# Human Security challenges in Kosovo

Author: Besa Kabashi–Ramaj

Centre for
Research

Documentation
and Publication

FRIEDRICH
EBERT
STIFTUNG

# Political Instability in Kosovo and Implications for the Human Security of the People

# CONTENTS

# I. Introduction

Much has been researched and written about the challenges and possibilities of developing Kosovo further as a state, economy and society. It is common knowledge that the country's economic policies have been oriented predominately toward public sector sustainability, a sector that is quite large and therefore costly. Furthermore, Kosovo has a well-documented challenge with informality, corruption, bureaucracy, and political instability, which are all contributors to discouraging foreign investments. As a result, Kosovo faces EU imposed visa restrictions that have put the population of Kosovo in a Ghetto like environment (Global Security, 2017). Without a doubt, human security in the Republic of Kosovo (hereafter Kosovo) is far from where it should be (Coleman, Human security in Kosovo: The other side of National Security?, 2016). Although many factors have contributed to the slow progress in Kosovo for the past ten years, and the state of the human security of its citizens, a central (and often overlooked) issue has been political instability, including constant early elections resulting in a series of unfinished government terms. As a result, the implications for human security have been dire, as the limbo in which political instability holds Kosovo's progress only has fueled more challenges with food security, job security, and health security, among others.

# II. A culprit to slow progress: A history of "early elections" and "unfinished government terms"

Kosovo has come a long way since the war of 1999. The long phase of transition from peace keeping to peace building to state building has already bared its fruit, a conflict which has been kept in the past and a Kosovo that is relatively stable. Kosovo has already made notable political progress. The Republic of Kosovo has been recognized by 113 UN Member States (Republic of Kosovo Ministry fo Foreign Affairs, 2017). Secondly, Kosovo has made much progress as far as consolidating most of its state institutions. Third, certain progress has also been made as far as Kosovo's economic development (Coleman, Human security in Kosovo: The other side of National Security?, 2016).

In the research conducted by Alesiza, Ozler, Rubini and Swagel (1996) political instability has been defined as *"the propensity of a government collapse... a model in which such a measure of political instability and economic growth are jointly determined."* Furthermore, the results of their research show that while low economic growth does increase the chance for government changes, political instability and a subsequent collapse of the government does increase the chance for future government collapses (Alesina, Ozler, Rubini, & Swagel, 1996).

Since the independence of Kosovo, the political realm has been plagued by disunity, even when critical national interests were in question, and in this light the future seems unsure for a population that so desperately needs a unified country rallied around the many paramount needs of its citizens. As it is, Kosovo still deals with the inability to meet the basic needs of its citizens, as above mentioned. Furthermore, Kosovo has yet to cross over the major barrier to progress, corruption and organized crime, and additionally be able to lay out in some realistic way the possibilities of solving ethnic disputes or even aiming at reconciliation but in a meaningful way. Nonetheless, the constant unstable governments, and what has become now a tradition of early elections are a major disruptor of progress in any area mentioned above (Global Security, 2017).

The resulting government to have its mandate cut early right after independence is the government that ensued from the national elections of 17 November 2007. The mandate of this government was cut short when, after independence, Kosovo held its national elections on 15 November 2009. Subsequently, due to the Kosovo Constitutional Court ruling on President Sejdiu citing violation of *"the constitution by simultaneously holding the position of president and president of his political party, the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK)"* and the 27 September resignation of President Sejdiu, which created a trickledown effect that deteriorated the governing coalition relationship between LDK and PDK (Democratic Party of Kosovo), early parliamentary elections were once again a result. With the Kosovo Assembly no confidence vote against the Thaqi Government, early elections once again happened on December 12, 2010. While the international community/observers called the elections effective, locally elections were scandalized with irregularities and electoral manipulations, irregularities in counting, intimidation and pressure of local observers, breeches of election procedures, falsification of signatures on the voters' list, and family voting, which lead to re-voting in some municipalities in early 2011 (Global Security, 2017).

Final results from these elections were certified February 7, 2011, and following inter party negotiations a new coalition government was created, with Hashim Thaci formed it in coalition with AKR, minorities and "Rugova's List". The coalition agreement made Behgjet Pacolli the new president and the new coalition government was led by then Prime Minister Hashim Thaci. All the aforementioned was set by February 22, 2011, but due to the complaint by oppositions parties and the Constitutional Court ruling that *"the Assembly's election of President Pacolli violated the constitution because there was not a valid quorum to conduct the vote and due to the failure of more than one candidate to contest the election"*. This meant that Pacolli's mandate would end, and only by 7 April 2011 was an agreement reached for a consensus candidate, Atifete Jahjaga. The agreement was reached based on the promise of significant electoral reform which has not happened yet. All in all, this whole political instability, counting the pre-election craze, counted for a whole year of limbo and stagnation, for a country which cannot afford a day of stagnation (Global Security, 2017).

The following early national elections took place in 2014, before a full four-year term was completed, once again. After the break away of two senior leaders from PDK, Fatmir Limaj and speaker of the parliament Jakup Krasniqi, who announced they

were leaving PDK to form a new party (NISMA), the governing coalition started becoming really weak and the political situation unstable. As a result, once again, early national elections happened on 8 June 2014, after which the winning party, PDK could not form a parliamentary majority, which led to a political standstill. At the same time, the opposition parties, LDK which placed second in the election, Vetevendosje (VV), the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) and NISMA formed an opposing coalition with the intent to form the government. What resulted was an unprecedented move which led to a weak and troubled governing coalition. The LDK split from the opposing coalition and united with PDK to form a government. This led to another extremely short-lived government term, plagued with a very active and even violent opposition, and a dysfunctional assembly which could not pass laws and make decisions of vital national importance. The political freeze that followed the 2014 elections, together with the lack of a much expected political "era" in light of LDK breaking away from the opposition coalition, only further fed into the desperation of a socially exhausted population, which debatably was one of the underlying causes of the migration wave of 2015. Here we have yet again another political stalemate which put the whole country in a developmental limbo from spring 2014 when the situation started deteriorating until a new government was in place and going in fall 2014. What followed was yet another weak and highly contested coalition government that would be challenged from the get go and that could not do much as far as passing decisions and laws through the parliamentary process. This term also ended half way through, with the following break away of PDK from the coalition and the no confidence vote, in May 2017, which then led to the latest early elections on June 11, 2017 (Global Security, 2017). Despite the results of these elections showing promise as far as how people have seemed to vote differently as opposed to previous elections, and how that could signify and more aware and active citizen willing to punish elected officials who have not delivered on their promises, the question remains, if the new government will be created fast enough as not to allow the vicious cycle of political stalemate and country wide stagnation to continue.

Lastly, every time Kosovo has political instability, another dysfunctional government, another set of early elections and an unfinished governing term, severe consequences follow for its people. In all such cases, it is the people of Kosovo who suffer the consequences of: all normal government business being put on hold; a much slower functioning of state institutions and local institutions; the trickle down effects of foreign relations slowing down as a results of a government who cannot make any more executive decisions, and finally, the consequences of losing funding because of the inability to make executive decisions once a government term has been cut short and until the new government is in place. Add to this the complete lack of a tradition of handing over between administrations, a new administration starting almost from ground zero, and the result is a loss of anywhere from 3 months to 6 months of normal government business until a new government is consolidated, but maybe up to an additional year, to put it modestly, until the new government gets a grip of their new tasks and is aware of challenges and how to solve them, which can turn into a regular one a half year stagnating for every two years of "progress". Considering the challenges that Kosovo and its people face, this is not only negative but also completely detrimental to the

progress of the country and to the improvement of the human security needs of its people. Still, this having become "the way of the land" these past ten years or so is also proof of the lack of loyalty and responsibility of Kosovo political leaders towards their very people, who suffer at their actions, on an everyday basis.

## III. Kosovars and the state of their human security

Despite the above mentioned political instability being a common denominator of the country's myriad of challenges as far as its human security is concerned, the institutions and the people as a whole still lack an understanding of security beyond the traditional/Realist view, and therefore are not directly recognizing the negative correlation that political instability has with their human security. In this sense, the Kosovo institutions, and society as a whole maintain a focus on security issues that are predominately of the traditional sense, such as the military, police and intelligence and are less focused or not at all on issues related to human security and societal security, as equally important to the national security, especially for a country the size of Kosovo. The concept of human security incorporates a number of different factors, including economic, health, food, political, community, environmental, and personal security. According to Kofi Annan (2001) "*Human security, in its broadest sense, embraces far more than the absence of violent conflict. It encompasses human rights, good governance, access to education and health care and ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfill his or her potential. Every step in this direction is also a steep towards reducing poverty, achieving economic growth and preventing conflict. Freedom from want, freedom from fear, and the freedom of future generations to inherit a healthy natural environment –– these are the interrelated building blocks of human – and therefore national – security.*" (The Global Development Research Center, p. 1). Although the focus of human security differs from that of national security, the two are inextricably linked. Human security is highly relevant not only for the well-being of the country, but also to its national security, overall stability and development. Most of the focus in Kosovo, in matters of security has been centered on the creation of a Kosovo Armed Force and prevention of radicalization and violent extremism. Focusing solely on these two aspects of security has allowed ignoring the underlying serious issues with human security and societal security in the country, which if left untreated do pose a serious threat to national security as a whole. The lack of economic growth and opportunities for Kosovo citizens has become a serious challenge in the consolidation of Kosovo as a stable state. Its national security and the approach to countering violent extremism so far has failed to address one of the main potential underlying issues for Kosovo, the identity crisis of a predominately young population that has been overwhelmed with information and change in an environment that has given no adequate support (Coleman, Human security in Kosovo: The other side of National Security?, 2016).

While the aim of a young country such as Kosovo should be to become a state capable and willing of fulfilling its duties and obligations to its citizens, there remain significant shortcomings by Kosovo in a variety of areas related to the human security of

Kosovo citizens. These shortcomings make Kosovar citizens even more vulnerable, especially in an environment where political stability is at its worst, and where early elections seem to plague almost every central government mandate, making Kosovo's progress even more unfeasible.

To give a clearer picture about the state of Kosovar citizens, in terms of human security, it was worth mentioning a few examples. According to research, Kosovo's citizens suffer *"from a lack of employment opportunities, a lack of job security, and a lack of the financial means to ensure that their basic needs (food, shelter, clothing, access to education and healthcare, etc.) are met"* (Coleman, Human security in Kosovo: The other side of National Security?, 2016). The threats to economic security in Kosovo are further exacerbated. Despite recent attempts for improvements, in looking at the condition of health care in Kosovo, research shows that there are still many obstacles that the majority of citizens face when needing medical care. The high out of pocket cost of health care is one of the most predominate challenges. The government of Kosovo having failed to implement the Health Insurance Fund, around 85% of citizens remain without health insurance. The harshest effects are suffered by those already on the poverty margins who end up paying for unexpected health care costs. This, as a result has an impoverishing effect on the poorest of the poor. The combination of the high cost of healthcare and other challenges in getting sufficient health care renders the people of Kosovo and Kosovo itself even more vulnerable. A lower standard of health may be correlated to a weaker economy, and a population that is less able to exercise other constitutional given rights (Coleman, Policy Recommendations for Healthcare in Kosovo, 2016).

*"The high cost of healthcare, especially for those who are most affected by the weak economy and lack of employment opportunities, further weakens the population and negatively affects its ability to participate in political, economic, or social life."* The government of Kosovo, having acknowledged the need to improve services for the health of its citizens, took initial steps and passed the Law on Health Insurance, but the implementation of such a law has proven to be badly coordinated and has stagnated all together, citizens of Kosovo remaining mostly uninsured and suffering below par health services overall, but especially in regard to early diagnosis capabilities. Despite this, there is a lack of significant public debate about the responsibility of the state to remedy these issues immediately, and the possible consequences of not doing so. The issue of healthcare has not been framed as it relates to the human security and societal security of Kosovo citizens or the overall economic growth of the country (Coleman, Policy Recommendations for Healthcare in Kosovo, 2016; Coleman, Human security in Kosovo: The other side of National Security?, 2016).

Countering violent extremism (VE) is unquestionably a vital task for countries around the world, including Kosovo, which has not been immune to the risks and consequences of such a threat. Nonetheless, the approach so far taken by Kosovo, despite many strengths in the Countering Violent Extremism area (CVE) has had serious setbacks in the Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE) area. This firstly has happened partly due to the fact that as a small country in transition, with young institutions, it faced a complex problem and a new threat and as such had to learn as it went (learning by doing and through mistakes). Secondly, serious setbacks have

happened due to the nature of the political environment and the actual lack of political stability. Since the issue of VE flared up publically and institutionally during 2014, the new government in place, a coalition government, was faced with the fact that it was a weak coalition and it had a huge opposition, resulting in constant political unrest. This resulted in too many distractions and a loss of focus by the government, which then led to an initially less than harmonized national strategy on how to counter radicalization and violent extremism. A lack of a well harmonized and well-coordinated drafting and implementation of the strategy from the get go, would have enabled PVE carrier institutions to be better informed and prepared to carry out PVE activities, but this unfortunately did not happen. So far, the approach taken has been much more focused on the CVE activities and there has been a lack of understanding on the complexity of the underlying causes not just of radicalization but especially the cross over to violent extremism. In this sense, a national level policy on CVE that fails to consider the implications that lack of human security and societal security may have on CVE/PVE efforts is nothing short of shortsighted (Coleman, Human security in Kosovo: The other side of National Security?, 2016).

The three above mentioned examples show a high relevance to Kosovo's human security and therefore, its national security. Yet important challenges to human security have often received insufficient attention, as the focus of the Kosovo government, and that of the international community has been mainly targeting top down issues with security, from a more traditional and Realist perspective. Failing to address basic needs related to the human security and societal security of Kosovo citizens affects their capabilities to constitutionally given fundamental rights, their ability to be active citizens and to participate in creating the change they need as well as contributes to further perpetuate their already flared up identity crises. This in turn makes for vulnerable citizens, and a vulnerable state, citizens unable to live fulfilling lives and a resulting unconsolidated and weak state with a very porous national security.

## IV. How can the Kosovo Government do better?

In order to be able to address the challenges that Kosovo is facing as a country and as a people, state institutions and therefore the government must function in a stable manner within the mandate earned, as to provide for enough time for handover from a previous government, an initial phase of understanding where the systems are being challenged in meeting the needs of the population, and then having enough time to actually deliver efficient solutions. Sadly, this has not been the case in Kosovo, since 2010, and arguably even earlier, and still continues the perpetual cycle with the recent elections and yet another limbo until a new government gets established. Therefore, it is safe to say that political instability is the potential breeding ground for an overall lack of institutional memory, continuity and progress, and therefore a breeding ground for a deteriorated state of human security and societal security which ultimately threaten the national security of Kosovo.

Like human beings, states must adapt to new environments and accommodate to geostrategic changes in order to preserve themselves. This may mean that initially the security concept as a whole

has to be reviewed and redefined in order to reflect the world as it is today. This may also mean that the role of the state should be reviewed, in light of these changes. What is certainly clear, theoretically and in practice, is that national security is linked with human security and that to preserve national security states must safeguard the human security as well as the societal security of its population. This means that ultimately, people who live within a state should be provided the space and tools to have their human security needs met as well as preserve their ethnic, cultural, religious and national identity, as a way to preserve national security. In this sense, the responsibility for the provision of such a space and tools falls to the political leaders in place, whose ultimate responsibility as elected officials should primarily be to cater to the needs of the population they have been elected to represent. Furthermore, even their political decisions should be based on setting priorities right, starting with how their political decisions would affect the people they are meant to represent first, before how they would affect their political agendas. Only switching a mindset that shifts how local political leaders function, from a "political party figure" to a "statesman" that is capable of putting "the people" first, when it matters, can the vicious cycle of political instability and stagnation be put to a halt.

In conclusion, lack of political stability and in consequence of human security puts the states' legitimacy at great risk, weakening national security. Therefore, the vicious cycle of political instability should be immediately addressed as a way to unlock the "progress limbo" and be able to allow the country to develop. In this sense, it is of vital importance to also adopt a security concept that is more fitting to the current global security environment, and that combines the traditional Realist view of security and the significance of threats to the state, with a present day broad concept of security and where threats to people are considered. This way, by addressing human security, greater priority would be given to the people and their wellbeing, at the same time diminishing an internal threat to the state, as the primary agent in the international relations, increasing the chance for stability, peace, and order. Yet, none of the above mentioned can even begin to happen without the desperately needed political stability. In this sense, it is the responsibility of the Kosovo political leaders, in the short term, to adopt a mindset that focuses more on what Kosovo and its people actually need, and what is vital for this country's survival and self-sustainability then the interest of the political parties they belong too. In the short term, only a conscious decision to shift the political mindset could possibly break the vicious cycle of political instability that Kosovo has been plagued with.

# References

1. Alesina, A., Ozler, S., Rubini, N., & Swagel, P. (1996). Political Instability and Economic growth. Journal of Economic Growth, 189–211.

2. Coleman, J. (2016). Human security in Kosovo: The other side of National Security? Prishtina: Centre for Research Documentation and Publication.

3. Coleman, J. (2016). Policy Recommendations for Healthcare in Kosovo. Prishtine: Centre for Research Documentation and Publication.

4. Global Security. (2017, June 15). Kosovo Politics. Retrieved from GlobalSecurity.org: http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/europe/ks-politics.htm

5. Republic of Kosovo Ministry fo Foreign Affairs. (2017). International recognitions of the Republic of Kosovo. Retrieved from Republic of Kosovo Ministry fo Foreign Affairs: http://www.mfa-ks.net/?page=2,224

6. The Global Development Research Center. (n.d.). Definitions of Human Security. Retrieved from The Global Development Research Center: https://www.gdrc.org/sustdev/husec/Definitions.pdf

# Human Security challenges in Kosovo

**FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG**