

The Kosovo Protection Corps

A Critical Study of its De-activation as a Transition

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Department of Security and Conflict Management

Publisher: The Norwegian Institute of International Affairs
Copyright: © Norwegian Institute of International Affairs 2010
ISBN: 978-82-7002-273-1

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The final KPC parade before De-Activation

This report is part of the Norwegian engagement in the Multinational Experiment 6 (MNE-6). The project is financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Defence and is managed by the Innovation, Network Capabilities and Information Infrastructure Command (INI). Besides NUPI, the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI) and the Defence Staff College are also engaged in the programme. Further information can be found at: <http://mne.oslo.mil.no>

Context

This paper has been written from a practitioner's perspective. The author spent 6 months embedded with the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC) command team, spending hours in their company during its de-activation. Whether visiting KPC headquarters across the country; sitting in meetings at the highest echelons of Government; or accompanying the Commander and Deputy Commander to the Kosovo Force (KFOR) HQ in Pristina, the author had unprecedented access and exposure at the heart of the organisation. As the 19th UK Liaison Officer to fill the appointment, the post had contributed to a long and trusted relationship between the UK and the KPC – in many circles the KPC was considered a 'British Baby' as it was conceived and established under the leadership of the UK's General Sir Mike Jackson¹, a folk hero to the KPC.

Working to the Commander of Kosovo Force (COMKFOR) in Pristina, the liaison officer post existed to provide the eyes and ears for the NATO-led mission in Kosovo and to provide the essential linkage between the two organisations at the highest level. Provisionally formed on 20 September 1999, the KPC had been fulfilling its civil emergency mission for close to a decade. Providing de-mining expertise, disaster relief, urban search and rescue and more routine community construction projects, the KPC had served its country well. Organised into six Protection Zones (PZ) across the country, its HQ was in an old driving school in Pristina. Its personnel had been recruited from the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) which had transformed and downsized into the KPC. The KPC was only a transitional arrangement. Designed to absorb many of the KLA membership, it was always going to be replaced with a more appropriate structure. During its existence, some members of the KPC had been convicted of involvement in serious crime, which had an inevitable effect on its reputation. However, the KPC survived and as time passed, its membership enjoyed deep respect from the population. The position in society of senior KPC members in particular, and the Protection Zone they served in, was inextricably connected to family and clan-based influence and power. The KPC also played a significant role, although mostly understated, during some of the most tense and difficult periods of Kosovo's recent history. The uprising and bitter ethnic clashes in March 2004 saw the KPC deploy in many of the worst areas in order to reduce tensions amongst Kosovo Albanians; tensions that had threatened to destroy communities. Considered by the Kosovo Albanians to be national heroes, the KPC was generally a feted organisation that managed to recruit, albeit in small numbers, across the ethnic divide. A combination of international initiatives, stemming from the Ahtisaari Plan² sealed the KPC's fate.

This paper is written assuming some prior knowledge from the reader of the Kosovo situation. It describes the last few months of the KPC before de-activation in January 2009, as an organisation going through a transition. Look-

¹ General Jackson was the first Commander Kosovo Force.

² In November 2005, the Secretary-General appointed Former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari as his Special Envoy for the future status process for Kosovo. According to the terms of reference, this process should have culminated in a political settlement that determined the future status of Kosovo.

ing at the stakeholders, the risks and how those risks developed, the paper will attempt to bring to life the issues that faced Kosovo at this time. The *raison d'être* for this paper is to provide the reader with the opportunity to critically assess the relationship between the international community and the KPC, the issues that dominated this period and to identify lessons for future transitional activities. Of course Kosovo was a unique situation; its status was unrecognised by the very organisations charged with leading it through this difficult period of change. It is impossible to write about Kosovo without touching on the degree of complexity, at many levels, that was present. And some stakeholders will attract criticism. The paper did not set out to do this; the paper set out to raise some difficult issues and, where appropriate, explain why a situation occurred and how it could have been avoided or dealt with better. It is not the criticism that should remain with the reader; it is the fact that the situation existed in the first place.

Introduction

Approximately 2800 strong with a smaller number of reservists, the KPC was only ever a ‘stop-gap’ solution to assist with the dissolution of the KLA. The Kosovo Status Settlement³, published in March 2007 and fully endorsed by the UN Secretary General five months later, acknowledged the requirement for the KPC to be dissolved within a specific timeframe. In the full expectation of dissolution, during the summer of 2007 senior members of the KPC had begun to look forward to the establishment of a new security ‘architecture’. During a visit to a KPC field project with LTG Selimi, the KPC Commander, Mr Joachim Rucker, SRSG said;

“We discussed the Ahtisaari Plan, which foresees a Kosovo Security Force (KSF) and the drawing down of the KPC... We agreed that such a draw down must be done with dignity and honour and with the greatest respect for the sacrifices and for the contribution that the KPC is making for this society⁴”.

By late 2007, anticipating the future changes to Kosovo’s security organisations, NATO established a Military Civilian Advisory Division (MCAD), based in HQ KFOR, in order to look at the issue of closing the KPC and establishing the KSF. When the Law on the Dissolution of the KPC was passed on 15 June 2008, its dissolution had to be complete by 14 June 2009. How this was to be achieved was still exercising the minds of the MCAD planners and other stakeholders as late as August 2008. Through the close cooperation of these stakeholders during the early stages of planning, the task of standing down the KPC and standing up the KSF generated a number of options. One of the original options was to have a synchronised reduction of the KPC with a corresponding increase in activity of the KSF over time leading to 14 June 2009. Two other options considered an early dissolution and a late dissolution. In fact, after much deliberation, the chosen solution was a combination of all three options. Under the ‘big bang’ approach, the KPC was to be formally de-activated at midnight and the KSF ‘stood up’ at one minute past midnight. This was initially set for December. The day on which the KSF was created was called Announcement Day (A Day) when all successful applicants from the KPC would learn whether they had been selected for the KSF or not. In reality the plan would also have included a period of days leading

³ Fully endorsed by Ban Ki Moon, the UN SG, this document paved the way for Kosovo’s Constitution.

⁴ UNMIK Press Conference 28 June 2007, [http://www.unmikonline.org/DPI/PressRelease.nsf/0/676D723C3CA10D5EC12573080058432C/\\$FILE/pr1688.pdf](http://www.unmikonline.org/DPI/PressRelease.nsf/0/676D723C3CA10D5EC12573080058432C/$FILE/pr1688.pdf)

up to A Day when the KPC were sent home. There were many reasons for this choice; by August 2008 there was a fear that any other option could have seen a rapid collapse of the KPC. The evidence supported this view; attendance was dropping, projects were yet to be completed and some senior voices in the KPC warned the KPV leadership that there could be incidents of disobedience by the KPC members unless the plan was tightly controlled.

This resulted in the overall process of dissolution being separated into two further phases; de-activation and demobilisation. Demobilisation, a relatively straightforward functional process, was an internationally recognised activity and therefore relatively easy to understand. KPC personnel needed to be demobilised before the Corps could be dissolved. De-activation however suffered from a lack of a direct translation in Albanian, which immediately became a source of significant misunderstanding. This misunderstanding, which existed amongst the KPC and the local national media, left people unsure as to the difference between dissolution and de-activation. The term de-activation is described in the next paragraph. This initial example of how a simple message could not be explained successfully was a symptom of greater problems to come.

The ingredients required to describe the de-activation of the KPC as a transition are mostly present and it is therefore key to understand its context. De-activation was the end of official work for the KPC. At de-activation KPC members would either report for duty with the KSF or they would go home. They would still be paid for 6 months until 14 June 2009 when they would receive 12 months severance pay and they would be able to enter a resettlement programme immediately after de-activation. For most, a pension would also be available. So the KPC was heading for a change of condition; one that would inevitably generate intended and unintended circumstances that would play out during the process of de-activation and beyond. The consequences of these circumstances varied widely as the paper will explain later.

This paper will consider NATO's New Tasks and provide an assessment of the actors involved who influenced events from different viewpoints and with different agendas. The challenges that faced these stakeholders and the risks to the process will be highlighted using factual accounts of events leading up to the de-activation of the KPC. What went wrong during this process and why, from the author's perspective, will then be studied. Before a conclusion, the paper will draw the reader's attention to three important lessons identified from the de-activation of the KPC; lessons that have a resonance in other post-conflict scenarios.

The period in question was never likely to be a smooth operation. There were arguably too many players with an opinion on what should happen, a series of tight timelines made more challenging because of a lack of appropriately skilled staff officers assigned to the tasks in hand and little consensus. There were friction and strongly opposing views at almost every turn, especially between the key international organisations. This lack of unity stemmed from the ubiquitous political situation over Kosovo's status and how certain nations serving in KFOR and other organisations approached it. National agendas played their part and the newly formed Government of Kosovo (GoK) was beginning to flex its muscles. Combined together, this heady mix ensured that the New Tasks were destined to achieve the minimum set of conditions required for the next stage in Kosovo's history.

NATO's New Tasks

Planning for the dissolution of the KPC, the creation of the KSF and the establishment of the Ministry for the KSF (MKSF) had begun in late 2007, well before NATO's New Tasks were formally agreed and reported to the world's media on 12 June 2008. The first task described the establishment of the new MKSF under the direction of a largely civilian-manned NATO Advisory Team – known as the Ministry Advisory Team (MAT). Appointed by NATO HQ in Brussels, the team was led by a UK 1* civil servant – a grade equivalent in military rank to a Brigadier – with an international group of subject matter experts whose role centred on supporting the creation of the civil-led ministry. Although not the primary role of the MAT, it assumed many tasks including setting the terms and conditions, writing laws, drawing up the organisational structure and writing job descriptions. The ownership of this first task lay in Brussels with the UK 1* acting with considerable autonomy. The second task was focused on establishing the KSF. This responsibility sat with KFOR's MCAD. The existing structure of KFOR was altered to accommodate the new division which focused on tasks two and three (see below). During the summer of 2008, the MCAD received a new 1* Deputy Chief of Staff (DCOS), who was directly responsible to COMKFOR for the stand up of the KSF. Previously MCAD had been led by a German Colonel. With DCOS MCAD's office in the main KFOR Headquarters next to the 1* lead for the MAT, the opportunity for liaison over these first two tasks was evident and it soon became clear that there was a close linkage between them. Whilst the MAT was reasonably well resourced, the MCAD remained consistently undermanned. Unfortunately a different interpretation of the NATO Secretary General's intent resulted in a number of grey areas developing, which inevitably led to difficulties. This will be discussed later. The third task directed the supervised dissolution of the KPC by KFOR (MCAD).

Wrestling with NATO's New Tasks, the small staff within the MCAD, working closely with other stakeholders, developed a framework of planning meetings – or pillars – in which to take forward the New Tasks; pillar one to establish the civilian-led ministry, pillar two the stand up of the KSF (with the task to stand down the KPC) and the third pillar focused on the dignity aspects of dissolution for the KPC⁵. Establishing clear lines of responsibility proved to be very difficult

⁵ This included the provision of archiving, the establishment of museums and other appropriate commemorative events. In essence, pillar three dealt with the 'soft' aspects of dissolution.

over the implementation of the new tasks. Pillar one seemed relatively straight forward with the NATO-appointed MAT driving forward preparations for the MKSF. Pillar two also seemed to enjoy a clear delineation of roles; KFOR had the responsibility to supervise both the stand up of the KSF and the stand down of the KPC. The two activities were connected with success in one leading to success in the other. However, this proved to be a challenging concept. Pillar three was set up to ensure dignity was intimately linked to the dissolution of the KPC. The lead, on behalf of KFOR, for pillar three was the KPC Coordinator, a United Nations-appointed British 2* General, effectively acting as the Minister for the KPC. However, as stated in the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement, “The IMP⁶, in consultation with the ICR⁷ and Kosovo, shall have executive authority over the KPC, and shall decide the timing of the KPC’s dissolution⁸.” A grey area developed between KFOR and the KPC Coordinator over the lead for this activity and it was a problem that hindered the process of de-activation. The reference to executive authority was omitted when, in June 2008, NATO declared that it will, “supervise the standing down of the Kosovo Protection Corps and supervise and support the stand up and training of a civilian-controlled Kosovo Security Force, KSF⁹.” This ensured that the situation was open to interpretation and it left many asking what the term ‘supervise’ actually referred to. Did it imply leadership and the provision of all necessary resources, both intellectual and physical, in order to achieve a successful outcome? To most people, the answer was yes.

This ambiguity lies at the heart of the problem. At the same press conference, the NATO Secretary General was asked a question by Chris Dickinson¹⁰;

“Secretary General, just on the new tasks you mentioned, standing down with the one operation, standing up with the other, and also the existing mandate, are there any problems from existing allies, existing participants in dealing with these particular institutions? I’m thinking particularly of problems with the recognition of Kosovo and getting involved with different institutions that may have a national character.”

De Hoop Scheffer replied:

⁶ KFOR was referred to as the International Military Presence in early UN documents.
⁷ International Civilian Representative and EU Special Representative – Mr Peter Feith was appointed to oversee the implementation of the Status Settlement and is the final authority in Kosovo for civilian matters.
⁸ Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement, Annex VIII, Article 6, UNSC 26 March 2007, http://www.unosek.org/docref/Comprehensive_proposal-english.pdf
⁹ NATO Press Conference with Secretary General 12 June 2008, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-3253B702-5E536D28/natolive/opinions_7852.htm?selectedLocale=en
¹⁰ European Diplomacy Defence

“Well, the answer is no in the sense that given the fact that NATO only decides on the basis of consensus, this morning when the NAC, North Atlantic Council agreed to the new tasks, it was by definition a decision taken by consensus. So the answer to your question is negative.”

Well-meaning statements in front of the media at NATO HQ in Brussels were one thing; applying this intent in Kosovo was quite another. Despite plenty of opportunity for a robust interpretation of the direction given in Brussels and in the Status Settlement, KFOR had other priorities, which will be discussed later in the paper.

The Stakeholders

The Government of Kosovo

Looking first at the fledgling GoK¹¹, Prime Minister Thaci along with many members of the Government had been involved in one role or another with the KLA¹². The depth of understanding within the political elite of the KPC and its origins was considerable. The leadership of the KPC was equally recognised in official political circles and this created an unusual degree of access for those representing the KPC's views. For all the opportunities that this familiarity provided, the inter-relationships built up during the KLA years between politicians and senior KPC officers had also resulted in a high degree of mistrust and often open discord. This agenda was not confined to those in power. The main opposition leaders had served in the KPC in high office; one a former Commander and the other a District Commander. Both Agem Ceku and Ramush Haradinaj had also been appointed as Prime Minister pre-independence and held strong views on the fate of the KPC and the shape of the new KSF; views that were both a help and a hindrance. Both men wanted to see a larger KSF than the proposed 2500 strong force. And they were determined to make political capital out of the situation, using the plight of the KPC to criticise the government. The strong ties between families and between individuals, dating back to the 1997-99 period, remained strong and influential. This was particularly true when these relationships existed between members of the KPC and politicians on all sides. It was this depth of personal involvement from members of the GoK that enabled them to enact their own agendas and to seek influence over a fragile and delicate environment. From early on it was clear that the Prime Minister was not a supporter of COMKPC¹³ and this should have rung alarm bells in Film City¹⁴. Likewise the determination of the opposition to make political capital out of the de-activation of the KPC was an ever-present threat.

The main responsibility of the GoK was to pass an acceptable KPC Pension Law, an integral element to dissolution with dignity. There is little doubt that the GoK and others in the political elite wanted to find an agreeable solution for the KPC, but the economic pressure to invest

¹¹ At no time during the authors 6 months in Kosovo did KFOR refer to the GoK. Reflecting NATO's lack of formal recognition of Kosovo, KFOR could only use the term IoK – Institutions of Kosovo.

¹² Prime Minister Thaci had been the KLA spokesman during 1998/99.

¹³ Commander KPC

¹⁴ Film City was the local name for the HQ KFOR barracks in Pristina.

across all the main government ministries inevitably set the government on a collision course with the KPC over what was affordable. In fact, the GoK's role in the de-activation process when the Pension Law was eventually passed evoked emotions that had laid dormant for much of the last decade.

The Kosovo Protection Corps

The main stakeholder was the KPC. The organisation was set up as a solution to a difficult problem of what to do with the KLA in the aftermath of Operation Allied Force¹⁵ and had achieved some excellent results. For example, the KPC de-mining unit that deployed to Albania in the aftermath of the Gerdec ammunition explosion in March 2008 gained widespread acclaim for its efforts. Ironically, the KPC also achieved international recognition for its Urban Search and Rescue capability in the final few weeks of its existence. However by September 2008 the reality was stark; the KPC was in danger of imploding. The Command team had lost its focus and the result had led to its administration, its chain of command, its ability to influence the media and its morale, in sharp decline. The reality for some in the KPC was a daily routine which involved turning up at work (although this was not always necessary) and sitting around drinking coffee until it was time to go home. The unifying purpose of providing a civil emergency role had clearly been replaced by a fear for the future by the grass roots membership. This manifested itself through a growing dissent and unwillingness to follow orders. The concept of orders was no longer a reliable means of passing information or achieving an effect. The KPC's internal data network relied on insecure hotmail.com and even this was rarely used. The mobile phone was the only means of communicating between the levels of command. The leadership of the KPC was often divided and had over time generated a bipartisan approach throughout its ranks. There were generally two camps: one group supporting the Commander; the other supporting the Deputy Commander. Balancing the needs of the Commander and Deputy Commander, likely rivals for the position of Commander KSF, was a full time task.

For some in the KPC the desire to move on was overwhelming. For the lucky few likely to be selected for the KSF, the promise of a better future, with better pay, was the prize. For those who did not enjoy such reassurance, there was an obvious nervousness over what would happen to them and their families. Often poorly educated and influenced by more disruptive members, the KPC's willingness to commit

¹⁵ Op Allied Force was the NATO military action against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999.

to the transition varied between Protection Zones (PZ)¹⁶. The quality of PZ commander, its geographical location and its nebulous political history, were all factors in determining the degree of compliance towards the process of de-activation. The most interesting fact though that emerged during the process was the realisation by the Deputy Commander that the KPC was the only organisation with sufficient motivation and will to lead the de-activation process. This only served to increase the mistrust and disappointment – bordering on resentment – felt towards its ‘partner’ organisations.

The Office of the Kosovo Protection Corps Coordinator

Sitting above the KPC was the Office of the KPC Coordinator, a UN organisation established to oversee the KPC. Answerable to the Special Representative of the Secretary General, the OKPCC had the role of supporting KFOR over the dissolution (and in this paper the de-activation) of the KPC. The KPC Coordinator’s pillar three tasks involved a number of coordinating roles involving the Pension Law, a resettlement programme, maintaining the integrity and reputation of the KPC during the process and planning for the post de-activation period. The provision of a reasonable Pension Law for KPC personnel, entirely the responsibility of the GoK, was at the heart of the problem. By September 2008, this was moving slowly through the Kosovo Assembly’s legislative process. The pension issue was fundamental to a successful transition for the KPC membership. The central challenge was to see the pension law passed in a timely manner and with a fair pension provision. Without any direct responsibility for the speed of passage of the law and of its final details, the KPC Coordinator could only rely on his position to influence events. After the publication of the law, he was expected to commend the benefits to the KPC, even though many in the KPC didn’t understand it and saw it as an act of treachery.

The implementation of a robust resettlement programme was awarded to the UNDP. They in turn appointed a Kosovan employment promotion agency, APPK, for their country-wide local knowledge. The UNDP needed to be in step with the announcement of the pension provision. The programme also had to satisfy the KPC membership who had experienced a discredited pilot resettlement project, organised and implemented by the IOM¹⁷, in 2007/08. There was a widely held view that the IOM project had been harmful to those who had volunteered. Whether this was true was irrelevant; perception was everything, especially in Kosovo. In spite of a well choreographed

¹⁶ There were 6 Protection Zones covering Kosovo which were set up after 1999 in order to provide command and control to KPC personnel. Their Headquarters was in Pristina.

¹⁷ International Organisation for Migration

communications campaign by the UNDP supported by the KPC Coordinator in the days leading to de-activation, there remained a significant degree of reluctance to accept the resettlement message across some PZs.

Finally, it was imperative that the KPC achieved *Dissolution with Dignity* – enshrined in law and implicit in the third ‘New Task’. When it became clear that this was unlikely to happen, the KPC Coordinator stepped into the vacuum and gathered many of the tasks, mainly related to de-activation, and provided the necessary leadership. This included encouraging the KPC to plan for an event to commemorate its de-activation. This event would give the KPC membership the opportunity to look back with some pride on its achievements throughout the previous nine years. Initial ideas included a parade through the streets of Pristina followed by an address from the Prime Minister. As events unfolded, this plan reduced in importance and resulted in a very low-key ceremony, a decision driven by the KPC Commander.

The KPC Coordinator therefore faced some soft power challenges: he needed to influence the GoK to ensure the KPC received a timely announcement on its pension provision and subsequently ‘sell it’ to the KPC; he needed to support the UNDP in order to convince a sceptical KPC audience of the benefits of the resettlement programme; and he needed to manage the grey area, already alluded to, between the activities of the OKPCC, KFOR and the KPC, in relation to de-activation in particular. Attempting to influence and coerce the GoK and KFOR, organisations reluctant to be pushed around, created a degree of risk that was inherent to the plan to de-activate the KPC. In the absence of any other stakeholder, the KPC Coordinator gently influenced those directly involved in the de-activation activity. And even if some members of the OKPCC, traditionally loyal to the UN, tried to add a degree of complexity to an already challenging situation, the KPC Coordinator adopted a sensible approach to solving sensitive issues, with a pragmatism missing from many other stakeholders.

Kosovo Force

Central to the stand down and stand up of the KPC/KSF sat KFOR, the NATO-led international military presence. From the start, KFOR’s effectiveness and credibility came under scrutiny over its implementation of the new tasks. Acting under UNSCR 1244, KFOR did not recognise Kosovo’s new independent status. As the NATO Secretary General said; “... the KFOR mandate will be based on 1244. NATO is, as you know, not in the recognition business as far as Kosovo is

concerned, so that KFOR mandate will not change¹⁸”. For an organisation that had been operating in Kosovo since 1999, its knowledge of the culture and its people seemed to be surprisingly weak. This was all the more surprising as many from KFOR’s contributing nations had returned time and again for tours of duty. By September 2008, a deep comprehension of the issues surrounding Kosovo, its people and its institutions should have been available in order to better inform the de-activation process. The corporate knowledge, built up since 1999, needed to be unlocked and applied to the analysis underpinning the de-activation plans. The MCAD needed to be resourced with appropriate manpower to be able to deal with this significant set of tasks. Instead, KFOR’s focus remained fixed on the provision of a safe and secure environment and freedom of movement (SASE/FOM), a mission drawn from UNSCR 1244. NATO’s New Tasks and the dissolution of the KPC in particular, was never on KFOR’s main effort. Whether this was driven by the need to remain neutral to Kosovo’s new status or whether it was as a result of the continual rotation of key posts every 6 months is unclear.

Directed by the NATO Secretary General in Brussels to provide leadership over the dissolution of the KPC and the establishment of the KSF, KFOR was reluctant to face contentious issues, no doubt influenced by its position *vis-à-vis* Kosovo’s status. It was accused from many quarters of being risk averse. There was also an opinion that KFOR viewed the KPC in a patronising and paternal manner, treating with disdain the very difficult task facing its members. The leadership promised in Brussels appeared to be absent, which undermined the whole process. The need to set the conditions for a successful establishment of the KSF was inextricably linked to the efficient de-activation of the KPC. This point seemed lost. As a result, the responsibility for leading the process through to de-activation fell, not to the capable and very well resourced KFOR, but to the comparatively dysfunctional KPC, supported wherever possible by well intentioned officers in MCAD and by the KPC Coordinator.

Looking at KFOR’s role in this transition, the change of conditions and impact on the KPC personnel was perhaps obvious but the threat to the well-being of their families was not considered. More generally, without investing in sufficient analysis of a situation, the ability to deal successfully with second and third order issues is diminished. In effect, this is what happened. Pressure from families and other external organisations, such as the powerful KLA veterans associations, was played out through the KPC members. KFOR had a knack of underestimating the role of other key stakeholders in the process, includ-

¹⁸ NATO Press Conference 12 June 2008, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-3253B702-5E536D28/natolive/opinions_7852.htm?selectedLocale=en

ing the GoK and the KPC. As the de-activation plan unravelled in parts of the country, KFOR identified the KPC membership as the source of disruption instead of trying to understand the causes of their discontent. When the possibility grew that the new tasks could fail, there was a scramble to do something and it was only at the end of the process that KFOR began to apply resources to avoid this scenario. Most observers agreed that by September 2008, the basic conditions necessary for an efficient process of de-activation had not been set.

KPC De-activation: The Risks

The number and severity of risks that threatened KPC de-activation were wide-ranging. The undefined role played by KFOR, the absence of a strategic communications plan, the role of the KPC leadership and many others contributed to a complex and constantly evolving picture. Here they are considered.

During this period there was a key piece of work running in the background; negotiations to transfer executive authority of the KPC from SRSG to COMKFOR. Notwithstanding SRSG's unwillingness to contradict UNSCR 1244, there was a mutual understanding from both sides that a compromise was necessary. Driven by the UN's strategic reduction in Kosovo and the imminent arrival of EULEX's Rule of Law Mission, the need to pass executive authority to KFOR was pressing. This reflected directions given in the Status Settlement¹⁹ and Kosovo's Constitution, a document endorsed by the UN SG. To reinforce this point, KFOR's role as the International Military Presence was stated under Article 154 of the Constitution;

“The Kosovo Protection Corps shall be dissolved within one year after entry into force of this Constitution. Until such dissolution, the International Military Presence [KFOR], in consultation with the International Civilian Representative and the Republic of Kosovo, shall exercise executive authority over the Kosovo Protection Corps and shall decide on the schedule of its dissolution²⁰.”

The Law on the Dissolution of the KPC stated that executive authority; “shall initially be conducted through the office of the OKPCC, which shall cooperate with the IMP [KFOR] on all matters pertaining to the dissolution²¹.” Notwithstanding this apparent contradiction, it remains difficult to argue against KFOR's moral duty and authority to dissolve the KPC. This position therefore went further than the NATO Secretary General's direction for KFOR to ‘supervise’ the dissolution of the KPC. That KFOR chose to retain its focus on SASE/FOM was a risk; one that potentially undermined the transitional activities being forced on the KPC. Notwithstanding a clear mandate to take the lead and impose itself on the situation, the general view was that KFOR fell short.

¹⁹ See footnote 8.

²⁰ Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, dated 15 June 2008, <http://www.kushtetutakosoves.info/repository/docs/Constitution.of.the.Republic.of.Kosovo.pdf>

²¹ Law on the Dissolution of the KPC, dated 13 June 2008.

The key risk though was the absence of a strategic communications plan. Throughout the drawdown of the KPC, the lack of a coordinated message to the people of Kosovo, the KPC and the media in particular, had the most negative impact on the process of de-activation. The lack of any media lines was driven by NATO HQ in Brussels, which directed KFOR to be reactive with the media rather than proactive. This policy was highlighted in the first few days of the new COMKFOR's tenure. During a brief meeting at KPC HQ between COMKPC and COMKFOR in the presence of the national media, an aide explained that COMKFOR would not make any statement to the press. An excellent opportunity to set out his thoughts on the KPC and to engage with the media was lost. The following day, one newspaper ran this story with a throw away line reflecting his silence. COMKFOR was troubled by this minor criticism which suggested a degree of discomfort with either the KPC or the media.

Essentially, no organisation had the lead for a coordinated strategic communications plan and the result invited disaster. The KPC media office was losing interest and effectiveness by the day and the KPC Coordinator was focused on explaining the benefits of the pension law and supporting the UNDP/APPK resettlement programme communications plan. The KPC Coordinator was also restricted, as a UN officer, in what he could say to the media. This situation therefore left KFOR exposed and impotent in the eyes of the media and the KPC membership. During this period in the KPC HQ's smoke-filled offices, there was disbelief at each round of stories. Both the Commander and Deputy Commander were incensed that the media was able to have such a negative impact on the de-activation process. Many a raki²² was downed by the Commander's support staff who pored over every copy of every newspaper. Tensions were high and nobody knew when it would end. The risk of an increasing number of rogue elements in the KPC feeding the press was likely to lead to localised problems, particularly in more unstable areas. The lack of any message from KFOR was unhelpful. This risk, above all others, proved to be a force multiplier for the disaffected KPC membership. This situation was observed first-hand by KFOR's network of liaison teams, which were embedded in the Multi National Task Forces, located geographically throughout the country and working closely with each PZ. This Inspectorate provided a regular picture of the growing unease within the KPC at the grass roots level. However there was little evidence that KFOR was willing to adapt to the developing situation and to manage the emerging risk. It could be argued that KFOR should have lobbied Brussels over the need to change its media policy

²² This was a favourite spirit from the region and was generally known as *40% proof mouth-wash*.

while there was still time. Instead, the problem was left for someone else to sort out²³.

The next two areas of risk were closely connected and in many ways fed off each other. The KPC leadership, divided and initially unreliable, presided over a severely compressed chain of command. The hierarchical structure had all but disappeared. Decisions were made by a small but highly influential ‘politburo’; comprising officers who had the ear of the commanders. The ever present threat of a division between the Commander and his Deputy ensured that there were often two messages emanating from the KPC HQ; but this could change day by day. The fragility of the situation and the KPC’s inability to respond quickly to changing circumstances led to an institutionalised lack of trust by KFOR which increased as de-activation date approached and the pressure grew. Ironically it was as the deadline approached that the KPC leadership improved its effectiveness and started to drive the agenda forward, reflecting a lack of leadership from elsewhere. However, the KPC commanders still struggled to pass information up and down the chain of command reliably which affected its ability to operate efficiently. When a key decision was taken or when a key message was agreed, there were no guarantees that the grass roots would be given accurate information. However, a collection of a few good men, in positions of influence, still retained professional pride and made the de-activation possible for the many.

Unintended or not, the consequences led to a secondary risk emanating from the KPC. A sceptical and increasingly vocal KPC membership posed a very real danger of derailing the process. The lack of a robust communications plan and the reduced effectiveness of the KPC chain of command began to show in the behaviour of its members. Isolated reports of dissent in the pages of the national newspapers became more common place; a practice in clear breach of the KPC Disciplinary Code. Generally, those who transgressed were interviewed in KPC HQ but dealt with leniently by the leadership, perhaps reflecting a steadily weakening grip on the discipline of the organisation by its commanders. As time went on, individuals were not even interviewed. The prospect of change was resisted by many, although not all. Life for the average KPC member was, on the whole, acceptable but the future was potentially worse; this led to a growing resentment and lack of trust in most organisations associated with the deactivation. The KPC leadership was held accountable, along with the GoK, the UNDP (still struggling to gain ground after the IOM Pilot Resettlement Project) and the UNMIK²⁴.

²³ How the ‘message’ was finally addressed with the media involved a solution beyond the scope of this paper.

²⁴ UNMIK did not attract a great deal of sympathy or support from the KPC.

The next clear risk surrounds the stand down plan. The imperative to find a way forward in order to set the conditions for the establishment of the KSF should in theory have seen KFOR leading from the front in close cooperation with the KPC and the OKPCC. The original MCAD-owned and sponsored stand down plan spanned the entire process of dissolution. However, the activity that was required prior to de-activation, setting the conditions for the KSF, also became known as the stand down plan to which the paper will now refer. However, it soon became clear that KFOR would not take the lead. There were a series of meetings held in the KPC HQ with every conceivable stakeholder present. It appeared that there was little consensus over the detail; in fact there was a general appetite to emphasise the negative rather than dealing with the reality facing the group. Without any other organisation willing to commit itself to leading the stand down plan, it was left to the KPC to volunteer to write its own. Clearly exasperated, the Deputy Commander announced that he would take responsibility for the stand down plan. The relief around the room was tangible.

In order to capture the work needed to set these conditions, the plan had to be devised, written, distributed and executed against very tight timelines. The KPC needed considerable assistance in this task and the author spent many hours working through the options with the Deputy Commander (who had been appointed by the KPC Commander to lead the activity). The stand down plan involved reducing the number of base locations from 33 to 7 (+3)²⁵ to reflect the new footprint of the KSF, and centralising the men and equipment at a few of the larger sites prior to the stand up of the new force. This plan had to be communicated to the chain of command with the right message. The plan was initially explained to the PZ and independent unit commanders in the Deputy's office. There was a general feeling that it was workable and they departed ready to brief their personnel. Unfortunately, even though this was a KPC-led plan, the detail was the first direct threat to the status quo for KPC members and some simply refused to buy into the concept. To compound matters, the long awaited details of the pension law were released around the same time by the GoK²⁶. To many, this was the straw that broke the camels back.

The final risk, the package on offer to resettle those KPC personnel not selected for service in the KSF, never evolved into a significant problem, but it added to the overall atmosphere of uncertainty and

²⁵ The +3 was a reference to the need for short term additional capacity to consolidate equipment during for a period of months.

²⁶ The terms of the pension provision were generous for a country operating under such tight fiscal rules; the problem lay in the very low basic salary – around Euro 80 per month - for the lowest KPC rank. For ten years the KPC had not received a single pay rise and this proved too much for many to bear.

mistrust in the final few weeks of the de-activation process. Working closely with the KPC Coordinator, the UNDP had planned a meticulous campaign to ensure the KPC members had access to a range of excellent opportunities in order to transition them into civilian work. The financial support for this programme came from a fully supported NATO Trust Fund at \$19M²⁷. A series of regional offices were established by APPK throughout the country, ensuring the resettlement programme was accessible by the people who needed it most. Importantly, the communications campaign was well managed, well targeted and effective. However the spectre of the IOM pilot cast a shadow over people's opinions and getting the message across was a challenge.

²⁷ Conversely, the NATO Trust Fund established to support the creation of the KSF at the same time had only attracted a fraction of the \$45M required.

KPC De-activation: A Flawed Transition?

Having looked at the risks and suggested how these had the potential to influence events, the paper will look at what went wrong and why, using real examples to bring these issues to life. It is impossible to recreate the atmosphere during the final days of the KPC. There was a growing sense of frustration by the KPC leadership at KFOR's unwillingness to commit itself. The way the decision was made over the KPC-led stand down plan was a perfect example of this frustration. Only by understanding the human effects of the transition, the voracious national media and how one of Kosovo's most respected organisations was driven to strike, can the reader appreciate the difficulties facing the international community during this time. The influence of host nation politics, the creation of a special government group and the untimely intervention from the Prime Minister also add significant weight to the opinion that the transition in Kosovo was flawed.

Throughout October, the KPC-led stand down plan began to take effect. After the KPC finally agreed to write the plan, KFOR was well positioned to act as an unequal partner; advising and supporting, but at arm's length. The first challenge for the KPC was to make a workable plan that was simple enough to be implemented against a very aggressive timeframe. The schedule of equipment centralisation and the disposal of the KPC locations began in earnest. However, the disposal of KPC real estate immediately ran into problems when a previously obscure legal office in the UN²⁸ pointed out that many of the KPC buildings would need to be processed through its office; potentially adding months onto an already tight schedule. The complexity of this situation has been simplified here, but there were some locations that the OLA considered belonged to the UN. Their disposal needed to be conducted correctly. Threatening the viability of the plan, this stand-off remained for a couple of weeks while the KPC Coordinator was out of the country. Although a way forward was identified shortly after the KPC Coordinator's return, the issue was resolved by a PZ commander. One of the first buildings to be dealt with was simply handed back to the local municipality without involving the UN at all. This was against the direction issued to the KPC from the OKPCC. But the keys were now in the hands of the municipality, there was no going back and there was nothing anyone could do to reverse the

²⁸ The Office of Legal Affairs (OLA).

move. When the author asked the commander why he had chosen to follow this course of action, against orders, he replied; “The UN didn’t build that building, the Municipality did.” In one simple act of defiance, the UN’s authority had been by-passed and the plan was back on track.

The reality of the pension provision following the announcement by the GoK did not go down well in some areas. There was a feeling amongst the grass roots that the benefits enjoyed by KPC personnel during the organisation’s existence were being removed. Their role as ‘heroes’ in the eyes of the population appeared to be diminishing; individuals were becoming disempowered and unhappy. It became obvious that the KPC would not go easily, at least in certain PZs. Actually, many members of the KPC didn’t have it too bad. They enjoyed the trappings associated with the uniform but had other lines of employment. The low basic wage was often supplemented through other business and some did very little at work, enjoying free lunches and coffees at restaurants in recognition of their status in society. However, a growing lack of self-worth felt by the membership was evident through the increasing number of newspaper articles appearing regularly, much of it anti-Government, questioning the treatment of the KPC. One commander in the south of the country became a *cause célèbre* with the media. Clearly opposed to the process of dissolution, Major Suma effectively prevented his men from applying for the KSF (a task that was running concurrently with the KPC stand down). High level visits by the KPC Commander and a senior official in the Ministry for the KSF could not break the deadlock. Even though the numbers involved were relatively low – around 25 – it was symbolic.

The media was having a field day. Never before had the popular press had the opportunity to witness the KPC behaving so disloyally. The opportunity to heap criticism on the Government was too good to miss; and for the first time, the press even started to turn on KFOR. The daily stories were entirely one-sided and became incendiary as the days passed, with newspapers stoking up unrest in the KPC ranks to resist the changes being imposed on them. The situation was careering out of control.

Yet the reaction by KFOR was to batten down the hatches and look the other way. The daily reports of dissent had an increasingly disruptive effect on the stand down plan, leading many to believe that parts of the KPC were on the verge of a mutiny. The muted response by KFOR created the space for the de-activation process to be undermined. Without a clear line for the media by KFOR, coordinated with the KPC press office and the OKPCC, the vacuum was filled with whatever the press could dig up. Directly linked to the absence of a

clear 'message' was this growing movement of insubordination within the KPC across all ranks. Their feelings of dwindling self-worth and marginalisation grew by the day; added to that the pressure to comply with the stand down plan, the stark reality of a future without the KPC, the perceived injustice of the Government-backed Pension Law and a tarnished resettlement plan all conspired to lead many to demonstrate their feelings publicly. In October, after many warning signs, one protection zone, closest to Pristina, decided to refuse all orders related to the timetable for the stand down plan.

The author attended a number of meetings between the leadership of the KPC and the 'striking' KPC personnel. Sitting behind a long table in front of a room packed with KPC personnel, the atmosphere resembled a 'town hall meeting'. Their demands were often based on ignorance and rumour. It was a difficult time for everyone; the KPC had to face up to an unwanted reality. They were concerned about providing for their families. They recalled stories of former KLA members who had committed suicide under this pressure after a previous reduction in KPC numbers. The atmosphere was emotional, highly sensitive and often menacing. At one meeting, an officer stood up in front of the KPC Commander and symbolically ripped up the pension law to cheers from the room. They were passionate and vociferous in their argument against the growing wave of change about to engulf them. They felt they deserved more respect and better benefits. In response, the KPC leadership was sympathetic; in fact there was little else it could do. Buoyed by a tacit support from the KPC Commander, the ringleaders were clear that they should be heard at the highest level and the situation downward-spiralled extremely quickly.

There were suspicions that the protest was fomented to suit certain political agendas from outside the Government. From contacts within Kosovo's political elite, the author was exposed to these views on a number of occasions. The possibility that there was direct support for the protests from the political opposition was never disproved. The reality was of a changing situation that needed to be managed closely.

The general levels of dissatisfaction amongst the protesters soon began to crystallise. Within days of walking out, the KPC protesters met the recently appointed Minister for the KSF. Even without any responsibility for the KPC he did what he felt to be the right thing in order to defuse the situation. This took KFOR and others by surprise as the connection between politician and protester was more intimate than anybody expected. It also deeply upset the KPC leaders who were angered that the Minister had agreed to see the protesters. This frustration by the KPC Commander stemmed from the fact that he was also pursuing a line into Government in order to represent the protest-

ers' views. Host Nation politics suddenly became a central issue and the rules of the game had changed again. The growing discontent was also stoked up by politicians speaking to the media but without understanding the impact of their comments. The Chairman of the Commission for Security and Internal Affairs, a former member of the KLA and KPC, 'Remi' Mustafa²⁹, after meeting COMKPC addressed waiting TV crews and expressed his satisfaction at the Pension Law, stating that, "it is a good package for the KPC". This comment poured fuel on the fires of KPC unrest and was subsequently used time and again as the 'Government's view'.

Following this escalation the Prime Minister agreed to meet the KPC Coordinator, COMKPC and the Minister for the KSF. At the top of the agenda was the need to reach out to the wider KPC. As a result, the Prime Minister directed that a 'technical group', led by the Minister for the KSF, should be established immediately in order to pull together other government departments to consider some of the additional requests that had been made by the protesters. These included free bus travel, tax breaks for business start-ups and health care support for KPC veterans, inspired by the policies of neighbouring post-conflict Balkan countries. It was an extraordinary example of political leverage and influence enjoyed by the KPC. In effect, a few officers, led by a Lieutenant Colonel³⁰, managed to mobilise the Prime Minister to call his government ministers together to deal with their demands. It also served another purpose though; satisfied that they were being heard, the strike was called off and the KPC-led stand down plan was back on track.

However, the one act that threatened to undermine the linked activity of establishing the KSF and de-activating the KPC came out of the blue. Running in parallel with the de-activation was the selection process for the KSF. The future KSF's strength was set at 2500, with approximately 1400 coming from within the KPC via a NATO-led selection procedure. The selection of the KSF Commander was required before the remaining officers and other ranks could be selected because the KSF Commander designate was a member of the subsequent boards. The selection board was run by KFOR and held under the scrutiny of the International Civilian Office. After the board, a name was forwarded to the Prime Minister's office for ratification prior to the President confirming the appointment. Unfortunately it

²⁹ On 2 Oct 09 the EULEX Court sentenced three members of the so-called 'Llapi Group', which included Rustem Mustafa (Remi), to prison terms ranging from three to six years for war crimes committed in the 1998-1999 conflict in Kosovo, http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/features/setimes/features/2009/10/06/feature-02

³⁰ The Lieutenant Colonel in question was well connected politically which raised the spectre of external interference in the 'strike'. In January 2009 the leader of the protesters was selected for service in the Kosovo Security Force.

was at this point that an already brittle plan was effectively ambushed. The Prime Minister was reluctant to endorse the nominated candidate. A decision that was due at the beginning of November was delayed until the third week in December. The outcome of this intervention was significant; the de-activation day had to be pushed to the right by a month with a domino effect on selection boards. Rather than an orderly selection process run by MCAD, boards were convened at short notice and without the full complement of appropriately experienced advisors from MCAD and the OKPCC. The implications for MCAD were serious with some key staff due to end their missions during the Christmas period. The timing could not have been worse for the new MCAD team members. The MCAD had been KFOR's focus over all matters relating to KPC stand down and KSF stand up business, albeit under resourced and under pressure. The new MCAD officers, unfamiliar with the background and using a fragile database, were thrown into the deep end to complete a delayed and hugely intricate plan.

Whether this intervention could have been avoided is pure conjecture; certainly a greater understanding of local politics and time spent analysing 'what ifs' may have resulted in this scenario being considered. It would be too harsh to put the blame at any one door. As with most unexpected situations, it is not that the event occurs in the first place but how an organisation reacts to it. With depressing inevitability the seriousness of the impact on the KPC/KSF plan was ignored, despite some clear warning signs. While the situation was still recoverable, the author suggested to DCOS MCAD that KFOR should attempt to influence the PM to speed up the ratification process in order to keep on track with the MCAD plan. The reply was telling; "It is not our job". However, Kosovo's Status Settlement makes it quite clear;

"In fulfilling the IMP's [KFOR's] responsibilities, the Head of the IMP [KFOR] shall have the authority, without interference or permission, to do all that he/she judges necessary and proper... to carry out its responsibilities³¹."

Eventually the pressure grew too much for KFOR and the wider international community. The Prime Minister was lobbied by a range of senior military and civilian members from the International Community in Kosovo. When the PM finally endorsed the recommendation (the original candidate) he did so in his own time and when it suited him. The consequences though were significant with the delay ultimately leading to widespread unrest³². This period of uncertainty brought into sharp focus the danger of viewing processes as purely

³¹ Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement, Annex 11, Article 2.1, 26 March 2007.

³² Errors in the administration of announcement day and crass decision making by key stakeholders provoked street protests and a U-turn on KSF selection procedures.

technical issues. The people and politics were ignored and the PM's intervention proved the dangers of doing so.

Finally, the resettlement programme, UNDP-led and meticulously planned, had one major challenge to overcome. As described, the IOM Pilot Project had already cast a shadow over resettlement. At one stage, the KPC Deputy Commander was called to speak to KPC personnel from the PZ based in the divided town of Mitrovica. At the height of the 'strike', there was a fear by the PZ Commander that his men were about to walk out. Tensions in Mitrovica always had the potential to escalate. During the face to face meeting that ensued between the Deputy Commander and about 150 KPC members, the issue of resettlement was raised and the role of APPK was questioned in disparaging terms. One KPC member was incredulous that the APPK could possibly help him during his resettlement. He asked; "What can the APPK do for me? I have never even heard of them". But why would that KPC officer have needed the services of an employment agency during his ten years in the KPC? The decision to select the APPK was not without risk; trying to sell the virtues of an employment agency in a country suffering 40% unemployment was always going to be difficult. It exposed the depth of the problem to be overcome by the UNDP if the resettlement programme was to succeed; but succeed it did³³.

³³ As a post script, as at 30 Sep 09 the UNDP programme had 1571 former KPC personnel registered on their programme, 98% of the total available to register (1609), and had spent approximately \$5.7M. Source; KPC Resettlement Programme, 2009 Third Quarterly Progress Report / 30 Oct 09.

Lessons Identified

This paper by design has not included every issue that had to be negotiated before KPC de-activation. Instead it has focused on some of the key challenges that applied the greatest influence on events; events offered to the reader as lessons to be identified for future transitional situations. The three major lessons that can be drawn from the de-activation process are: the critical need for a robust communications plan; the need to understand the role played by culture within the country in which the transition is taking place; and the precondition of clear lines of responsibility between all the main stakeholders, coupled with strong leadership.

Taking each lesson in turn, the paper examined the impact that resulted from the lack of a coordinated strategic communications plan. The plan needed to target the KPC, its family members, the wider Kosovan public and the Kosovan media. Its absence had a corrosive effect on the progress of the stand down plan, which was the essential element underpinning the process as a whole. Into the vacuum stepped some of the inter-clan, inter-family divisions and prejudices that had been hidden under the surface for many years. These prejudices were held not only by the more militant-minded members of the KPC, but also by some in Government. A lack of dialogue with these stakeholders by KFOR increased the opposition to change and was a fundamental flaw. In the final weeks of the KPC's life, after the main difficulties had been resolved, a low budget, low-key KFOR media campaign was finally produced which targeted Kosovan television and radio channels. Quite why the campaign took so long to arrive remains a mystery. Some suggest that national caveats within KFOR's media operations organisation prevented any significant engagement with the KSF/KPC issue. The reaction by KPC personnel was generally positive, but by this stage in the process the KPC were resigned to their fate and it was all too little, too late. To understand the origins of this situation the reader needs to go no further than the policy from Brussels, preventing KFOR from taking a proactive role in its relationship with the media. The resulting conditions saw the de-activation process attacked by the press and struggling to regain the initiative. A strong and unequivocal message needed to be conveyed to the target audience; this did not happen in Kosovo during the de-activation of the KPC.

The second lesson identified, that of the cultural challenge of imposing the de-activation on the KPC, should have seen the odds stacked

well in KFOR's favour. After all, NATO's second largest operation had been in Kosovo for nearly ten years. Many of the senior officers leading NATO's effort had deployed to Kosovo many times. COMKFOR, who was charged with implementing NATO's New Tasks, had himself been the Deputy Commander. He already knew the key actors in the country and was familiar with their backgrounds, their loyalties and the way they did business. Theoretically, then, the behaviour of host nation politicians and the wider KPC should have been anticipated. At the very least it should have been identified as a risk and mitigated against during the planning stages; ten years of familiarity should have provided plenty of evidence that unexpected twists and turns would occur during this process and contingencies put in place to deal with them. The striking KPC personnel and the PM's role had a detrimental effect on progress. Ultimately this resulted in a reworked and rushed plan that although outside the scope of this paper, provided rogue elements both inside and outside the KPC organisation the opportunity to create chaos in pursuance of their own agendas at the strategic level.

During the preparations for the de-activation of the KPC, there were too few qualified personnel assigned to the task of analysing these risks, reflected in the undermanning experienced by MCAD. This lack of engagement resulted in insufficient focus being given to the cultural aspects of the operation. Also, some objectives held by the International Community were at odds with the wishes of individuals occupying senior positions in Kosovo's Government. The selection of the KSF Commander was one example. The Host Government demonstrated a growing confidence and independence in its dealings with the International Community. The absence of engagement at the right level throughout the de-activation of the KPC and establishment of the new KSF is a significant lesson to be identified.

Finally, the absence of clear leadership over the implementation of NATO's New Tasks was deeply unhelpful. KFOR was directed by Brussels to 'supervise' two of NATO's New Tasks in Kosovo, but how this was interpreted was the root cause of misunderstandings amongst the stakeholders and it never reached a satisfactory state of agreement. The path of most resistance was frequently chosen ahead of a practical and common sense approach. When the development of a stand down plan was becoming a critical activity, the KPC took the lead, developed its own stand down plan and made it work; effectively the KPC de-activated itself. Whether the KPC had the critical competencies to achieve this challenge was questioned at the beginning, but in the absence of any other organisation willing to assume the role, all stakeholders had to accept that the KPC was in the lead.

It may not have been the ideal solution to the de-activation problem; but at the time it was the only solution. The fact that KFOR should have led the stand down plan, in the view of many including those in the KPC, reflects the discomfort felt by KFOR over the 'New Tasks'. Having an unequivocal lead for such a complicated process, one that has 'buy-in' from each major stakeholder, is vital. The example of the KPC de-activation demonstrates this. Only with unambiguous roles and responsibilities between the international organisations and the host nation can any operation on this scale be concluded with any degree of success.

Conclusion

It is fair to say that the de-activation of the KPC could have been completed without a delay. It would also be fair to conclude that many of the problems encountered along the way were preventable. However, as the reader will have observed, it was an intensely complicated environment in which to gain a consensus. There were too many stakeholders, too much friction between them and too little appetite to take the lead. And even now the issue of the 'New Tasks' remains a divisive issue for those involved in their implementation.

One can only speculate why the difficulties described in this paper occurred in Kosovo during one of the most important periods in its recent history. Perhaps the political delicacy of the unilateral declaration of independence was at its heart; the UN did not recognise Kosovo or its Government and neither did KFOR or NATO³⁴. This was an incongruous situation which served to divide KFOR's efforts and constantly act as a barrier to progress. The curious collection of contributing nations provided a fascinating insight into the inner workings of the NATO-led mission in Kosovo.

Even though the North Atlantic Council (NAC) had agreed to implement the new tasks, the national representatives on the ground appeared to apply their own interpretation of that decision. There were rumours that the Ministry Advisory Team had to change its name to the NATO Advisory Team at the request of a major KFOR contributing nation because of the suggestion that KFOR (and by default NATO) recognised the new Ministry and hence Kosovo's Government. Another example neatly captures this issue; for most KFOR contributing nations the Kosovo Security Force was not abbreviated to KSF but Ksf. Unwilling to recognise Kosovo's new status, KFOR appeared to devalue the new force by removing the capital letters from its title. This type of detail was repeated in other areas of activity and only served to inject an unhelpful and unnecessary atmosphere between the KPC, the GoK (or IoK) and KFOR.

The paper introduced the constituent parts to the dissolution of the KPC. By focusing on the first, the de-activation, the paper has attempted to raise many issues that were at the heart of this activity during a transition dominated by politics and emotion. The real-world

³⁴ Even though some contributing nations in KFOR chose to act in line with their own country's recognition of Kosovo, many operated firmly under UNSCR 1244.

examples included in the paper were designed to bring to life the problems faced by the stakeholders who were, to a greater or lesser extent, charged with achieving success. The paper has not attempted to define success in this instance; the need to meet the conditions for the creation of the new Kosovo Security Force was the overwhelming priority. And all this needed to be completed with some dignity. Certainly, the image of the KPC on strike was far from dignified.

The relationship between the international community and the host Government was often strained; even the relationships within the international community suffered from significant friction. The spectre of Kosovo's status infiltrated every decision made by KFOR and this had a direct impact on achieving de-activation. The role of individuals and organisations conspired to make this process demonstrably more difficult than it needed to be. The establishment of the KSF suffered as a result and the close linkage between the two tasks was inherently risky but unavoidable.

However, the facts are indisputable. The KPC was de-activated within the strategic timeframe set by Kosovo's Constitution and under the circumstances envisaged in the Status Settlement. The de-activation and the conditions for the eventual dissolution of the KPC were achieved. And it was largely down to a few motivated and professional-minded KPC personnel who ensured that it happened with as much dignity as they could muster. Hence, without the KPC making the difficult choices, the process is unlikely to have happened satisfactorily. It could be argued that it was the KPC that saved the day, not the international community.

On 14 June 2009, a very small, simple ceremony took place, organised by the KPC legacy cell which had been responsible for providing advice and support to KPC personnel post de-activation, and attended by a handful of respected international officers who had remained deeply engaged in the activities of the KPC in the lead-up to its final dissolution. The event marked the final act in the life of the KPC.

By including the events described in detail here, the paper has highlighted the issues that emerged from the de-activation of the Kosovo Protection Corps in the hope that future post-conflict transitions will benefit from them.