

OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE NOTE

ASSESSMENT SERIES CASE STUDY:

Applying an Anthropological Perspective to Social Contracts in Albania

BACKGROUND

The idea of a Social Contract has been 'the core conceptual framework in which we [in the West] understand the relationship between the individual citizen and the state; citizens' consent bestows legitimacy on the state,'¹ or sovereign. Based on the classic state theories of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, this implies that 'an individual consents to surrender some of [his/her] rights in order that the state can deliver public goods for the collective benefit.'²

From an anthropological viewpoint, social contract theory appears 'ethno-centric' in that it rarely reflects realities on the ground in those societies or communities at the periphery of, historically excluded from, or only temporary beneficiaries of,³ Western democratisation and state-building processes.

Albania presents a case study where citizen and state have not, and do not have the idealised, institutional Social Contract relationship. Rather, social norms based on mostly personal forms of interaction between citizens persist. In specific realms of society these are still expressed through the cultural custom of 'besa'. For security and justice sector reform to take place, such interpersonal social contracts and their spaces need to be understood and not simply sidelined for a citizen-state relationship that is not present.



SPECIFIC LESSONS OF THIS CASE STUDY INCLUDE:

LESSON 1: INFORMAL SOCIAL CONTRACTS

- Regulate relations among citizens that codified laws do not capture
- Highly subjective in interpretation depending on time and place

1. Mark Knight, 'Security Sector Reform, Democracy, and the Social Contract: From Implicit to Explicit', *Journal of Security Sector Management*, vol. 7, no. 1, February 2009: 1–20, here p. 15.

2. *Ibid.*

3. Why publicised withdrawal intentions in Afghanistan have affected loyalties to Western intervention powers adversely, is discussed in Herfried Münkler, 'Der Tückische David: Von der Führung eines asymmetrischen Krieges', *Der Spiegel* no 19, May 2010: 28–29; see also, *ibidem.*, *Der Wandel des Krieges: Von der Symmetrie zur Asymmetrie*, Göttingen: Velbrück 2006.

LESSON 2: CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

- Important to understand for potential leverage and potential risks
- Enhancing efficacy of intercultural communication

LESSON 3: ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

- Assists in understanding informal cultural practices

ANALYSIS

Where state and government are, or have been, experienced as alien, absent, untrustworthy, failing or even abusive, the social organisation of justice and human security (including economic and social security) as well as the monopoly of force can be found to be retained in private hands. In such contexts, personal loyalties and social obligations remain located outside relations with the state (except for cases of state capture and neo-patrimonial forms of governance, in which state-exploiting elites maintain personal relations of patronage to their clients, who pay back in loyalty⁴). In the context of weak, absent or abusive states, citizens' economic, social, and physical survival rely on reciprocal support networks of family and friends rather than on an independent and accountable police, judiciary, public health-care and pension schemes. In consequence, people remain entangled in powerful webs of social obligations and personal loyalties which compete with, sometimes intersperse or substitute for, the social contract between an anonymous state and its citizens as taken for granted in the West. In such context, cultural values such as personal trustworthiness, reliability, loyalty, faithfulness to the given word etc. – frequently subsumed under gendered codes of honour and shame – accrue great significance and, if uncontested, would render trust and obligation to an anonymous yet unreliable state redundant.

However, in some societies where there exists no overarching Rule of Law backed-up by a state's executive powers, the adherence to collective rules may rely only on the strength of the moral economies of local communities, who judge and assess a person's social standing according to his or her compliance with these norms. Customary laws have always been subject to change in time and space, are not likely to apply to all constituencies in a given country and may be contested from within. Also on the ground, even in a remote village context, the interpretation and application of customary laws may be part of local negotiations of power that can affect processes of social inclusion and exclusion in the respective community.⁵ Customary laws aim to be prescriptive but, in contested situations or where executive powers are lacking (such as of the village elders in mountainous northern Albania after the regime change in the early 1990s), historical codification attempts are not always descriptive of social realities on the ground.⁶

The historical Albanian concept of besa encapsulates the need to negotiate face-to-face networks

4. Cf. Gero Erdmann & Ulf Engel, 'Neopatrimonialism Revisited', GIGA working papers, Hamburg: German Institute of Global and Area Studies 2006; available at www.giga-hamburg.de; for the case study Albania, see Stephan Hensell, 'Polizei in Albanien. Öffentliche Verwaltung zwischen Klientelismus und illegaler Aneignung', *Südosteuropa* vol. 54 no. 1 (2006): 83 – 106; *ibidem.*, 'Die Grenzen der Gesetzeshüter: Zur bürokratischen Praxis in der albanischen Polizei', *Hamburger Beiträge zur Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik*, Heft 141, December 2005; for a wider view on Southeastern Europe, including Kosovo, see *ibidem.*, 'Police Reform as a "Solicitous Siege" – International Actors and Local Subversion in the Balkans' in: Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy (Ed.), *OSCE Yearbook 2009*, Baden-Baden 2010: Nomos: 303-319.

5. Cf. Maurus Reinkowski, 'Gewohnheitsrecht im multinationalen Staat: Die Osmanen und der albanische Kanun', in: Michael Kemper und Maurus Reinkowski (eds), *Rechtspluralismus in der Islamischen Welt: Gewohnheitsrecht zwischen Staat und Gesellschaft*. Berlin; New York 2005: de Gruyter, pp. [121] – 142; Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers, 'Humiliation and Reconciliation in northern Albania: the logics of feuding in symbolic and diachronic perspectives', in: G. Elwert, S. Feuchtwang and D. Neubert (eds), *Dynamics of Violence: Processes of Escalation and De-escalation in Violent Group Conflicts* (supplement to *Sociologus*), Berlin: Duncker and Humblot 1999, pp. 133 – 152; On the contested nature of parallel systems of law and the increasing rates of conflicts in situation of parallelism and contestations, see, for example, Jonas Grutzpalk, 'Bloodfeud and Modernity', *Journal of Classical Sociology* vol. 2, no. 2 (2002): 115 – 134.

6. Wendy Bracewell, 'Gjeçov, Shtjefën (ed.), 'The Code of Lekë Dukagjini/ Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit. Translated from Albanian and with an introduction by Leonard Fox. Gjonlekaj Publishing Company, New York, 1989', review article, *The Slavonic Review* vol. 71, no. 1: 166 – 68, here p. 167.

of trust, solidarity and mutual support in context of societal insecurity outside the framework of a trustworthy state. Still today, particularly in rural communities of Kosovo and northern Albania, the so-called Gheg socio-linguistic regions, besa can be operationalised either explicitly (e.g. when ritually sealed or appealed to in formal speech) or become implicitly operational, such as when a traditionally-minded Albanian stakes his honour⁷ on someone else's safety and protection. It can sometimes be initiated simply through mutual expressions of respect and the offering and accepting of hospitality. Furthermore, both the semantic transformations of besa in recent history and its continuous resonances with contemporary traditionalists offer some interesting insights into nationalism, governance, political legitimacy and democratisation in both Kosovo and Albania today, albeit many Albanians rightly distance themselves from any stereotypical identification with historical kanun today.⁸

Besa is a complex cultural concept – once a total social fact in the Gheg mountain regions – which requires different translations in English according to context. According to a broad literature perusal,⁹ these include 'trustworthiness' or 'faithfulness to the given word', loyalty, the 'word of honour' or 'pledge', 'hospitality', 'agreement', 'pact', 'protection guarantee', 'armistice' or 'truce', and social honour (or 'honour of the house') – in reference to a person's or family's capacity to protect others. A person can 'have besa', 'be a besnik', besa can be bound, broken or extended. While kinship solidarity is perceived as a given, besa extends social obligations of protection and reciprocal support to those categories of persons who are ritually included as 'friends' into the family. The traditional Albanian term for friend, mik (pl. miqtë) includes, in traditional customary law, the former enemies in feuds after successful reconciliation; the partners in political alliance; the guest of the house; the in-laws etc. – broadly all those ritually integrated non-kin individuals and groups to whom specific social obligations and protection duties apply, which are secured through besa. Rooted in notions of social honour, the concept is based on social evaluations of a person's and family's norm conformity, which determines their standing in the relevant community (the local social 'circle's, or rreth); on collective (kin) liability for norm transgressions; and generally on a highly personalised form of local knowledge regarding social relationships and obligations.¹⁰

Historically, Besa was a core ingredient of Albanian customary law, kanun, which provided the cultural means of self-regulation in rural communities outside the direct rule of the state, particularly during the insecure late Ottoman period (lasting into the early 20th century). Besa has been described as a customary form of social contract.¹¹ It is based on idealised and strong codes of social honour. Universally, honour is always performative and requires witnesses from within the respective community, who act as judges of norm compliance and assign social status to the involved actors, accordingly. Historical Albanian kanun law even foresaw the institution of formal, ritual guarantors, who would stake their own honour to secure the fulfilment of agreements and vouch for the stability and persistence of certain relationships established under besa. Such arrangements included inter-personal and inter-tribal relations, social and political agreements, ranging from marriages to inter-

7. In a traditional patriarchal context besa would be mostly a matter of public communication for men, although women, particularly if older, can also extend besa protection.

8. E.g. Besnik Pula 'Is it true that Kosovo is a clannish society still regulated by the Kanun, or the customary law, and does not belong to the West?', in: Anna Di Lellio (ed.), *The Case for Kosovo: Passage To Independence*, London – New York 2006: Anthem, pp. 179 – 183.

9. E.g., Eqrem Çabej, 'Albanische Volkskunde', *Südost-Forschungen* vol. 25 (1966): 333 – 381, here pp. 344, 363; *ibidem*, *Studime Etimologjike Në Fushë Të Shqipërisë*, vol. II (A – B), Tirana 1976: Akademia e Shkencave e RP Të Shqipërisë, pp. 204 – 206; Oda Buchholz et al., *Wörterbuch Albanisch-Deutsch*, Leipzig 1981: Interdruck, p. 56; Leonard Fox, 'A Note on the Translation', in: Sh. Gjeçov, *Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit*, op. cit., p. xx; Max Lambert, *Die geflügelte Schwester und die Dunklen der Erde: Albanische Volksmärchen*, Eisenach 1952: Röth Verlag, pp. 182, 190; *ibidem*, *Die Volksepik der Albaner (The Folk Epic of the Albanians)*, Halle 1958: Max Niemeyer Verlag, p. 135n.; Stavro Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878 – 1912*, Princeton 1967: Princeton University Press, p. 15; etc.

10. All honour systems require the relevant public's appreciation of conduct and norm compliance; e.g., classically, Julian Pitt-Rivers, 'Honour and Social Status', in J.G. Peristiany (ed.) *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*, London 1965: Weidenfeld and Nicolson; Michael Herzfeld, *Anthropology Through the Looking Glass: Critical Ethnography in the Margins of Europe*, Cambridge 1987: Cambridge University Press.

11. Cf. Milutin R. Đjuričić, *Čuvari Bese*, Belgrad 1979: SANU.

tribal alliances and including pledges regarding the repayment of social and material debts.¹² Less formal relationships, which nevertheless were subject to social obligations arising out of besa, included those between hosts and guests, blood brothers, comrades in fighting, and between any 'friends' (see above). Third parties, who were ritually responsible for besa-guarantees, such as the formal guarantors of a political pact or a host of someone involved in a blood feud, would find themselves forced to vindicate their honour when their besa was challenged (e.g. the guest attacked while under protection of the house, or a political pact broken) – a fact which has been held responsible for an excessive expansion of feuding practices in late 19th-century northern Albania.¹³ 'Breaking a besa' was a crime, which 'struck at the roots of society as understood in the mountains'¹⁴ and was considered the worst offense to honour imaginable.¹⁵ When affecting community outsiders, pre-emptive¹⁶ communal sanctions included the burning down of the culprit's house and the expulsion of his entire family by the community.¹⁷

Although an idealised, mythologised and sacralised concept to which social realities have not always stood up,¹⁸ the binding features of the underpinning concept of social honour were frequently exploited by representatives of respective states in history. Representatives of the Pasha, e.g. the bylykbashi, had to request a besa of the affected tribes when in need of safe passage.¹⁹ Contrary to standard national self-perception, besa was also repeatedly imposed on the tribes by the regional Turkish rulers, when aiming to reconcile the notorious blood feuds among the Gheg tribes in the late 19th century, arguably often in order to generate better support for their own military ventures in the wider region.²⁰ However, historical records suggest that such externally imposed truces never lasted for long.²¹ Also the Nazi's Wehrmacht and the British utilised the concept of besa in order to engender local support and protection guarantees and negotiate truces when plotting against each other in Albania during the Second World War.²²

From the late 19th century Albania's national poets lifted besa, along with other customary concepts such as burrnia ('manliness'), ndera ('honour'), trimëria ('heroism') and fisnikeria ('noble character'), on the ethno-nationalist stages. Besa became a literary trope used both to construct an idealised self-image for the Albanian nation and in order to suggest a pragmatic and culturally sensible way of ritually uniting across the different Albanian constituencies in solidarity against the outer enemies.²³

Simultaneously, Albanian tribal and community leaders met to unite in besa (besa-besë or besë-

12. Ibid.; also Stephanie Schwandner, *Funktion und Bedeutung der Besa in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, unpublished MA-dissertation, Berlin 1993: Free University (a copy available in Tirana National Library); see also, ibidem, 'Humiliation and Reconciliation in northern Albania...', op. cit.; cf. Shtjefën Gjeçov, *Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit – The Code of Lekë Dukagjini*, edited and translated by Leonard Fox, New York: Gjonlekaj 1989 [original publication date: 1933].

13. S. Schwandner-Sievers, 'Humiliation and Reconciliation in northern Albania...', op. cit.

14. Margaret Hasluck, *The Unwritten Law in Albania*, Cambridge 1954: Cambridge University Press, p. 244.

15. According to the cultural ideal-type, romanticised in the 1874 Drama, *Besa*, by Albania's national poet, Sami Frashëri, a man would kill his son for keeping his besa.

16. Presumably aimed at avoiding inter-tribal revenge.

17. Hasluck, *The Unwritten Law in Albania*, op. cit., pp. 44 and 244 – 247.

18. In folk mythology, besa unites the living and the dead and requires great sacrifices in order to fulfil social obligations to both friends and kin; cf. Lambert, *Die Volksepik der Albaner...*, op. cit. and the legend, Constantin and Doruntine, or Constantin's Besa (internationally known through Ismail Kadare's novel, *Doruntine*, Lanham, MD 1992, New Amsterdam Books), in which the dead brother rises from the grave in order to fetch his sister from her marital home and take to her mother in fulfilling the promise given to their mother. According to a critical Albanian research respondent, 'where besa is emphasised you will always find incidents of treachery' in Albanian society (Berlin 1993).

19. Ludwig von Thallóczy, 'Türkischer Gesetzentwurf betreffend Kodifizierung des albanischen Gewohnheitsrechtes', *Illyrisch-albanische Forschungen* vol 1 (1916), pp. 463 – 486, here p. 481; Georg von Hahn, *Albanesische Studien*, vol I, Jena 1854: Friedrich Mauke Verlag, p. 174.

20. Gert Robel, 'Bemerkungen zur Geschichte Nordalbanien 1853-1875', in: *Dissertationes Albanicae: In honorem Josephi Valentini et Ernesti Koliqi septuagenariorum*, ed. by Peter Bartl et al., Munich 1971: R. Trofenik, pp. 29 – 45, here p. 38; Anneliese Wernicke, Theodor Anton Ippen, Wiesbaden 1967: Harrassowitz, p. 62; see also (with standard text critique) Vladan Georgevitch [Đjordjević], *Die Albanesen und die Großmächte*, Leipzig 1913: Hirzel Verlag, p. 41 and Spiridon Gopčević, *Oberalbanien und seine Liga: ethnographisch – politisch - historisch*, Leipzig 1881: Duncker & Humblot.

21. Ludwig von Thallóczy, 'Kanun i Lekës, Ein Beitrag zum albanischen Gewohnheitsrecht', in: *Illyrisch-albanische Forschungen* vol 1 (1916), pp. 409 – 462, here p. 429; cf. S. Gopčević, *Oberalbanien und seine Liga*, op. cit., p. 304.

22. E.g., Julian Amery, *Sons of the Eagle: A Study in Guerilla War*, London 1948: Macmillan, pp. 322 – 334; Klaus Lange, *Grundzüge der albanischen Politik: Versuche einer Theorie politischer Kontinuität von den Anfängen der albanischen Nationalbewegung bis heute* (= Beiträge zur Kenntnis Südosteuropas und des Nahen Orients, vol.15), Munich 1973: R. Trofenik, pp. 35, 54; Walther Peinsipp, *Das Volk der Shkypetaren, Geschichte, Gesellschafts- und Verhaltensordnung*. Wien-Köln-Graz 1985: Boehlau, pp. 33 - 40, 124 - 125, 185 n.; David Smiley, *Albanian Assignment*, London and Sydney 1984: Sphere Books, pp. 43 – 45.

23. E.g. national poet Sami Frashëri, *Shqipëria: Ç'ka qenë, ç'është e ç'do të bëhetë?*, Prishtina 1999: Dija [re-print of orig. 1889], pp. 76 – 77.

lidhje) in order to fend off, militarily, the increasing territorial advances of the emerging nation-states surrounding Albanian-inhabited land at the time. Soon they also promoted the creation of an Albanian nation-state in uniting, via besa-agreement, against the fading Ottoman Empire. Famous historical internal besa-agreements include, according to Albanian historiography, the Union (or League) of Prizren (1878), the Union of Peja (1899) and the National Besa of Peja in 1943.²⁴

As a consequence of the Second World War, Albanians became subject to different state formations (e.g. isolated Albania under the totalitarian communist rule of Enver Hoxha and Kosovo, the economically least developed province of Socialist Yugoslavia). In Albania, since the collapse of the previous Communist regime at the beginning of the 1990s, the revival of blood-feuding practices in the remote northern Albanian Alps and among migrants from this region has been explained, variedly, as a perpetuation of kanun as cultural 'habitus'; a modern 'bastardisation' of pre-communist kanun; or kanun a rational post-socialist re-invention in response to a local power vacuum in conjunction with a situation of extreme economic scarcity.²⁵ In the academic literature it is undisputed that the communist Albanian regime had used excessive violence in order to suppress and extinguish local traditions, traditional knowledge and the cultural basis of tribal authorities and social cohesion in this region and thereby, arguably, caused cultural 'amnesia'.²⁶ Regardless, besa has often been suggested to secure internal compliance and silence against the outside world in Albanian crime, comparable to the Sicilian mafia code of silence, *omerta*.²⁷ Also the first post-communist president, Sali Berisha, himself originating from the northern mountains, is said to have secured the votes of the mountain population in the first elections through appealing to besa (suggestive of mutual support and obligation).²⁸

In Kosovo, feuding practices had never been as effectively suppressed as in totalitarian Albania.²⁹ In the early 1990s the Albanians needed to internally mobilise against an increasingly abusive, Serb-led nationalist state. This prompted mass reconciliations of still existing blood feuds in order to enhance internal ethno-national cohesion. Besa was 'bound' (*besë-lidhje*) between previously feuding families in TV-transmitted (and thus widely witnessed) mass events on village fields and in private courtyards between former internal Albanian enemies across the rural communities of Kosovo.³⁰ The Kosovo Liberation Army, KLA, also relied on enforcing loyalty and internal cohesion among its fighters through 'uniting in besa' when swearing an oath of allegiance; and – as various post-war biographies openly suggest, it morally justified the killing of perceived 'traitors' among fellow-Albanians who

24. Haxhi Gocit, 'Besa – virtyti i lartë i popullit shqiptar', Konferenca e Dytë e Studimeve Albanologjike, Tirana 1969, Instituti i Historisë dhe i Gjuhësisë, p. 177; Enis Sulstarova, 'Lidhja e Prizrenit' (= note in Lidhja e Prizrenit si themel i politikës shqiptare), 3 June 2009, available at http://www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=88052868558 (accessed 19/05/2010); Emin Fazlija, 'Si u formua organizata patriotike "Besa Kombëtare"', Prishtinë, 19 shtator 2005, faqe 17; see also, http://www.shqiperiaetnike.de/html/body_emin_fazlija.html (accessed 19/05/2010).

25. E.g., Clarissa De Waal, *Albania Today: A Portrait of Post-communist Turbulence*, London 2008: Tauris; Gjin Marku, 'The Kanun Bastardized', in *Kanun: Periodical Magazine for Human Rights*, No. 2., 2000–2001, Tirana, pp. 26–29; Mentor Mustafa and Antonia Young, 'Feud narratives: contemporary deployments of kanun in Shala Valley, northern Albania', *Anthropological Notesbooks* 14 (2), 2008, pp. 87–107; Schwandner-Sievers, 'Humiliation and Reconciliation in northern Albania...', op. cit.; Stéphane Voell, 'The Kanun in the City: Albanian Customary Law as a Habitus and its Persistence in the Suburb of Tirana, Bathore', *Anthropos* 98/1 (2003), pp. 85–101.

26. E.g. Isa Blumi, 'The Politics of Culture and Power: The Roots of Hoxha's Post-War State', *East European Quarterly*, vol. XXXI, (September 1997): 379–398 and Peter Krasztev, 'The price of amnesia: interpretations of vendetta in Albania', *Journal for. Politics, Gender and Culture* vol. 1, no. 2: 33–63.

27. E.g. Jana Arsovska, 'Understanding a "Culture of Violence and Crime": The Kanun of Lek Dukagjini and the Rise of the Albanian Sexual-Slavery Rackets', *European Journal of Crime, Criminal Law and Justice*, vol. 14, no. 2 (2006), pp. 161–184; *ibidem*, 'Code of Conduct: Understanding Albanian organized Crime', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 11 July 2007; Norbert Mappes – Niediek, *Balkan-Mafia: Staaten in der Hand des Verbrechens in Europa – Eine Gefahr für Europa*, Berlin: Ch. Link, p. 108; Gus Xhudo, 'Men of Purpose: The Growth of Albanian Criminal Activity', *Transnational Organized Crime: A Frank Cass Journal*, vol. 2, no. 1, (1996), pp. 1–20.

28. 'Berisha kërkon të hyjë në Evropë me kanunin e Lekë Dukagjinit', *Zëri i Popullit* 23 August 1994, p. 1.

29. Cf. Howard Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, London 2000: Pluto Press., p. 60; Ger Duijzings, *Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo*, London: Hurst 2000, p. 127.

30. Under leadership of the Albanian folklorist Anton Çetta, kanun was re-imported into the villages, yet 'the positive values' of 'manliness', *burrnia*, enhanced: forgiveness for the purpose of ethno-national cohesion was posited as greater honour than taking revenge. Another modernisation factor included the extension of the audience or public witnesses through the use of modern media. Cf. Howard Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, London 2000: Pluto Press., pp. 61, 63. 'When Albanians try to reconcile blood feuds, some people say they are preparing for war', according to *ibid.*, p. 61. At the time, only 'a few blood feuds remained unreconciled' (*ibid.*, p. 63). Since the collective emergency situation had passed, feuds have re-occurred in Kosovo, although they usually hardly become known, most likely for reasons of national image problems; e.g. Bytyci, Fatos. 2004. 'Blood Feuds Revive in Unstable Kosovo: Rise in 'Honour Killings' blamed on collapse of respect for law and order'. *Balkan Crisis Report* No. 481, 19 February. Prishtina: International Institute for War and Peace Reporting.

were thought to have broken the national besa.³¹ Hardly noticed or understood by the international presences in Kosovo, besa has continued to underpin most symbolic expressions of national unity and Pan-Albanian solidarity. For example, it has been ideologically propagated by the popular Albanian youth organisation and political movement Levizjë Vetëvendosje, 'self-determination' and the war veterans' organisations. These local institutions are involved in a symbolic process of nation-building that exists in parallel to the international state-building project in Kosovo.³² In the social context of local villages, however, independent of the overarching nationalist discourse, it is still remembered that inter-personal besa agreements could extend beyond ethnic boundaries.³³ In the pre-war era, village reconciliation councils used to mediate conflicts in ethnically mixed villages and guaranteed settlement agreements by recourse to social honour (besa), although this fact seems never to have become part of the official national discourse.

Apart from its nationalist uses as an ideological token (and regardless of existing internal contestations by less traditionally minded Albanians),³⁴ besa affects social interactions in many rural communities of Kosovo still today. Hence, both internationally introduced policies and personal visits may incur, locally, unintended consequences. Where social honour is staked and status anxieties rife, offense is not far off and trust quickly lost. For example, an Albanian municipal leader expressed how he felt let down by the decentralisation process, as foreseen in the Ahtisaari plan: 'I staked my honour on engaging the Serbs, and now it is all being undone.'³⁵ On an every-day level, foreign guests can enjoy a village family's hospitality and, thereby unknowingly, enter into social obligations for the personal protection received. Willy-nilly they may risk offending a host when, for example, inappropriately cutting visits short, or worse, switching hosts, or refusing traditional offerings, which mark the generosity (honour) of the house (typically including the local spirit called raki, cigarettes,³⁶ coffee and, depending on circumstances, a meal including meat³⁷). However, by the same token, the sense of personal responsibility inherent in the notion of social honour and besa, when explicitly appealed to, can secure cooperation and enhance mutual trust on an always personal basis. KFOR, in contrast with the UN administration, arguably has enjoyed continuously much higher trust rates³⁸ among the population because of its direct form of inter-personal communication with the locals in villages across Kosovo, and thus may have had a much higher impact on communicating intent, generating trust and loyalty and securing agreements via their implicit use and respecting of besa. As KFOR's first commander, General Michael Jackson, who is still venerated as 'folk hero' among the ex-fighters,³⁹ wrote in his memoir:

I flew around the country meeting KLA regional commanders and enduring a series of yet more elaborate Balkan lunches. It seemed to me important to make contact with the lower levels of the KLA

31. E.g., Faton Mehmetaj, Adrian Krasniqi-Rexha: *Një jetë e një vdekje për atëdhe*, Gjakova 2001: Zgjimi, p. 18.

32. Nicolas Lemay-Hérbert, 'Statebuilding Without Nation-building? Legitimacy, State Failure and the Limits of the Institutional Approach', *Journal of Intervention and State-Building*. Vol. 3, no. 1 (2009), pp. 21 - 45; *ibidem*, 'State-Building from the Outside-in: UNMIK and its paradox'. *Journal of Public and International Affairs* vol. 1, no. 4 (2009), pp. 65 - 86.

33. Ethnographic research result of early 2000, published in La Cava, Gloria, et al., *Conflict and Change in Kosovo: Impact on Institutions and Society*, Washington D.C. 2000: The Worldbank, p. 35; available at < http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDS/IB/2006/04/14/000012009_20060414152533/Rendered/PDF/358530ENGLISH010and0change01PUBLIC1.pdf> (accessed 20/05/10).

34. E.g. Anna Di Lellio and Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers, 'The Legendary Commander: The construction of an Albanian master-narrative in post-war Kosovo' in: *Nations and Nationalism* vol. 12, no. 3 (July 2006), pp. 513 - 529.

35. According to an ethnographic interview in 2007 by Denisa Kostovicova, see *ibidem*, 'Legitimacy and International Administration: The Ahtisaari Settlement for Kosovo from a Human Security Perspective', *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 15, no. 5, November 2008: 631 - 647, here p. 640.

36. Which do not necessarily have to be consumed, just to be accepted and kept.

37. For especially honoured guests a chicken or sheep might be freshly slaughtered and prepared. In keeping with old Ottoman traditions, in some villages the head of the animal might be offered as a special token of respect. However, rejection is possible if accompanied by respectful explanation.

38. Cf. UNDP/ USAID Kosovo, *Fast Facts, Early Warning Report 27* (March 2010), p. 1, available at <http://www.ks.undp.org/?cid=2,169> (accessed 06/05/10).

39. Ade Clewlow, *The Kosovo Protection Corps: A Critical Study of Its De-activation as a Transition*, Oslo 2010: The Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, p. 3, available at <http://english.nupi.no/Publications/Books-and-reports/2010/The-Kosovo-Protection-Corps-A-Critical-Study-of-its-De-activation-as-a-Transition> (accessed 03/05/2010).

as well as the leaders, to get everyone involved in the process of demilitarization.⁴⁰

Culturally sensitive communication of interests and aims in socially highly complex contexts, such as the one described in this case study, universally demand a direct personal engagement, a willingness to take sufficient time, adhere to the specific conventions and listen as a matter of showing basic respect (rather than relying on any fixed notion of a given culture).⁴¹ Cultural sensitivity does not necessitate the denial of self-identity. Rather, it entails the assertion of identity as well as openness regarding aims, intent and temporarily of engagement. If trust is to be built, cooperation and the implementation of policies enhanced, adhering to culturally appropriate forms of reciprocity in terms of respect will significantly heighten chances of sustainable success.⁴² However, cultural sensitivity and knowledge on their own can never substitute for the need to provide substantive reasons of trust to interlocutors in any field.

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40. General Sir Mike Jackson, *Soldier: The Autobiography*, London 2007: Bantam Press, p. 288.

41. Raymond Cohen, 'Negotiating across Cultures', in: *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict*, ed. By Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, Washington D.C. 2001: US Institute of Peace Press, pp. 469 – 480.

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