

Kosovo is no longer the focus of world attention. The war is over. LSE student **Jehona Gjurgjeala** gives her personal view of the aftermath.

# Rebuilding Kosovo

**A**t four o'clock in the morning one night in March this year, my parents were woken by the sound of breaking glass. They woke up to see the whole neighbourhood in darkness. My dad got up and looked round the rooms to see if anything was broken – he couldn't see anything and they went back to sleep. In the morning, my dad went into my room to find that one of the windows in my room had two bullet holes in it. The bullets had pierced the window and the wardrobe and stopped among the clothes inside.

This story tells you more than you think about Kosovo, all boiling down to the fact that what is *de facto* an independent state is in grave danger because it has no effective superstructure to support it. The UN, as Kosovo's administrative wing, and KFOR, as its security wing, have inherent faults, faults which are proving costly for Kosovo itself. As a consequence, Kosovo's bins are constantly blazing because rubbish collection is infrequent and bins are overflowing; there are power cuts as there is no efficient production of electricity; the traffic is hectic because traffic lights have been pulled out of the ground and there are no traffic regulators. The list is endless.

But these occurrences, although hampering, are not fatal. In time, these things will get better. There is an area, however, which is absolutely frightening with regards to reconstructing Kosovo. It is symbolised by the bullets through my window. Security Kosovo was a police state controlled by Serbs with more than 10,000 policemen during the ten years of their rule. The situation now is that Kosovo is policed by barely 1,000 UN policemen who are portrayed in caricatures in Kosovan newspapers as drinking Coca-Cola all day as crime happens in front of their eyes. Their flippancy is appalling – my friend witnessed a scene where the traffic junction in Pristina was at a standstill, as none of the traffic lights were working. A UN police vehicle came over, a policeman got out, managed the traffic back into a working order, got back into the UN car and drove off, leaving

the traffic junction to return to the mayhem it was before. Comical, but dangerous. A low level of policing is dangerous even for a civil society, let alone in a country that has just undergone three months of all-out war, preceded by ten years of oppression and one year of localised war.

The first month after the war in Kosovo was marked by a shameful period of killing, looting, burning, all under the name of some patriotism but which all boiled down to straightforward crime. This pattern of crime, although greatly reduced, has still allowed the emergence of a stratum of people who now engage in criminal acts of theft and assault throughout Kosovo. The country does not have the superstructure to deal with it right now. By the time it has, it may be too late.

I have left out mention of NATO-led KFOR on purpose, for they are a story on their own. Kosovo's security jurisdiction is divided into five sectors: British, American, German, French and Italian. Although the official story is that they are all co-ordinated by the joint HQ in Pristina, subsequent months and especially events in Mitrovica have highlighted that this is not entirely true. To be fair, KFOR have been the most effective force present in Kosovo. But it has turned out that how secure you are depends on which sector you live in. Kosovars in the German and American sectors seem to be the luckier ones – the imposition of a curfew and other security measures have reduced the level of crime in those areas. In the British sector the situation can be very commendable depending on whether the British think it reasonable to intervene – for example, during Christmas and New Year celebrations army policing was greatly increased in Pristina and consequently there were very few incidents in town. But somehow, in its day-to-day running, Pristina seems to lack the policing hand of the British KFOR. This is very unfortunate as it has allowed the establishment of crime structures which may have been stopped, or at least significantly reduced, if measures had been taken earlier to prevent them.

The failure to think about these issues last June has caused many problems for the international administration in Kosovo. As in other

sectors, the French army have had a great deal of autonomy and discretion when dealing with ethnic and criminal issues in its northern sector. When I was there last summer I had great fears about the situation in Mitrovica. It was obvious that the French army's tactic of simply separating the Serb and Albanian communities at the bridge, and giving each community free reign in their respective 'kingdoms', was not a good long-term solution – for no other reason than that both communities had homes and friends on the other side. The recent violence there has proved me right. I hope that KFOR itself has realised that this autonomous approach to Kosovo is not the best policy and that all sectors should have been ruled with more uniformity.

I know there is still great debate on the legality and the rightness of NATO's intervention in Kosovo. I do not deny that my support for the campaign is more emotive than rational, but I still think, in principle, that if funds allow it, such interventions are right. But what western governments need to work on, and this applies to any situation in which foreign troops and organisations play an important role in the interim governing of a region, is systematised administrative and security procedures. I have heard suggestions of creating a UN 'rapid reaction group', trained in the immediate takeover of administrative and governing duties of a region in a state of emergency, rather than weeks of waiting while countries gather their staff for these operations. In addition, no autonomy should be allowed within the military corps – a single chain of command should mean exactly that. Kosovo has been the archetypal 'guinea pig', showing what happens if these components do not exist. While we Kosovans will have to bear the consequences, the international community should concentrate on creating structures which could save other world trouble spots from the same fate. ■



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