far the worst violent episode in Kosovo since 1999, but representatives of Kosovo’s international administration expressed their “surprise” at the outbreak of violence, and their inability to explain it.¹ Though unable to handle the situation, the administration admitted that the violence undermined its mission, since it “challenged the sustainability of the International Community’s efforts to build a multi-ethnic Kosovo where all citizens could live in peace and security.” This violent episode had regional repercussions, being

¹ The head of KFOR, German Lieutenant General Holger Kammerhoff, indicated “that probably everyone was surprised by the violence.” See Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, *Newsline* (19 March 2004).

followed by violent attacks in Serbia and the destruction of Muslim mosques in Belgrade. In short, the March violence in Kosovo demonstrated the complete failure of the international administration’s mandate in Kosovo, as detailed in Security Council Resolution 1244.²

Discourse and writings on Kosovo’s situation and the methods to solve the security problem in that province of the Serbian and Montenegrin state have focused on solutions to the “status” issue, that is, on whether the situation would best be helped by giving Kosovo independence or by continuing to put off resolution of its legal personality until certain criteria are met.³ This paper proceeds from the assumption that an appropriate resolution to the security problem in Kosovo must rest on an accurate understanding of how key political groups (actors) in the province conceptualized or “constructed” security. It finds that these actors did so from the perspective of protecting societal identity. Societal security concerns prompted key actors to engage in actions (and perceptions of those actions) that, by March 2004, resulted in an intra-state security dilemma whose dynamics contributed decisively to the outbreak of violence. Finally, the paper argues that those dynamics were facilitated by the international administration over Kosovo and by the Serbian republic’s government.

The first two sections of this paper provide a brief overview of the conceptual framework this analysis draws on, and present the representations of security held by relevant security actors in Kosovo. The third section demonstrates that those representations fed into a security dilemma operating within the province. Finally, the paper examines the role of the international authority over Kosovo

² Bryan Hopkinson, “Soul-searching on Kosovo: March Violence Poses Challenge to International Community,” *OSCE Magazine* (Vienna: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, May 2004), p. 21, and International Crisis Group, “Collapse In Kosovo,” *International Crisis Group* (22 April 2004).

³ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, *Newsline* (July 2004).

and the Serbian government in contributing to Kosovo's security dilemma.

Conceptual Framework

To represent the security situation in Kosovo in March 2004, this analysis draws on two different bodies of literature within security studies. The first is the literature proposing the “widening” of the concept of security beyond its traditional, narrow conceptualization within the military-political realm to include environmental, economic and other areas in an expanded definition of “national security.”⁴ It will also use the contribution of the “Copenhagen school” – and its emphasis on the interplay between security and identity⁵ – to determine how in 2004 important security actors in Kosovo conceived of security. This paper tries to see “how” more than “why” certain events unfolded, in an attempt to problematize assumptions that are often taken for granted by more traditional approaches to security studies. For example, to ask why security broke down in Kosovo would assume a single (coherent, unique) understanding of “security” and also the existence of “security” prior to and after the March violence, assumptions that seem unreasonable in the specific case of Kosovo. This paper follows Curticepan and Doty in arguing that “why” questions are incomplete, since the effort to answer them “already presupposes a certain background of meaning, kinds of social actors and relationships.” How questions are

⁴ Barry Buzan, in Ken Booth (ed.) *New Thinking about Strategy and International Security*, (London: Harper Collins, 1991), and Jessica Mathews Tuchman, “Redefining Security,” *Foreign Affairs*, 68:2 (1989), pp. 162-177.

⁵ The Copenhagen school includes Barry Buzan, Ole Weaver, Jaap deWilde, Morten Kelstrup and Pierre LeMaitre. See Paul Roe, “Misperception and Ethnic Conflict: Transylvania's Societal Security Dilemma,” *Review of International Studies*, 28 (2002), p. 64.

concerned with explaining how these meanings and subjects are constituted. To address the question of how security-related problems and events are presented in a specific manner, this paper implicitly inquires into their very production.⁶

The actors discussed here are the Kosovar Albanian leadership and community, the Kosovar Serb leadership and community, the international administration in Kosovo (primarily the United Nations Mission in Kosovo, or UNMIK, and the Kosovo Force, or KFOR) and the government of the Republic of Serbia. The Kosovar Albanian and Serb leaderships and communities are considered apart from other actors because they were directly involved in the intrastate security dilemma operating in Kosovo. The international administration and the Serbian government can be considered facilitators to the security dilemma in Kosovo. For each actor, I will apply the Buzan, Waever and de Wilde framework and use a “sectoral” approach assessing security through the following five lenses: economic, environmental, military, political and societal. By dividing security according to sectors I seek to clarify what each actor understands by security, and thereby to “put security back together in... a more transparent form.”⁷

The Buzan, Waever and de Wilde framework of analysis defines security as both the absence of existential threat and a speech act, that is, an attempt to convince an audience to change its discourse from one related to “normal” politics to one touching on “security” issues. When successful, such a “securitization” renders legitimate the use of extraordinary means. Security is therefore “performed” in the service of some “referent object,” something from which

⁶ See R. L. Doty, cited in Alina Curticepan, “On the Construction of Security and Identity in Romania During 1990-2000,” paper presented at the OIIP Summer School, July 2004.

⁷ Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998), p. 167.

existential threat needs to be removed, but is also “inter-subjective,” meaning that it is “about how collectivities related to each other and to their natural environment in terms of threats and vulnerabilities.” This paper determines in which sector each actor’s most important sources of threat lay in March 2004 by analyzing the actors’ discourse during the October 2003 - June 2004 period.

The second body of literature this paper draws on refers to intra-state security dilemmas.⁸ In its traditional formulation, the security dilemma refers to a situation when two states harbor no hostile intent toward one another, but misinterpret each others’ defensive measures to the point of misperceiving each other as harboring such intent. Under such conditions, measures taken by one actor to bolster its own security are perceived by the other actor as offensive rather than defensive, and prompt the second actor to take measures to increase its own security that are perceived in like terms by the first actor. In such a scenario, security is perceived in zero-sum terms where the increase in security for one side is considered by the other side as a decrease in its own security. The result is a process where, though it is not the intention of either actor to escalate the conflict, the behavior of the two sides creates an “action-reaction” dynamic with that outcome. In the process, both sides lose out since the result is a decrease in security for both actors. When applied to inter-state conflicts, the security dilemma is usually seen as originating in the military sphere.⁹

⁸ I am indebted to Niels van Willigen for encouraging me to apply the intra-state security dilemma literature to this analysis.

⁹ For example, the classic application of the security dilemma at state-level is the cold war and arms racing. See Herbert Butterfield, *History and Human Relations* (London: Collins, 1951), John Herz, *International Politics in the Atomic Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), Barry R. Posen, “The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict,” *Survival* 35:1 (1993), p. 28, and Paul Roe, “Former Yugoslavia: The Security Dilemma that Never Was?” *European Journal of International Relations*, 6:3 (2000), p. 375.

There has been growing application of the concept of the security dilemma to intrastate conflicts in various parts of the world. The present analysis follows Roe in his marriage of the security dilemma to the Copenhagen school theoretical framework. Roe argues that it is possible for a security dilemma to occur at the intrastate level as the result of misperceptions in opposing groups’ intentions when those groups undertake measures to protect their societal security (group identity). Roe’s formulation of a “societal security dilemma” “illuminates the central role of identity concerns in driving forward the cycle of action and reaction towards the eventual perpetration of ethnic violence ... [it] captures a fundamental set of non-military escalatory dynamics.” This paper tries to show that societal security (identity) concerns were central to security formulations by Kosovar Albanians and Kosovar Serbs in March 2004, and that misperception in the form of an “illusory incompatibility between security requirements” was also at play.¹⁰

The time frame chosen here covers a period in Kosovo’s administrative and political life representative for the March 2004 violence. On 30 October 2003 SRSG Harri Holkeri for the first time addressed the UN Security Council as the head of the UNMIK. On 25 May 2004 he resigned, the present paper discussing the echoes of that event. My primary sources for the discourse of the Kosovar Albanian leadership were the summaries of Kosovar Albanian press reports translated into English by the UNMIK Independent Media Monitoring (IMM) department, and the talk Veton Surroi, an important Kosovar Albanian political figure, delivered at the University of Toronto in May 2004. For the statements of the Kosovar Serb leadership and the Serb republic government, I used the UNMIK summaries of Serb press reports, the Serb online news provider B92, and the Serb government website. For all three groups, I relied on reports published by independent monitoring agencies like

¹⁰ See Roe, “Transylvania’s,” pp. 58 and 59, for the two citations.

the International Crisis Group and the European Stability Initiative.

Societal (In)Security in Kosovo

First, let me demonstrate that what was primarily in question for the Kosovar Albanian and Serb communities over the October 2003 – June 2004 period was their societal security. Following Roe, a society is defined as any “politically significant ethnic, national and religious group,” and societal security is considered to encompass all threats to the survival of a society.¹¹ By assessing all four groups’ referent objects for security and their main perceived threats, I argue that the Kosovar Serbs’ and Kosovar Albanians’ perceived threats fed into societal security.

To do this, I rely on an analysis of a sample of the statements issued by the leaderships of the four groups (Kosovar Albanians, Kosovar Serbs, UNMIK/KFOR and the Serb republic government) between October 2003 and June 2004, with particular attention to the two weeks surrounding the March violence. With the help of these statements I compiled a list of each actor’s perceived threats, which I then categorized according to the Buzan, Waever and de Wilde framework of security sectors. Sectors irrelevant for a given actor were ignored. For example, the environmental security sector did not apply to any of the actors. The Appendix provides a partial list of each actor’s threat perceptions.

For the Kosovar Albanians, the referent object of security is Kosovo as an (albeit unrecognized) state, as an independent, self-governing political entity encompassing the territory now lying within that province’s borders and capable to assure the continuing existence of the Kosovar Albanian community. The Kosovar Albanian community sees the province as its country. As one report describes:

¹¹ Roe, “Transylvania’s,” p. 65.

for Kosovo Albanians, independence was declared in October 1991, and the last twelve and a half years have been a process of waiting for the international community and Serbia to recognize it. UN Security Council Resolution 1244...further enshrined the idea of the popular will as a significant factor for determining Kosovo’s future status. As a result, 90 per cent of Kosovo’s population will accept no final outcome other than independence.¹²

The assessment that Kosovar Albanians see Kosovo as their country, an independent or emergent state, is corroborated by the rhetoric of both Kosovar Albanian leaders and general citizens, as in the following statements:

The 24 March 1999 is the most important day in the history of Kosova. The NATO campaign against Serbian targets marks the beginning of the free Kosova that we have enjoyed over the past five years (Muhamet Hamiti, a spokesperson for President Rugova).

KFOR brought us peace and did much to help in the reconstruction of our country. For that we will always be thankful (young man on the street).¹³

In Kosovar Albanian perception, the “status” of independence is not a possible, but a necessary and expected, outcome of the temporary international protectorate.

The international administration is seen as an interim step between full-fledged independence and Kosovo’s past under Serbian domination. Kosovar Albanians experienced Serbian sovereignty over Kosovo as threatening to the existence of their society. There were a number of periods of Serb repression of Kosovar Albanians: during the first

¹² International Crisis Group, “Collapse,” p. 2.

¹³ Beta News Agency (24 March 2004).

Yugoslavia and after the second Yugoslavia's 1974 constitution which rescinded Kosovo's status as an "autonomous unit." According to Kosovar Albanians and many others, including NATO, under Milosevic there were plans to ethnically cleanse Kosovo of its Albanian population, which were interrupted only by virtue of NATO's 1999 war against Serbia.¹⁴ As a result, any possibility of Serbia and Montenegro's sovereignty over Kosovo in the future is considered by Kosovar Albanians to be existentially threatening to their societal security.

Based on their historical experience, Kosovar Albanians' perception is that true societal security cannot be attained with anything less than independence for Kosovo. In the discourse of the Kosovar Albanian leadership, key perceived sources of threat lie within a number of sectors. For example, Serb parallel institutions are a threat in the political sector, as is Kosovar Serb non-participation in the Standards Before Status Plan and the Serbian government's plan for "decentralization" in Kosovo, i.e., for the creation of Serb autonomous areas. In the economic sector, UNMIK's stalled privatization efforts are seen as a key threat to the economic viability and therefore economic security of Kosovo.

What all of these perceived sources of threat have in common is that they are seen as obstacles to the attainment of a functioning, independent state of Kosovo, the perceived guarantor of Kosovar Albanian societal security. Thus, the economic and political threats mentioned above should be seen as overlapping with societal security in a crucial way and, consequently, as being of heightened, existential importance for the Kosovar Albanian community. As a result of intense perceptions of threat across these sectors in the run-up to March 2004, Kosovar Albanians experienced a

¹⁴ It remains unclear whether plans for the "Operation Horseshoe" really existed, though the harsh repression of Kosovar Albanians under Milosevic cannot be denied.

generalized fear and heightened perceptions of uncertainty and existential danger during that time period. The overriding source of existential threat was perceived as being the local Serb community in conjunction with the Serb republic's government. Even when the international administration was seen as the immediate source of threat in a given sector, it was usually perceived so as a consequence of its supposed intentional or inadvertent catering to Serb interests.

Of the dominant perceived sources of threat for Kosovar Albanians in the time period under consideration, one of the most prominent and the one that will be the focus for this paper were Serb government-sponsored parallel institutions in Kosovo.¹⁵ One of the most common themes in the discourse of the Kosovo Albanian leadership before, during, and after the March violence was of the threat posed by Serb parallel institutions. Before the violence, prominent Kosovar leaders like Prime Minister Bajram Rexhepi and Kosovar Albanian newspapers repeatedly referred to the parallel institutions as an obstacle to peace and as a danger. For example, after the violence, Rexhepi declared that, ever

¹⁵ Since 1999 in the northern part of Kosovo, three municipalities and half of the divided Mitrovica town have been "effectively administered by Serbia." In 2003, highly-visible parallel structures were established in southern Kosovo, by 2004 becoming "Serb islands in the south that administer themselves but are linked to Serbia" and financing Kosovar Serb parallel court, administrative, security, school and health care structures. The international administration and the Kosovar provisional government (PISG) have almost no influence in those areas. The Milosevic regime and Serbian governments sponsored parallel institutions in Kosovo for "working towards a territorial division of the province so that if Kosovo ever gains independence, those de facto divisions could be the basis of a partition." The Serb government prefers Kosovo's restructuring as an autonomous enclave in the SaM state or its partition. See European Stability Initiative, "The Lausanne Principle: Multiethnicity, Territory and the Future of Kosovo's Serbs" (June 2004), p. 11, OSCE Mission to Kosovo, OIIP summer school (July 2004), and International Crisis Group, "Collapse," pp. 4-5 and 9-10.

since NATO's 1999 military campaign, peace in Mitrovica had been hampered by Serb parallel structures the purpose of which was to maintain the ethnic division of that city.¹⁶ He also said that the UN should have done more to "uproot Serb intelligence structures in the province."¹⁷

For the Kosovar Serbs, the referent object of security was the Serb and Montenegrin (SaM) state as an entity sovereign over Kosovo. Kosovar Serbs perceived attachment with the Serb republic as necessary to guarantee the continuing existence of their community in the province. Also, an important aspect of Kosovar Serb identity is the feeling that they are not a "minority" in Kosovo, but that even in Kosovo, a province where they are clearly outnumbered by Kosovar Albanians, they are still the "majority" population of the Serbian republic and of the SaM state, while the Albanian Kosovars are the "minority."¹⁸

Kosovar Serbs perceive existential threats within a number of sectors and, as is the case for the Kosovar Albanians, those threats importantly overlap with societal security. Key perceived threats of Kosovar Serbs are, in the political sector, Kosovo's independence and progress towards that status and, also in the political sector, any obstacles to Serb parallel institutions. Although these threats can primarily be classified as political, they also importantly reside in the economic sector since attachment to the Serb republic is a vital source of revenue for members of the Kosovo Serb community. For example, parallel institutions pay many Kosovar Serb wages, and Kosovo's statehood would likely put an end to such economic benefits for local Serbs.

These threats also feed into societal security since both deal with the strengthening of links with the Serb republic, links without which the Kosovar Serbs do not

believe their existence in Kosovo can be assured. The rhetoric of Serb Kosovar representatives before, during and after the March violence demonstrates this perception. For example, even before the March events, Kosovar Serb representatives met with Serbian republic Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica to report that in Kosovo they were unable "to exercise even the most basic human rights" and to communicate their need for continued assistance from Serb-government-sponsored institutions in Kosovo. During the March violence, Kosovo Serb elders called for a variety of measures to be taken in defense of their communities, including "for the Serbian Government to draft a plan together with the Ministry of Education and UNMIK for protecting Serb children and students."¹⁹ The importance of links with the SaM state for Kosovo Serbs was also demonstrated in comments from a Kosovo Serb villager, made in an interview following the March violence: "We hope that our country will provide us with something concrete, some kind of protection, some form of security—it is very difficult."²⁰

For UNMIK and KFOR, the referent object of security is "Kosovo," understood as the protectorate over the province and common society of Kosovar Albanians and Serbs, a political entity over which they have oversight. UNMIK before the March violence saw threats to Kosovo's security as residing overwhelmingly in the traditional military/policing sector. This is seen in rhetoric on the part of KFOR prior to the March violence, where threats to security in Kosovo were considered to be criminal violence and terrorism.²¹ Prior to the March violence, the rhetoric of international administration officials was very positive about

¹⁹ UNMIK Independent Media Monitoring, Media Monitoring Reports (17 March 2004).

²⁰ Beta News Agency (27 March 2004).

²¹ UNMIK Independent Media Monitoring, Media Monitoring Reports, (March 16, 2004).

¹⁶ Beta News Agency (19 March 2004).

¹⁷ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, *Newsline* (19 March 2004).

¹⁸ OSCE Mission to Kosovo, OIIP summer school, July 2004.

the security situation in Kosovo. For example, NATO Commander in Chief for Southern Europe Admiral Gregory Johnson stated in March that, despite recent bombings in the province, the security situation was “satisfactory.”²² He also stated that “the crime rate in Kosovo was normal for a region of two million people.”²³ After the March violence, the rhetoric of UNMIK eventually began to demonstrate a perception of security as residing in other sectors beyond the military/policing sector.²⁴

The referent object of security for the Serbian republic’s government is the SaM state. The main threats are any challenges to SaM sovereignty over Kosovo, including Kosovar Serb participation in local Kosovo political institutions, or obstacles to the functioning and strengthening of parallel institutions in Kosovo. SaM sovereignty over Kosovo is in the discourse of the Serbian government referred to as “faithfulness” to Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1244. Along with rhetoric calling for “decentralization” in Kosovo, this is the most common theme in the Serb government’s discourse.

The Societal Security Dilemma in Kosovo

Following Roe, for the situation in Kosovo in March 2004 to be accurately characterized as a societal security dilemma requires proof that three elements existed: that measures taken by one group to increase its societal security were interpreted by members of the other community as a

²² Ironically, Johnson also said that “KFOR had expected much greater incidents than actually took place.” (UNMIK Independent Media Monitoring, Media Monitoring Reports, 16 March 2004).

²³ UNMIK Independent Media Monitoring, Media Monitoring Reports, (16 March 16, 2004).

²⁴ UNMIK Division of Public Information, Press Release 1149: “Personal Letter from SRSG Harri Holkeri to the People of Kosovo,” (23 March 2004).

threat to their own identity; that a perception of worst-case scenario fueled an action-reaction process; and that there was a misperception by both sides of each others’ societal security requirements.²⁵ All three of these criteria existed in the case of Kosovo in 2004. The above section has demonstrated that Serb government-sponsored parallel institutions were seen by Kosovar Serbs as a measure to increase their societal security while the same institutions were seen by Kosovar Albanians as a threat to their own societal security. That is, the two groups saw those institutions differently in terms of their “offensive” or “defensive” nature.²⁶ While for Kosovar Serbs the parallel institutions were a defense against existential threats to their society in Kosovo, for Kosovar Albanians they were a hostile act towards the territorial and political integrity of Kosovo as an emerging state and guarantor of their own societal security.

The continued functioning of the parallel institutions was seen by Kosovar Albanians as a tactic by Serbs to subvert efforts at establishing self-government in the province and therefore of hampering Kosovo’s path towards independence by re-asserting the Serbian state’s *de facto* sovereignty over at least some portion of the province and paving the way for “decentralization,” in effect, for territorial division of the province between Kosovar Albanian and Kosovar Serb areas.²⁷ Kosovar Albanians therefore perceived the continued operation of the parallel institutions as an “offensive” act by the Serb Kosovars and the Serbian government, the programs of whom were seen as largely indistinguishable by Kosovar Albanians. This is a recurring theme in Kosovar Albanian rhetoric, particularly clearly

²⁵ Roe, “Transylvania’s,” p. 71.

²⁶ Here “offensive” is defined as “to detract from another’s security” and “defensive” as “to enhance [one’s own] security.” See Roe, “Transylvania’s,” p. 59.

²⁷ Serbia and Montenegro’s sovereignty over Kosovo is *de jure* recognized through Security Council Resolution 1244.

demonstrated in a statement by the Kosovar Assembly (boycotted by Kosovar Serb representatives) after the March violence where it was stated that “Serbia continues a series of actions against Kosovo” and where a resolution by the Serb republic’s Assembly calling for territorial and political autonomy for Serbs in Kosovo was termed a “new aggression against Kosovo.”²⁸

The second element in Roe’s formulation that must be proven to demonstrate that a security dilemma really was at play in the situation in Kosovo is that a perception of a worst-case scenario provoked an “action-reaction” process. In fact, in March 2004, a series of events occurred which generated spiraling responses from both ethnic groups and culminated in the mass-scale Kosovo Albanian rioting and attacks of March 17-18. The spiral of responses was importantly driven by worst-case perceptions on either side.

On March 15, a Serb youth was shot and wounded in a Serb area of Kosovo by unknown perpetrators in a drive-by attack, and Albanians were suspected. In response, local Serbs in a number of Serb areas launched protests, set-up roadblocks and demanded further institutional measures from the Serb republic’s government, in cooperation with UNMIK, to assure the safety of Kosovar Serb youth.²⁹

These actions and demands by the Kosovar Serbs were seen in worst-case scenario terms by Kosovar Albanians for a number of reasons. The previous section

²⁸ Beta News Agency (1 April 2004).

²⁹ UNMIK Division of Public Information, “Chronicle,” *Focus Kosovo* (Kosovo: UNMIK Division of Public Information, 2004), p. 2. Kosovar Serbs and Kosovar Albanians hold of each other the stereotype of “child-killers,” as “each community also sees the other as capable of engineering or instrumentalising the deaths of its own children to blacken the reputation of the other community.” For example, “Writing in the Kosovo Albanian newspaper *Bota Sot* on 8 April 2004, “human rights” activist Halit Berani claimed that ‘Serbs are talented, and even in the 1980s they disinterred their dead children and raped their old Serb women, trying to blame Albanians.’” See International Crisis Group, “Collapse,” p. 14.

demonstrated some of the background reasons why Kosovar Albanians interpreted these renewed Kosovar Serb demands for the strengthening of parallel structures as hostile, not defensive. In fact, by the middle of March 2004, Kosovar Albanians had long had a growing sense that the Serb position in the province was strengthening precisely because of the parallel institutions. This was seen as particularly threatening given the belief commonly held among Kosovar Albanians that, within approximately a year, negotiations would open to resolve Kosovo’s legal personality. In the period before the March violence,

Kosovo Albanians feared that facts were being created on the ground against them, pre-empting status talks. This insecurity was further fuelled by a combination of renewed assertiveness and tactical adroitness from Belgrade from 2003 onwards and weak or insensitive responses from UNMIK [including in the area of] the growing power of Belgrade-sponsored parallel administrative structures.³⁰

According to some observers, with the strengthening of parallel structures over the course of 2003, “ethnic cantonisation appeared to be in the process of creation in a way that fed Kosovo Albanian anxiety and animosity.”³¹

On March 16, three Kosovar Albanian children drowned in a strong river current, with the fourth of their group blaming the deaths on Kosovar Serbs who had allegedly chased them into the river.³² This story played to the already raw fears and suspicions of Serbs on the part of Kosovar Albanians, as described above, and uncorroborated coverage of the events in the Kosovar Albanian media stoked

³⁰ International Crisis Group, “Collapse,” p. 9.

³¹ International Crisis Group, “Collapse,” p. 10.

³² This proved to be untrue. See UNMIK Division of Public Information, “Chronicle,” p. 2, and Hopkinson, “Soul-searching,” p. 21.

those fears.³³ For example, the Kosovar Albanian daily *Epoka e Re*'s front page headline claimed "Serbs Kill Three Albanian Kids in Ibar River." The same newspaper carried an article claiming another incidence of violence by Serbs against Albanians in Kosovo, concluding that "the Serbs are creating problems and aim to destabilize all Kosovo."³⁴ On March 17th, Kosovar Albanians organized protests over the drownings, some of which crossed into the northern (Serb) half of the divided city of Mitrovica.³⁵ This marked the start of the violence which then spread to other areas of the province, as described earlier.

Finally, to justify the characterization of the situation as an intra-state societal security dilemma, it must be proven that this was a case where both groups "misinterpreted the nature of the other side's societal security requirements, [that] the two sides came to misperceive what the other needed to be secure in terms of their identity."³⁶ Discourse samples show that Kosovar Albanians misperceive Kosovar Serbs' societal security requirements in the sense that they view Serb security measures as unwarranted. An editorial in a Kosovar Albanian newspaper called the roadblocks and other actions by Kosovar Serbs after the shooting of two youths on March 15 unnecessary and counterproductive as they "cannot bring any qualitative solution."³⁷ The same editorial goes on to claim the Serb measures unreasonable "because all the parameters show that the situation [for

Kosovo Serbs] in general has improved, the situation is far better today than it was one or two years ago."³⁸

Although statistically it is the case that the overall security situation for Kosovar Serbs had improved, attacks on them and their property still occurred and threat perceptions among them remained high: "through 2003 and into 2004 violent extremists have continued every few months to target Kosovo Serbs, thus feeding the insecurities of that community against a backdrop of otherwise declining inter-ethnic and overall crime rates." In particular, Kosovar Serbs felt that their ancient religious and cultural sites have been "systematically targeted," and many believed that "the Albanians were trying to remove all evidence that Serbs had ever lived in Kosovo."³⁹

For Kosovar Serbs, their participation in the Belgrade-sponsored parallel institutions is occurring in a context where they do not feel in any way a part of the political sub-unit of Kosovo and its local institutions; in fact, they feel threatened by it. For example, there is no longer any Serbian language education in the formal Kosovo school system, and Kosovo Serbs do not speak any Albanian, since Serbian was previously the *lingua franca* in the province. Also, there is effectively no freedom of movement for Serbs in Kosovo, and few even attempt travel. As for the sporadic violence that has continued to occur against Kosovar Serbs, "the international authorities have consistently been unable to catch the perpetrators."⁴⁰

Kosovar Albanian leaders display little empathy for Kosovar Serb societal security requirements. Those requirements are largely seen by the Kosovar Albanians

³³ "On the Trail of a Report by the Temporary Media Commissioner in Kosovo: Abuse of *Cinema Verite* in TV Journalism," (Media Online: June 1, 2004), p.4.

³⁴ UNMIK Independent Media Monitoring, Media Monitoring Reports, (17 March 2004).

³⁵ UNMIK Division of Public Information, "Chronicle," p. 2.

³⁶ Roe, "Transylvania's," p. 58.

³⁷ UNMIK Independent Media Monitoring, Media Monitoring Reports, (17 March 2004).

³⁸ UNMIK Independent Media Monitoring, Media Monitoring Reports, (17 March 2004).

³⁹ International Crisis Group, "Collapse," p. 14.

⁴⁰ Though the international administration sometimes attempts to secretly organize bus convoys to transport Serbs, it is usually the case that word gets out and Kosovar Albanian children are dispatched to throw rocks at the convoys. OSCE Mission to Kosovo, OIIP summer school, July 2004.

through a “politics” lens rather than a “security” lens. For example, in response to the March 15 roadblocks and other actions by Kosovar Serbs described above, Kosovar Albanian discourse framed the issue outside of security terms and in political ones. That is, it underplayed the existential threat to Serbs and described the real problem as being that Kosovar Serbs refuse to submit to the authority of local Kosovar institutions: “Pristina is the political address for the Caglavica [a city in Kosovo] Serbs.”⁴¹ This reasoning is indicative of a common theme in Kosovar Albanian discourse that the problems faced by Kosovar Serbs are largely of their own creation because of their non-participation in Kosovar political institutions and dialogue. The argumentation was most dramatically seen when, after the March violence, Kosovar Albanian rhetoric refused to attribute to the Kosovar Serbs the identity of victims. Instead, in the discourse Kosovar Serbs were often blamed for the violence.⁴²

Another reason why Kosovar Albanians misperceive Kosovar Serbs’ security requirements is because they see local Serbs, due to their association with the Serb republic government, not as vulnerable but as the stronger party in the political dealings that led up to March 2004 and that are setting precedents for eventual status negotiations in 2005; they perceive Serbs as able to satisfy their interests to the detriment of Kosovar Albanian security requirements. For example, for three years UNMIK worked on a program to privatize Kosovo’s socially-owned enterprises, to the great anticipation of Kosovar Albanians.⁴³ However the Serbian government protested the plan on the basis that UNMIK had no authority to privatize the companies. In October 2003,

⁴¹ UNMIK Independent Media Monitoring, Media Monitoring Reports, (17 March 2004).

⁴² UNMIK Independent Media Monitoring, Media Monitoring Reports, (18 March 2004).

⁴³ Kosovo has 400 unprivatized companies.

UNMIK abruptly cancelled the plans for privatization, a decision that Kosovar Albanians perceived as a symbol of UNMIK’s willingness to accommodate Serb interests and neglect their own: “privatisation was a tangible litmus test as to which of the competing realities of the 1990s the international community would legitimate: Serbia's revocation of Kosovo's autonomy or the Kosovo Albanian resistance.”⁴⁴

To understand this reasoning, the cross-sectoral linkages of Kosovar Albanian security requirements are important. For Kosovar Albanians, privatization and economic concerns played into societal security since the level of economic failure in the province threatens its future as a functioning political entity, and thus threatens the continuing survival of their society. The issue of privatization must therefore be understood in the context of Kosovo’s remarkably poor economic situation.

Unemployment in Kosovo is calculated at between 50 and 60 percent. Seventy percent of Kosovo’s population is under the age of 30, and every year there are between 30,000 and 40,000 new entrants into the job market.⁴⁵ At the same time, Kosovo’s GDP is under severe strain. In 2002, foreign assistance made up 50 percent of GDP. However, foreign assistance has been dropping dramatically in recent years. The European Union is the biggest donor but EU aid has dropped from 336 million Euros in 2001, to 147 million Euros in 2002, and then to approximately 60 million Euros as the total earmarked for the period 2004-2006. Another main and failing source of GDP is remittances from the Kosovar Albanian diaspora. In 2002 these accounted for 30 percent of GDP, a figure that has also been considerably dropping. Further, a mere 20 percent of Kosovo’s GDP comes from “domestically generated economic activity” and only 4 percent of imports are paid for by exports. As an

⁴⁴ International Crisis Group, “Collapse,” p. 8.

⁴⁵ Veton Surroi, talk delivered at the University of Toronto, May 2004.

independent report states, “even Kosovo’s present low level of GDP is unsustainable.”⁴⁶

Kosovar Serbs also misperceive Kosovar Albanian societal security requirements. One example is the different perception held by both ethnic groups over the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC). The KPC is the institution created by the international authorities out of the decommissioned Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). Kosovo Serbs perceive it as the core of a future Kosovar Albanian army and therefore intrinsically threatening. To Kosovar Albanians, however, the KPC is their most legitimate and esteemed institution, this despite the fact that it has been sidelined by UNMIK to a minimal security-provider role. For Kosovar Albanians, the KPC remains an important symbol of societal identity. The feeling of Kosovar Serbs toward the KPC can also be characterized as a misperception based on the fact that during the March violence, the KPC acted as an important security provider for Kosovo Serbs, both in terms of its rhetoric and behavior.⁴⁷

Serb Republic Government and UNMIK as Contributors to Insecurity

The most important condition for the security dilemma to materialize is that of uncertainty, where because it is impossible to know with confidence the intentions behind an opponent’s actions, fear prompts actors to assume a worst-case scenario, and therefore behave in the pattern that the security dilemma captures.⁴⁸ Uncertainty is a structural variable that facilitates the security dilemma:

“often ... [decision-makers] do not empathize with their neighbors; they are unaware that their own actions can seem threatening. Often it does not matter if they know this problem. The nature of their situation compels them to take the steps that they do.”⁴⁹ In the case of Kosovo in March 2004, both the Serb government and UNMIK contributed to a level of uncertainty that helped fuel the security dilemma in the province. In particular, their actions or inactions heightened the degree to which decision-makers found themselves in a position of having to “continuously make judgments as to others’ intentions.”⁵⁰

Misperceptions of Kosovar Serb societal security requirements by Kosovar Albanians were importantly assisted by the Serb republic’s government’s policies and rhetoric. One level of uncertainty created by the Serb government rested in the way it represented Kosovar Serb community interests. Clear understanding of Kosovar Serbs’ security requirements was complicated because the voice of the Kosovar Serbs was rarely distinct from that of the Serbian government. In fact, many bodies of Kosovar Serb representation have been co-opted by Belgrade.⁵¹

A second way in which the Serb republic’s government contributed to uncertainty was by promoting policies that, though purportedly beneficial to the societal needs of Kosovar Serbs, arguably are not. The Serb government advocates territorial solutions to the problems of the Kosovar Serb minority: either “decentralization” or partition. The plan for “decentralization,” sometimes also

⁴⁹ Barry R. Posen quoted in Roe, “Yugoslavia,” p. 376.

⁵⁰ Roe, “Yugoslavia,” p. 377.

⁵¹ In Serb areas of northern Kosovo, Kosovar Serb parliamentarians are paid salaries by Belgrade, on top of their salaries from the local Kosovar government institution, the PISG. Some of the parliamentarians even reside in Belgrade. In March 2004 there were two distinct groups of Kosovar Serb representation: one close to the Serb government, the other close to the Kosovar Serb religious leadership. See UNMIK Independent Media Monitoring, Media Monitoring Reports (1 and 16 March 2004).

⁴⁶ See International Crisis Group, “Collapse,” p. 4.

⁴⁷ International Crisis Group, “Collapse,” pp. 11 and 31, and UNMIK Independent Media Monitoring, Media Monitoring Reports (18 March 2004).

⁴⁸ Roe, “Transylvania’s,” p. 59.

referred to as “cantonization,” calls for the creation of five ethnically homogenous Serb units in Kosovo. The European Stability Initiative (ESI) has argued that the demographic reality of the Serbs now resident in Kosovo means their needs would not be served, but indeed hurt by either partition or decentralization.

According to ESI, 75,000 of the 130,000 Serbs in Kosovo live in isolated rural communities in the southern half of Kosovo. Either of the territorial solutions advocated by the Serb government would require massive dislocation of both Kosovar Serbs and Kosovar Albanians, and create upheavals that would only increase tensions in the province and therefore increase the possibility of violence. The decentralization plan would also in the end create precarious and economically irrational Serb enclaves with poor prospects for long-term survival.⁵² As a result of these Serb government proposals, the real needs of Kosovar Serbs to assure their societal security were obscured.

This is corroborated by the discourse of some Kosovar Serb leaders. There is a stream of Kosovar Serb discourse that does not conform to the mainstream rhetoric put forth by the Serb government and associated Kosovar Serb organizations, and does not insist on some kind of territorial autonomy for Kosovar Serbs as the only possible solution to their continued existence in Kosovo. The alternate perspective of Kosovar Serb interests is provided largely by Kosovar Serb religious leaders who claim that the Serb government is pursuing its own narrow interests and disregarding those of Kosovar Serbs.⁵³

Beyond this, Serb government discourse was generally of a nature that heightened threat perceptions. It exaggerated threat, as with blanket statements claiming that Kosovar Albanians harbor insurmountable hatred for

Kosovar Serbs, like that “one must find new solutions which reflect the reality of life, which is that the Albanian community or individuals hate the Serbian community,” or which claim that “multiethnicity has failed.”⁵⁴

The international administration of Kosovo, UNMIK, likewise contributed to the level of uncertainty in Kosovo first by the very nature of its mandate, which is inherently ambiguous. Because its effective role is to maintain the status quo and buy time before the issue of “status” need be resolved, UNMIK facilitated a situation where tensions between the two main ethnic groups of Kosovar citizens had opportunity to escalate. UNMIK initially refused to address when and how the status question would be resolved. Later, it introduced the Standards Before Status plan but for some time remained unclear on the criteria and method of assessment involved. Also, when 2005 was specified by UNMIK as the target year for status talks, Kosovar Albanians understood that those talks would be about independence, and UNMIK only after clarified that in fact they would be about whether independence or some other status would be Kosovo’s final outcome. The uncertainty had a negative impact not only on Kosovar Albanian feelings towards the Serbian community, but also on their feelings about segments of their own leadership and on the legitimacy of extremists:

In late September, President Rugova warned that if the independence of Kosovo was not recognised, sooner rather than later extremists could be expected to try to form a unified Albanian state. PISG's glance over its shoulder at the extremists revealed its growing insecurity at being seen to collaborate in UNMIK's continued domination of Kosovo.⁵⁵

⁵² European Stability Initiative, “Lausanne,” p. 13.

⁵³ UNMIK Independent Media Monitoring, Media Monitoring Reports (16 March 2004).

⁵⁴ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, *Newsline* (18 March 2004), and UNMIK Independent Media Monitoring, Media Monitoring Reports (16 March 2004).

⁵⁵ Beta News Agency (19 September 2003).

UNMIK has also contributed to uncertainty because it has not disputed the apparently false assumptions that are the basis of Serb government justifications for territorial division of the province. This has allowed the Serbian government and some Kosovar Serb leaders to maintain an exaggerated rhetoric of threat about the situation of the Serbian population in Kosovo. According to the Serbian government, few Kosovo Serbs have returned to the province after the 1999 war, and those who remain live in “ghettos.” This rhetoric has not been disputed by international officials and is in fact often espoused by them despite the fact that, as ESI points out and as has been described above, the reality appears to be quite different.⁵⁶ In fact, the international administration has not made any effort to perform its own demographic assessment of the Kosovar Serb community, nor has any other organization besides ESI.⁵⁷

By not addressing the real interests and needs of the Serb residents of Kosovo, UNMIK has contributed to the sense of existential threat propounded by the Serbian government. It has also wasted precious time when it could have been pursuing policies based on demographic realities

⁵⁶ “The claim that there are 200,000 IDPs from Kosovo in Serbia, representing almost the entire Kosovo Serb population, has become an orthodoxy, even repeated by international officials. It is a constant theme in the speeches of Serbian politicians that Kosovo Serbs have been subject to a relentless campaign of violence since 1999, making return impossible and causing a continuing exodus of Serbs.” See European Stability Initiative, “Lausanne,” p. 18.

⁵⁷ An observer stated that the reason UNMIK has not in five years of administering Kosovo performed the kind of demographic study of ethnic groups and their needs that ESI performed is because of either a “lack of interest, or for political reasons.” (OSCE Mission to Kosovo, OIIP summer school, July 2004). The consequence has been that “in an environment where no official body has carried out a serious survey or analysis, there is a tendency for all actors—including international organizations and both the domestic and international press—to repeat whatever figures have been placed in the public domain, however tentative, unreliable or out of date, until they become a quasi-official consensus.” See European Stability Initiative, “Lausanne,” p. 19.

rather than allowing dubious rhetoric to guide policies and public opinion. Instead, the Kosovar Albanian community has had its sense of threat escalate because of the continued currency given in public discourse to territorial division of Kosovo as part of the resolution of Kosovo’s status.

UNMIK has been blind to the cross-sectoral nature of (in)security in Kosovo. Among other things, the international administration has been slow to recognize that certain economic or political issues have been “securitized” for Kosovar Albanians, such as privatization, or parallel institutions. This is evident in the following statement by an UNMIK representative, from an article appearing after March 2004, where he writes that the “level of violence” was a “surprise” to UNMIK:

While there was frustration on a number of issues and genuine problems for large sectors of the population caused by a lack of growth in the economy, these were to a great extent unavoidable factors and have affected administrations in other post-conflict regions in the post-communist world. Whether any of the factors outlined here actually influenced or were indicators of the imminent violence is still difficult to say.⁵⁸

The international administrators of Kosovo, particularly before the March violence, were deceived by the surface calm in Kosovo, a calm that did not convey the reality of the security situation there. This failure in understanding was to an important extent due to an inability to recognize the role of societal security and the security dilemma dynamics at play. Rather, UNMIK operated under the mistaken presumption that as long as progress was being made in establishing the institutions demanded by the

⁵⁸ Tim Cooper, “March Violence: Could We Have Seen It Coming?” *Focus Kosovo* (Kosovo: UNMIK Division of Public Information, 2004), p. 10.

Standards Before Status plan, the situation in Kosovo was tenable.⁵⁹

Conclusion

Although it is valid that some portions of Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Albanian societies for the time period in question fell outside of the security dilemma described in this paper for the basic reason that they did desire to escalate the conflict and intend harm to the other side (which makes the other sides' perception of threat accurate, not a misperception), it is unlikely that most of either community felt this way.⁶⁰ It is for these Kosovars that the societal security dilemma operated and for whom the events of March 2004 were importantly the result of misperception, where "both sides misinterpreted the nature of the other's societal security requirements...the two sides came to misperceive what the other needed to be secure in terms of their identity."⁶¹ These misperceptions led both sides to behave in a manner that escalated the conflict.

Kosovo's international administration – the primary body tasked with security provision in the province – for its part neglected to address the security dilemma between the two ethnic groups, and instead allowed the two groups to attempt to defend their respective societal security requirements in nonmilitary issue areas, like institution-building and privatization. Under conditions where the international administration failed to address the extreme

⁵⁹ OSCE Mission to Kosovo, OIIP summer school, July 2004.

⁶⁰ Speaking on Kosovar Albanians, a commentator wrote that "while Albanians everywhere are becoming ever more frustrated by the worsening economic and social conditions since the end of fighting, very few want to see a renewal of widespread conflict." Robert Hislope, "Crime and Honor in a Weak State: Paramilitary Forces and Violence in Macedonia," *Problems of Post-Communism* 51:3 (May/June 2004), p. 23.

⁶¹ Roe, "Transylvania's," p. 58.

uncertainty caused by Kosovo's unresolved status issue, both ethnic groups perceived each other as "arming" against one another,⁶² not most importantly in military terms, but through positioning themselves in other sectors. Thus, UNMIK's real failure occurred before the outbreak of violence in March, and lay in its inability to manage the two groups' perceptions of vulnerability, with particular sensitivity to their societal security needs. It failed because it invested its energies in building Potemkin institutions rather than "address[ing] the fears that triggered the conflicts initially" and "making these groups feel less threatened and...reducing the salience of windows of opportunity."⁶³ The explosion of violence by Kosovar Albanians against Kosovar Serbs that occurred in March 2004 was an expression of security dilemma dynamics that had been facilitated by the international administration.

This paper has taken on Roe's invitation to apply the still largely untested concept of societal security dilemma. It has sought to confirm the value of his particular formulation of the security dilemma for the context of Kosovo in 2004, to demonstrate that "by concentrating specifically on the question of identity, the concept is...able to illuminate crucial dynamics otherwise missed by its more traditional, military-centric equivalent."⁶⁴ By looking at the situation in Kosovo in March 2004 through the Buzan et al. sectoral framework and through Roe's intrastate security dilemma, it has been shown that the March violence should not have been a surprise. Rather it was the reasonable outcome of spiraling security dilemma dynamics over societal insecurities on the part of Kosovar Albanians and Kosovar Serbs.

⁶² Posen, "Conflict," p. 31.

⁶³ Posen, "Conflict," pp. 43 and 44.

⁶⁴ Roe, "Transylvania's," p. 74.

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Appendix: Survey of Actors’ Threat Perceptions (partial list)

Code: E: Economic security sector
M: Military security sector
P: Political security sector
S: Societal security sector

Actor	Sector	Perceived Threats
Kosovar Albanians	E	-deterioration of economic situation under UNMIK
	E	-stalled privatization under UNMIK
	P/E/S	-Serbian parallel structures in Kosovo
	P	-UNMIK's unwillingness to delegate more authority to PISG
	P/S	-Kosovar Serb non-participation in local institutions
	P	-Kosovar Albanian violence/rioting (as harmful to Kosovo's interests)
	P	-lack of clarity over goals, process of Standards Before Status Program
	P	-continuation of current international arrangement over Kosovo
S	-any obstacle to independence from Serbia	
↑↓ (intra-state security dilemma operates)		
Kosovar Serbs	S	-any obstacle to the continued existence of Kosovar Serb communities in Kosovo
	S	-any obstacle to Kosovo remaining under Serbian authority
	S	-destruction, vandalism of Serbian heritage sites by Kosovo Albanians
	P	-a continuation of current institutional arrangements over Kosovo
	P/S	-any increased transfer of authority to local Kosovo institutions

	P	-obstacles to return of refugees
	P/E	-decrease in role of, elimination of Serbian parallel institutions in Kosovo
	E	-difficult economic circumstances in Kosovo
	M/S	-violent attacks by Kosovar Albanians
	M/S	-inability of Kosovar Serb children to attend school due to safety concerns
Serbian Government	E	-privatization of Kosovo's enterprises by UNMIK
	P/S	-loss of Kosovo territory
	P/S	-destruction, vandalism of Serbian heritage sites by Kosovo Albanians
	P	-Kosovo Albanian authority over Kosovo Serb communities
	M/P	-current institutional arrangement over Kosovo
UNMIK, KFOR	M/P	-organized crime, corruption
	M/P	-population's perceptions of international administration's lack of legitimacy
	P	-Serbian parallel structures in Kosovo
	P	-international administration's own policies (recognized after March)
	P	-PISG's thwarting of UNMIK efforts

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