
International Governance and Local Resistance in Kosovo: the Thin Line between Ethical, Emancipatory and Exclusionary Politics

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the emergence and implications of local resistance against the practice of liberal peace-building in post-conflict Kosovo, as pursued by the international community and local authorities. Exploring the prospects and limitations of local resistance, as articulated through social movements and institutionalised forms of politics, enables us to examine the applicability and potential implications of post-liberal and emancipatory peace, approaches recently propagated by critical approaches to peace-building. Drawing on an original analysis of the discourse and affirmative action of local resistance against the international governance of Kosovo, this paper will argue that different types of local resistance articulate a thin line between ethical, emancipatory and exclusionary practices. Due to the inherent contradictions of resistance movements, the challenges associated with local ownership, grassroots democratisation, and the emancipation and empowerment of local agency cannot be resolved entirely. Indeed, there is a persistent danger that subalterns articulate their needs and interests not only according to an acceptable public transcript for the group's inner dynamics, but also in relation to the dominant authority, whether it is local or international. This paper illustrates that where there is power there will be resistance, and where there is resistance there will be exclusion and further subordination.

INTRODUCTION

When NATO troops entered Kosovo in June 1999, thousands of Kosovars took to the streets to welcome the presence that would liberate them from the regime of Serbia's Slobodan Milošević. The ensuing establishment of the UN interim administration, which, alongside many international aid organisations, managed Kosovo's affairs, was welcomed by the local population for providing valuable assistance in reconstructing destroyed livelihoods, establishing basic public services and providing basic goods and welfare. As time passed and conditions

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improved in Kosovo, however, new concerns emerged that gradually undermined the credibility and legitimacy of the international presence. As the Kosovars demanded broader self-governance from the UN administration, the political agenda of both local and international stakeholders began to diverge. Friction developed around a number of issues: the delay in clarifying Kosovo's statehood; incompatible political agendas; political and aid conditionality; and the extensive power and undemocratic and unaccountable practices of the international presence. These issues, against a backdrop of fragmented ethnic relations and protracted underdevelopment, gave rise to local resistance against the decisions and actions associated with the liberal peace-building agenda in Kosovo.

The nature of local resistance to the international governance of post-conflict societies shares many similarities with local resistance in colonial and post-colonial contexts.¹ Those who were once welcomed and considered as liberators, are soon seen as new occupiers. Whereas the international community, in the context of peace-building, does not seek explicitly to extract and exploit the local resources of post-conflict societies, but rather seeks to provide external resources to the formerly conflicted society, there are other factors of an exploitive but non-material nature in the relationship.² Recognising that peace is always for someone and for some purpose is essential to understanding thoroughly the complex implications of peace-building in conflict-affected societies. A relationship of accommodating multilateral interests develops between the peace-builders and the post-conflict society. Delivering development aid and building a neo-liberal economy enables international actors to benefit from trade, loans and other investments. Changing regimes and building democracy creates new partnerships, security communities and loyalties, and space for unlimited exploitation. Deploying military troops also serves the purpose of training troops in dangerous terrains, and practicing modern military technology and doctrines. Establishing the rule of law prevents terrorism, organised crime, trafficking and asylum claims. Establishing human-rights regimes benefits the normative aspect of international institutions, and global governance more generally.

This mutually exploitive relationship has recently been addressed by those advocating new critical approaches to peace-building, who argue that as a result of interaction between the local and international actors and their respective cultures, identities, needs and interests, hybrid forms of peace are emerging that impact on both local populations and the international presence.³ Hence, they recognise the multi-dimensional nature of power manifested not only by the powerful international actors or ruling local elites, but also reflected by the weak and powerless population through resistance, disobedience and silent and symbolic defiance evident in the terrains of everyday life in post-conflict situations. Building on these premises, this paper provides original analysis on the emergence and implications of local resistance against the practice of liberal peace-building in post-conflict Kosovo, as pursued by the international community and local authorities. Drawing on local knowledge, this paper seeks to shed light on the prospects for and limitations of local resistance, as

¹For a comparison between post-colonial and post-conflict contexts, see Edward W. Said, *Culture and imperialism* (London, 1993); Mark Duffield, *Development, security and unending war* (Cambridge, 2007); Ilan Kapoor, *The postcolonial politics of development* (London, 2008); and John Gledhill, *Power and its disguises* (2nd edn, London, 2000).

²Roland Paris, 'Saving liberal peacebuilding', *Review of International Studies*, 36 (2010), 337–65.

³Oliver P. Richmond, *A Post-liberal peace* (London, 2011); Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, 'Introduction: liberal peace in dispute', in Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh (ed.), *Rethinking the liberal peace: external models and local alternatives* (London, 2011), 1–16: 3.

articulated through social movements and institutionalised forms of politics. This, in turn, facilitates an examination of the applicability and potential implications of post-liberal and emancipatory peace, as recently propagated by the critical perspectives on peace-building.

Local resistance towards international governance in Kosovo is articulated by different actors and through different means. The most vocal resistance emanates from the Movement for Self-Determination (*Lëvizja Vetëvendosje*), whose main goal is the realisation of external and internal self-determination of Kosovo's majority population, as well as the re-adjustment and reduction of the protracted and extensive powers of international governance in Kosovo. To achieve these goals, *Vetëvendosje* has combined popular demonstrations, citizen mobilisation and education with public performances, slogans and media communication campaigns for 'naming and shaming' political leaders, as well as a hidden transcript of resistance through everyday acts of disobedience. Resistance is also articulated by the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) war veterans, who have used political pressure through public statements and media appearances, and low-scale protests and threats against the international presence, to protect the dignity and integrity of ex-combatants, and to improve the legal and welfare conditions of their families. Other local resistance towards the decisions and actions of the international governance in Kosovo has also taken hybrid forms, combining institutional and cooperative aspects, or more contentious forms of resistance such as public protests, with other hidden, silent forms of non-cooperation. This is the case with regard to the Kosovo Women's Network, which seeks to support, protect and promote the rights and the interests of women and girls in Kosovo through institutional and popular resistance practices.

This paper argues that these types of resistance articulate a thin line between ethical, emancipatory and exclusionary practices. In terms of ethical and emancipatory practices, local resistance has the potential to revitalise the political life of society, where bottom-up initiatives attempt to safeguard the pluralist nature of public affairs, critique the contested legitimacy and authority of local and international governance, encourage citizen activism and hold the government accountable and responsible for its actions. Notwithstanding this, local resistance often results in exclusionary practices that risk affecting the subalterns who belong to minority and vulnerable communities. Exclusionary practices are reflected through promoting nationalist ideology and denying implicitly ethnic difference and pluralism in society. Consequently, local resistance does not resolve entirely the issues of local ownership, grass roots democratisation, or the emancipation and empowerment of local agency, because there is a persistent danger that the subalterns articulate their needs and interests in an acceptable public transcript for the inner group's dynamics, but also in relation to the dominant authority, whether it is local or international. Therefore, emancipatory politics should not be seen as an ultimate solution to post-conflict problems; instead, the ethos and nexus of emancipation should remain the 'immanent critique' of dominance and power relations within and between social groups.

The first section of this paper examines the core theoretical assumptions and practical limitations of liberal peace-building, and then discusses the emergence of the emancipatory peace-building argument as an alternative to the mainstream approaches. Thus, the core debates between supporters of liberal peace-building and the proponents of emancipatory peace-building are explored, and some of the implications that might occur in 'bringing in' the emancipatory peace perspective, or combining it with liberal approaches, are examined.

Following this theoretical discussion, the paper then provides an original analysis of different types of local resistance in Kosovo, to examine the emergence of a 'critical turn' through social movements and bottom-up civic initiatives, and also to consider its potential contribution towards building a sustainable peace. The paper concludes by examining some of the inherent pathologies and case-related implications of the discourse and practices of local resistance and emancipatory politics in post-conflict situations.

FROM LIBERAL TO POST-LIBERAL PEACE?

Liberal peace-building and uncontentious politics

Efforts during the early 1990s to build a sustainable peace in societies experiencing conflict using a 'light footprint' were ultimately insufficient for addressing the complex problems emerging from the absence of a functional state, an underdeveloped welfare system and ethnic division. The move to expand the UN peace-building agenda by including state-building activities turned to the prevailing form of liberal democracy as the optimal approach to govern post-conflict societies, by institutionalising social practices, liberalising the economy and transforming gradually the remaining ethnic disputes. This approach expanded UN involvement in post-conflict societies well beyond earlier conflict-resolution and conflict-management agendas. The expanded agenda combined state-building and peace-building instruments. The aim of state-building is the establishment of self-sustaining, legitimate and effective state institutions; peace-building, on the other hand, concerns primarily the establishment of self-sustaining peace by eradicating structural factors that trigger violence in the first place. These two parallel and interwoven agendas are often defined as 'liberal peace-building', whereby the goal of the international military and civilian presence is to build a sustainable peace by establishing democratic institutions, rights and civil society, and to install a neoliberal and market-oriented economy.

Liberal peace-building operates on the assumption that building a liberal state will produce a stable peace, because:

- democracies tend to be more peaceful;
- free elections produce democratic practices and political stability;
- the rule of law promotes effective governance;
- power-sharing arrangements promote ethnic reconciliation;
- neoliberal economic policies promote free-market and economic growth; and
- civil society promotes human rights and social inclusion.

The liberal peace thesis encourages the development of the domestic liberal democratic system in which:

- political and civil rights are respected and advanced;
- governments are democratically elected and exercise limited powers;
- economic activity is largely free from state intervention; and
- the social welfare of citizens is protected.⁴

⁴For an overview of the liberal peace thesis, see: Michael W. Doyle, 'Kant, liberal legacies, and foreign affairs', *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12 (3) 1983, 206–7; Michael W. Doyle, 'Three pillars of the liberal peace', *American Political Science Review* 99 (3) 2005, 463–6; Michael W. Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, *Making war and building peace: United Nations peace operations* (Princeton, 2006); Charles T. Call and Vanessa Wyeth (eds), *Building states to build peace* (London, 2008).

However, in the practice of the international governance of post-conflict societies, this sequence of policies is far from reality. Indeed, one of the most distinct attributes of liberal peace-building praxis has been the promotion and implementation of compliance politics, and the cultivation of a subservient political culture in post-conflict societies. According to liberal peace-building perspectives, the creation of peace is conditional upon building a local polity, which operates based on power-sharing arrangements, consensual decision-making and compliance with the transitional authority.⁵ The nature and intention of power-sharing arrangements, however, often discourage social activism and political participation, seeking instead to maintain citizen compliance with and obedience towards the authority of international governance and local ethnic elites. In addition, the hierarchy of needs following violent conflict prioritises humanitarian and security related needs over the need for civic and political agency. Civil society, media and trade unions—traditional agents of social mobilisation—are controlled by foreign donations and conditionality, and sophisticated legal and political discourse.

One of the most important aspects of post-conflict democratisation is the choice of electoral system.⁶ Most of the theoretical and policy prescriptions suggest that a successful democratic transition in post-conflict societies is conditional on providing maximal inclusiveness, moderation and accommodative politics that serve as incentives for inter-ethnic cooperation.⁷ Hence, it is suggested that a form of proportional representation is a more suitable institutional designs for divided societies than the majoritarian systems.⁸ In the post-conflict recovery dominated by a liberal peace agenda, the main local actors involved in power-sharing deals are either ex-combatants, war-lords or a self-proclaimed political and civil society elite. Driven by power management logic, these local groups are involved by internationals in order to control or reduce local resistance from potential conflict spoilers, and as such avoid creation of parallel political structures that would challenge the authority and legitimacy of international peace-builders. In addition to this, power-sharing arrangements have often discouraged citizen participation, focusing as they do largely on ethnic elites to govern political affairs. This is mainly done to maintain an overall stability and avoid public deliberations as a forum that could lead to violent confrontation between different ethnic groups. However, power sharing can affect negatively the democratisation process by excluding moderate elites; by the fact that they lack popular support; by preventing local ownership of political processes as a result of external intervention; and by maintaining fragile ethnic relations as a result of group representation.⁹

⁵See: Roland Paris, *At war's end: building peace after civil conflict* (Cambridge, 2004). For an analysis of its impact in Northern Ireland, see Michael O Kelly, John Doyle and Philip J. Boland, 'How many ways can you look at a proportion? Cross-community vote transfers in Northern Ireland before and after the Belfast agreement', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society Series A (Statistics in Society)* 173 (1) (2010), 215–35.

⁶See: Oisín Tansey, *Regime-change: democratization and international administration* (Oxford, 2009); Karen Guttieri and Jessica Piombo (eds), *Interim governments: institutional bridges to peace and democracy* (Washington D.C., 2007).

⁷See Arend Lijphart, *Thinking about democracy: power sharing and majority rule in theory and practice* (London, 2008); Ian O'Flynn and David Russell (eds), *Power sharing: new challenges for divided societies* (London, 2005);

⁸Arend Lijphart, 'Constitutional design for divided societies', *Journal of Democracy* 15 (2) 2004, 96–109.

⁹Anna K. Jarstad, 'Power sharing: former enemies in joint government', in Anna K. Jarstad and Timothy D. Sisk (eds), *From war to democracy: dilemmas of peacebuilding* (Cambridge, 2008), 105–33: 107.

In general, the exercise of sovereign authority by a UN-sanctioned international administration is seen as running the risk of developing institutions that 'will be less the creations of the people in question, and more products of external interests'.¹⁰ Although liberal peace-building aims to foster self-sustaining peace through effective, legitimate self-governance, the fact that there is extensive external involvement 'can create new political and economic patterns in the host society that come to rely on the continuation of large-scale external aid and guidance'.¹¹ By its nature, liberal peace-building removes political authority from local political institutions, weakening their capacity to develop and implement public policy and thereby creating a culture of dependency.¹² In addition to this, driven by economic, security and strategic self-interests, states and international organisations engaged in post-conflict reconstruction often display an unwillingness to commit sufficient resources, to operate in a coordinated and effective manner and to be accountable for the human-rights abuses and local damages directly caused by internationals.¹³

Critique and the post-liberal peace

In response to the shortcomings, failures and consequences of the practice of liberal peace-building, a critical scholarship is emerging that seeks to interrogate the performance, effectiveness and implications of mainstream peace-building praxis. For some scholars, the act of immanent critique and the promotion of emancipation in academic discourse seems to provide sufficient level of resistance; whereas other critics demand the production of alternative solutions to resolve the unfulfilled potential of mainstream approaches.¹⁴ Following the 'critical turn' in International Relations,¹⁵ critical approaches to peace-building seek to reject or modify the propositions made by mainstream scholars, who predominantly employ problem-solving and a positivist logic of inference in their analyses.

Most critical approaches to peace-building provide a reflective analysis on how liberal peace-building facilitates a counter-productive environment that ultimately develops a weak and unaccountable local polity, fragments local sovereignty and maintains fragile peace. They reveal a number of problematic practices and paradoxical manifestations of liberal peace-building. First, critics disagree with the imposed nature of democratic regimes in post-conflict societies, as imposition undermines the legitimacy of liberal peace and also

¹⁰Christopher Bickerton, 'State-building: exporting state failure', in Christopher Bickerton, Philip Cunliffe and Alexander Gourevitch (eds), *Politics without sovereignty: a critique of contemporary international relations* (London, 2006), 93–111: 96.

¹¹Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk, *Managing contradictions: the inherent dilemmas of postwar statebuilding* (Washington, D.C., 2007), 6.

¹²Dominik Zaum, *Sovereignty paradox: the norms and politics of international statebuilding* (Oxford, 2007), 241.

¹³Simon Chesterman, 'Building democracy through benevolent autocracy: consultation and accountability in UN transitional administrations', in Edward Newman and Roland Rich (eds), *The UN role in promoting democracy: between ideals and reality* (Tokyo, 2004), 86–112: 102.; Daniel Philpott and Gerard F. Powers, *Strategies of peace: transforming conflict in a violent world* (Oxford, 2010).

¹⁴See, Richard Wyn Jones, 'On emancipation: necessity, capacity, and concrete utopias', in Ken Booth (ed.), *Critical security studies and world politics* (Boulder, 2005), 215–35; Tara McCormack, *Critique, security and power: the political limits to emancipatory approaches* (London, 2010); David C. Hoy, *Critical resistance: from post-structuralism to post-critique*, (Cambridge, MA, 2004).

¹⁵For an overview of critical approaches to international relations, see Andrew Linklater, 'The achievements of critical theory', in Steve Smith, Ken Booth and Marysia Zalewski (eds), *International theory: positivism and beyond* (Cambridge, 1996) 279–98.

undermines the prerogative of local people to choose the form of political system they want to establish in their society. Second, externally imposed democratisation insists on immediate results, ignoring the fact that the democratisation dynamics should be locally driven and locally owned in order to ensure sustainability. Third, often the promotion of democratic and multi-ethnic parties triggers identity-based violence and exacerbates further social fragmentation. Fourth, democratisation processes often neglect the importance and influence of informal institutions and local culture, and may not take into consideration how the local population might react to or resist externally designed institutions.

In turn, critical approaches attempt to provide alternative solutions to the shortcomings of externally imposed democratisation, varying between approaches that favour inaction and non-intervention to approaches that suggest small-scale engagement. Some advocate larger local ownership and consent, which will empower local agency while providing external actors with legitimacy and effectiveness. Others suggest adapting democratic principles that recognise local contexts and empower local populations, while accepting indigenous forms of governance. These propositions advocate a hybrid model, combining local indigenous principles with more liberal and cosmopolitan principles, thus incorporating local perspectives in the decision-making process, bringing everyday processes of society to the forefront.¹⁶

The most vocal critic of liberal peace-building, Oliver P. Richmond, advocates a new critical research programme, while consolidating a more systematic and pragmatic conceptualisation of peace. Drawing on feminist notions of empathy,¹⁷ post-colonial worldviews of resistance and hybridity,¹⁸ and the sociological concepts of the local and the everyday,¹⁹ Richmond argues that liberal peace-building distances individuals in post-conflict societies, with the result that local agency is expressed through everyday practices, indicating forms of resistance that in turn is reshaping mainstream liberal peace towards a local-liberal hybridity.²⁰ Richmond defines this as ‘post-liberal peace’; i.e., the transformation of liberal peace to engage proactively with the local, recognise their needs and seek for their support and consent. For him, ‘post-liberal peace’ has a transitory and fluid nature, which seeks to emphasise ‘the everyday’, ‘local agency’ and ‘local context’ as a space to reclaim a new social contract, which recognises the plurality of peace, is open to customary governance and prioritises social empowerment and welfare. The notion of empathy, for Richmond, is a connector between the local and international. Undergoing a post-liberal peace, where local needs, customs and cultures are recognised and promoted accordingly, the prospects for local-liberal hybridity emerge as a

¹⁶See, Oliver P. Richmond, ‘Resistance and the post-liberal peace’, *Millennium—Journal of International Studies*, 38 (3) 2010, 665–92; Roger Mac Ginty, *International peacebuilding and local resistance: hybrid forms of peace* (Hampshire, 2011); David Roberts, *Liberal peacebuilding and global governance: beyond the metropolis* (London, 2011); David Chandler, *International statebuilding: the rise of post-liberal governance* (London and New York, 2010). Chandler takes this further, linking the debate on R2P to the aftermath of the international intervention in Kosovo, in David Chandler, ‘Unravelling the paradox of the “responsibility to protect”’, *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 20 (2009), 27–40.

¹⁷Christine Sylvester, ‘Empathetic cooperation: a feminist method for IR’, *Millennium—Journal of International Studies* 23 (2) 1994, 315–34.

¹⁸Homi Bhabha, *The location of culture* (London, 1994); Kapoor, *Post-colonial politics of development*.

¹⁹Michel de Certeau, *The practice of everyday life* (California, 1984); James C. Scott, *Weapons of the weak: everyday peasant resistance* (New Haven, 1985).

²⁰Richmond, *Post-liberal peace*; Richmond, ‘Resistance and the post-liberal peace’.

promising approach to achieve a sustainable peace and social contract in post-conflict situations.

Richmond grounds his post-liberal peace thesis in a thorough critique of liberal peace-building in theory and praxis. He holds that as a result of focusing on an international, regional and state level peace, liberal peace-building has failed to engage with the local context, everyday forms of peace, care, empathy or emancipation.²¹ Hence, he argues that ‘without an engagement with needs and welfare, peacebuilding will not lead to a sustainable outcome because there are few peace incentives for citizens or elites’.²² The notion of ‘everyday’ is central to understanding this emerging new conceptualisation and contextualisation of post-liberal peace. Whereas most critical scholars seek to advance the emancipation argument by suggesting the extermination of the notions of state and political authority, and seek global solutions for injustice, Richmond suggests reclaiming emancipation from the everyday and the most local levels of society. He defines an emancipatory peace as:

an everyday form of peace, offering care, respecting but also mediating culture and identity, institutions, and custom, providing for needs, and assisting the most marginalised in their local, state, regional, and international contexts.²³

According to Richmond, the everyday is seen as ‘a site of dynamics including resistance and politicisation, solidarity, local agency, hybridity, and also of passivity and depoliticisation’.²⁴ Focusing on the everyday, post-liberal peace is able to understand contextual manifestations of peace, where citizenship, rights and duties have an everyday meaning, rather than constructing peace-building models at the global level or constructing virtual peace by relying on institutions or elite power capacity.²⁵

Certain theoretical aspects propagated by post-liberal peace are still too broad and difficult to operationalise, and also contradictory and ambiguous in notions such as the local agency and everyday. The notion of ‘the everyday’, for instance, is difficult to conceptualise, as it can mean a wide range of things, thus obstructing any systematic and generalisable inferences.²⁶ Richmond does not explain in detail how post-liberal peace can: reduce ethnic tensions; resolve self-determination and recursive secession attempts; and design community and institutional decision-making in deeply divided societies. While in theory Richmond seems to favour local agency and self-government, as well as locally initiated political developments, in the context of Kosovo he seems to find problematic Kosovo’s claim for statehood, considering it as a monopolisation of the entire state-building and peace-building process by the Kosovo Albanians.²⁷ Richmond also critiques the division and entrenchment of Bosnian society along ethnic lines and the absence of pluralist civil society, whereas, in essence, one could argue that such an ethno-cultural condition might represent the will, needs, interests and local context of each ethnic community in Bosnia.²⁸ Indeed, these ‘bitter’ post-conflict developments are also forms of

²¹Richmond, *Post-liberal peace*, 3–10.

²²Richmond, *Post-liberal peace*, 34.

²³Richmond, *Post-liberal peace*, 3.

²⁴Richmond, ‘Resistance and the post-liberal peace’, 671.

²⁵Richmond, ‘Resistance and the post-liberal peace’, 671.

²⁶See John Roberts, *Philosophizing the everyday: revolutionary praxis and the fate of the cultural theory* (London, 2006).

²⁷Richmond, *Post-liberal peace*, 81.

²⁸Richmond, *Post-liberal peace*, 73.

local agency and resistance, mainly in response to contextual hostilities between disputant groups, but they are also responses to an externally imposed liberal peace agenda, transitional justice mechanisms and social transformation technologies. This paper intends to contribute to these theoretical debates by examining the nature of local resistance towards international governance in post-conflict Kosovo.

THE INTERNATIONAL GOVERNANCE OF KOSOVO: 1999–2011

In June 1999, NATO's military intervention was followed by a civil intervention when the UN was tasked to govern Kosovo through its Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. UNMIK was to provide Kosovo with a transitional administration, while establishing and overseeing the development of provisional democratic, self-governing institutions to ensure conditions for a peaceful and normal life for all inhabitants in Kosovo. Under Security Council resolution 1244, UNMIK was mandated to: (a) establish and maintain public order and internal security; (b) oversee the repatriation and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons; (c) perform basic civil administrations; (d) develop local political institutions and hold elections; (e) build civil society; and (f) promote economic reconstruction and development.²⁹ The special representative of the secretary-general (SRSG) was the head of UNMIK and the highest international civilian official in Kosovo. Indeed, the SRSG enjoyed maximum civilian executive powers flowing from resolution 1244 and was the final authority on their interpretation.³⁰ UNMIK was structured around four pillars. The first two pillars, coordinated by UNMIK, dealt with public security issues and the judicial system, and managed domestic public administration and the international civilian presence. The third pillar was administrated by the OSCE, which dealt with democratisation through institution building; strengthening local police and municipal authorities; and promoted the rule of law, human rights and an independent media and an active civil society. The fourth pillar mandated the EU to undertake economic reconstruction and development, including privatisation, operating customs and resolving property issues. With such a broadly mandated international administration, UNMIK was criticised for 'having too many masters'.³¹

Between 1999 and 2003, UNMIK delayed transferring power to local institutions, and did little to promote local ownership of the reconstruction processes. This was partly due to Kosovo's unresolved political status and the fear that transferring power to Kosovo's local institutions would be viewed by Kosovo Serbs as a threat. In an attempt to balance these fears, the SRSG to Kosovo, Michael Steiner, had outlined benchmarks in April 2002 that 'should be achieved before launching a discussion on status'.³² The externally led efforts to build state institutions and a stable peace in Kosovo favoured and cultivated a strategy of creating a multi-party political system that would accommodate consensual politics, providing privileged status for minority groups and discourage extremist ideologies and their groupings. During this transitional

²⁹UN Security Council, *Resolution 1244 (1999)*, S/RES/1244 (1999), 10 June 1999.

³⁰UN Secretary-General, *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo*, S/1999/799 (New York, 1999).

³¹Iain King and Whit Mason, *Peace at any price: how the world failed Kosovo* (London, 2006), 249.

³²UN Security Council, Meeting, New York (S/PV.4518), 26 June 2002, available at: <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Kos%20SPV4559.pdf> (29 July 2011).

period, the state of affairs was maintained by a sophisticated system. UN international staff directed most government departments, whereas subordinate positions and gradually some of the departments came under local directors. Still, the UN administration held executive power to overrule any decision coming from the local actors and institutions that was considered incompatible with the interests of the 'stability paradigm' in Kosovo, thus excluding and punishing any social force that was acting against the interests of the international administration in Kosovo. This set of disciplinary mechanisms created political parties servile to the international community and unaccountable and irresponsible to Kosovo citizens in general. The party development was largely supported by foreign assistance, which detached the party dependency from the membership support, and thus created a top-down relationship and discouraged bottom-up policy input.

As the Kosovars wanted greater self-governance from the UN administration, the political agendas of local and international stakeholders diverged, causing friction and mutual antagonism. By 2004, events on the ground, including the March 2004 riots, put discussions of Kosovo's status firmly on the agenda. Two years and two rounds of UN-led negotiations between the Serb authorities and Kosovo representatives failed to achieve a consensual solution. Given this deadlock, a group of predominantly Western countries saw no alternative but to support UN secretary-general special envoy for the future status process for Kosovo Martti Ahtisaari's recommendation to give Kosovo 'independence, supervised initially by the international community' and to implement his Comprehensive Status Settlement (CSS).³³ As Ahtisaari's proposal did not receive sufficient support within the UN Security Council, due to the expected negative veto of Russia and China, the United States together with a group of the European Union member states facilitated the unilateral declaration of independence. Accordingly, on 17 February 2008, Kosovo's political representatives declared Kosovo 'an independent and sovereign state'.³⁴ The Declaration of Independence was framed 'in full accordance' with Ahtisaari's proposal and committed to future cooperation with the international community to ensure 'Kosovo's future peace, prosperity and stability'.³⁵ Despite its contested status, Kosovo has to date been recognised by 81 out of 192 UN member states.

The Ahtisaari proposal envisaged a new format for the international presence, tasked to supervise the status settlement and gradually pass full governance power to the local authorities. However, the international presence in post-independence Kosovo does not operate as envisaged in Ahtisaari's proposal. Due to a lack of consensus in their respective organisations, UNMIK, the OSCE and the European Union's Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) remain neutral with regard to Kosovo's status. Although they formally remain status-neutral under the framework of UNSC resolution 1244, these three organisations differ when it comes to practical cooperation with

³³UN Secretary-General, *Report of the special envoy of the Secretary-General on Kosovo's future status*, S/2007/168 (New York, 2007), 3. For a contribution by Ahtisaari see Martti Ahtisaari, 'Conflict resolution: the case of Kosovo', *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 19 (2008), 183–8.

³⁴Kosovo Assembly, *Kosovo Declaration of Independence*, 17 February 2008, Prishtina, available at: <http://www.assembly-kosova.org/?cid=2,128,1635> (14 July 2011); hereafter cited as *Declaration of Independence*.

³⁵*Declaration of Independence*.

their Kosovo counterparts, and their recognition of the empirical or factual sovereignty of Kosovo. By contrast, the International Civilian Office (ICO) is the only status-supportive international body.³⁶ The ICO is mandated to strengthen Kosovo's domestic sovereignty by supporting the implementation of decentralisation and the protection of minorities, and by improving governance and 'implicitly' abolishing so-called Serbian parallel structures, to minimise Serbian interference in Kosovo's domestic affairs.

Although EULEX operates under UNSC resolution 1244, its mission aims to strengthen the rule of law sector by advising, mentoring and monitoring the work of courts, police and customs that function as institutions of an independent Kosovo.³⁷ Despite its commitment to remain neutral regarding Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence, the UN presence in Kosovo undertakes three main functions: (a) monitoring and reporting; (b) facilitating dialogue between Prishtina and Belgrade on issues of practical concern; and (c) facilitating, where necessary and possible, Kosovo's engagement in international agreements.³⁸ UNMIK still holds some administrative functions in the north of Kosovo, where its key partners are Serb local political structures. The OSCE continues to support local governance and communities in Kosovo, but operates under a status-neutral framework. OSCE activities are now reconfigured to focus on early warning and proactive monitoring of local institutions and community rights.

During the two phases of international administration (before and after Kosovo's independence), the international community together with local actors failed to lay the seeds of a stable peace in Kosovo. While the international community was interested in maintaining a fragile peace and stability, Kosovar authorities demanded independence and state-building, allowing Belgrade to exploit the opportunity created by this dual agenda to promote its own national interests in the bargaining process in Kosovo. Subsequently, the contested nature of Kosovo's independence led to multiple international organisations acting with overlapping, and status-neutral mandates, thus challenging the consolidation of independent Kosovo's domestic and external sovereignty.³⁹

THE EMERGENCE AND ARTICULATION OF LOCAL RESISTANCE

Singer argues that citizens are obliged to obey the law for as long as organised society functions on a democratic and inclusive basis, and the state provides public services and goods equally to all its members, despite their distinct identity-related differences.⁴⁰ Resistance is justifiable in seeking to reform the system, while opening new space for positive political changes through non-violent methods; revolutionary means, however, may ruin society.⁴¹ This was

³⁶For more details on the ICO work in Kosovo, see: <http://www.ico-kos.org/ico/index.php?id=8> (14 July 2011).

³⁷EU Council, *Council Joint Action 2008/124/CFSP of 4 February 2008, on the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo*, EULEX Kosovo (Brussels, 2008), 2.

³⁸UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo*, S/2008/354 (New York, 2008), 5.

³⁹Gëzim Visoka and Grace Bolton, 'The complex nature and implications of international engagement after Kosovo's independence', *Civil wars* 13 (2) 2011, 189–214.

⁴⁰Peter Singer, *Democracy and disobedience* (Oxford, 1992).

⁴¹See: Lawrence Quill, *Civil disobedience (un)common sense in mass democracies* (London, 2009); John Rawls, *A theory of justice* (Cambridge, MA, 1971); Hugo A. Bedau, (ed.) *Disobedience in focus* (London and New York, 1991); Gene Sharp, *The politics of nonviolent struggle: power and struggle* (New York, 1973).

clearly articulated during the Enlightenment by John Locke, who asserted that any individual citizen, when abused by the rulers of the state, has the right to disobey their commands, break their laws and even raise the issue of and demand replacing the rulers and changing the laws.⁴² Although more ambiguously, even Hobbes, who is characterised as strong supporter of state authority, recognised some rights of resistance that are inalienable, related to the right of self-defense from imminent threat and collective self-preservation, which give people the right to disobey the laws of their political community and challenge the social contract and the political Leviathan.⁴³

In post-conflict environments, local forms of resistance often invoke justifications related to the undemocratic nature of international administrations, where different ethnic groups or social movements reject and refuse to recognise their authority. Those resisting invoke their right to disobey, as their consent and interests were not considered when the post-conflict mission was established, or when the new constitution was written, or because the internationals involved selected only subservient or beholden local actors to participate in the determination of the nature of the political and legal system. In Kosovo, local resistance towards the international presence is articulated by different actors using different methods. The resistance is articulated mainly through: popular demonstrations, citizen mobilisation and education; public performances, slogans and media communication; campaigns for ‘naming and shaming’ political leaders; as well as institutional and cooperative techniques and more hidden forms of resistance through everyday acts of disobedience. The remainder of this paper will discuss the emergence, activities and implications of local resistance in Kosovo.

Lëvizja Vetëvendosje (Movement for Self-Determination)

Responding to the gap in citizen activism created by donor-oriented civil society groups, and rejecting international governance, as well as its local counterparts, a new social movement emerged in Kosovo in 2004. *Lëvizja Vetëvendosje* (the Movement for Self-Determination) emphasised the need for ethical and accountable politics and local autonomy from external rule, and it incorporated a nationalist discourse for popular self-determination as a manifestation of direct democracy. Vetëvendosje is led and inspired by Albin Kurti, a former Kosovo-Albanian student leader who was a political prisoner during the last years of the Milošević regime. Between 2004 and 2010, Vetëvendosje acted as a social movement and organised protests against the UN administration in Kosovo, the final status negotiations and the independence settlement plan. In late 2010, Vetëvendosje expanded its activity and registered as a political party (citizen initiative) to run in the national elections in Kosovo, following which it institutionalised its influence by gaining the third-largest share of the vote. The analysis of Vetëvendosje that follows here reflects on several attributes of the post-liberal and emancipatory peace thesis articulated through an unanticipated local agency, which was nurtured in Kosovo’s case by the constant delegitimation of the international governance and its local partners, and the exploitation of transitional challenges to generate popular resistance and obstruct the liberal peace agenda in Kosovo.

Influenced by post-colonial discourses, Vetëvendosje bases its manifesto within the historical perspective that emphasises how the Albanian nation has

⁴²John Locke, *Two treatises of civil government* (USA, 1953).

⁴³Susanne Sreedhar, *Hobbes on resistance: defying the Leviathan* (Cambridge, 2010).

been suppressed and denied the right to collective self-determination under different colonisers and foreign occupiers.⁴⁴ It considers Kosovo's right to collective self-determination as the most important factor for peace, stability, progress and emancipation in Kosovo and the wider region.⁴⁵ The main strategy employed by Vetëvendosje towards UNMIK aimed to delegitimise the mission in the eyes of the local population, portraying its mandate as undemocratic, colonial and constraining Kosovo's freedom and self-determination.⁴⁶ In its manifesto, Vetëvendosje maintains:

The UNMIK administration of Kosova is a non-democratic regime. What else can happen with a system when the essence of its mission is the denial of people's will? The indeterminate duration of UNMIK's rule has become unbearable. Its presence is the antithesis of our self-determination. That's why we do not have freedom today.⁴⁷

One of the first initiatives organised by Vetëvendosje was a campaign on missing persons, consisting of: a petition, with more than a quarter of a million signatures collected, that called upon UNMIK and the Serbian authorities to clarify the fate of around 3,000 missing persons in Kosovo; civil disobedience among the families of missing persons, who refused to pay taxes and other public services bills; blockage of important roads; promoting dissatisfaction through artistic performances and publications.⁴⁸ In June 2005, Vetëvendosje initiated one of the most visible campaigns in post-war Kosovo, which painted slogans stating 'No negotiations—Self-determination' on the walls of public buildings and private houses throughout Kosovo. This slogan became the hallmark of Vetëvendosje's mission to resist the transitional processes that were taking place in Kosovo during that time—namely the decentralisation process, the final status negotiations and dysfunctional dynamics within and between the UN administration and local institutions. Following this, Vetëvendosje established a practice of organising public protests in response to every significant political development, disseminating posters, flyers and other promotional materials, and began utilising print and electronic media to reach wider audiences.⁴⁹

Through its distinct repertoire of resistance, Vetëvendosje differs from local and international NGOs, as it combines simplicity and populism, conveying messages that touch the essential and most desperate problems and weaknesses in Kosovo's politics, while also focusing its activities on small community discussions, rural gatherings and simple public performances. Its broad scope of ideological orientation allows Vetëvendosje to appeal to a variety of groups: educated students who are dis-encharmed with the political situation and want to see positive change in Kosovo; ex-combatants who have been excluded by the mainstream war-related parties; members of veterans' associations; and unemployed people who live in poverty and vulnerable conditions. Whereas most civil society groups would not approach sensitive political issues with

⁴⁴Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, 'Movement's Manifesto', 15 June 2010, 3, available at: <http://vetevendosje.org/repository/docs/Manifesti.pdf> (19 July 2011), hereafter cited as Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, 'Manifesto'.

⁴⁵Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, 'Manifesto', 2.

⁴⁶Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, 'History of Lëvizja Vetëvendosje (Movement for Self-Determination)', 3; available at: http://vetevendosje.org/repository/docs/Historik_i_Levizjes_VETEVEN DOSJE!.pdf (20 July 2011), hereafter cited as Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, 'History'.

⁴⁷Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, 'History', 2.

⁴⁸Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, 'History'.

⁴⁹Albin Kurti, 'JISB interview: Kosova in dependence: from stability of crisis to the crisis of stability', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 5 (1) 2011, 94.

radical tones, Vetëvendosje organises public events within hours of significant political developments. Clearly, Vetëvendosje restored an element of public deliberation to the most sensitive political events before and after Kosovo independence.

Although Vetëvendosje operated until the end of 2010 outside the institutional space, the movement strategised to attack essentially all significant political decisions taken by the international presence and local authorities towards improving ethnic relations in Kosovo, and fulfilling human-rights and democracy conditions set by the international community before determining Kosovo's final status. Between 2005 and 2007, Vetëvendosje continuously organised activities to resist the decentralisation plan, which was set forth as one of the most important issues to accommodate Serb minority interests and needs in Kosovo, before resolving Kosovo's final status. At the heart of Vetëvendosje's campaign was a set of messages aimed at spreading the 'fear' that decentralisation would lead to partition, and partition consequently would lead to the recurrence of conflict.⁵⁰ Another campaign employed by Vetëvendosje since 2008 is against Serbian products; the movement called upon Kosovo citizens to boycott economic products imported from Serbia, arguing that economic nationalism and trade reciprocity is necessary as a response to Serbia's destructive interference in Kosovo's internal affairs. This, in turn, increased Vetëvendosje's support within the business community.

During the final status talks, Vetëvendosje continuously reacted to the concessions Kosovo was making in relation to the special status for minorities and their religious and cultural heritage; to decentralisation and broad self-governance; as well as to the nature of the political system emerging after the resolution of Kosovo's final status. It mainly targeted the members of the Kosovo delegation to the talks and aimed to delegitimise them personally, calling them traitors, traders of Kosovo's statehood and inadequate representatives. Equally, Vetëvendosje targeted the UN mediators by creating a negative image about their motives to constrain Kosovo's right to self-determination. In February 2007, Vetëvendosje organised a demonstration to articulate popular dissatisfaction with the provisions imposed by the international community for settling Kosovo's final status. Although the demonstration began peacefully it grew threatening: UNMIK Police blocked the popular march and dramatically overreacted, resulting in the death of two civilians and wounding hundreds more.⁵¹ Although Vetëvendosje was very pessimistic before and during the final status negotiations concerning the prospects for Kosovo to become an independent state, Ahtishaari's Comprehensive Settlement Proposal provided the basis for the Kosovo Assembly to declare unilaterally its independence from Serbia. This historical landmark shook Vetëvendosje's popular support and provided an excuse for the movement's political opponents—mainly the mainstream political parties and civil society groups—to question the accuracy, motivations and the necessity for a social movement such as Vetëvendosje.

However, the constrained and supervised independence granted to Kosovo provided fertile ground for Vetëvendosje to reposition itself in the face of

⁵⁰Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, *Serbia's plan for Kosova* (Prishtina, 2006), 13, available at: <http://www.vetevendosje.org/sh/images/stories/broshura/decentralization.pdf> (20 July 2011).

⁵¹Amnesty International, 'Amnesty International calls for full transparency in UNMIK inquiry into deaths of Mon Balaj and Arbën Xheladini', AI Index: EUR 70/002/2007 (Public), 15 February 2007; see also: 'Kosovo (Serbia): Romanian police and UNMIK must be brought to account for the deaths of demonstrators in Kosovo', AI Index: EUR 70/010/2007 (Public), 9 July 2007.

critique and expand its resistance. Regarding the mandate and the nature of EULEX, Vetëvendosje set out a discursive framework, which intended to delegitimise the Kosovo government for its inability to gain complete sovereignty from the final status negotiations, but also to delegitimise the EULEX presence by describing it as a pillar of UNMIK—neutral but equipped with executive authorities, thereby constraining Kosovo's internal self-governance.⁵² In addition, Vetëvendosje criticises EULEX's broad and ambiguous mandate, which considers Kosovo a crisis management terrain and enjoys diplomatic immunity. Vetëvendosje argues that EULEX follows the UNMIK tradition of remaining irresponsible and unaccountable to Kosovo's society for the consequences of actions undertaken by the mission.

Between 2008 and 2010, Vetëvendosje expanded its actions to include other civil society organisations. Following Kosovo's Declaration of Independence, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon reconfigured UNMIK by reducing its staff and governance functions.⁵³ Responding to this, in 2008 Vetëvendosje organised a number of demonstrations denouncing the reconfigured role of UNMIK and labelling it as harmful for Kosovo's sovereignty and as prolonging Serb interference on internal Kosovo issues. Vetëvendosje reported that together with other 20 other 'social organisations' it managed to mobilise 40,000 people to demonstrate against the protracted and reconfigured UN presence, but also against EULEX, which was seen again as an operative unit of UNMIK in Kosovo.⁵⁴

During 2009, two events marked the main resistance efforts of Vetëvendosje. In the first, against EULEX, Vetëvendosje activists targeted and damaged 25 cars belonging to EULEX personnel, arguing that EULEX is a mission made in Serbia and as such it represents the interests of Serbia in Kosovo.⁵⁵ Kosovo police reacted to this and arrested over 30 activists for damaging public property. In response, Vetëvendosje drew parallels between the violent behaviour of the Kosovo police and that of the Serb militias under the Milošević regime. Equally, Vetëvendosje blamed the Kosovo authorities for executing violence on behalf of internationals, by which it intended to delegitimise action taken by the Kosovo government to enforce law and public order. The second major event was a campaign to encourage boycotting the local elections in Kosovo during November. Vetëvendosje claimed that voting in elections for the current political parties is harmful and counter-productive to the interests of Kosovo's people.⁵⁶ Although it is difficult to speculate whether this type of boycotting affected the local election dynamics, the subsequent low turnout served the Vetëvendosje discourse that the current political elite lacks popular legitimacy and, accordingly, that the decisions of this political elite do not represent the wide interests of Kosovo's population.⁵⁷ During 2010,

⁵²Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, 'EULEX-I Shtylla e Parë (e re) e UNMIK-ut' (in English: 'EULEX, First (new) pillar of UNMIK'), 16 December 2008, available at: http://www.vetevendosje.org/repository/docs/EULEX-i_Shtylla_e_pare_e_re_e_UNMIK-ut.pdf (12 August 2011), hereafter cited as Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, 'EULEX'.

⁵³Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, 'EULEX', 4.

⁵⁴Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, 'Po rritet numri i demonstruesve kundër 6 pikëshit dhe EULEX-it' (in English: The number of demonstrators against the 6 points and EULEX is growing), 2 December 2008, available at: <http://vetevendosje.org/?cid=1,3,1838> (21 July 2011).

⁵⁵Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, 'EULEX Made in Serbia', 25 August 2009, available at: <http://vetevendosje.org/?cid=1,3,1602> (21 July 2011).

⁵⁶Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, 'MOS VOTO. Zgjedh përnjëmend' (in English: 'Don't vote. Choose for real'), 7 November 2009, available at: <http://vetevendosje.org/?cid=1,3,1599> (20 July 2011).

⁵⁷Kurti, 'JISB Interview', 93.

Vetëvendosje's main activities focused on resisting the on-going privatisation of public enterprises in Kosovo; criticising bad governance and corruption in government; and promoting Albanian national symbols, consequently delegitimising Kosovo's 'civic' identity as reflected in the new flag, anthem and other symbols that had been introduced.⁵⁸

The influence and impact of Vetëvendosje's actions towards the international governance and local institutions in Kosovo is evident in the on-going actions of international and local authorities, including the systematic arrest and imprisonment of Vetëvendosje activists. Operating within the ambiguous legal system of Kosovo, international and local prosecutors have justified legal cases against Vetëvendosje activists for calling and organising demonstrations causing public destruction; violating public peace and order; damaging public property; and obstructing government officials in performing their work.⁵⁹ The case against Albin Kurti, for example, dragged on for nearly two years. Kurti was arrested on 10 February 2007 for organising a demonstration at which two protestors were killed. He was then kept in detention and later ordered under house arrest; and, for a period of time, he was denied contact with Vetëvendosje activists, with the media and with international human-rights advocates, while the vague and protracted legal case against him remained pending.

Amnesty International raised concerns that Kurti's 'prosecution and trial proceedings to date appear to be politicized', and also expressed concern in this case 'at the lack of independence of the judiciary'.⁶⁰ Amnesty called upon the international administrators of justice in Kosovo to initiate instead an investigation against the Romanian UNMIK police who murdered two protesters at the demonstration. The case against Kurti boosted Vetëvendosje's popular support, including among the local judges and lawyers who refused to deal with his case.⁶¹ As Vetëvendosje intensified its resistance activities against EULEX, the latter reopened Kurti's case in February 2010, arrested him for organising another protest in June 2010, and eventually closed the case in favour of Kurti at the end of 2010.⁶² Vetëvendosje considered the prosecution and arrest of its activists as politically motivated acts, which targeted legitimate and peaceful local resistance against the counter-productive and undemocratic practices of international and local governance in Kosovo, and labelled the Kosovo government, local police and international presence as unjust, undemocratic and suppressive of the human rights of Kosovo citizens.⁶³

The transformation of Vetëvendosje into a political party and its participation in the December 2010 national elections signifies the movement's entry into Kosovo's political system, while still retaining the 'street resistance' approach

⁵⁸Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, '28 Nëntori nuk është festë për këtë flamur, por është festë kombëtare, është festë për flamurin kuq e zi' (in English: '28th of November is not a holiday for this flag, but it is a national holiday, it is a holiday for the black and red flag'), 28 November 2010, available at: <http://www.vetevendosje.org/?cid=1,3,2343>, (21 July 2011).

⁵⁹Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, 'The case against Albin Kurti, 2007–2008', available at: <http://www.vetevendosje.org/?cid=2,63> (14 August 2011).

⁶⁰Amnesty International, 'Serbia (Kosovo): Albin Kurti—A politically motivated prosecution?', Public Statement, AI Index: EUR 70/014/2007, 10 December 2007, available at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR70/014/2007/en/fa20afdc-a73a-11dc-9249-5f9f850000d6/eur700142007eng.html> (15 August 2011).

⁶¹Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, 'Padëgjueshmëria e të gjithëve e bën UNMIK-un të dorëzohet' (in English: 'Collective disobedience makes UNMIK give up'), 8 February 2008, available at: <http://www.vetevendosje.org/?cid=1,2,293> (15 August 2011).

⁶²Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, 'Arrestohet Albin Kurti' (in English: 'Albin Kurti arrested'), 12 June 2010, available at: <http://www.vetevendosje.org/?cid=1,2,1645> (15 August 2011).

⁶³Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, 'Drejtesia e UNMIK-ut' (in English: 'UNMIK's justice'), 21 January 2008, available at: <http://www.vetevendosje.org/?cid=1,2,250> (12 August 2011).

that deplored that system. Despite large irregularities identified during the election process, Vetëvendosje established itself as the third political force in Kosovo, winning 88,652 votes, or 12,69% of the overall vote. Consequently, Vetëvendosje occupied fourteen seats in the newly formed parliament, where it is becoming the most active parliamentary party in terms of trying to hold the government and other public authorities accountable and ensure that political decisions are transparent to Kosovo's citizens.⁶⁴ During the first half of 2011, Vetëvendosje was very active within Kosovo's parliament and outside it, where it resisted the technical dialogue with Serbia and called for Kosovo to withdraw from this dialogue. Vetëvendosje sees the dialogue not only as another concession on Kosovo's internal sovereignty, but also as a trade-off between the international community and Kosovo's ruling political elite so that the latter escapes or delays revealing its illegal and corrupted portfolios. Concerning privatisation, for example, Vetëvendosje uses its parliamentary position to bring Kosovo's prime minister, Hashim Thaci, and other senior ministers before parliamentary hearings and question their political decisions, where Vetëvendosje has either rejected a law that it considers damaging for Kosovo's economy, or where it has intended to delay the passing of laws in the hope of modifying their content towards solutions that are closer to its ideological position.⁶⁵

With or without this structural transformation into a political party, Vetëvendosje, through its resistance actions, has emerged as a strong opposition and popular force against domestic and foreign attempts at compromising Kosovo's sovereignty and its territorial integrity. Operating largely outside the institutional and legal framework, Vetëvendosje is an exemplary case of how local resistance is articulated in an organised manner to delegitimise mainstream international and local authorities and shape the political agenda towards a contingent hybridity. For as much as they claim to represent local needs and interests, their resistance is entirely motivated by political ambitions and will to power.

KLA war veterans' associations

The associations set up by the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) war veterans and the families of martyrs have also articulated local resistance towards the decisions and actions of the international governance in Kosovo, largely related to issues of transitional justice, the welfare conditions of ex-combatants and their families and controversial political events in Kosovo. At the end of the 1999 war, the political wing of the KLA transformed into a moderate political party (the Democratic Party of Kosovo—PDK), and it has been a loyal partner of the international community before and after Kosovo's independence. It is seen as a collaborative partner in resolving transitional justice issues and an influential group that manages potential peace spoilers in Kosovo. The military wing of ex-combatants was transformed into a semi-military structure with limited functions under international supervision (the Kosovo Protection Corps KPC), with the remaining veterans transformed into civil society associations for defending the values and interests of former-KLA veterans and their

⁶⁴Kurti, 'JISB Interview', 96.

⁶⁵Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, 'Mocion për Interpellancë' (in English: 'Motion for interpellation'), 4 May 2011, available at: <http://vetevendosje.org/?cid=1,2,2941&author=0> (12 August 2011).

families. The ex-combatants reintegrated into the KPC have been under the direct control of UNMIK, which limited its scope to a 'civilian emergency service agency' tasked to deal with disasters, humanitarian and infrastructural reconstruction.⁶⁶ The war associations sheltered under the civil society platform have continuously benefitted from special public status, and different types of formal and informal social welfare. The war associations have also served as a useful mechanism for preventing potential peace spoilers from triggering public disturbances and/or inter-ethnic confrontation, but also as a reserve 'asset', when necessary, to channel the grievances of an important and influential social group.

The most vocal among the war associations is the Organization of the KLA War Veterans (hereafter OWV), whose primary mission entails 'protecting the dignity and integrity of ex-combatants, and helping ex-combatants' families in enjoying their rights, including their legal and social protection'.⁶⁷ In its political programme, OWV sets the goals of responding strongly to any development that could violate and degrade respect for Kosovo's liberation struggle. It also aspires in the near future to Kosovo's re-unification with Albania 'under a single a nation, state, and flag'.⁶⁸ As far as its repertoire of actions is concerned, OWV sets out a number of activities in its founding act, which are in accordance with democratic practices: public official demands, petitions, protests, demonstrations, marches, lobbying institutions and other methods of influencing different levels of decision-making.⁶⁹

Between 2005 and 2011, OWV has been mainly active in advancing the political and social conditions of ex-combatants. It has issued public statements on occasions when former KLA combatants were arrested by either UNMIK or EULEX. The OWV has attacked those voices in Kosovo who question the KLA's war record, and it has defended the political practices of the ruling political parties (mainly PDK) that emerged from the KLA's political wing. In the context of the arrest of former KLA soldiers by UNMIK justice mechanisms, OWV invoked a delegitimising discourse towards the international presence by emphasising the parallels between UNMIK and Serbian aggression towards Kosovo Albanians.⁷⁰ In their public appearances, OWV representatives have warned the international presence in Kosovo that if KLA war values continue to be degraded, the OWV will respond in unpredictable ways, thus implicitly threatening to destabilise the situation in Kosovo, if necessary. During the process of final status talks, on several occasions the OWV threatened publicly that if Kosovo did not gain independence, and the KLA war record was not respected, veterans would mobilise in defense of the general will of Kosovo's society.⁷¹

The OWV has also organised several small-scale protests against the arrest of former KLA members, and against significant political decisions that

⁶⁶UNMIK Regulation 1999/8, *On the establishment of the Kosovo Protection Corps*, 20 September 1999. See also: Alpaslan Özerdem, 'From a "Terrorist" group to a "Civil Defence" Corps: the "Transformation" of the Kosovo Liberation Army', *International Peacekeeping* 10 (3) 2003, 79–101.

⁶⁷The Programme of the Organization of the KLA War Veterans, 1; available at: <http://www.veterani.net/dokumente/programi.pdf> (10 August 2011).

⁶⁸The Statute of the Organization of the KLA War Veterans, Article 6, 24 January 2009; available at: <http://www.veterani.net/dokumente/statuti.pdf> (10 August 2011).

⁶⁹Statute of the Organization of the KLA War Veterans, Article 6.

⁷⁰For more public releases concerning the arrest of former KLA soldiers, see the OWV internet archive, available at: <http://www.veterani.net/index6.html> (10 August 2011).

⁷¹OWV, Press release, Prishtina, 18 February 2007, available at: <http://www.veterani.net/arkivi7.html> (11 August 2011).

influenced the political system in Kosovo. In all the protests, war veterans expressed their dissatisfaction with the international governance of Kosovo, and called for the withdrawal of their executive authorities and subsequent ending of their missions in Kosovo.⁷² In many of its public appearances, OWV highlighted that:

The political games of UNMIK in collaboration with Serbia resulted in extensive consequences for the values of our liberation war, and for our people and its future . . . the purpose of this campaign is to reject our values for which we have paid a high price with the blood of thousands of martyrs who died in the constant war for freedom⁷³ . . . those who fought for freeing its people, those who fought against the occupiers and its organized crimes, now are being trialled and imprisoned with the orders and files compiled by our occupier and its laws, and implemented strictly by UNMIK.⁷⁴

The response of the international governance in Kosovo towards these radical and non-inclusive voices within the war veterans' organisation has been mainly a combination of hybridisation and indirect confrontation, which has resulted in rewarding them with social protection and welfare services. Indeed, the resistance demonstrated by war veterans' associations against the international governance in Kosovo, by combining empathy from and connections within the Kosovo government, as well as public threats, protest and boycotts, has succeeded despite extensive international objection to create special welfare conditions and legal protection for former KLA combatants, invalids and their respective families. Responding to this, in 2000 UNMIK regulated that persons with partial and complete physical infirmity in connection with the armed conflict in Kosovo have the right to compensation.⁷⁵ So, through these legal provisions, over 7,000 family members of KLA members and civilians who had lost their lives or their families in connection with the armed conflict in Kosovo have benefitted from small pensions in the form of a social welfare allowance. In 2006, the Kosovo Assembly adopted a new law intended to improve the social conditions of former KLA members and their families, but the SRSG did not promulgate it until the beginning of 2007 due to insufficient funds and disagreements on the terminology of the law.⁷⁶ While this law was primarily dedicated to former KLA members and their families, UNMIK tried to expand its scope of beneficiaries to other civilians damaged and affected by the conflict in Kosovo.⁷⁷ The continuous protests and pressure from the KLA war veterans' associations had a strong effect in passing this costly and controversial legislation. This illustrates how local agency influenced the international governance agenda, which was concerned with prioritising stability over justice,

⁷²OWV, Press release, Prishtina, 19 July 2010, available at: <http://www.veterani.net/arkivi17.html> (10 August 2011).

⁷³OWV, Press release, Prishtina, 29 May 2010, available at: <http://www.veterani.net/index3.html> (14 August 2011).

⁷⁴OWV, Public reaction, Prishtina, 17 February 2006, available at: <http://www.veterani.net/index3.html> (14 August 2011).

⁷⁵UNMIK Regulation 2000/66, 'On the privileges for war invalids in Kosovo and for next-of-kin of persons who lost their lives because of the armed conflict in Kosovo', 21 December 2000.

⁷⁶Assembly of Kosovo, 'Law on the status and the rights of the families of martyrs, invalids, veterans, and members of the KLA and of the families of civilian victims of the armed conflict in Kosovo', 23 February 2006.

⁷⁷UNMIK Regulation 2006/29, 'On the promulgation of the law on the status and the rights of the families of martyrs, invalids, veterans, and members of the KLA and of the families of civilian victims of the armed conflict in Kosovo adopted by the Assembly of Kosovo', 2 May 2006.

and coping with influential actors in Kosovo to ensure local consent and support, while attempting to establish a liberal state in practice.

Kosovo Women's Network

Local resistance towards the decisions and actions of the international presence in Kosovo has also taken hybrid forms, combining institutional and cooperative techniques, as well as more contentious forms of resistance, including public protests and silent forms of non-cooperation. An example of such an approach is that taken by the 'Kosova Women's Network' (KWN), a network of around 80 women's NGOs and associations in Kosovo whose mission is to 'support, protect and promote the rights and the interests of women and girls throughout Kosova, regardless of their political beliefs, religion, age, level of education, sexual orientation and ability'.⁷⁸ Within its institutional and cooperative wing, KWN has drawn on its partnership with UN development agencies and other international NGOs and local government to improve the institutional position of women during the UN administration, increase women's participation in local governance and improve their well-being and social position on an everyday level. This productive relationship between local and international stakeholders, along with the broad support it receives from the women's community, has enabled KWN to play an influential role in developing gender-related legislation, putting pressure on the international presence to address more effectively women's issues in Kosovo, and creating broader public awareness of the subordinated status of women and the incidence of domestic/gender violence within Kosovo society.

During 2005, KWN managed to meet several times with the UNMIK SRSG, UN Special Envoy Kai Aide, and other senior UN officials in New York, where it took the opportunity to complain about the 'lack of gender mainstreaming in UNMIK and women's participation in status talks'.⁷⁹ KWN also collaborated with Amnesty International to channel its concerns to a wider international audience. Through the Regional Women's Lobby for Peace, Security and Justice in Southeast Europe, KWN has addressed several advocacy letters to the UN Security Council and UNMIK in Kosovo. Around the time of Kosovo's final status talks in 2007, as a result of what KWN described as the 'unjust exclusion of women from the negotiations on the future status of Kosovo', the network expressed its gender-related position and encouraged the UN Security Council to 'ensure that a new resolution on Kosovo recognizes that human security for all women and men is a cornerstone of sustainable peace in Kosovo and in the region, and must also be ensured'.⁸⁰ Reminding the UN Security Council of the failure of UNMIK to implement UNSC resolution 1325, which calls for women's inclusion in post-conflict decision-making,⁸¹ the KWN, through a joint Kosovo and Serbian women's

⁷⁸KWN mission statement, available at: http://www.womensnetwork.org/15ourmission_english.html (14 August 2011).

⁷⁹KWN, 'Annual report 2005', 7, available at: <http://www.womensnetwork.org/images/pdf/kwn%20annual%20report%202005.pdf> (10 August 2011).

⁸⁰Regional Women's Lobby, Letter to UN Security Council, Vienna, 19 April 2007, available at: <http://www.womensnetwork.org/images/pdf/al/Regional%20Womens%20Lobby%20Letter%20to%20UNSC.pdf> (10 August 2011).

⁸¹UN Security Council, Resolution 1325 (2000), S/RES/1325 (2000), 31 October 2000. The text of this resolution is available at: http://www.un.org/events/res_1325e.pdf (14 September 2011).

peace coalition, lobbied that the new international presence should ‘steadily involve women in all monitoring processes’.⁸²

Parallel to consolidating institutional support, KWN has also articulated its mission through public demonstrations, women’s mobilisation and different forms of pressure. For example, it organised annual small-scale public protests on International Women’s Day, where it promoted slogans such as ‘We want power, no more flowers’, and called for the greater involvement of women in politics and more investment in women’s security and welfare. Equally, KWN assisted women from families with missing persons, to bring a stronger voice to international and local decision-makers for resolving the issue of missing persons and provide security for their families. Such initiatives include small-scale public performances, non-cooperation with the international presence and petitions of different scales. An example of this type of resistance occurred during 2006, when local women in the village of Krusha e Vogel rejected an investigation visit by UNMIK police and local Serbs who were collecting information for a transitional justice case. Most of the men of this village had been killed or were missing following the war, so the women wanted to take the opportunity to ask the local Serbs who had left the village after the war about the fate of their missing man. UNMIK police rejected this and in turn triggered resistance from the local community as well as use of violence by UNMIK police. KWN raised its voice in relation to the overreaction of members of the UNMIK police, describing the resistance and violence that occurred during the visit to the village as follows:

...the women from Krusha e Vogel sat in the middle of the road, preventing the UNMIK armored vehicles from moving forward. The UNMIK police officers grabbed the women by the shoulders and arms, physically, forcibly moving them from the road. When the women struggled, the police officers began to use riot batons. The women responded by throwing stones at the UNMIK police officers and vehicles. In the meantime, men saw what was happening and came to protect the women. When the men came, some of the UNMIK police officers started their vehicles, while others continued to hit the villagers with the butts of their guns and riot batons. Then, all of the officers jumped in their armored vehicles. As they drove away, they threw tear gas from their moving vehicles at the citizens until they reached the edge of the village. They also threw tear gas near the school where children were playing during recess.⁸³

Through combining hybrid forms of resistance, KWN has succeeded in shaping the government’s agenda on gender issues, thereby strengthening the legal protection of women, and consolidating a strong network of women’s organisations that safeguard women’s rights from local level to the high political levels. The table below summarises the nature and articulation of different types of local resistance in Kosovo. The section of the paper that follows then analyses some of the implications of the different types of local resistance in post-conflict Kosovo.

⁸²Women’s Peace Coalition, Letter to Martti Ahtisaari, 12 February 2007, available at: <http://www.womensnetwork.org/images/pdf/al/Womens%20Peace%20Coalition%20Letter%20to%20Mr.%20Ahtisaari.pdf> (10 August 2011).

⁸³KWN Letter to Søren Jessen-Peterson, UNMIK special representative to the secretary-general, 25 May 2006, 1, available at: <http://www.womensnetwork.org/images/pdf/al/KWN%20Letter%20to%20SRSG%20regarding%20Krusha.pdf> (10 August 2011).

Table 1. Types of local resistance in Kosovo.

<i>Entity</i>	<i>Mission</i>	<i>Repertoire of resistance</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>
<i>Lëvizja Vetëvendosje</i> (Movement for Self-determination)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – External and internal self-determination for Kosovo’s majority population. – Participatory democracy and active citizenry. – Strong public order, rule of law and territorial integrity. – Social justice, economic protectionism and welfare state. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Popular demonstrations. – Citizen mobilisation and education. – Public performances, slogans and media communication. – Campaigns for ‘naming and shaming’ political leaders. – Hidden forms of resistance through everyday acts of disobedience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ignite active citizenry and public participation. – Influence the political agenda of international and local authority. – Promote exclusionary practices towards dominant and non-dominant minorities. – Re-inforce and re-actualise ethnic cleavages. – Increase the potential impact of parliamentary opposition.
KLA War Veterans’ Associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Protect the dignity and integrity of ex-combatants. – Defend KLA’s war record and honour. – Help ex-combatants’ families to exercise their rights, including their right to legal and social protection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Political pressure through public statements and media appearances. – Slow-scale protests and threats against the international presence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Re-inforce nationalist values and discourse. – Challenge transitional justice and the emergence of moderate social groups. – Antagonise minority communities and challenge inter-ethnic reconciliation.
Kosovo Women’s Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Support, protect and promote the rights and the interests of women and girls in Kosovo. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Institutional and cooperative techniques. – Symbolic public protests, citizen mobilisation and education, and other subtle forms of non-cooperation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Improve the institutional and legal conditions for women. – Increase social awareness about women’s rights. – Increase women’s participation in politics.

THE PROMISE AND IMPLICATIONS OF LOCAL RESISTANCE

Theorists of post-liberal peace argue that peace-building-as-resistance has the potential to lead to emancipation, but also to other uncertain forms of politics.⁸⁴ For instance, Richmond recognises the dual implications of peace-building-as-resistance, which can either ‘revitalise the liberal social contract and give these externally constructed states substance’, or it can enable ‘a more proactive encounter between the liberal peace and its others, in which the hegemonic weight of the liberal peace project is finally countermanded’.⁸⁵ Aware of the ambiguous and sensitive nature of local resistance, Richmond argues that the ‘everyday’ in post-liberal peace should not be seen as a binary exclusion, where the local prevails over the international, or the non-liberal over the liberal, but should rather be ‘a site where these meet and are negotiated, leading variously to repulsion, modification or acceptance, and hybridity’.⁸⁶ In the same line of reasoning, Mac Ginty argues that ‘hybridity is often problematic and not necessarily pacific’, and that it can take forms of inclusion and tolerance as well as exclusion and confrontation.⁸⁷ Indeed, the dual implications of peace-building-as-resistance anticipated by Richmond seem to capture the practice of local resistance in Kosovo, which has led to several implications that walk, and sometimes cross, a thin line between ethical, emancipatory and exclusionary practices.

In terms of ethical and emancipatory implications, local resistance could represent a revitalisation of politics, whereby bottom-up initiatives attempt to safeguard the pluralist nature of public affairs, critique the authority and legitimacy of local and international governance, ignite citizen activism and hold the government accountable and responsible for its actions. Traces of an ethical resistance and emancipation were evident in the activities of the Kosovo Women’s Network. Conversely, local resistance that aims towards mono-ethnic emancipation, while also ignoring the distinct identity and rights of minority communities in Kosovo, risks further segregating the society, and effectively delaying any form of ethnic reconciliation and the establishment of inclusive social cohesion. This is particularly the case with Vetëvendosje, and to lesser extent with the war veteran’s associations. Although Vetëvendosje might be seen as a promising political platform to overcome fragile governance and poverty in Kosovo, the movement’s ideological mixture and conceptual inconsistencies, together with its intentional and unintentional dimensions, promote exclusionary practices. A closer reading of Vetëvendosje’s party manifesto reveals that, in terms of ideological orientation, Vetëvendosje cannot be located into a single and coherent ideological framework. From the right, Vetëvendosje espouses those policies that promote Kosovo’s national interest, aim to reclaim internal and external autonomy, seek unification with Albania, dismiss minority interests and advocate the establishment of a strong rule of law, public order and territorial integrity. From the left, Vetëvendosje promotes a more socialist and welfare-oriented economic order, political and civil freedoms, public deliberations and an active citizenry, as well as internal and local self-governance and self-determination.

⁸⁴Tadjbakhsh, *Rethinking the liberal peace*; Richmond, *Post-liberal peace*; Mac Ginty, *International peacebuilding and local resistance*.

⁸⁵Richmond, ‘Resistance and the post-liberal peace’, 686.

⁸⁶Richmond, ‘Resistance and the post-liberal peace’, 672.

⁸⁷Mac Ginty, *International peacebuilding and local resistance*, 210. For an authentic analysis of the notion of hybridity, see: Bhabha, *The location of culture*.

At the heart of Vetëvendosje's ideology lies the notion of emancipation-through-self-determination. Although Vetëvendosje's emancipatory priorities reflect the situation on the ground that needs immediate change, a closer examination of this emancipatory programme reveals a set of exclusionary practices, which can cause unintended, unanticipated and undesirable consequences. Some of the obvious exclusionary practices of Vetëvendosje towards minorities include: ridiculing and raising public anger over Serb monastic land set-asides; promoting a boycott of Serbian products; reviling Serbian municipal autonomy; using anti-Serb emotive messaging and war images; and advocating elimination of reserved seats in parliament for minorities. To reveal some of the implications of Vetëvendosje's 'emancipatory programme', the critique provided by Ernesto Laclau on the notion of emancipation is worth considering. Laclau argues that within the notion of emancipation there are incompatible and contradicting dimensions: where emancipation claims universal destiny and sameness, but it is generated by particular motivations and grounds; where it claims liberation and equality, but it ultimately encourages exclusion and division; where it claims the unity of parts into a totality, but by invoking the pre-existence of distinct identity it encourages further separation; where it claims social equality and totality, but in practice it reinforces hierarchical structures and practices.⁸⁸ This paraphrase of Laclau's argument pertains particularly to Vetëvendosje's 'emancipatory discourse'.

In the case of Vetëvendosje, a similar situation of emancipation-through-exclusion is evident. Vetëvendosje's vision of emancipation and self-determination is exclusionary towards the minority communities in Kosovo, and those who support Kosovo's distinct statehood and identity. By invoking a discourse of abolishing ethnic identity and creating a new common civic identity, Vetëvendosje denies implicitly the rights of minorities to manifest their ethnic, cultural and political identity free from any external interference. Equally, practices engaged in by Vetëvendosje to make Kosovo a state of Albanians and 'other' citizens serve to antagonise minority communities, who have gradually come to accept Kosovo's new identity after the 2008 independence. This is evident in the party manifesto:

Lëvizja Vetëvendosje is committed to the constitutional definition of Kosova as a state of Albanians and all citizens of Kosova. Lëvizja Vetëvendosje in addition is committed to returning the national Albanian symbols to the state of Kosova.⁸⁹

By invoking this new discourse of civic democracy and civic identity in Kosovo, Vetëvendosje attempts to discourage the majority community from supporting Kosovo's new identity, but also expects minority communities to abandon their distinct religious and cultural identity and join Vetëvendosje to lead to the creation of a new social contract. Indeed, one could argue that these discursive and affirmative practices of Vetëvendosje as articulated through media propaganda, public protests and other public manifestation are more harmful—in terms of disturbing the fragile peace and social order in Kosovo—than a promising change for Kosovo's society.

It could be argued that, although Vetëvendosje subscribes to the principles of (physical) nonviolence, its discursive and affirmative action can cause physiological violence to minority communities in different instances and

⁸⁸Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipation(s)* (London and New York, 1996), 1–7.

⁸⁹Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, 'Short political programme', December 2010, available at: http://vetevendosje.org/repository/docs/Programi_i_shkurte_anglisht.pdf (22 July 2011).

through different manifestations. Related to these discursive practices of Vetëvendosje, a leading Serb community representative, Slobodan Petrović, has argued that the ‘idea for the partition of Kosovo between Kosovo and Albania is supported by the extreme right political forces represented by the Movement for Self-Determination of Albin Kurti’.⁹⁰ Petrović has pointed out the devastating consequences of such logic for the Serb community in Kosovo, as well as for the wider region. Much stronger fearful reactions to Vetëvendosje’s practices are evident among those minority communities who are gradually integrating into Kosovo society and fear a recurrence of violence and further marginalisation.

Similar exclusionary practices are also evident in the resistance of war veterans’ associations. The action to protect KLA values, re-inforces nationalist values, and the veterans’ preconceived ownership of popular legitimacy supporting their actions has blocked in several instances the process of transitional justice, while preventing the emergence of more moderate social groups who value difference and pluralism.⁹¹ In particular, such articulated nationalist resistance by war associations antagonises minority communities, as well as challenging inter-ethnic reconciliation in Kosovo.

The notion of excluding others through the attempts to emancipate an imaginary collectivity can be explained by Chantal Mouffe’s critique of liberal democracy and her proposal for an agonistic model of democracy. Mouffe holds that, in order to maintain liberal values and principles such as equality and liberty, the challenge is not ‘how to eliminate power but how to constitute forms of power more compatible with democratic values’.⁹² She recognises that the nature of politics and the political in itself expose hegemonic and exclusionary tendencies, which can only temporarily be reconciled through a consensual logic of seeing other political counterparts not as enemies, but as adversaries. Mouffe’s agonistic democracy is an interesting idea, which seeks to transform social antagonism into a common symbolic space where difference, tolerance, but also struggle, hegemony and exclusion, are handled in such a way that they do not harm democratic principles.⁹³

By way of recognising the inherent contradictions of emancipation, moving the political struggle between social and political forces within an institutional framework is a promising alternative to reconcile differences, balance domination tendencies and prevent the exclusion of the subaltern. Relevant to Kosovo, the transformation of Vetëvendosje into a political party can signify a new ‘agonistic confrontation and pluralism’ within Kosovo’s political institutions, where the relatively high number of parliamentary seats gained by Vetëvendosje in recent elections and those allocated to minority political representatives could either close the gap between their programmatic and ideological differences, or intensify nationalist discourses, while blocking political processes from both sides by using parliamentary power and other constitutional and institutional mechanisms and constraints. Such indications are evident, but not yet significant.⁹⁴

⁹⁰Petrovic kundër ndarjes’ (in English: ‘Petrovic against the partition’), *Gazeta Express* 6 June 2011, available at: <http://gazetaexpress.com/?cid=1,13,55280> (07 June 2011).

⁹¹For a more detailed account of this issue, see: Alpasan Özerdem, ‘From a “terrorist group” to a “civil defence corps”’: the transformation of the Kosovo Liberation Army’, *International Peacekeeping* 10 (3) (2003), 79–101.

⁹²Chantal Mouffe, *The democratic paradox* (London, 2005), 100.

⁹³Mouffe, *Democratic paradox*, 13.

⁹⁴Gëzim Visoka, ‘The obstacles to sustainable peace and democracy in post-independence Kosovo’, *Journal of Conflict Transformation and Security* 1 (2) 2011, 27–37.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the discourse of local resistance, and the repertoire of resistance actions evidenced in Kosovo, illustrates how local resistance emerges largely as a result of the unfulfilled promises of liberal peace-building, whereby institutions and rights are prioritised over local needs and interests, peace and stability over justice and development, and external values and principles are privileged over the local culture and context. Mainstream accounts of peace-building and state-building in Kosovo have largely ignored non-institutional dynamics and peripheral local agency in post-conflict transitions. They have instead focused on larger structural, legal and political factors that constrain or facilitate the consolidation of democracy and the establishment of a stable peace. In return, critical approaches to peace-building consider local resistance as an articulation of local agency, which influences the mainstream governance policies and practices towards a hybridity between the local and the international. In that approach, local resistance highlights the disfunctionalities of liberal peace, and thus favours alternative forms of politics to reclaim subjectivity and agency by delegitimising and destabilising the inconvenient social order. In line with this, local resistance movements from the margins of society in Kosovo aimed at addressing those issues that mainstream political parties, civil society and labour forces failed to address effectively. These local movements used the weapons developed by 'powerless' local resistance movements worldwide to disturb the mainstream post-conflict politics; thus reflecting resilience and agency.

In general, local resistance has the potential to revitalise the political life of a society, where bottom-up initiatives attempt to: safeguard the pluralist nature of public affairs; critique the contested legitimacy and authority of local and international governance; ignite citizen activism; and hold governments accountable and responsible for their actions. In the Kosovo context, this aspect of local agency and resilience and the potential to shape the international governance agenda continues to remain under-researched. These observations notwithstanding, the analysis of local resistance in Kosovo highlighted in this article explores some of the limitations and implications of local agency and emancipatory practices. As examined in this article, local resistance can also take paths that, in order to justify its discursive and affirmative actions, while promoting nationalist ideology and denying ethnic differences and pluralism in society, often result in exclusionary practices that risk affecting the subalterns who belong to minority and vulnerable communities. In Kosovo, for instance, Vetëvendosje combined popular protests, creative campaigns and local deliberations to propagate the right to self-determination, and to target the protracted and exclusive powers of the regime of international governance in Kosovo as the main obstruction towards achieving that goal. Its discourse, however, has immanent implications for redesigning the character of the state, deepening ethnic division and excluding the subaltern. Equally, war veterans have used political pressure, public appearances, low-scale protests and discursive threats against the international presence in Kosovo, to protect ex-combatants from transitional justice processes, as well as proactively to improve their own legal situation and well-being. On the other hand, the Kosovo Women's Network has shown more sophisticated skills in combining institutional and cooperative approaches, as well as more contentious resistance through public protests and other hidden and silent forms of non-cooperation, to protect and improve women's rights and welfare conditions in Kosovo.

In sum, from the analysis of local resistance in Kosovo, we can assert that such resistance does not resolve entirely problems of local ownership, grass roots democratisation, or the emancipation and empowerment of local agency, because there is a persistent danger that subalterns articulate their needs and interests in a public transcript acceptable to the inner group dynamics, but also acceptable in relation to the dominant authority, whether it is local or international. This logic was developed decades ago by Walzer, who argued that the very act of disobedience to some type of broader authority is an act of obedience to a narrower authority, which is bound by the perceived collective identity and solidarity.⁹⁵ This dynamic signifies that where there is power there will be resistance, and where there is resistance there will be exclusion and further subordination. Consequently, emancipatory politics should not be seen as an ultimate solution to post-conflict problems, but instead, the ethos and nexus of emancipation should remain the ‘immanent critique’ of dominance and power relations within and between social groups. Equally, international policy-makers should not ignore the influential role that public and hidden forms of resistance pose to post-conflict transformations.

⁹⁵Michael Walzer, *Obligations: essays on disobedience, war, and citizenship* (Cambridge, MA, 1970).